

V. A. Tishkov¹NATION-STATES IN THE HISTORICAL AND GLOBAL CONTEXT²

The term *nation-state* is merely a synonym for any sovereign state with a designated and controlled territory and an established fact of being permanently populated. This notion came into use in the middle of the 17th century, after emergence of the Westphalian system of international relations, which defined the principles of sovereign states, some

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² The report is based on the book: *Тишков В. А. Национальная идея России*. М.: АСТ, 2021.

of which are still in force today. C. Young writes: "There was nothing natural or predetermined by historical destiny in the emergence of the nation-state. This is a relatively new phenomenon in European history – nation-states began to form during the French Revolution, and the intellectual currents of the Enlightenment played a major role in their emergence. As modern civil society developed, the very concept of nation (nationality) began to merge with the concept of citizenship and belonging to the state... Nations, like states, are a contingency, and not a universal necessity. However, the common belief is that they were destined for each other; that either without the other is incomplete, and constitutes a tragedy."³

Nation-states and their role in history

Discussions of what is a national (or non-national) state, whether Russia is a nation-state, and what the composition of the population must be to be considered a nation-state,

³ Янг К. Диалектика культурного плюрализма: концепция и реальность // Этничность и власть в полиэтнических государствах : [сб. ст.] / под ред. В. А. Тишкова. М. : Наука, 1994. С. 92–93.

are generally based on the definition that nation-states are ethnically designated state and administrative entities, such as those comprising the Soviet Union. This approach also covers the claims of European countries to be nation-states because of long-established nations in their territory and their allegedly ethnically homogeneous composition.

These are all misconceptions, since the formation of European nations, despite the differences, especially between the so-called French (Jacobin) and German models of the nation, between Western and Eastern Europe, was identical in two respects. First, in all cases, these were upper-level projects initiated and implemented by the ruling elites, but with the support of real culturally diverse communities, with varying degrees of awareness of their commonality at the mass, grassroots level. With the French nation, prescribed by the revolutionary elite and then by the Bonapartist regime, everything seems clear: it was a construct based on the cultural component and linguistic version of the central region of the country, Ile-de-France. But even in the case of the German nation, with its appeal to a certain eternal "spirit of the nation" or its natural roots, the Bismarckian method of "fire and sword" played a leading role. The situation was similar in other European versions. C. Nagengast writes: "Many of the 'nationalities' of Eastern and Central Europe, based on allegedly common language, real or mythical ancestry, and history, were literally created by elites; and some members of those elites were not even able to speak the languages of the nationalities thus invented."¹

Intellectual clubs and academic institutions practiced creative "imagination of nations," developed a version of a unified literary language to replace dialects, wrote folklore epos and "national history." E. Kiss speaks of the role of such adherents of nation-building who "have achieved very different political results, which is particularly evident in the cases of small groups that have not had political independence throughout their history. So, in 1809 a certain philologist invented the name "Slovenes" and became the creator of the Slovenian national identity... At the same time, members of other dialect groups, such as Sorbs [Lusatians], never managed to develop a common collective identity, and their political and cultural presence in the modern Europe is therefore not felt in any way."²

The second common point in nation-building, whether European or otherwise, is that no homogenization of the population in terms of cultural characteristics was achieved throughout the entire history of the nation-state, including the stage of modernist globalization. The phenomena of "ethnic revival," "root searching," "minority uprising," and the like emerged in response to the homogenizing influence of global capitalism and mass culture. Publications on the politics of identity often begin with the author mentioning how erroneous and trivial a certain concept of the nation-state has proven to be.

Thus, European nations were not and are not culturally homogeneous collective bodies, some sacred entity sanctified by history and culture. The classic Euro-Atlantic idea of a nation contained such a goal, but it did not materialize. What was actually achieved was spreading the *idea of*

a single nation (French, Germans, Italians, etc.) among the population, forming the feelings of belonging and loyalty (national consciousness/identity), disciplining the population in terms of duty to the nation and teaching them the rights and duties common to all members of the nation. The coveted cultural homogeneity of national communities has essentially backpedaled in recent decades due to mass migration of the population, which has increased the cultural complexity and super-diversity of old, seemingly long-established nations. But have nation-states and nations ceased to exist because of the loss of ethnic purity that was never really there?

