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Ethnic Tatars in contention for recognition and autonomy: bilingualism and pluri-cultural education policies in Tatarstan

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This article explores the development of language and education policies in the Republic of Tatarstan, a constituent of the Russian Federation, in the context of continued decline in minorities' political nationalism between 2000 and the 2010s. The new "model of Tatarstan" relies on a close partnership with Moscow reaffirmed by an exclusive treaty on the division of powers. However, this formality does not eliminate Tatars' cultural contention for recognition and autonomy. The case of Tatarstan speaks to both the potential and the constraints of autonomous territories that are incapable of satisfying the needs of co-nationals living beyond their administrative borders. Language policies and education practices have become a relatively autonomous area for claim-making in defense of Tatar culture as well as bilingualism and multicultural education in the region. This study reveals the interrelationship between the two components, Tatar ethno-culturalism and "pluri-culturalism," and the encouragement of the region's diversity in the public domain of Tatarstan. Valuable in itself, the latter in a wider context appears to be a necessary condition for protecting minority groups in multinational Russia. Thus while promoting the interests of the "titular" nationality – ethnic Tatars – Tatarstan also serves the advancement of multicultural values in present-day Russia.

Keywords: national minorities; multicultural education; Tatar language; Tatarstan republic; Russian Federation

Introduction

After the collapse of Communism and the subsequent formation of numerous independent nation-states in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia, the Russian Federation (RF) became the only post-Soviet country in which a federalist structure was preserved. Consequently, the Russian state was forced to address the challenge of governing a huge and unevenly developed territory full of complex ethnic differences along with increasing political and cultural diversification in the context of the democratization of Russian society. The "Concept of the State National Policy of the Russian Federation," which was adopted in 1996 during the presidency of Boris Yeltsin, followed the principles of equal civic and collective rights and protected the development of all Russian peoples. However, the uniquely historic role of ethnic Russians as the backbone of the country's statehood was also mentioned. It took more than 15 years for the state to elaborate upon the goals, priorities, and actual problems of Russia's inter-ethnic policy.

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The new wording of the state strategy defined Russia as "one of the largest multinational (polyethnic) states of the world" (Strategiia Gosudarstvennoi Natsional'noi Politiki RF … [Strategy of the State National Policy of RF …] 2012), with 193 nationalities in which Russians, the Russian language, and Russian culture are of system-forming significance. The state strategy reaffirmed the value of the democratic federative state and cultural diversity, while leaving space for numerous questions that have not yet found agreed solutions: how to balance the implementation of the principles of territorial integrity and national security on one hand and the protection of minority claims and rights to self-determination on the other; how to preserve and develop the many languages of the Russian people while supporting Russian as the single state language in a non-discriminative way; how to reconcile the potential for public activism with the authority of the state; and how to balance the concentration of resources in federal hands and the burden of regional (as well as local) responsibilities for the state of social and inter-ethnic affairs.

The "Tatarstan model" that acquired some fame and recognition in the early 1990s (Bukharaev 1999) has survived essential transformations over the past two decades. In the early post-Soviet period, which witnessed the disintegration of the USSR and the "parade of sovereignties," a peaceful means of accommodating minority nationalism was ushered in. This approach strove for the political and economic independence and state sovereignty of the Republic located in the very heart of Russia, as well as a careful balancing of divergent yet overlapping Tatar ethno-nationalist and Tatarstani pluralist regional interests. In the late 1990s, the political image of the Republic was strongly associated with treaty-based relations between subnational units and the federal government; Tatarstan was a pioneer in signing the bilateral treaty on mutual delegation of powers with the federal center, advancing the idea of asymmetrical federation. Social scholars increasingly acknowledged "Tatarstan was never sovereign" yet "did achieve a high degree of territorial autonomy" (Derrick 2008, 77).

The strengthening of the hierarchical state system in the 2000s and the gradual decline of political nationalism in these regions have reshaped Tatarstan's policy. A conception of the State National Policy was accepted in the Republic of Tatarstan (RT) in 2013 in conformity with federal strategy. Nevertheless, this policy declared the "necessity of comprehensive development of Tatar people and strengthening of the RT as the historic form of its statehood and providing equal conditions of livelihood for representatives of all peoples residing in the Republic" (Kontseptsiia Gosudarstvennoi Natsional'noi Politiki v RT [Concept of the State National Policy in RT] 2013, 3) as the two fundamental principles of inter-ethnic policy in Tatarstan. Currently, aspirations are focused mainly on the value of Tatar language and culture, the development of pluri-cultural education, and the preservation of linguistic diversity and cultural pluralism in the federative state. As Graney indicates, Republican leaders help "to remake the Russian Federation as a truly federal and multicultural entity" (Graney 2007, 17).

This article aims to explore recent developments in support of minority language, regional bilingualism, and the advancement of pluri-cultural education both as a core of "the new model of Tatarstan" and as a part of the multicultural agenda proposed by the republic's leadership. Transformation is evaluated in the context of on-going nation-building in Russia – a contradictory process that is influenced by the competing concepts of national identity, a unitary "nationalizing" Russian state; a multinational "Eurasian civilization;" and a pluri-cultural, multilingual federative state.

Evaluations of ethno-political transformations in Tatarstan, including those of its language and education policies, are informed by the study of legislative and policy documents, as well as by the federal and republican press. The findings and conclusions of this

article are based on an analysis of data from the All-Russia Censuses of 2002 and 2010, regional statistics, and data from the representative sociological survey that helped to examine the attitudes, opinions, and practices of Tatarstanians.[1]

First, to provide context, the author addresses the evolution of "the model of Tatarstan" in the period in which power was centralized in the hands of the federal center under the presidency of Vladimir Putin and the consequential limitations to advancing political nationalism. It is argued that close economic cooperation with Moscow and the political loyalty of the republican leadership in the past 15 years did not eliminate claims for cultural recognition and preservation, and the representation of distinct ethnic and regional identities. Moreover, the assertion of "Tatarness" helped to promote the values and practices of bilingualism, cultural diversity, and multinational federalism on a national scale.

Attention is then focused on the state of republican bilingualism and recent language developments: attitudes toward regional bilingualism and the reproduction of linguistic disparities, inter-generational shifts in language transmission, language use in public and private domains, and the effects and results of the language policy of "Tatarization" launched in the earlier period to overcome the increasing marginalization of Tatar language. Thereafter, this study explores the emergence of the concept of "pluri-cultural education" in Russia and Tatarstan, as well as the practices and controversies related to its implementation in the Republic. The region-wide introduction of compulsory classes of both state languages of the subnational unit – Tatar and Russian – along with continuing support for Tatar and other national minorities' schools in the Republic shed light on the advantages and limitations of multicultural policies in Tatarstan, as well as on the extent of autonomy demanded by the region and admitted by federal authorities.

