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An imperial community: difference and inclusionary approaches to Russianness in the State Duma, 1906–1907

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ABSTRACT
Focusing on the debates in the First and Second State Duma of the Russian Empire, the article argues that the imperial parliament was the site for articulating and developing multiple approaches to political community. Together with the better studied particularistic discourses, which were based on ethno-national, religious, regional, social estate, class and other differences, many deputies of the State Duma, including those who subscribed to particularistic agendas, appealed to an inclusionary Russian political community. The production of this new, modern political community was part of the global trend of political modernization but often departed from the homogenizing and exclusionary logic of nation-building. It relied on the experience of the composite imperial space, with its fluid and overlapping social categories. Two approaches predominated. The integrative approach foregrounded civil equality. It resembled other cases of modern nation-building but still remained attentive to diversity. The composite approach synthesized particularistic discourses with the broadly circulating ideas of autonomy and federation and, relying on the imperial politics of difference, imagined individual groups as the building blocks of a new differentiated political community. Both approaches stressed loyalty to the Russian state but borrowed from aspirational patriotism, seeking to rebuild it on new principles.

Introduction
During the imperial transformations of the early twentieth century, which engulfed inter alia the Russian, Ottoman and Qing empires, parliamentary institutions were built into the imperial repertoires of governing diverse populations and contributed to the consolidation of existing political communities and the construction of new ones. Some of these political communities appealed to particularistic categories of nationality (ethnicity), religion and class; others sought to include the whole empires, accommodate diverse interest groups, prevent the shared social space from disintegrating, and reinforce imperial states. These institutions played a key role in the attempted modernization of empires and the building of inclusionary and heterogeneous imperial communities. They were supposed to resolve the paradox between the implied homogeneity of a nation and the inherent heterogeneity of imperial formations as composite polities based on the differential distribution of rights.
The State Duma of the Russian Empire, which was introduced during the Revolution of 1905–7 as a legislative parliament, reshaped imperial politics. As noted by Diliara Usmanova, the first two convocations of the Duma were revolutionary assemblies, and their deputies addressed a broader imperial audience in the first instance.\(^2\) The deputies also relied on the revolutionary discourses, which had been channelled in the uncensored press and other publications, as well as at various rallies and congresses, such as, for instance, the congresses of zemstvo and municipal activists.\(^3\) The debates in the First and Second Duma, which were widely publicized through the press, became the amplifiers of the socialist and liberal discourses, standardized them, and made them into the oppositional mainstream, which was reproduced by a broad array of intellectuals and activists and did not correspond to clear party divisions.\(^4\)

Although the Imperial government attempted to use the Duma for constructing the ‘Russian political nation’ on the principle of loyalty to itself,\(^5\) its first (27 April 1906 to 8 July 1906) and second (20 February 1907 to 3 June 1907) convocations had oppositional majorities.\(^6\) They became political forums, where difference was articulated and co-produced, where particularistic claims were formulated, and where different versions of an imperial community were developed for reassembling Russia on new principles. The projects of building an imperial community fell into the broader trend of developing non-essentializing legal philosophies and the notion of empires as both modern and viable.\(^7\)

Difference, formulated in terms of nationality (Polish, Ukrainian, Jewish, Kazakh, Bashkir and other), class (worker and peasant), social estate (peasant and Cossack), religion (Muslim, Jewish and other) and region (Baltic region, Siberia, Western Borderlands and other), played an important role in the self-organization of deputies and in the parliamentary debates, and its ethnic and religious dimensions are relatively well studied.\(^8\) The production of the synthetic and ambivalent discourse,\(^9\) which imagined the community\(^10\) of Russia’s overlapping ethnic, religious and social groups, received much less attention. The parliamentary debates, which were studied on the basis of the official verbatim reports,\(^11\) did not support the notion of a teleological transition from a ‘pre-national imperial patriotism’ to secessionist nationalisms, which missed the discourse of imperial modernization and the building of a modern, inclusionary Russian imperial community. The nationalism of the liberals in the first two dumas was not assimilative.\(^12\) Many deputies articulated the need to build an inclusionary and internally diverse Russian people or nation.

The dominant strains of the Duma discourse of Russianness were integrative and composite. The integrative approach was formulated in terms of creating a legally homogenous civic community through legal equality. At the same time, its supporters did not advocate cultural assimilation. The widespread homogenizing notion of the parliament itself, which was described as the ‘people’s representation’ (narodnoe predstavitel’stvo) and, collectively, as the ‘representatives of the people’ (narodnye predstaviteli), also contributed to this approach.\(^13\) The composite approach foregrounded the heterogeneity of the imperial community and sought to accommodate particularistic interests by reshaping the existing hierarchies, for instance through decentralization and autonomous rights.\(^14\) It relied on the imperial politics of difference and imagined individual groups as the building blocks of a new differentiated political community. This was not a step in the alleged transition from
empire to nation-state, since for many national movements at the turn of the century autonomy was not a surrogate for independence but a goal in itself. Both approaches stressed loyalty to the Russian state, and borrowed from aspirational patriotism, seeking to ensure a fairer future. Although they were not mutually exclusive, there was no agreement on how to combine individual and group rights.

