

## THE 21ST CENTURY WILL ACKNOWLEDGE THE RIGHTS OF THE MAJORITY

Valery Tishkov



VALERY TISHKOV – a member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, a member of the Public Chamber of Russia, and the Director of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology at the Russian Academy of Sciences

All modern states have a complex ethnic, religious, and racial mixture. That is why all modern nations are characterized by cultural complexity. It was the same in the past, but it went unrecognized: it was considered, for example, that all French people were the same. It was only with the development of democracy, with the so-called silent groups acquiring their voice that France found out that it had Corsicans, Bretons, and other territorial, cultural and historical identities. France was always considered to be an example of a civil nation of Jacobin type where no cultural differences were recognized. This is to say nothing about a broad inflow of migrants from

less well-off states to developed countries since the 1960s.

Surely the challenge for modern states was not ethnic migration, but migration related to different religious cultures. It turned out to be much more difficult to adapt and integrate people not so much differing in language, tradition, phenotype, and color of skin as people different in religious affiliation. These barriers are much more difficult to break, indeed people hardly ever change one religion for another, and Islam even punishes severely and does not allow a possibility to quit, much less change religion.

And here an element of panic appears: multiculturalism policy is guilty, it has been wrong and so on and so forth. It has helped activate conservative, ultra-right forces and political parties. And today we are in quite a tangled situation. But we cannot play back, we will have to admit the fact of existence of a new problem and we will have to find a new form of managing new cultural complexity.

Countries that face **problems of crisis of multiculturalism policy**, interethnic tension and conflict are mainly countries of the Euro-Atlantic civilization, including Eastern Europe and the territory of the former USSR; in some of them, democracy has existed for a long time. These crisis phenomena can be related to **development of democracy**: it has given more opportunity to assert one's rights within the scope of different international conventions, declarations,

charters on rights of minorities or citizens belonging to ethnic, racial and religious minorities. There is UNO Declaration, OSCE Charter on National minorities and many other international mechanisms that build up protection of these groups, the latter being of emigrant origin, or of local, autonomous origin.

This process is generally considered to be a process of democratization. But it is attributed not only to political democratization, but also to economic development. After all, migration was called for by the European economy. Indeed, Turks and former Yugoslavs started coming to Germany in the 1960s and 70s because at that time the country was experiencing an economic boom and faced a large labor shortage. **Countries which did not admit migrants have not excelled much in their development in the last fifty years.** It is quite another matter that migration brings along political, social, or emotional and ideological risks as well. Unfortunately, politicians do not often admit that Germany, France and even Russia have acquired a lot more from the immigration than they have lost.

*E pluribus unum* – this formula is widely used in different countries. Many democracies are based on the formula of unity in diversity, however sometimes the formula is challenged and as a counter of it a new idea emerges: that we need to equalize all people, or even establish a monoculture. But it is not feasible. That is

why democracy should be built on recognition of diversity, rights, requests and interests of citizens that are connected with their culture, and their ethnic and religious origin; simultaneously civil solidarity must be asserted.

In Russia it refers to the Russian identity, an all-Russian patriotism. The formula here is not ‘either – or’, you are either Russian, or a citizen of the Russian Federation; either you are Chechen, or you are a citizen of the Russian Federation, but ‘both – and.’ **Democracy must be built in such a way as to reflect this complexity.** And this must be reflected not only in administrative and state structure, but also in matters of access to power. One group, representatives of one nationality must not announce themselves to be the state’s primary ethnicity or people and usurp all power. This principle is more or less observed in our country – both on the level of the parliament as well as on the level of government. It is difficult to formalize it in the Constitution, these cannot be quotes: quotes are very vulnerable, they do not reflect the changeability of our life; situations can change, but rigid quotes cannot. All our Russian culture should reflect this variety, including the mass media.

If the 20th century was a century of minorities, starting from the League of Nations established after World War I, I believe the 21st century is going to be a century of majority in the sense of its interests, requests, and rights. Because now we face the situation when either on the level of states or on the level of separate regions within countries minorities are turning out to be in the situation of a ruling majority, in the situation of majority from the perspective of positions of power and access to resources. Minorities now enjoy international protection, they can organize themselves, they can assert themselves, they can demand and even apply to international Strasbourg courts. It was generally believed that majorities will always ‘overvote’ minorities, but it is far from so, because certain groups can commit such genocide or terror against the majority that the whole country or the whole world will shudder. ■

*Exclusively for the Yaroslavl Forum*

## PROTECTING THE MAJORITY IS POINTLESS



IAN BURUMA – a Luce Professor of democracy, human rights, and journalism at Bard College, New York. He is the author of the book, ‘Murder in Amsterdam: The Death of Theo Van Gogh and the Limits of Tolerance’ (2006).

*Exclusively for the Yaroslavl Forum*

I’m not sure that multiculturalism has failed. As a dogmatic idea, that minorities should stay within their cultural ghettos, it certainly has not been a success. But European societies are in fact multicultural – and of course they always have been. As far as integration of immigrants is concerned, I think it would help if there were fewer regulations to protect vested interests in the job market. The European welfare state will not, and should not, be as loose as the United States, but we should make it easier for people to enter the job market, for that is the quickest way for people to integrate.

I’m not sure what is meant by ‘protecting the majority.’ Protection against what? If it is a matter of protecting citizens against violence, or against people who use violence or threaten to use violence to impose their views, then such protections concern all citizens, minorities as well as majorities. **The law should apply equally to all. This is especially true of laws protecting the rights to free speech. As far as special religious or cultural rights are concerned** – the right to halal, or kosher

butchery, for example – they can be granted, as long as others are not harmed in the process.

A question of shared values can be connected with multiculturalism, so long as values are narrowed down to a few very basic ones. For example, no group or society would consider the use of torture as a value. But all human beings should be protected from arbitrary power, which is not constrained by law. The desire to freely express one’s opinions, or faith, without risk of arrest, is probably also universal. Beyond those values, however, it becomes more difficult to find universality. But this is an issue that does not just concern relations between majorities and immigrant minorities. Christian, conservative Americans often don’t share the same values with secular, liberal Americans; Catholic conservatives in France often have different values from secular republicans; Orthodox Israeli Jews cannot agree on many basic values with most liberal Israelis; and so on. But this doesn’t mean that these groups cannot live peacefully with one another within their respective societies. ■