Historiosophic publications aside, all this debate has nothing to do with the rigorous science of nation and nationalism, much less with understanding the nature of modern states, in which nations are culturally complex in terms of ethnos, race, and religion. Just look at who makes up the French, German, and British nations today, not to mention the American and Canadian nations, and the answer can be given on the basis of visual analysis alone. So the current search for an answer to the long-standing question "What is a nation?" in order to establish the ontological essence as a culturally homogeneous collective body is futile. *All states, regardless of their population content and form of government, where, politically and socially, there is an idea of a countrywide commonality, loyalty and solidarity of the population, and patriotism as a sense of affinity to the homeland, have reasons to consider themselves nations.* Another thing is that in some cases this term, borrowed from Europe, can be substituted by a similar concept. It can be related to religion (for example, in Muslim countries with their concept of *ummah*) or to the ideology of the so-called national question (for example, in China there is the concept of *Zhonghua minzu* meaning "nation of nationalities"). Finally, in the USSR, the *Soviet people* were a civic-political nation, but only the term itself was reserved for ethnic communities, while the entire union state was declared a "new type of historical community of people."

The return of nations and the nation-state is but a metaphor in response to neoliberalism and postmodernism, with their rejection of this rather strictly organized form of human social coalitions in favor of individual freedom, world government and private interest. In fact, these essential and meaningful coalitions in the form of sovereign co-citizenships have never left the historical scene over the last three centuries. Nation-building, based on the idea of the nation and civic nationalism (with a certain touch of ethnic nationalism) was and is the basis of successful and secure existence of any country, while theories postulating the demise of nation-states are promoted by those who already have such statehood in abundance and even in excess. In the meantime, dozens of countries around the world are experiencing dramas because their population has no idea of a nation, and the state itself does not possess the necessary attributes of a nation-state (above all, sovereignty). We can conclude that *a nation-state remains the norm in the world of modern states, and the subject remains extremely relevant for social scientists and politicians.*

The largest nations of the world and their composition

Let us return to the path of practice-oriented analysis in application to our theme of nation and nation-building. Since

¹ *Нагенгаст К.* Права человека и защита меньшинств: этничность, гражданство, национализм и государство // Этничность и власть в полиэтничных государствах. С. 81.

² *Кисс Э.* Национализм реальный и идеальный. Этническая политика и политические процессы // Ibid. С. 148–149.

the Russian Federation is a large state with a complex ethnic and religious composition of the population, we are interested in the experience of understanding and managing this kind of societies in other countries of the world. Cultural complexity (multinationality) is not unique for our country; among several dozen large countries (Russia ranks 10th in population size) there are none where the population has a homogeneous ethnic, racial and religious composition. Moreover, a fair half of top ten countries are home to a much larger number of ethnic groups than Russia; they may be referred to as “peoples,” “nations,” “nationalities,” “minorities,” “tribes,” or sometimes have no categorical designation other than “ethnicities” or “others.” Most often this is due to their official non-recognition by the state. Nevertheless, in science and international practice there are methods for determining ethnic composition of the state’s population. A particularly strong tradition of such global counting exists in domestic ethnology and statistics.

In the 1960s, the Institute of Ethnography of the USSR Academy of Sciences published a multi-volume series titled *The Peoples of the World*, which was the most authoritative source on the subject for a long time and was unofficially translated into English in the United States “for internal use.” S. I. Bruk published an ethnic demographic guide on the population of all countries of the world, containing information on ethnic religious and racial composition of each country, albeit under the umbrella of a concept of ubiquitous existence of ethnicities rather than any other forms of culturally distinctive communities. An encyclopedia I edited, titled *The Peoples and Religions of the World*, was published in 1998; it contains 1,250 articles on peoples and 450 articles on religions. A kind of a register of ethnic nomenclature of the world is maintained in the international organization *Ethnologue*; the U.S. CIA also has its lists of ethnic groups of the world. Below is the data on the structure and composition of the population of the largest countries of the world (table).