In a way, the proponents of both approaches attempted to find a balance between imperial subjection and a modern citizenship. In the late Russian Empire, the subjects were sorted into different categories with distinct rights and duties, which created the ‘imperial rights regime’, as Jane Burbank calls it. Some progressive intellectuals and politicians sought to replace heterogeneous subjection with a modern citizenship with uniform, individual and equal rights, which would undermine existing privileges. Other progressive intellectuals, including those in some of the Duma caucuses, however, sought to reconfigure the regime of special treatment by expanding the rights of their constituencies. In this respect they contributed to the development of an imperial, that is, differentiated, version of citizenship. As argued by Mariia Gulakova and Alexander Semyonov, the concept of imperial citizenship can be traced to the Great Reforms of the 1860s, which combined the creation of a universalizing framework of norms and institutions and the retention of particularistic specificity during the integration into this framework.

In this respect, the composite approach foregrounded the redistribution of special rights, which now had to originate in the whole imperial collectivity rather than the Imperial government, and the elimination of duties in its attempts to create differentiated citizenship in place of subjection. The integrative approach emphasized the need for legal equality and hence its proponents envisioned a more homogeneous version of imperial citizenship, insisting, however, that it did not hamper differentiated interests. The latter became important in the split among the liberals, with the centre-right Union of October 17 (Octobrists) rejecting any differentiation of the Russian state in their 1906 programme.

The debates in the First and Second Duma became somewhat a distillation of the discourse of the Revolution of 1905–7, which launched mass politics on an empire-wide scale. On the one hand, the dominant discourse of the revolution was one of citizenship. The citizen was one who ‘insisted on their equality before the law and claimed the right to be represented and to participate in the polity on an equal basis,’ as Stephen A. Smith puts it. The emergence of multiple professional, ethno-national, regional and religious unions across the empire, which campaigned both for uniform rights of the citizen and for the group rights of those whom they claimed to represent, meant that the principle of differentiated treatment often superseded that of uniformity. The ‘unionism’ of the revolution also brought to life multiple projects of ethno-national, religious and regional autonomy, and consolidated the demands for rights of specific categories of employees or broader social and economic groups. Some of the unions laid the foundation for caucuses in the Duma. The term ‘people’ (narod) was widely used during the mobilization campaigns and could refer to the community of all inhabitants of the empire, to the ‘common people’, and to a specific ethno-national or religious group.
The appeals to Russia and the ‘people’ were central to the First and Second Duma, while the term ‘people’s representation’ had been used for parliament since the 1860s, when Boris Nikolaevich Chicherin wrote the first book on parliamentarism in Russian.\(^{21}\) As private letters indicate, the notion of the ‘people’ was not a mere rhetorical device, and played an important role in the political ontologies of many deputies.\(^{22}\) The explicit attempts to define the body of imperial citizens were not central to the Duma debates, but citizenship was mentioned or implied when the most important issues of civil rights, agrarian reforms and amnesty were being discussed. The integrative and composite approaches to Russianness predominated until the Revolution of 1917 and during its first months, but the particularistic community-building based on class and nationality ultimately prevailed.\(^{23}\)

It is important to note that in 1906–7 there was no strict division between liberal and socialist visions of an inclusionary political community. Indeed, the liberals mainly articulated the notion of civic equality, but some of them also spoke of popular sovereignty and narodovlastie (‘people’s power’), just like the socialists.\(^{24}\) The issue of popular sovereignty played a major role in the debates among liberal law scholars, most of them members of the KD Party, and their positions on it did not correspond to party divisions.\(^{25}\) As noted by Vasilii Alekseevich Maklakov, a KD leader, in his memoirs, the public (obshchestvennost’) in general viewed popular sovereignty as the source of the late imperial reform, while the Tsar traced it to his own sovereignty.\(^{26}\)

**Difference in the State Duma**

In the official proceedings of the Duma, the deputies were identified according to their province, but in the debates, they claimed to represent a great variety of different group interests. The organizational composition of the State Duma was hybrid and included both political parties and non-party caucuses, which had overlapping memberships. The liberal Constitutional Democratic Party (KD) had the largest faction in the First Duma. The left-leaning Labour Group (Trudoviks) was the second largest. In the Second Duma the Left were the largest force, which included the Trudoviks and the Faction of the All-Russian Peasant Union, the Party of Socialists-Revolutionaries (SR), who caucused with the Trudoviks, and the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (SD). Unlike the First Duma, the Second Duma also had a small but vocal right-wing group. The high economic qualification for most voters did not prevent the first two Dumas from being overwhelmingly oppositional, which resulted in their dissolution. Only the adoption of an even more restrictive electoral law on 3 June 1907 allowed for convening a Duma loyal to the Tsar’s government.\(^{27}\)