Finally, the wider geographical and political realm of the Volga federal district (i.e. Okrug) is addressed – including the other national republics (Chuvash, Udmurt, Mordvin, Mari, etc.) with their many minority groups (both compact and dispersed) – to further understand the dilemma of territorial versus cultural self-determination within the current federal system. The new model of Tatarstan over the period 2000–2010s, which is noted for its institutionalization of linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity, helps to evaluate the promises and shortcomings of existing autonomous republics from a comparative perspective.

Transformation of "the Tatarstan model" from 2000 to the 2010s and the decline of political nationalism

In the early 2000s, Russia entered a new period of its political development in close association with the presidency of Putin. Contrary to the previous decade in Boris Yelsin's Russia, which was characterized by the decentralization of state authority and the strengthening of regional elites, the beginning of the twenty-first century was noted for its reinforcement of state power hierarchies and the critical reassessment of multinational federalism (Sakwa 2008). This new stage of nation building implied a growth in unifying tendencies and the gradual abandonment of the key principles of federalism (e.g. unity in diversity – a kind of American *e pluribus unum*; divided sovereignty and others). In the mid-2000s, the number of regions decreased from 89 to 83; the integration and enlargement of so-called matrioshka regions with compound compositions took place; and Komi-Permiak, Koriak, Evenk, Taimyr, Ust-Orda, and the Aginskii Buriat Autonomous Areas were incorporated into ethnically neutral regions (Ivanov 2008). Authors of the reform gave clear pragmatic explanations for what happened (e.g. National Areas were economically weak and ineffective), yet the integration of the Aginskii Buriat Area into the Chita region progressed

counter to the common rule – the budget of the Chita region was three times smaller than that of the Area (Amelian and Polonskaya 2006). Various projects to reform the administrative territorial division of Russia were announced; they implied the elimination of republics, the further enlargement of various regions, and the restoration of provinces (i.e. gubernii) (Dobrynin 2005, 119).

Administrative reform in the mid-2000s aimed to reorganize and clearly distinguish the authority and responsibilities at the federal, regional, and local levels of the state system. Although the federative state suggests a division of powers and responsibilities, Russian administrative reforms essentially legitimized the priority of federal bodies of state power (Lapidus 2002). Against this background, however, members of Tatarstan's elite stressed the need to develop the federative character of Russia, called for further federation-building, demanded the implementation of budget federalism, and disclosed numerous problems in the area (Khakimov 2011). In the mid-2000s, Tatarstan's leadership expressed dissatisfaction with Putin's law of 2004, which abolished elections of regional governors (and presidents of republics) and replaced them with a nomination and appointment process headed by the President of Russia upon approval by the regional parliament (Nizamova 2006, 520–521). The leadership demanded that the rules of the Russian Constitution be upheld, namely, that the bodies of state power should be independently established by region and be thereafter under the exclusive authority of the territories, in accordance with Article 77 of the Constitution:

> The system of bodies of state authority of the Republics, territories, regions, cities of federal importance, autonomous regions or autonomous areas shall be established by the subjects of the Russian Federation independently and according to the principles of the constitutional system of the Russian Federation and the general principles of the organization of representative and executive bodies of state authority fixed by federal law. (Konstitutsiia Rossiiskoi Federatsii 2001, Article 77)

Similarly, Tatarstan has had no intention to abolish the title of the president, which would mean a change in the authority and status of the republic by 2016. Rustam Minnekhanov, successor to the first president of Tatarstan Mintimer Shaimiev, still carries this title. The initiative was introduced in 2010 by the presidents of Chechnya and Ingushetia, approved first in the other republics of the Northern Caucasus, and later elsewhere, though it has met slight resistance in a few republican parliaments (e.g. in Buryatia). The majority of republican leaders have agreed to conform to the law, accepting a shift away from the President of the Republic and toward the recognition of a head; however, the issue is still not settled in Tatarstan, which has openly refused to introduce amendments to the republican constitution.

Regional politicians believe that the loss of the president's title will weaken the special status and authority of Tatarstan, which were legitimized in the treaty on the division of powers between the federal center and RT in 1994, renewed in October 2006, and approved by the State Duma in 2007. The bilateral treaty between Moscow and Kazan was the only intergovernmental agreement (of 42 previously existing in Russia) that was reapproved and signed during Putin's presidency, although a compromise was reached to exclude the idea of Tatarstan's sovereignty outlined in the new regulations. The article of the 1992 constitution which recognized Tatarstan as "a sovereign state, subject of International Law, associated with Russian Federation" was replaced by a statement proclaiming that the RT was integrated with the Russian Federation (RF). Tatarstan's sovereignty implied the fullness of state power beyond the authority of the RF and a mandate shared between the RF and RT (Konstitutsia Respubliki Tatarstan 2012). For the next 10 years, the republic preserved the right to articulate its position with regard to economic, ecological, and

cultural peculiarities of the republic; support Tatars elsewhere in Russia; and issue internal Russian passports containing additional pages in the Tatar language. Candidates for the presidency of the RT were required to know both state languages of the republic.

At the same time, the political line of the republican leadership in the last decade aimed to avoid visible confrontation with the federal center, and the political initiatives of Putin's administration were positively supported. The political party Edinaia Rossiia (United Russia) acquired a strong regional department in Tatarstan with the former and current presidents of Tatarstan as the key members. A redistribution of tax flows in the interest of Moscow and their hyper-centralization significantly increased the financial dependence of the region on subsidies from the federal center, thus reshaping republican economic policy. The financial well-being of the region became heavily reliant on federal subsidies and investments with the implementation of special federal programs and large projects requiring federal approval (Leksin 2006, 338–339). The authorities of Tatarstan made a pragmatic choice in favor of a close economic partnership with Moscow.

In recent years, the republic has acquired a reputation as the leading region of the Volga Federal district and Russia for successful groundbreaking initiatives and projects, taking impressive advantage of federal investments, motivated by the introduction of high-tech and other innovative technologies (Novokshonova and Leonova 2012). The world student games in Kazan, the Universiade of 2013, became a mega-event (*Tatar-inform* 2014) that made possible the vigorous modernization of city infrastructure (e.g. new subway stations, reconstruction of the international airport, railway transportation, roads and traffic junctions, a games village, and numerous sports venues). The Universiade stood in line with the earlier celebration of Kazan's millennial anniversary (2005), the World Fencing Championships (2014), the World Aquatics Championships (2015), and plans to host the 2018 FIFA World Cup as large-scale events to attract significant federal investments and to help develop the regional economy. Even skeptics recognize that "the system of exploitation of money [subsidies and investments] built in Tatarstan is not just effective, but super-effective, especially on the background of scandalous mismanagement of state expenditures in the rest of the country" (Vafin 2013). Vafin argues that the initiation and implementation of grand projects in the region with the help of the federal center form the "new [economic] model of Tatarstan." This model is based on the region's aspiration to modernize, the power of the existing bureaucratic apparatus, and the consolidation of a republican elite. Tatarstan has acquired a reputation for being an "extraordinarily reliable region" that does not have problems with the federal center; a reputation that works as symbolic capital helping to diversify and maximize economic benefits (Vafin 2013).