Table

State structure and ethnic composition of large countries (2021)

No.	Country	Population (people)	Structure	Number of ethnic groups
1	China	1,400,970,200	Unitary with a system of autonomies: 24 provinces, 5 autonomous regions, 30 autonomous districts, 117 autonomous counties, 1,085 national parishes	Fifty-six nationalities are officially recognized: Han – 91.6%, other 55 (Zhuang, Hui Dungan, Manchus, Uyghurs, Xibo, Miao, Naxi, Lahu, Tibetans, Mongolians, Dong, Jingpo, Bai, Koreans, Hani, Li, Kazakhs, Tai, etc.) – 7.1%
2	India	1,357,580,350	Federation, parliamentary republic, 29 states, 7 union territories	Several hundred nations, nationalities and tribes. The largest: Hindustani, Telugu, Marathi, Bengali, Tamil, Gujarati, Kanarese, Punjabi, etc.
3	U.S.	329,210,630	Federation, presidential republic, 50 states, Indian reservation system	Ethnic racial groups: whites 72.4%, blacks 12.6%, Asians 4.8%, Indians 0.9%, island aborigines 0.2%, others 6.2%, racially mixed 2.9%. Hispanics of different ethnic origins 16.3%. Whites are predominantly from European countries
4	Indonesia	265,015,300	Unitary, parliamentary republic	About 300 ethnic groups: Javanese 40.1%, Sundanese 15.5%, Malays 3.7%, Batak 3.6%, Madurese 3%, Betawi 2.9%, Minangkabau 2.7%, Bugis 2.7%, Chinese 1.2%, Papuans and others 15%
5	Pakistan	212,742,631	Mixed-type federation with ethno-territorial autonomies	About 100 ethnic groups: Punjabi 44.7%, Pushtu 15.4%, Sindhi 14.1%, Siraiki 8.4%, Urdu 7.6%, Baluchi 3.6%, others 6.3%
6	Brazil	211,014,564	Federative, presidential republic, 26 states	Ethnicity is not counted; whites 47.7%, mulatto 43.1%, blacks 7.6%, Asians 1.1%, Indians 0.4%
7	Nigeria	188,500,000	Federation, 36 states, taking into account the ethno-religious composition	More than 250 nations and tribes. The largest: Hausa 22%, Yoruba 21%, Igbo (Ibo) and Ijo 18%, Fulani 10%, Ibibio 5%, Kanuri 4%
8	Bangladesh	167,961,222	Unitary, parliamentary republic	Main population: Bengalis 98%, 27 small ethnic groups – 1.1% (according to other sources – 75 groups)
9	Russia	146,877,088	Federation with autonomies (22 republics, autonomous region, 5 autonomous districts)	193 ethnic groups: Russians 79%, Tatars 3.7%, Ukrainians 1.4%, Bashkirs 1.1%, Chuvashes 1%, Chechens 1%, others 10.2%, without identified nationality 3.9%
10	Mexico	126,577,691	Federation without autonomies, 31 states	Métis (Hispanic-Indian) 62%, Indians 28%, others 10% (mostly Europeans). The census does not collect data on ethnicity
–	The world	7,759,546,000	202 countries (193 are UN members), of which 27 are federative	5–6 thousand ethnic groups, about 7,000 languages

How are these countries organized, what ideas and doctrines underlie their policies, and what are the components of the national self-perception (identity) of their culturally complex societies? Ours and other studies show that large countries with great ethno-cultural and regional-historical diversity more often choose a federative type of state administrative structure with varying degrees of authority delegated to “subjects of the federation.” Such countries are India, Indonesia, Nigeria, Brazil, the United States, and Canada. Russia is also among them; for our country, this option

has been tested throughout the history of the Russian state, the experience of the USSR and the new Russia. Among the large states there are unitary states, but with internal autonomies of different levels (China, Indonesia).