According to Rustem Tsiunchuk’s estimate, some 41% of the deputies in the First Duma were non-Russian.\(^{28}\) Some non-party caucuses, such as the Polish Koło (‘circle’) and the Ukrainian Hromada (‘community’), were explicitly ethno-national. The Caucus of Autonomists also had ethno-national groups within it, while the Group of the Western Borderlands was strongly associated with the Poles. The rest were defined in religious (the Muslim Group and Muslim Labour Group, which emerged in the Second Duma), social estate (the Cossack Group) and regional (the Siberian Group of Progressive Deputies in the Second Duma) terms.\(^{29}\) The overlapping between different factions and caucuses and the lack of a single criteria for faction-building embodied the ‘pluralist nature of political representation’.\(^{30}\)
Deputies of different backgrounds opposed Russification, legal inequality and settler colonialism; defended the right to use native languages and profess their religions freely; and demanded territorial autonomy for nationalities and regions. Cossacks defended their social estate rights; Siberians advocated reforms in their region. Peasants and intellectuals alike appealed to class and social estate differences during the debates on the agrarian reform, which was seen as the most important task of the Duma. Socialists, predominately the Georgian SDs, also appealed to a class-based political community explicitly.

The oratorial manifestations of difference were frequent and did not cause any protests in the First Duma. This changed in the Second Duma where the right deputies ridiculed the accents of the Georgian SD Iraklii Georgievich Tsereteli, a student, who had been exiled for his political activities, as well as other non-Russian deputies. The Tatar Muslim scholar Mukhammedsabir Mukhammedzhanovich Khasanov (Figure 1) had to endure shouts from the Right when he dismissed the support of death penalty by an Orthodox priest as non-Christian. When Khasanov was discussing Russification, the Right shouted that Russian Muslims could move to Turkey. The Right used difference to attack non-Russians personally and dismiss their political positions. They also explicitly supported their own particularistic, exclusionary version of Russianness in the Second Duma.

Figure 1. Members of the Muslim Faction of the Second Duma, Saint Petersburg, 1907. Left to right, seating: Sh. Koshchegulov, M. Khasanov, Kh. Usmanov, Kh. Atlasov, G. Musin; standing: M. Makhmudov, K. Tevkelev, Z. Zeinalov, G. Badamshin. Source: TsGAKFFD SPb (Central State Archive of Film and Photographic Documents of Saint Petersburg), E19382; RNB (National Library of Russia), EAlP/2-187, Ei 25187.
Integrative Russianness

The idea of the Russian nation or people as one inclusionary civic nation was at the centre of the integrative approach to building an imperial community. Its proponents focused on civil equality, which involved the elimination of discrimination, based on gender, nationality, religion and social estate, as well as individual rights and liberties. They also demanded a responsible cabinet and universal suffrage. The idea of civil equality united both socialists and liberals, including those who supported particularistic interests. The idea of a civic nation was central for the First Duma’s address to the Tsar, which reflected the oppositional consensus on the need of reforms. Given the First Duma’s swift dissolution, the discussions continued in the Second Duma.

Numerous deputies evoked the idea of a homogenous civic nation explicitly. Some tied it to the parliament itself, building on the notion of ‘people’s representation’. Ian Ianovich Tennison (Jaan Tõnisson), a founder of the Estonian Progressive National Democratic Party, a member of the KD faction, and a member of the Caucus of Autonomists, urged the Duma to be ‘the reason of the nation’. When the First Duma discussed its address to the Tsar, one Trudovik deputy stressed that it should overcome programme differences because it had to be the address of the nation and not an address of individual parties. Aleksei Fedorovich Alad’in (Figure 2), a political activist of peasant background and one of the founding leaders of the Labour Group, used the terms nation and people interchangeably. The idea of ‘people’s representation’ also drove the rejection of the half-appointed State Council, the de facto upper chamber, as an intermediary between the monarch and the representatives of the people by both liberals and Trudoviks. Maksim Maksimovich Kovalevskii (Figure 3), a legal scholar, a historian and a leader of the minor Party of Democratic Reforms, argued that the State Council was the supreme administrative body and could not hence be at the same time a legislative body.

After Prime Minister Ivan Logginovich Goremykin rejected the demands of the Duma’s address, Vladimir Dmitrievich Nabokov (Figure 4), a law scholar and one of the founding members of the KD Party, demanded the subordination of the executive to the legislative branch in line with the ‘principle of people’s representation’. In the Second Duma, the SD Tsereteli took Nabokov’s statement further, demanding the subordination of the cabinet to the will of the people and claiming that only the organized force of the people could ensure it: ‘We say, in unity with the people, in contact with the people, let the legislative power subjugate the executive power.’ Some deputies on the right interpreted Tsereteli’s words as a call to insurrection.