The above history helps to explain how political and cultural arenas preserve their autonomy; demonstrates that the cultural uniqueness of Tatars and Tatarstan remains a basis for advancing minority claims; and articulates the value of cultural diversity and multinational federalism in the region. De-federalization tendencies in the country as well as the decline of political nationalism and the marginalization of nationalist activism in Tatarstan have not eliminated a sense of distinct ethnic Tatar and regional Tatarstanian identities. As Faller shows, language has become a central symbol and instrument in nation-building (Faller 2011, 157). The development of Tatar–Russian bilingualism and a regional multilingualism of a wider scope along with the aspiration to introduce pluri-cultural education – a model different from the federal ideal of a unified education system – is taken as a necessary condition for the preservation of the Tatar language, culture, and traditions in an increasingly globalized world.

Language developments in the RT: transformation of attitudes and practices

There is still no consensus as to whether the statistical minorities of Russia, especially titular nationalities possessing some territorial autonomy (i.e. states within the framework of the larger federative state) and representing a regional majority, can be taken as an "ethnic" or "national minority" group as is currently understood in the social sciences and international legislation. Usually, an ethnic minority is defined as a distinctive, numerically minor ethno-cultural group that is not dominant politically, finds itself in a state of social exclusion, and is seen by the dominant culture to be "inferior" or "the other" (Minority Rights Group 1990; Eriksen 1993). Generally, the characteristics of deprivation are economic and political exclusion, limits to collective rights, involuntary assimilation, negative stereotyping, and stigmatization – all of which appear to be a basis for the introduction of the international system of minority protection. However, these characteristics cannot be applied uncritically to the titular nationalities within the RF, including Tatars. Furthermore, the concept of a national minority is not accommodated by Russian political and academic discourses; there is no legislative act in Russia that defines the notion of a national minority (Stepanov 2010, 11; Azarov 2002).

Most of the 5.3 million Tatars in Russia reside in other regions: only 38% live in the titular republic (Vserossiiskaia Perepis' [All-Russia Census] of 2010). The Tatar majority in RT are concerned about cultural, language, and religious exclusion and latent assimilation at the federal level and in the many regions where Tatars live. Thus cultural contention for recognition continues.

The coherent strategy for the preservation and development of the Tatar language that was legitimized in the early 1990s did not imply the exclusion of other minority tongues in the region, as had occurred in many former Soviet states. On the contrary, this strategy was balanced by a respectful recognition of the existing multilingualism of the republic's population and orientation for linguistic diversity becoming even greater because of the growing significance of foreign languages (especially the growing importance of English) and ambitions to internationalize (State Program 'Development of Education … 2014, 92–94).

Since the late 1980s, "linguistic state-building" has been a significant part of the agenda of post-Soviet legislative and political reforms (Gorenburg 2005; Cashaback 2008). However, "discussions on language policy were increasingly focused inward and dissociated from a larger claims regarding federal design" (Cashaback 2008, 255). Although the parity of the two main languages of the territory has been enshrined in law (Zakon Respubliki Tatarstan "O Iazykakh Narodov Respubliki Tatarstan" [The Law of the Republic of Tatarstan "On the Languages of the Peoples of the Republic of Tatarstan"] 1992), it is still far from being implemented in practice. The state program on the preservation, learning, and development of the languages of the peoples of the RT has been implemented since 1994; the latest version was adopted in 2013 for the 2014–2020 period (Gosudarstvennaia Programma "Sokhranenie, Izuchenie … " [The State Program "Preservation, Learning … "] 2013).[2]

Currently, the majority of Tatars are bilingual; they recognize the Tatar language as their mother tongue and speak Russian as the state language of the region and the country as a whole. According to data from the 2010 All-Russia Census, 95.5% of Tatars in RT acknowledged that they know Russian, yet just 3.6% of ethnic Russians reported having Tatar language skills. Given a linguistic asymmetry that dates back to previous Russification policies in the Soviet Union and Russian Empire, language has long been a source of loud political accusations and claims, contradictions, and debates in the region and beyond. The share of Tatars who declare an ability to speak the Tatar language

is gradually decreasing, from 96.6% in 1989 to 94% in 2002 and 92.4% in 2010. As such, special attention is being given to the development of the Tatar language and to mainstreaming it in the public sphere.

Russian language dominates in private contexts as well; a sociological survey conducted by researchers at Kazan Federal University in 2012 (quota sample of 1590 respondents)[3] revealed that 53% of Tatarstan residents speak Russian at home with their parents, spouses, and children, while another 20% use both state languages, and 26% speak Tatar (Minzaripov, Akhmetova, and Nizamova 2013). This disparity and the dominance of the Russian language are also evident in inter-generational analyses of the bicultural Tatarstan population. Unlike the generation of grandmothers and grandfathers, where Russian and Tatar were on equal terms in family communication, the young generation of grandsons and granddaughters, aged 18–30, is much more strongly committed to using the Russian language in family and everyday settings, or practice a mixture of both languages. According to the same study, the number of Tatars recognizing Russian as their native language is growing; 87% of ethnic Tatars reported the Tatar language as their native tongue, 10% chose Russian, and 2% selected other options (Nabiullina 2013, 96). Nevertheless, the majority of respondents (70%) reportedly believe that the ability of their children to speak their native language is a significant issue; 68% of Tatars with no language skills expressed a desire to learn Tatar, whereas the attitudes of ethnic Russians were more polarized and negative: 33% expressed interest in learning Tatar and 46% rejected the idea.

A number of federal experts have argued that indices of native language knowledge in the All-Russia censuses are too high; they do not reflect a genuine degree of linguistic assimilation among non-Russian peoples or the incontestably leading role of the state language of Russia (Sokolovsky and Tishkov 2010). Tatars are one of the primary cases implied therein. A republic sociological survey in 2012 made possible the evaluation of four language skills: the ability to understand, speak, read, and write in the titular minority language. The measurement scale included the options of "fluent," "sufficient," "bad," and "absolutely no" Tatar language skills. Almost 94% of Tatars reported that they understand the Tatar language perfectly or pretty well; similarly, 86% estimated their ability to speak; 81% to read; and 76% to write in the native language.[4] The share of Tatar respondents with no Tatar language skills ranged from less than 1% of not understanding to 12% being unable to write in Tatar (Minzaripov, Akhmetova, and Nizamova 2013).