In the state administrative structure of large countries, regional cultural characteristics of the population are reflected in different ways. The most common is mixed type, where within a federation or a unitary entity there are autonomous territories (provinces, districts, regions, etc.) that have an ethnic national profile and status equal to or dif-

ferent from the constituent entities of the federation. Such is the structure of China, with its national districts, autonomous regions of Tibet and Xinjiang, autonomous counties and national townships. Other multiethnic countries are organized similarly, with the exception of European countries, where extraterritorial cultural autonomy is favored, and Muslim countries, where the concept of a single *Ummah* does not allow the recognition of minorities (Turkey and Iran).

In some countries the constituent entities of the federation do not have a specific ethnically designated status, yet their boundary lines take into account the ethnic linguistic characteristics of the population, such as in India after reorganization of the states in 1956. However, there are special districts and entire states in India that are de facto autonomies on an ethnic basis (for example, the state of Nagaland with a population consisting of *Naga* tribes), and even areas not controlled by the central government, like Jammu and Kashmir, where the nationalist separatist movement has actually developed into a jihadist insurgency. The latter example makes particular sense from the point of view of assessing historical attempts to implement the “two-nation theory” on a religious ethnic (communalist) basis, as opposed to the secular and cross-ethnic version of nation-building.¹

In order not to exclude Europe from comparative-historical analysis, let us discuss the example of Spain. It is a multi-ethnic country with *Catalans*, *Galicians*, *Basques*, *Occitanians*, *Asturians*, and *Aragonese* in addition to *Castilians*. They speak their own languages, have their own cultural traditions and a strong collective identity, based on the historical memory of the existence of separate state formations. Spain is a constitutional monarchy, but in the twentieth century the idea of the Spanish nation as the foundation of the state was established; Spanish culture and the Castilian (Spanish) language have an outstanding role in the world culture.

Having survived the Francoist regime, under which non-Castilian population, cultures, and languages were forcibly assimilated, Spain opted for a state system based on a federation of 17 autonomies with a high level of self-government. Autonomous communities have their own constitutions (statutes). Culturally strong and economically advanced regions such as Catalonia and the Basque Country have enshrined in their statutes the concepts of the Catalan and Basque nations; a fair half of the population and political class take separatist positions in favor of creating their own states. In that case, the question is whether there is a nation in Spain, and who it comprises?

Naturally, the same question is all the more applicable to the top ten most populated countries. If, according to those who deny the Russian nation, not everyone in Tatarstan accepts it, then many more do not accept the Chinese nation in Tibet and Xinjiang, the Indian nation in Nagaland and Jammu and Kashmir, the Spanish nation in Catalonia and the Basque Country, the French nation in Corsica, the British nation in Ulster and Scotland, and the Canadian nation in Quebec. And so on throughout the list of states which have separatist regions and socio-political forces. *Therefore, the thesis of existence of various kinds of dissi-*

dent within a particular civic nation can in no way serve as an argument for denying the existence of the nation itself. In the same way, one cannot infer presence of a nation in a state from the nature of its government, or, more precisely, from presence or absence of democracy.

It is important to consider how different countries and their rulers at different times, and especially today, “work with the category of a nation” (A. I. Miller’s expression). First of all, there is no doubt that all major multiethnic countries have chosen the idea of a civic nation and the ideology of nationalism as affinity with the Motherland, loyalty and service to the Fatherland, that is, patriotism, as a doctrinal basis for ensuring their legitimacy and consent. The idea of a nation as a co-citizenship with common destiny, values, and responsibilities is the basis of virtually all modern states, but for large countries with complex populations and large regional differences, this idea has historically been hard to establish, competing with ethnic nationalism, tribalism, and regional separatism. In some cases, the idea of a common nation on a multi-ethnic basis has been rejected by the ethnic majority, such as the nationalism of the Hindi-speaking majority in India or Han chauvinism in China.

In Russia, the opponents of the Russian nation are not only non-Russian ethnic nationalists, but also, to an equal extent, radical representatives of the so-called Russian nationalism. In Canada, the concept of a Canadian nation competes with the Francophone idea of a Quebec nation, as well as “first nations” represented by the Indians and Inuit, who have an internal autonomous territory and reservation communities.