Indeed, many deputies on the left viewed the people as external to the Duma. The Trudovik Cossack Fedor Dmitrievich Kriukov, a deputy of the First Duma, wrote in a private letter that if the State Council rejected the agrarian law of the Duma, the Russian people itself would have to act. The SR Trudovik Mitrofan Kuz’mich Popov, a deputy of the Second Duma, wrote similar things in another letter, although he cautioned against a popular rebellion. The Georgian SD Isidor Ivanovich Ramishvili (Figure 5), a teacher, who had been imprisoned due to his participation in the workers’ movement, maintained that the all-Russian people was the only master of Russia. The Georgian SD Ivan Gegeyanovich Gomarteli (Figure 5), a medical doctor, called the government the enemy of the ‘whole Russian people’ in the First Duma.
The idea of the people, however, did not necessarily mean republicanism. The KDs supported constitutional monarchy. Speaking at the First Duma, the KD Nikolai Ivanovich Kareev (Figure 6), a historian and a sociologist, asserted that only full unity of the monarch and the nation could lead the country out of the deadlock. Urging the avoidance of the horrors of the 1789 French Revolution, Kareev maintained that an accountable cabinet was the key to this unity, since it established connection between the monarch and the people's representatives.\footnote{40} The programme of the Muslim Faction in the Second Duma also spoke of a ‘genuine participation of the people’ in ruling Russia but supported ‘constitutional parliamentary monarchy’, in which the monarch and the people shared the supreme authority.\footnote{41}

Mikhail Aleksandrovich Stakhovich (Figure 3), a zemstvo (rural self-government) activist and one of the founders of the right liberal Union of 17 October, articulated a minority opinion against parliamentarism. Stakhovich insisted that the accountability of the cabinet to the Tsar would eliminate the danger of ‘political passions’.\footnote{42} In another speech, Stakhovich urged the Duma not to ‘offend the Tsar’ and to help him bring peace to the country, citing his peasant voters.\footnote{43}

For both the KDs and the Trudoviks, constructing the Russian nation required full civil equality through the elimination of existing discrimination, based on gender, nationality, religion and social estate.\footnote{44} In the First Duma the KD Fedor Fedorovich Kokoshkin (Figure 4), a legal scholar, deemed ‘civil equality of all citizens of the Russian Empire’ necessary and claimed that it became possible, since the masses

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{Members of the Labour Group of the First Duma, Saint Petersburg, 27 April 1906. Left to right: A. A. Alad’\textquotesingle in, I. V. Zhilkin, S. V. Anikin. \textit{Source: TsGAKFFD SPb, E16246.}}
\end{figure}
joined the upper classes on the historical scene. He underscored the need to eliminate all privileges and limitations of social estates, all national and religious discrimination, especially that related to the Poles and the Jews, and gender inequality.

Kokoshkin used etatist argumentation when advocating the construction of a Russian nation:

After all, the establishment of civil equality is not only a matter of justice; it is a matter of state necessity. If we want to really construct a new state building, we must remember that legally, according to our legislation, at the present time we do not have a people, a nation in the legal sense of the word; we have only separate groups of the population, separate tribes, nationalities, and class groups, which are subordinate to one authority, but they do not constitute one legal whole. [...] We do not have a people, a nation in the political sense of the word. A nation is a necessary foundation for a modern constitutional [pravovoe] state. It [the nation] is being organized in our country de facto, but we need to organize and unite it de jure, we need to create the Russian people in the legal sense of the word, we need to create a nation – and such in our time can only be a union of free, equal citizens (applause).46

Fedor Izmailovich Rodichev (Figure 6), a zemstvo activist, lawyer and founding member of the KD Party, made the same argument, urging ‘put[ting] an end to inequality’ and ‘initiat[ing] the actual creation of a nation’, suggesting that until then the ‘concept “Russian people”’ was a mere ‘paper concept’.47
The issue of women’s rights was raised predominately by the Trudoviks. Some of them argued that the First Duma’s address to the Tsar needed to specify that universal suffrage included women’s suffrage. Whereas the statements in favour of women’s suffrage were well received, the patriarchal arguments against it, made by a non-partisan deputy of peasant background, were also met with applause. Count Petr Aleksandrovich Geiden, a retired official, a zemstvo activist and one of the leaders of the Union of 17 October, claimed that universal suffrage was unnecessary, since the Duma needed to get used to parliamentary activity involving only men first. Most of those who spoke on the matter in the First Duma, however, supported women’s suffrage. The KD Abussugud Abdel’khalikovich Akhtiamov (Ufa Province), a leader of the Muslim Faction, opposed the suggestion that Islam did not support women’s equality, which some Muslim activists ostensibly communicated to the Trudovik Alad’in, and reaffirmed his caucus’ support for women’s rights.48