Data show that a strong commitment among ethnic Tatars to their native language is not merely a census technicality automatically determined by an individual's ethnic background. Native language skills are formed in a family and a wider circle of relatives and taught in educational institutions under the influence of regional ethnic and cultural policies, oriented toward the maintenance of the titular language and promotion of bilingualism. The 2012 sociological survey showed that 66% of Tatarstan residents had studied the Tatar language at school. Although spheres of application of the Tatar language are not as wide and diverse as those of the Russian language, significant numbers of Tatarstan dwellers (66%) use Tatar in their everyday lives, with 23% among them making use of Tatar rarely; and a third of respondents not using it at all. Statistically significant numbers of residents in the region do not know and do not use the titular minority language; 41% of Tatarstanians believe that residents of the region are not obliged to know the Tatar language; and only approximately 9% of respondents insist on the opposite view, while another substantial group takes an intermediate position, indicating that residents "should at least understand the Tatar language" (34%) or "must have everyday communication skills" (14%).

Different attitudes toward minority languages in Tatarstani society feed controversy about the relevance and fairness of Tatarstan's language policy. However, a majority of

the population recognizes that bilingualism does not cause any problems in everyday communication (92%), public life (89%), at work (91%), or in education (86.5%). The population reporting that they experience difficulties ranges from 7% in informal communication to almost 10% in school. Inter-ethnic relations in the republic are evaluated as calm and stable (91% of respondents) and are more positively regarded than in Russia as a whole.

Currently, Tatar-Russian bilingualism is asymmetrical in many respects. Most Tatars know the Russian language well, while a majority of Russians have only a weak proficiency in Tatar. Though both tongues on equal terms have the status of official languages of the Tatarstan Republic, the Russian language is strongly empowered as the state language of Russia. The study of Russian by a Tatar person is often taken as a useful investment, while learning the minority language is seen by many Russian-language residents of the republic as a waste of time. Despite efforts to restore Tatar national schools in the post-Soviet period (the number of Tatar schools, including many small establishments in rural areas, now exceed their Russian counterparts), almost 78% of pupils still study in the Russian language and learn Tatar language and literature as a school subject (Republican Press and Mass Communications Agency Tatmedia 2015). Present-day republic policy in support of symmetrical bilingualism and the country's cultural diversity aims to overcome existing disparities and create conditions for the development of Tatar language in the wider public realm.

Pluri-cultural education in Russia and Tatarstan: new compromises between the federal center and the national republic

Although the idea of pluri-cultural education[5] in post-Soviet Russia is relatively new, so-called Soviet multiculturalism implied the institutionalization and development of "the national school" that supports education in minority languages at both primary and secondary levels. The concept of pluri-cultural education has acquired certain recognition in Russia (Dmitriyev 1999; Dzhurinskii 2008). Nevertheless, it does not fully conform to the ideology of the preservation of "the unified educational space" on the basis of federal educational standards. Currently, pluri-cultural education is understood variously: as a national school (which is currently called a school with ethno-cultural component), or as bilingual education practices that have developed on the regional level, or as new educational institutions for children from immigrant families with weak proficiency in Russian. Supplementary classes for migrant pupils at primary schools and special Russian-language schools in the largest cities of Russia are a relatively new practice for intercultural dialog; however, in the interests of cultural assimilation, such classes are intended to be a step toward the integration of a growing immigrant population into the dominant Russian-language culture.

The concept of a national minority school originates from the Soviet system of education. In the 1960s, 47 languages were used in education throughout the Soviet Union; however, within 10 years, this number was reduced to 30. This reduction resulted largely from the unification process and Sovietization policy that began under the rule of Joseph Stalin. It included the compulsory learning of the Russian language in schools of the national republics. Gradually, during Khrushchev's era many national schools in the cities were eliminated or reorganized (often with parental support for Russian-language education as a means of upward social mobility for their children). As such, the late Soviet period of the 1980s saw most national schools located in rural areas. Compulsory secondary education was available in the Russian, Tatar, and Bashkir languages only

(Belikov and Krysin 2001). The process of re-establishing and expanding national education in the cities began during a period of ethnic revival, the growth of minority nationalism in the 1990s, and political democratization in Yeltsin's Russia. The national school acquired new content and tasks. It applied to all levels of the education process (with the exception of the university level). Minority claims for greater independence, autonomy, and cultural recognition fed the process in the national republics, and many of the new schools opened in cities in the early 1990s gained prestigious gymnasiums and lyceums.

In Tatarstan, the preservation and development of national education became one of the principal concerns of the late 1980s and early 1990s. There were at least three key areas of public anxiety: the expansion of secondary education in the Tatar language, the promotion of the parity of Russian and Tatar languages as the state languages in the region, and the building of a national system of education up to the very top-level establishment of a Tatar National University that did not exist previously.[6] As such, by 1996–1997 in 1126 schools in Tatarstan (out of the total of 2432), pupils studied according to the curriculum of the Tatar schools, though an overwhelming majority of children in the republic were educated in Russian-language schools; 124 Tatar gymnasiums and seven Tatar-Turkic lyceums were opened. Pluri-cultural education in Tatarstan also included 143 Chuvash (approximately 50% of Chuvash children studied in their native language), 39 Udmurt (62.3% studied in their native language), 18 Mari (42%), and four Mordvin schools. The Tatarstan educational system included 56 Chuvash, 18 Udmurt, and nine Mari preschool institutions. There were also approximately 400 so-called mixed schools with two or three languages of education. In some cities, Sunday Jewish, Azerbaijani, Armenian, Ukrainian, and other schools were opened (Natsional'noe Obrazovanie v … [National education in …] 2009). Later on, the number of schools decreased due to a reduction in the population and the optimization of educational reform. By the beginning of 2015, there were 827 Tatar-language, 709 Russian-language, 95 Chuvash, 34 Udmurt, 18 Mari, and four Mordvin schools (Republican Press and Mass Communications Agency Tatmedia 2015).

Particular forms of national education at the preschool, primary, and secondary levels vary in order to cater to the needs of the local population and accommodate a specific ethnic identity. Tatar national education in Russia includes Tatar groups in kindergartens, Tatar schools, gymnasiums, schools with an ethno-cultural component, Tatar classes, and Sunday schools (Vsemirnyi Kongress Tatar [World Congress of Tatars] 2007). However, in some cities, Tatar schools have been closed. Although Tatar national gymnasiums in other regions of Russia now teach mostly in the Russian language and according to existing federal educational standards, their goal is to preserve Tatar culture and ethnic identity. Additional classes on Tatar language, literature, Arabic, and Turkish languages, the history of the Tatar people, and the history of world religions could have been included in the curriculum. Very often, these classes are offered not at large institutions, but rather as classes with a smaller number of pupils. Nevertheless, the difficulties of pluri-cultural education outside the autonomous region gave way in the mid-2000s to Tatarstan's Tatar Virtual Gymnasium project, a system by which the Tatar language is taught via the Internet. According to an assignment of the President of Tatarstan, Rustam Minnekhanov, the online school of the Mother Tongue Tatar language (Anatele.ef.com) began in 2013 (Gosudarstvennaia Programma "Razvitie Obrazovaniia … " [State Program "Development of Education … "] 2014).