There are difficult cases when two or three national ideas of equal demographic and cultural potential compete in a country. These are the so-called bicomunal or equal-community states, such as Belgium in Europe or Malaysia in South Asia. But even in these cases, there are recipes for resolving contradictions and developing projects for nation-building.

Another common case of a complication in asserting the concept of a civic nation is when there are regions or enclaves in the territory of one country with predomination of representatives of an ethnic group that constitutes the basis or a significant part of the population of another (usually neighboring) country. The most telling examples are Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan, Northern Ireland (Ulster) in the United Kingdom, the Tamils in Sri Lanka adjacent to the Tamil region of India, etc. But even in these explosive situations, national identity and political loyalty to the country of citizenship most often wins, unless there is a history of bloody confrontations between countries and populations, and violent extremists dominate among the ruling politicians.

The fate of nation-states in the modern world

Different countries have different experiences of state-building and expertise in the field of ethnic national, linguistic and confessional policies. In almost all major countries, there are smoldering conflicts of varying degrees of intensity, sometimes escalating into riots or even civil wars that are based on cultural or regional historical differences. India has had to put up with two or three internal armed conflicts throughout its sovereign existence. Nevertheless, the concept of the Indian nation continues to be on the agen-

¹ See in more detail: *Шаумян Т. Л. Проблема Джамму и Кашмира // Национализм в мировой истории / отв. ред. В. А. Тишков, В. А. Шнирельман. М.: Наука, 2012. С. 522–573.*

da, allowing to maintain the legitimacy and even territorial integrity of the state. In China, there is a difficult situation with the autonomous regions (Tibet and Xinjiang), where ethnic, religious, and linguistic differences constitute a significant obstacle to nation-building on a Han Chinese basis.

These two large countries, comparable to Russia in many respects, have different ethnic national policy strategies due to different state political systems, but their experience of civic nation-building is of interest to Russia. Studies of the modern world order show that *civic (state) nationalism in its various forms continues to play a key role in the system of modern nation-states* – apparently no less than during the formation of the Westphalian system of the first sovereign states of Europe, the collapse of the world colonial system after World War II, and the geopolitical cataclysm caused by the collapse of the USSR.

Nation-states have played a huge role, not only in resolving internal and cross-border armed conflicts of the late twentieth – early twenty-first centuries, but also in such an unexpectedly global problem as the 2019–2021 coronavirus pandemic. It was the authorities of sovereign states, with their ability to provide extensive protective measures, including quarantine restrictions, civil solidarity, and a willingness to submit to the national government, that helped control the spread of the disease¹.

How do modern nations work? In this regard, many components and mechanisms have changed, but some of them remain the same, particularly the development, promotion, and struggle for the very idea of a nation. This act of “birth of a nation” is often associated with certain politicians, founding fathers like Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson in the United States, or charismatic fighters like Mahatma Gandhi in India, Sun Yat-sen in China, Nelson Mandela in South Africa, or influential humanist philosophers like J.-J. Rousseau in France and H. Heine in Germany. “Fathers of the nation” can also be successful military leaders, such as Kemal Ataturk in Turkey, despite the current resurgence of Islamism, or Gamal Nasser in Egypt, despite the failure of his policy of pan-Arabism.

The birth of the nations and rethinking of the idea of the nation also take place in the modern era, especially in connection with geopolitical cataclysms – the collapse of former states and the birth of new ones. This process is successful when there is a candidate for the title of “father of the nation,” such as Nursultan Nazarbayev in Kazakhstan, Islam Karimov in Uzbekistan, and Heydar Aliyev in Azerbaijan. There is every reason for V. V. Putin to become one, especially if he could also talk to Mahatma Gandhi, who, unfortunately, passed away before the birth of the current president of the Russian Federation.

¹ See: Тишков В. А., Бутовская М. Л., Степанов В. В. Общество и государство в России и мире в период эпидемии коронавируса // Вестник Российской академии наук. 2022. № 4.