Multiple deputies focused on the issue of ethnic and religious inequality and violence. Denouncing the Białystok Pogrom of June 1906, Kovalevskii reaffirmed that all Russian citizens were ‘brothers’ and stood ‘for each other as one person’.49 Sergei Andreevich Kotliarevskii, a historian, a zemstvo activist and a founding member of the KD Party, argued that full civil equality of all Russian citizens without discrimination on the basis of nationality and religion was to become the main means against

pogroms. The KD Ivan Il’ich Petrunkevich (Figure 4), a lawyer and zemstvo activist, decried the official appeals to patriotism when justifying violence against non-Russians, Jews and Poles in the first place. The Trudovik Alad’in argued that the Russian people were not complicit in the pogroms, since all of them were organized by the authorities.50

The KDs submitted a legislative proposal on the principles of civil equality to the First Duma. It specified that since inequality was entrenched in Russian law, several acts were needed to eliminate the privileges and restrictions based on social estate, nationality, religion and gender. Liberals also submitted proposals on specific rights and freedoms to the First Duma and, given its dissolution, resubmitted many of them to the Second Duma. Socialists also submitted proposals on specific rights and freedoms to the Second Duma.51 While most socialists supported the idea of a constituent assembly,52 many liberal deputies advocated universal suffrage to the State Duma. The KD Rodichev tied the issue to patriotism, suggesting that ‘a Russian citizen, no matter how modest his existence’ was, ‘should have the right to call Russia his Fatherland’.53 The KD legislative proposal, prepared for the First Duma and submitted to the Second Duma, specified that universal suffrage was the foundation for a modern state, based on the rule of law.54

On 7 July 1906, an ad hoc committee of the First Duma presented its report on equal rights, but the Tsar dissolved the First Duma on 8 July, before the debate started. It is noteworthy that the Imperial government did not hamper the introduction of women’s suffrage in Finland as part of the broader democratic reform, which was passed by the Finnish Parliament (Eduskunta). In March 1907, when the Second Duma was already in session, Finland held the first universal parliamentary elections in Europe.55

Composite Russianness

Although those deputies who advocated particularistic interests also supported the First Duma’s address to the Tsar and hence the idea of a homogeneous civic nation, the issue of making a single nation compatible with group interests remained. Some deputies proposed to legally differentiate ethno-national and regional categories, reconfiguring the empire. When Aleksandr Robertovich Lednitskii (Aleksander Lednicki) (Figure 7), a Polish lawyer, a co-founder of the KD Party, and one of the leaders of the Caucus of Autonomists, presented the Autonomist programme, he specified that autonomy was supposed to be the main principle of reforming the state and establishing the ‘organic connection of individual elements’ into the shared whole. He nevertheless juxtaposed the Russian people and other nationalities, addressing the Duma as the representatives of the former and presenting the programme as the demands of the latter.56 Other supporters of
autonomy stressed the benefit of the whole Russian state. Boleslav Antonovich Ialovetskii (Bolesław Jałowiecki), a Polish engineer and a leader of the Group of the Western Borderlands, differentiated between individuals, societies and peoples, all of which could understand each other and find the best forms for shared living through their free agency.  

Unlike the SRs, who supported autonomy, and the SDs, who supported national self-determination, the KDs argued that the formation of a parliamentary, constitutional state had to precede national autonomy. As noted earlier, it was the issue of autonomy which had split the liberal movement, with its fierce opponents forming the centre-right Union of October 17, but in the KD Party there were also different opinions on the matter. The
KD programme was a result of a compromise. It supported cultural self-determination and the use of native languages, but explicitly it considered Poland the only territory which could be granted autonomy and its own parliament immediately after the creation of a democratic parliament, while the autonomous rights of Finland, which had its own parliament, had to be fully reinstated. At the same time, the passages on extended self-government left the possibility of autonomization of other groups and territories and resulted in the popularity of the KD Party among non-Russian politicians and activists.

In the First Duma, the KD Kareev criticized an ethnic, exclusionary understanding of the Russian nation by Russia’s ruling elites, but also remained cautious about the juxtaposition of Russians and non-Russians:

They say, ‘Russia is for the Russians.’ I understand this, but I understand this only in the sense in which one could say, ‘Austria is for the Austrians.’ But, if in this case the formula ‘Russia is for the Russians’ means something different, if in this case it means only one part of the population, that is, if this formula in Austria sounded like this, ‘Austria is for the Germans’, then I would naturally protest against this with all the strength of my soul. Meanwhile, until now, we have definitely not yet got rid of the idea that the future Russia, which should realize the brotherhood of all peoples inhabiting it, will ostensibly be the Russia of the [ethnic] Russians alone. Here, from this very rostrum, a representative of one of the nationalities of the Russian Empire [meaning Lednicki] addressed us as the ‘representatives of the Russian people’, juxtaposing himself to us. No! Here we see the representatives of the peoples of all Russia, and one part of this assembly cannot in this case juxtapose itself to another part. We are all equal here. We are representatives of the peoples inhabiting Russia; among us there are representatives of the Polish people, the Jewish people, the Tatar people, and many other peoples. Some of us are in the majority here, which corresponds to the numerical composition of the population of the Russian Empire, others are in the minority, but we are all equal here.