Generally, statistics reported by federal experts convey a positive impression; they conclude that 33 languages were used for teaching in Russia, including 14 at the level of secondary compulsory education (Tishkov et al. 2009). There were 34 schools and five kindergartens with an ethno-cultural component in Moscow, although the language of

teaching is Russian (Moscow International Portal 2009). Their comparative analysis of the Russian legislation aimed to protect and develop the languages of the peoples of RF and the European Charter of the Council of Europe on regional languages and the languages of national minorities revealed a great extent of correspondence between Russia and international legislative bodies (Krugovykh 2010). However, regional authorities emphasize the weakness of the law and discrepancies in practice: incomplete, changeable, and contradictory regulations; the failure to observe the law; and disregarded legal norms. An example of an existing disparity is the federal politics of obligatory learning in Russian as the state language for every Russian citizen; whereas in relation to minority languages, the principle of voluntary learning is prevalent. Current federal policy encourages the study of Russian and foreign languages, while minority languages appear to be in less demand and increasingly marginalized. The regional public and politicians were troubled by the elimination of the so-called national and regional component of secondary and university education that had previously made it possible to introduce the study of minority languages, culture, geography, and history into curricula as obligatory subjects. The new federal educational standard left them a space in the optional section. All of these new measures fed growing anxiety in Tatarstan and encouraged aspirations to find the means to break up the marginalization of minority languages and to overcome a very narrow niche, given its public recognition and application.

The development of the other form of pluri-cultural education in Tatarstan – a system of compulsory bilingual education at the regional level – represents the current means of achieving the parity of minority languages and Russian as equal state languages in all spheres, including that of education. In the region, 96% of young people, from 18 to 24 years old, reported in the survey that they had studied the Tatar language at school. Unlike the Tatar gymnasiums of the 1990s, the "institutional practice of cultural segregation" or "national archipelago" – as Veinguer called them (Veinguer 2007) – the current model of bilingual education does not imply a division of pupils on the basis of ethnic origin and religion, creating favorable conditions for intercultural dialog and learning and promoting mutual tolerance and understanding.

In 2012, 72% of residents of the republic gave a positive response to the practice of requiring all regional pupils to learn the Tatar language, yet 13% objected, and another 15% had difficulties defining their attitudes (Minzaripov, Akhmetova, and Nizamova 2013). It is not surprising that ethnic Tatars expressed their views more confidently, with 84% reporting complimentary attitudes, while the share of supportive ethnic Russians was smaller, at 57%, with similar numbers of approximately 20% rejecting obligatory Tatar language training or failing to give an assessment. Moreover, Tatar classes at schools have already produced some results: 18–19% of Russian respondents reported in the survey that they understand and read Tatar fluently or pretty well, 12% are able to write in Tatar, and 7.5% indicated that they speak quite well (Minzaripov, Akhmetova, and Nizamova 2013).

In 2010, primary schools began working according to the new federal educational standards that offered the option of three variants of the state curriculum. A philology section of Variant 1 was based on the Russian language alone. Variant 2 allowed for a minimum of native language instruction (approximately 40% of the amount granted for Russian language and literature). Variant 3 of the Exemplary Educational Curriculum, according to federal standards, was designed for primary schools to offer instruction in native (non-Russian) languages and included provisions for instruction in regions where bilingualism has been legally established. Variant 3 was selected and advanced by Tatarstan. It contained

the smallest number of classes on Russian language and literature and provided for an equal amount to be planned concerning Tatar language and literature.

Bilingual education has been criticized from different sides (Grigor'eva 2011; Elagin 2012) and still remains under scrutiny. Tatar nationalists (i.e. representatives of the All-Russia Tatar Public Centre (VTOZ), the Union of Tatar Youth Azatlyk, etc.) argue that the Tatar language still needs much greater support, financing, and promotion in the educational system of the republic and other regions of Russia. They argue that the new regulations were harmful to Tatar national schools teaching in the vernacular. A wider public cannot explain the regional government's inability to provide modern teaching programs, textbooks, and training methods. Obligatory classes on the two state languages in Tatarstan's schools – Russian and Tatar – are disputed by their Russian-language opponents (i.e. Society of Russian Culture in the RT (ORK) previously headed by A. Salagaev; M. Scheglov is the current chair) as a violation of the right to voluntary choice and a detriment to the knowledge of the native language of Russian speakers.

Activists associated with the "Russian language in the schools of Tatarstan" group supported by ORK have addressed the Russian Minister of Education, complaining that "in many schools, the amount of hours (classes) for Tatar language exceeds the number of hours for the Russian language." They have persistently criticized Variant 3 for allowing too much Tatar language instruction at the expense of Russian, in comparison with other variants of the curriculum. Activists, together with dissatisfied parents, made an offer to introduce Tatar classes as a voluntary option, reducing the amount of instruction from five hours to two–three hours per week, to give parents the right to choose a curriculum variant (Yudkevich 2011). They argued that Russian speakers were discriminated against in learning the state Russian language and that there was no need for Russians to learn Tatar to the same extent as Russian. A reminder of the parity of languages not going beyond the philological to mathematics, natural and social sciences, and other school subjects was ignored. Though a balance of languages in Variant 3 of the curriculum represented a compromise between federal authorities and the republic, a position disrespectful to minority culture and intercultural dialog gained definite support and was mediated by the popular regional Russian-language newspaper, which had the largest circulation in the city of Kazan.

In recent years, both sides of the dispute have made visible steps to accommodate counterclaims. The current reading of the Law on Education of RF guarantees a constituent unit of the country the right to promote regional programs of education with regard to its ethnic and cultural peculiarities; the notion of a regional and ethno-national component of state curriculum has returned back to educational regulations along with "the component of educational organization" (Prikaz 74 Ministerstva Obrazovaniia i Nauki RF [Order no. 74 of the Ministry of Science and Education of RF] 2012). Tatarstan thus gained the option to include the study of Tatar language and literature, along with Russian and foreign languages, in the compulsory (basic) section of exemplary training plans (Table 1).

However, Tatartstan's regional compulsory curriculum contains a special option for schools characterized by a "profound studying of Russian language;" by this measure, a school can enlarge the amount of Russian language classes it offers upon the demand of parents and pupils through the resources of a "component of educational organization." Though the number of classes offered in the Tatar language remains equal to Russian, the study of Tatar literature could be lessened. The greatest reduction in Tatar philology for the benefit of other minority languages is allowed in schools teaching in the Mari, Mordvin, Udmurt, and Chuvash languages. For example, it is recommended that for the fifth to ninth grades, schools introduce three hours of Russian language, two hours of

Table 1. Training plan for the fifth to ninth grades of Tatarstan's secondary schools. The total amount of hours for five years of studies[a].