Kareev advocated the unification of Russia’s different groups into one community of Russian citizens but without the assimilation of nationalities. Supporting the self-determination of Russia’s peoples, Kareev nevertheless viewed the emerging composite community as asymmetric. He argued that the Russian nationality would not lose its position due to its size, culture and the position of the Russian language, which was the language of the ‘the Russian parliament’ and would remain the language of the state. At the same time, Kareev argued that such an asymmetry could only be based on convenience and history and not on domination. He also spoke about the love of the new Russia in terms of aspirational patriotism, since this new Russia would exist for its citizens and represent ‘supreme justice’.

Kareev’s speech proved influential for the political discourse of the ensuing years. One Octobrist politician, for instance, rebuked it in 1909 during his party’s campaign for the upcoming elections of the Moscow City Duma, claiming that it was a sign of non-Russian (ethnic) influence on the KD Party. The same year Pavel Nikolaevich Miliukov, a KD leader, repeated the main points of Kareev’s speech in the Third Duma. Furthermore, this speech was recorded by Miliukov before or after the session and remains the only known recording of a speech, which had been delivered in the Duma.

Some non-Russian deputies recognized the importance of the Russian language but also advocated an unrestrained use of native languages. Sadretdin Nizametdinovich Maksudov (Figure 8), a Tatar jurist and a leader of the liberal Muslim Union (Ittifaq al-Muslimin), summarized such a position:
We have never shied away from the Russian language, and our intelligentsia will always try to spread the Russian language. After all, the Russian language is necessary for us not only as the state language but as the source of science and civilization. Until now, the government tried not to spread the Russian language, but to destroy native dialects [languages]. This is a huge difference. […] When promulgating laws on public education, we must never, gentlemen, lose sight of the diversity of our great Empire.65

The Muslim Faction as a whole supported such an approach. Recognizing the need to know Russian as the state language, it demanded that the official regulations, which fostered Russification, were abolished. According to the Muslim Faction, the free use of native languages in education would also bring the non-Russians ‘closer to the Russian

Figure 8. Deputy of the Second and Third Duma from the Kazan Province S. N. Maksudov, [1907–1912]. Source: TsGAKFFD SPb, G10000.
people on the basis of love for a common Fatherland’. Its programme also stressed the religious dimension of diversity, by including the equality of all religions, the abolition of a state religion, and the right to have religious education.67

The etatist and patriotic ideas of love and solidarity for the benefit of whole Russia was a popular motif among non-Russian deputies. Maksim Moiseevich Vinaver (Figure 4), a lawyer and one of the founding members of the KD Party, defined himself as a Jew, a representative of ‘one of the most tormented nationalities in the country’.68 When advocating legal equality, he envisioned a diversified yet coherent Russian political community:

Gentlemen, Russia is dear to all nationalities inhabiting it. [...] And I have no doubt that the hour will come when they, rallying all together, bound by the bonds of love, will defend the common interests of a single Fatherland. Then it will be clear that the state is not at all interested in squeezing and smoothing the originality of individual parts, that the preservation and development of these specificities is only for the benefit of the whole.69

The KD Rabbi Shmar’ia Khaimovich Levin (Shmaryahu Levin) argued that ‘the happiness of a country’ which included ‘different nationalities and nations’ could only be built on ‘reciprocity’: ‘Therefore, it is in our interests to see Russia as really powerful, to see Russia as really strong, to see that solidarity between different nationalities flourishes in it.’70 Lednicki seemed to agree with Kareev that the non-Russians were also ‘the sons and citizens of Russia’, but still differentiated the representatives of different nationalities and regions. He argued that these representatives united ‘with the Russian people’ in order ‘to strengthen, to create a powerful whole’, on which autonomous nationality life depended as well, but at the same time claimed that they would ‘never give up’ their ‘rights’.71

The Trudovik Cossack Timofei Ivanovich Sedel’nikov pointed to the reciprocity of cultural adaptation and tolerance as important elements of community-building. He cited the peaceful coexistence of the forced Russian settlers in Central Asia with the Kazakhs and their respect for Islam. Although he denounced Russification and settler colonialism, he claimed that the situation in the Russian Empire was better than in the colonies of the European powers in Africa, Asia and elsewhere. He concluded that if the Russian people took the power, it would not allow oppression of individuals and nationalities.72