Selected school subjects	Basic curriculum (and schools with teaching in Tatar language)	Exemplary training plan for schools with		
		Profound study of Russian language and culture of the Russian people	Teaching in native (non-Russian) language or with study of the other minority language[b]	Profound study of other school subjects
Russian language	490	490	525	490
Literature (in Russian)	385	385	350	385
Tatar language	490	490	175	490
Tatar literature	350	175	175	175
Other minority native language and literature	–	–	630	–
Foreign language	525	525	525	525

[a]Annex to the Order no. 4154/12 (2012, July 9) of the Ministry of Education and Science of the RT "On endorsement of the basic and exemplary curriculums for educational organizations of RT, promoting programs of primary general and basic general education."
[b]Mari, Mordvin, Udmurt, and Chuvash languages.

Russian literature, one hour of Tatar language, and one of Tatar literature as well as four hours of native language and literature per week (Primerniy Uchebniy Plan dlia 5–9 Klassov … [Exemplary training plan for the 5th to 9th grades …] 2012).

Additional evidence of the adherence to pluri-culturalism in the republic includes the politics underlying the introduction of a new school subject, "Basics of Religious Cultures and Secular Ethics." In 2007, Tatarstan instituted the pilot teaching of "History of Religions" at high schools and did not take part in the All-Russia experiment that, in 2009, gave parents the choice of six textbooks, including four devoted to a single religion (Orthodoxy, Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism), along with study books on the "History of the World Religions" and the "Basics of Secular Ethics." Tatarstan officials suggested that a new subject could divide parents and pupils of different religious identities and might therefore be harmful in a climate of inter-ethnic relations. A two-year long test period in a quarter of the regions of Russia showed that a majority of parents were wise not to bring religion and religious preferences into the classroom, promoting the introduction of a combined course on the history and culture of existing traditional religions as well as secular moralities. Eventually, everywhere in Russia, the content of six different textbooks (now subject modules) was integrated into a single scheme representing a variety of the spiritual and moral values of Russian society.

There was remarkable correspondence among the three initial variants of accommodations for language diversity in federal standards and in the competing models of national identity of present-day Russia. The growth of Russian ethnic nationalism in the second half of the 1990s, which became a substantial social force by the early 2000s, fed the idea of contemporary Russia as a unitary Russian state and found expression in the slogan "Russia for *Russkie* [ethnic Russians]!" The orientation of the nationalizing Russian state

completely excluded all non-Russian peoples from the national community and, correspondingly, learning native minority languages was omitted from the aims of educational institutions. The concept of Russia as a unique Eurasian civilization and great power following an original path appeared as the result of a merging of imperial consciousness and resurgent Russian nationalism. These sentiments further legitimized the status of a Russian (or Russian-language) majority as the state-forming core, whereas Tatars, Bashkirs, Chechens, Sakha-Yakut, and other non-Russian and non-Orthodox peoples were expected to play the role of junior partners or companions. Classes in native language and literature were incorporated into the curriculum; however, the amount and form of training excluded any competition with the leading role of the Russian language in the educational system and in society as a whole.

Activists and elites of ethnic and religious minorities considered Russia's project aimed at promoting multicultural and multi-religious citizenship and a federative home for all peoples of Russia to be in less demand in the federal realm. Correspondingly, the program of pluri-cultural and multilingual education gained strong support in the Republic. A multicultural model of Tatarstan embodies an alternative to asymmetrical cultural and language policy at the federal level.

Evolution of Tatar/Tatarstan nationalism: territorial versus cultural autonomy?

Since the late 1980s, Tatar nationalism has undergone significant changes. The political programs of the 1990s, focused on achieving greater independence and state sovereignty in the past decade, yielded to strategies aimed at the preservation of existing Tatar territorial autonomy (which had been established back in 1920). Tatar nationalism also includes the strengthening of ties with compatriots – ethnic Tatars living in the other regions of Russia and abroad – as well as supporting regional multiculturalism and originality in the context of Russian nation-building and increasing globalization.

Nationalism is not an activity that invariably involves a nation seeking statehood (Brubaker 1998). Brubaker reveals several forms of nationalism in the newly formed states of Central and Eastern Europe: "nationalizing" nationalism expressing the interests of the dominant majority as "the legal 'owner' of the state;" trans-border nationalism of the "external national homeland;" a national minority's nationalism; and defensive, national-populist nationalism articulating external "dangers" and supranational threats (Brubaker 1998). The subject of self-determination is always a controversial issue; attempts to identify the boundaries of "the national self" could be a source of new conflicts. The case of the Tatars and Tatarstan shows that there are at least three overlapping ways to define "the nation" (i.e. the people) in Tatarstan: (1) as ethnic Tatars living in the territory of Tatarstan and citizens of RF; (2) as Tatarstanians, permanent residents of the region despite their ethnic background, native language, and religion; or (3) as ethnic Tatars of the world dispersed across various regions of Russia and foreign countries. The ambiguity of the Tatar nation is grounds for inevitable compromises within the Tatarstan model, with preference given to Russia's federative design.

Autonomous subnational units (i.e. republics and others), inherited from the USSR and Soviet Russia, still promote the cultural development of minorities and indigenous peoples. The political will and economic resources of regional and local authorities help to publically represent the needs and satisfy the claims of ethnic minority groups. In the post-Soviet period, exterritorial cultural autonomy was offered as an alternative to territorial self-determination: the "Law On National Cultural Autonomy" was adopted in 1996, with a special section devoted to it in the Concept of the State National Policy of RF (Kontseptsiia

Gosudarstvennoi Natsional'noi Politiki RF 1996). Rafael Khakimov wrote, "In the 1990s some politicians looked at the institute of national-cultural autonomy with great hope as a form capable to solve the national issue, while not excluding gradual elimination of Republics" (Khakimov 2011, 164). The ideas of Austrian social democrats Karl Renner and Otto Bauer have survived certain transformations during the Russian revolutions of the early twentieth century and have been proposed as a possible model for territorially dispersed ethnic groups. In the post-Soviet context, this concept was legitimized as a form of national and cultural self-determination and represented the public association of Russia's citizens, who identified themselves with particular ethnic communities and formed voluntary organizations in the interests of the preservation of originality, development of language, education, and national culture. At present, 14 federal, more than 100 regional, and over 200 local cultural autonomies have been registered in various parts of the country (Stepanov 2010, 14). Tatarstan authorities and activists pay special attention to the development of Tatar cultural autonomy on the federal level along with regional and local cultural associations. National-cultural autonomy, having NGO status, constitutes a case of civic networking that appears to be too weak economically and politically (i.e. as weak as the other institutions of civil society in Russia) to be successful in satisfying the linguistic, educational, and cultural interests of the minority. As such, republic authorities consider cultural autonomy to be a supplementary form of self-determination. To date, the main guarantor of minority rights includes national-state formations – autonomous national territories of RF.

Data from the last All-Russia Census of 2010 shines light on the role of the autonomous republics of Russia in protecting minority languages, as well as the degree of conflict or consensus in advancing Russian as the state language and other languages of the peoples of Russia. An examination of the case of the Volga Federal District, to which the Tatarstan Republic belongs, shows that the Russian language is very well rooted in national republics and the regions of the district: 97–98% of the nationalities of the territory have a command of the Russian language. Nevertheless, indicators of proficiency in native languages (Mari, Mordvin, Udmurt, Komi, etc.) are much lower and vary among titular nationalities, ranging from 55% to 69% of total minority numbers. The level of native language command in ethnic diasporas (i.e. among Ukrainians, Armenians, Kazakh people, etc.) is even lower. The highest rates of native language proficiency are demonstrated by Tatars in the RT, 92.4%, and by Chuvash in the Chuvash Republic, 81%, both regions where the titular nationality is a majority. Unlike the Finno-Ugric Republics, where the teaching of a native language as a subject prevails, in Turkic Republics, instruction in the native language is also available (Zamyatin 2014).

The census data demonstrate that autonomous national republics are more effective in the preservation and promotion of minority languages than the other territories of Russia, though to a different extent. For example, in other regions and republics of the Volga Federal District, native language command among Tatars ranges from 42% to 86%, while in Tatarstan it exceeds 92%. Similarly, the highest rate of knowledge of the Udmurt language among Udmurts is found in the Udmurt Republic (almost 56%), while elsewhere it varies between 45% and 46.5%; a command of the Mari language among Mari people reaches 68% in the Mari El Republic, while beyond it ranges from 46.5% to 61.4%.

Federal statistics show the tendency of declining absolute numbers in the indigenous peoples of the Volga-Urals region, along with ethnic Russians in the period between the 2002 and 2010 censuses. Absolute numbers of Tatars, Ukrainians, Bashkirs, Chuvashs, etc., in Russia have decreased (Vserossiiskaia Perepis-2010). A similar tendency in internal

minorities' reduction can be seen in the RT (On Final Results of the All-Russia Census of 2010 in Republic of Tatarstan 2010). The two main ethnic groups have shown slight growth (Tatars from 52.9% to 53.2%; Russians from 39.5% to 39.7%), but a majority of the rest (with the exception of the Mari people) have experienced a reduction (Chuvash from 3.4% to 3.1%; Mordvins and Ukrainians from 0.6% to 0.5%, etc.). Nevertheless, data from the All-Russia Census of 2010 on the native language command of internal minorities in RT correct initial interpretations of statistics mentioned above and draw attention to rather high numbers, thus indicating some knowledge of the native language by Chuvash, Udmurt, Mordvin, and Mari peoples in the republic. Surprisingly, the mother tongue proficiency level of minorities is higher in Tatarstan than in the titular national republic[7] (Table 2).

Knowledge of the native language in all the observed national republics declined in the 2000s, but in RT, this fall was minimal (approximately 2–4.5%), with a larger loss of 13% among Mordvins (i.e. two-thirds of city dwellers), which is half the rate of decline in the Republic of Mordovia. Explaining the aforementioned data is rather challenging, as this data set includes both all-Russia and regional influences.

Statistical data represent not only the state of social relations and processes, but also the existing federal and regional practices of collecting social data. All-Russia censuses in the post-Soviet period were extremely politicized and subject to the influence of various political actors – including the federal center and regional authorities. Both censuses in the RT were conducted by a regional leadership intent on resisting further assimilation, under the slogan "register yourself as Tatar!" The case of the Republic of Mordovia and Mordvins in Tatarstan deserves special attention. O. Bogatova, a researcher from Saransk city (the capital city of the Republic of Mordovia), argues that the significant increase in the share of Mordvins in Mordovia from 32% in 2002 to almost 40% in 2010 is the result of manipulation (Bogatova 2015). A growth in the share of Mordvins was accompanied by a decrease in the share of the population knowing the native language from 84.6% (2002) to 57.4% (2010) – the most striking among the observed Volga region nationalities. K. Zamyatin explains that "Currently less than half of schoolchildren of titular origin are taught their language as native in Mari El and Udmurtia and only about a quarter in Komi, Mordovia, and Karelia" (Zamyatin 2014, 95).

Presumably, a rather high level of minority language command in Tatarstan is the result of the territorial location of minorities – a larger share of the rural population with a compact residence among them able to study in national schools with instruction in their native minority language. This is likely to be the case for the Chuvash and Udmurt peoples in RT,

Table 2. Native language proficiency: the most numerous nationalities in "titular" autonomous territories of the Volga Federal District and RT, in % (All-Russia Census 2002[a] and 2010).

	The share knowing native language			
	'Titular' Republic		Tatarstan	
The most numerous nationalities	2002	2010	2002	2010
Chuvashs	85.8	81	86.5	82.1
Udmurts	71.8	55.8	87.4	83
Mordvins	84.6	57.4	79	66
Mari	75.8	68.1	74.5	72.5

[a]Data for 2002 were calculated by Garipov (2014).

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represented correspondingly by 57% and 60% of villagers. However, the character of residence and the accessibility of minority schools in rural areas do not explain the cases of Mordvin and Mari peoples with a majority of city-dwellers. On the other hand, a cross-regional analysis draws attention to the prevalence of the rural population among the titular nationalities of Udmurt, Chuvash, Mordvin, and Mari El Republics (ranging from 53% to 60%); nevertheless, this does not automatically guarantee the highest rate of native language proficiency among national republics. Therefore, an explanation of the relatively high level of mother tongue proficiency lies in the peculiar features of Tatarstan's ethno-cultural policy. The organization of the All-Russia Census of the 2010s in the RT was amenable to the recognition of existing minority groups and the registration of their knowledge of the native language. More broadly, the Tatarstan model of the 2000s is respectful to cultural pluralism and originality and constitutes a notable approach to fostering a climate of tolerance, good neighborly relations, and cooperation among ethnic groups in the regional community.[8]

National republics possess historic experience and formal rights to satisfy nationalist claims and feelings, yet autonomous territories have their shortcomings; the implementation of rights varies, and autonomous territories are not capable of influencing minority life and its development outside titular republics, areas, and regions. The case of Tatarstan demonstrates that along with the maintenance of republics, national homes of the autochthonous peoples of Russia, the most promising means of accommodating minority issues is a wider implementation of the ideology of inter-culturalism and the expansion of the politics of multiculturalism as a non-discriminative set of practices of the recognition, inclusion, and democratization of society.