The composite and integrative approaches to Russianness intersected, but there was no agreement on the degree of integration, which also reflected in the difficulties with the use of the word ‘people’. Kareev suggested avoiding the terms ‘Russian land’ and ‘Russian people’ in the First Duma’s address to the Tsar due to the plurality of lands and peoples in Russia. The discussion that followed, however, demonstrated that there was no single definition of the imperial nation. When the words ‘all the people’ were discussed as an alternative to ‘the Russian people’, Kareev suggested explaining that different peoples lived in Russia. Prince Dmitrii Ivanovich Shakhovskoi, a zemstvo activist and a founding member of the KD Party, however, insisted on keeping the words ‘all the people’, since this would show ‘the complete unity’.73 The address kept the words ‘Russian Land’ but replaced ‘Russian people’ with ‘all the people’. It also specified that Russia was ‘a state inhabited by diverse tribes and nationalities’ and that their ‘spiritual unification’ was ‘possible only if the need of each of them to preserve and develop their originality in separate aspects of life’ was satisfied.74
Aspirational patriotism and the attention to nationalities nurtured new imperial ambitions. Although the idea of exporting democracy would loom large only in 1917, Kovalevskii had already started formulating such a civilizing discourse in the First Duma. He argued that ‘the renewed Russia’, which would be reconstructed ‘on the principles of freedom and self-determination of both individuals and whole national groups’, would remain a great power and, in addition to keeping its own integrity, would take care of ‘justice in the relations of all nations and especially in their relations to the Slavdom’. Kovalevskii connected the Tsar’s supposed aspiration to ensure international peace to domestic affairs and the need to stop enmity and unrest at home. At the same time, his suggestion was meant to allow Russia to define the principles of international peace, which was to rely on the inviolability of borders and the nations’ right to independent development. Furthermore, Kovalevskii’s suggestion of including special care for Slavic peoples, ensuring their freedom and self-determination, in the Duma’s address was directly connected to pan-Slavic expansionism.

Kovalevskii’s suggestion was opposed by several KD deputies. Nabokov voiced practical considerations, suggesting that the mention of foreign policy would weaken the address’ other points. Another KD claimed that the Duma was a domestic institution and hence not qualified to discuss the complexities of international law. Kareev was critical of Slav-centrism even before Kovalevskii made his suggestion, but at the same time supported the empire’s potential role in global progress. He argued that Russia had many non-Slavic inhabitants and urged ‘look[ing] for special friendship not among those who speak languages related to the Russian language, but among those who go ahead of other peoples on the path of progress towards happiness and freedom of all mankind’.

Although the SDs had an exclusionary vision of the Russian people in terms of class, they envisioned an internationalist political community, both in Russia and beyond. Ramishvili denounced colonialism and Russification and spoke of the bad stereotypes of the Russians in the Caucasus, which nurtured separatism. He also celebrated the newly found unity in class, since the Russian proletarians were also oppressed:

The worker and peasant of the Caucasus, together with the Russian proletariat and peasantry, say, ‘We are breaking with the autocratic regime, with the system from which we endured oppression together with our comrades. No separation of Georgia from Russia! One great organism – Russia – that is our salvation, the salvation of the oppressed classes, the salvation of all aliens [a legal term used for non-Russians], the salvation of individual nations.’ […] We are happy to prove together with the Russian proletariat to all oppressors that it is not so easy to torture the people. Gentlemen, there is no tribal strife in Georgia, because a powerful proletariat stands there between the bureaucracy and the people. The proletariat has shown its strength and says, ‘We are here without distinction of nations – Georgians, Armenians, Tatars – all together under one common banner of the great Russian proletariat. The international slogan is written on this banner in large letters, ‘Proletarians of all countries, unite!’

In the Second Duma, Tsereteli reaffirmed the importance of class and underscored the leading role of the proletariat in the all-Russian liberation.

The composite approach to the building of an imperial political community reflected in legislative proposals as well. Trudovik proposals included the use of native languages in education, while the KD proposal on universal parliamentary elections allowed the use of all languages in official documents.
The exclusion of Finland, which had its own parliament, from the representation in the Duma was not seen as a problem. In fact, when the Second Duma discussed a telegram to the Finnish Parliament, it addressed the ‘people of Finland’, including different nationalities, as a different political community than the rest of Russia. Interestingly, the response mentioned ‘Finnish people’ and spoke of the Duma’s efforts towards the political freedom and economic welfare of the ‘people’ in general.

Deputies on the right were vocal in their opposition to the inclusionary approaches of a Russian political community in the Second Duma. In the First Duma, however, Avdei Vasil’evich Kontsevich, an Orthodox priest of Ukrainian background and a member of the Union of 17 October, proposed a contemptuous amendment to the Duma’s address to the Tsar, rejecting the attempts to redefine Russia in a differentiated manner: ‘The State Duma will take care of the broad satisfaction of these needs so that Russia, inhabited by numerous tribes and nationalities, will lose its originality and even its very name.’