Conclusion

Tatarstan is often called "Russia's most nationalist Republic" and is internationally known for its "assertive secessionist campaign" in the 1990s (Giuliano 2011, 91, 92). Political images of the early 1990s still shape attitudes toward the nationalist agenda in Russia, though by the 2010s, this agenda had been substantially transformed. Political demobilization in the regions of Russia on the grounds of the unprecedented centralization and bureaucratization of power has brought to the fore the utmost marginalization of Tatar nationalist parties and populist movements, sometimes converting radical nationalist sentiments into a stronger sense of Muslim affiliation and alienation from mainstream regional and federal politics. This is evidenced by cases of political extremism and emergent Salafism, in conflict with Islam as it is historically rooted among Tatars (i.e. Sunni Islam of the Hanafi madhhab), and some evidence of Islamist terrorist groups active in the republic.

The preservation and expansion of the Tatar language and culture in the titular republic are promoted not by aggressive nationalist strategies – excluding others and fraught with conflicts – but mainly in the course of progressive advancement toward symmetrical Tatar–Russian bilingualism. Language developments in Tatarstan between 2000 and the 2010s demonstrate that decades of reforms in the context of shrinking federalism and the implementation of the political project of a single inclusive Russian (*Rossiiskii*) nation have not resulted from a reversal of the decline in the vernacular and the attainment of a linguistic Tatar–Russian parity. Although UNESCO's list of endangered languages does not include the Kazan (Volga) Tatar tongue (UNESCO Atlas 2015) and there have been signs of moderate success, a number of researchers have concluded that language revival programs in Tatarstan have failed (Gorenburg 2005; Zamyatin 2014).

In the 1990s, language parity was approached by means of reopening urban Tatar schools and gymnasiums with an entirely Tatar-language curriculum. In the second half of the 2000s, serious efforts were undertaken to reach a majority of pupils and expand the scope of teaching the vernacular via its introduction as an obligatory subject within the Russian-language curriculum for all schoolchildren, regardless of their ethnic origin. Support for the first type of establishments furthered the reproduction of Tatar national schools and the maintenance of rural Tatar-language communities, as well as initiating the restoration of numerous Tatar-language niches in the educational sphere of Tatarstan cities. In contrast, compulsory classes of the Tatar language gradually promoted the maximal inclusion of all pupils in Tatar-language culture on a non-discriminative basis, along with the study of the Russian language, as demanded by the country as a whole.

Whereas Tatar national schools represent a component of mosaic (or fragmented) biculturalism, compulsory regional bilingualism is a plausible approach to promoting mutual understanding, cultural exchange, and the values of interculturalism. It would be an exaggeration to call Tatarstan a territory featuring accomplished and flourishing multiculturalism; nevertheless, the latter form of multilingual teaching (encompassing foreign languages as well) became the core of the developing system of pluri-cultural education, which also embraces Chuvash, Udmurt, Mari, Mordvin, and other national schools. Inclusive recognition and the accommodation of cultural diversity within the authority of Tatarstan help to attract supporters among Volga region minorities and other peoples, as well as to protect Tatar's interests elsewhere in Russia. However, the downside of Tatarstan's willingness to reconcile Tatar national claims and ethno-cultural diversity in a decade of rising Russian nationalism and imperial consciousness in the federal realm is the downward trend in Tatarization courses and the deceleration of Tatar affirmative action policies that compensate for historical disparities. Accordingly, it is doubtful that the current strategy of equal input is sufficient for achieving symmetrical biculturalism and active Tatar language use in public.

Though the original meaning of the model of Tatarstan as a sovereignty project in Russia had been largely forgotten by the early 2010s, the republic could be taken as a model region in two clear yet contrasting meanings. The first denotes the state of being a typical Russian province with economic trends, political processes, and social problems similar to other regions of the country. The opposite draws attention to the unique features of Tatarstan's politics and cultural developments in the late 1990s and the beginning of the 2010s: a policy of inter-ethnic and inter-religious peace-keeping, the balancing of interests among ethno-cultural groups, the legitimization of cultural diversity, and the development of the Tatar language, education, mass media, and religion in the republic and beyond. Republican aspiration to promote bilingualism and pluri-cultural education as a necessary condition for the recognition of Tatar identity and culture stretches far beyond the boundaries of titular territorial autonomy and thus helps to introduce multicultural values into Russia's political agenda.

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Notes

1. The sociological survey "The State and Dynamics of Inter-Ethnic and Inter-Religious Relations in the Republic of Tatarstan" was conducted in 2012 by the Department of Sociology at Kazan

(Volga) Region Federal University (Head of the research project – R.G. Minzaripov, research team: S.A. Akhmetova, G.Ya. Guzelbayeva, L.R. Nizamova, A.N. Nurutdinova, M.Yu. Yeflova). The quota sample of 1590 respondents represented a micro-model of the adult urban and rural population of Tatarstan in terms of ethnic affiliation, territory of residence (capital city of Kazan, other large and small cities, and villages in various parts of the Republic), age, gender, and education. Sample deviation – 3.3%.

2. The Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Tatarstan is the state body responsible for language policy and planning. The other key player in the sphere of inter-ethnic and inter-religious policy is the Ministry of Culture of the Republic.
3. Sociological survey "The State and Dynamics of Inter-Ethnic and Inter-Religious Relations in the Republic of Tatarstan."
4. Survey data represent respondents' self-evaluation of language competences; therefore, it is as subjective as the census data. The 2012 survey was one of the first attempts to separately measure the regional population's self-estimation of different language skills: the ability to understand, speak, read, and write in the Tatar language. More often, general language proficiency is reported. For example, the State Program "Preservation, Learning and Development of the State Languages of the Republic of Tatarstan and Other Languages in the Republic of Tatarstan between 2014–2020" reproduces data from the All-Russia Census-2010 and mentions that 92.4% of Tatars know their native language (5).
5. The idea of pluri-cultural education is better accommodated in Russia than the concept of multicultural education. There is a great bias toward multiculturalism in present-day Russia as far as multiculturalism is put in line with nationalism or separatism, which is increasingly perceived as a practice of the self-isolation of ethnic communities. Guarded political attitudes toward cultural diversity are formed under public declarations in European countries on the failure of multiculturalism.
6. The project encountered serious difficulties and was put aside after the establishment of Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University (KFU). Currently, Tatar-language university courses are available at the Institute of Philology and Intercultural Communications and within the Program of Tatar Journalism at the Institute of Philosophy, Social Sciences, and Mass Communications of Kazan Federal University.
7. The only exception from the trend is the knowledge of the Bashkir language by Bashkirs in Tatarstan: the rate of 46.3% is lower than in Bashkortostan (67.4%), although Bashkirs, residents of Tatarstan, demonstrated rather high levels of proficiency in Tatar – 65.5%.
8. It is worth mentioning that Tatarstan has signed agreements with neighboring republics to promote cultures of titular nationalities outside of their territorial autonomies. For example, the Republic of Mordovia embraced an obligation to support Tatar minority language and culture (i.e. 5% of the republic population) in its territory, while Tatarstan takes care of 0.6% of Mordvin people in Tatarstan (Stepanov 2010).

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