The Right also criticized inclusionary Russianness outside parliament. The conservative philosopher Vasilii Vasil’evich Rozanov, for instance, expressed hope that the Third Duma would be a ‘national Russian’ representation and personally attacked the Armenian SD Arshak Gerasimivich Zurabov and the Georgian SD Ramishvili. What the opposition saw as non-Russians finally gaining a voice through the Duma, for Rozanov was a clear indication that the Russian state and the ethnic Russians could become subaltern, as he claimed that the ‘grey-haired old Rus’, represented by the people of ‘serious positions and professions’, had to listen to the ‘nonsense’ of the deputies from the Caucasus.

Conclusion

The State Duma was not simply a collective of deputies, representing distinct particularistic interests. It was a site for articulating and constructing a broader imperial community. The two approaches to constructing an inclusionary Russian community were intertwined. The idea of integrating the empire’s population into a single civic nation foregrounded the elimination of discrimination and privilege, but its supporters did not oppose cultural specificity; many of them also allowed for the establishment of legally autonomous territories. In contrast to the disagreements on the land question, with the Left demanding nationalization and liberals and many non-Russian deputies defending private property, there was almost complete unity in the matter of building a political Russian nation. The multi-layered diversity of the empire and the lack of agreement on the degree of integration, however, prevented a similar unity in the matter of the exact forms of a differentiated political nation. Many deputies of the first two Dumas, however, seemed to agree that the composite imperial space needed a composite imperial nation, which could join the dynasty or take over its place as the political basis of the Russian Empire.

It is hard to determine how influential the Duma debates were beyond the educated public. One indicator of the distance between the politicians and intellectuals on one side and the general population on the other is the lack of response to the Vyborg Manifesto, a proclamation primarily signed by KD and Trudovik deputies of the First Duma on 9 July
1906. Titled ‘To the People from the People’s Representatives’, the manifesto urged citizens to defend the parliament by refusing taxation and conscription. Yet no mass movement of civil disobedience followed.85

At the same time, the two inclusionary approaches to Russianess, which consolidated in the First and Second Duma, proved influential for the political discourse until the Revolution of 1917. They consolidated the discursive foundation of the strengthening of ‘civil society’, for further politicization of ethno-national, religious and other social difference as part of a heterogeneous community building, and for the emergence of aspirational patriotism during the First World War.86 Opposition deputies continued to develop the notion of inclusionary yet differentiated imperial citizenship,87 with one deputy coining the term ‘all-imperial nationality’,88 to grasp the community of imperial citizens. The Progressive Bloc of liberals and moderate nationalists, which formed in the Fourth Duma and the State Council in the summer and autumn of 1915, made imperial nationalism a political programme. The bloc, which had a majority in the Duma, put forward a programme of ‘internal peace’ which relied inter alia on protecting the rights of ethno-national, religious and social groups.89 Although the discourse of empire-wide unity subsided during the later months of the Revolution of 1917, it frequently surfaced in the attempts to stop the Russian Civil War.90

Notes

1. Burbank and Cooper, Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference, 8–9, 11–12; Gerasimov, “The Great Imperial Revolution,” 20–2; Semyonov, “Imperial Parliament for a Hybrid Empire,” 31; Sabin and Moniz Bandeira, Planting Parliaments in Eurasia, 1850–1950; Stoler, “Considerations on Imperial Comparisons,” 49. See also Moniz Bandeira, “China and the Political Upheavals in Russia, the Ottoman Empire, and Persia”; Kayali, “Elections and the Electoral Process in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1919.”
6. The Council of Ministers was not accountable to the Duma, which meant that the fact that the majority of the Duma deputies were in opposition to it did not allow it to form its own cabinet.
10. Anderson, Imagined Communities.
11. The published reports were partially redacted but nevertheless accurately represented most of the debates, see Kir’ianov and Kornienko, “Stenograficheskie Otchet Gosudarstvennoi Dumi Nachala XX Veka.”


16. Stockdale, Mobilizing the Russian Nation, 11–12.

17. Burbank, “An Imperial Rights Regime,” 400; Lohr, Russian Citizenship; Semyonov, “The Real and Live Ethnographic Map of Russia,” 221; Stockdale, Mobilizing the Russian Nation, 11–12.


25. The liberal Heidelberg professor Georg Jellinek, who was an authority for many Russian liberals, supported popular sovereignty, while Vladimir Matveevich Gessen, a leading Russian scholar and a KD deputy of the Second Duma, rejected it; see Sablin, “Russia in the Global Parliamentary Moment, 1905–1918,” 258, 261.


36. Gosudarstvennaia duma, 326.
46. Gosudarstvennaa duma, 1010.
47. Ibid., 1020.
52. Popova, “Ideia Uchreditel’nogo Sobraniia v Rossiiskoi Istorii i Ego Rol’ v Popytke Sozdaniia Pravovogo Gosudarstva v 1917–Nachale 1918 g.”
60. Gosudarstvennaia duma, 121–3.
63. Miliukov, Speech, Delivered in the State Duma on 4 December 1909.
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