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Ethnic policies of non-EU members neighbouring with Poland

Annotation: The article is part of studies on issues of ethnic policy. Its main aim is to present the conditions determining shape of ethnic policies of countries neighboring Poland – Belarus, Russia, Slovakia and Ukraine. This is achieved by analysis of their recent history, ethnic structure, legal system and solutions focusing on minorities.

Keywords: ethnic policy, Central and Eastern Europe, national and ethnic minorities.

Polityki etniczne państw spoza Unii Europejskiej sąsiadujących z Polską

Streszczenie: Niniejszy artykuł stanowi część prowadzonych przez autora studiów nad zagadnienia polityki etnicznej. Jego celem jest chęć ukazania uwarunkowań determinujących kształt polityk etnicznych państw sąsiadujących z Polską – Białorusi, Rosji i Ukrainy. Służy temu analiza ich najnowszej historii, struktury etnicznej, systemu prawnego oraz rozwiązań skierowanych do mniejszości.

Keywords: polityka etniczna, Europa Środkowa i Wschodnia, mniejszości narodowe i etniczne.

Этническая политика стран-соседей Польши не являющихся членами Евросоюза

Аннотация: Эта статья является частью авторских исследований по этнической политике. Его цель - показать условия, определяющие форму этнической политики соседних для Польши стран - Белоруссии, России и Украины. Анализ их недавней истории, этнической структуры, правовой системы и решений, направленных на меньшинства, служит этой цели.

Ключевые слова: этническая политика, Центральная и Восточная Европа, национальные и этнические меньшинства.

Introduction

The goal of this article is to present ethnic policies of the countries neighbouring with Poland while being non-EU members, namely Belarus, Russia and Ukraine. This is an especially significant issue as the aforementioned countries are at the same time the homelands of minorities currently residing in Poland. Naturally, their policies influence the perception and assessments of Polish endeavours in that domain by Belarusians, Russians and Ukrainians. On the other hand, despite Poland's lack of reciprocity as far as protecting and respecting the minority laws are concerned, it is an undeniable fact that the actions or negligence of these states towards the Poles living on their territories affect the Polish public opinion. Hence, it bears indirect influence on people responsible for creating and implementing ethnic policies of the Republic of Poland. Moreover, due to geopolitical changes occurring in this part of Europe between 1980s and 1990s, each of them was forced to re-evaluate or, in cases of the newly-created states, create their ethnic policies. It allows for comparing the process of how they were formed.

1. Ethnic policies in Belarus

Belarus is a particularly distinctive state not only compared to all other neighbours of Poland but also, in comparison with other European countries. Known as the last dictatorship in the Old Continent, it developed an equally distinct model of ethnic policies based on the so-called state ideology which also remains its main tool. It represents a discernible reference to the Soviet rationale – identifying with the Belarusian nationality equals with identifying with the state while the national community is a community of all citizens¹. If we assume this logic, Belarus does not have any 'titular' nation or minorities of any kind in the European understanding – only "ethnic communities" of which Belarusians are the most numerous. Together, they constitute the Belarusian nation, the language of which is common for another "ethnic community" – Russian. "Belarusianity" interpreted in its traditional meaning, namely as a community deriving from ethnic, cultural and linguistic roots constituting a nation and is considered by the authorities as nationalism which should be eradicated with all means and all public areas².

The result of this ideology could be seen in the results of the census in the Belarus conducted in years 1989, 1999 and 2009. This comparable analysis shows directly the dynamic in which the society's national and ethnic structures developed in 1989 still being a Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic while in 1999 and 2009, after the transformation, the Republic of Belarus.

¹ See e.g. P.Usau, *Związek Radziecki w granicach odrębnego państwa. „Ideologia państwa białoruskiego” – mechanizm jej propagowania i narzucania społeczeństwu*, [in:] *Spółczesność białoruska 2007. Nadzieja, złudzenia, perspektywy*, M.Pejda (Ed.), Warsaw 2007, p.44-50; P.Rudkouski, *Białoruska ideologia państwowa jako „utopia teraźniejszości”*, [in:] *Spółczesność białoruska...*, M.Pejda (Ed.), Warsaw 2007, p.51-56.

² E.Mironowicz, *Polityka etniczna Białorusi*, [in:] *Polityka etniczna współczesnych państw Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, H.Chałupczak, R.Zenderowski, W.Baluk (Eds.), Lublin 2015, p.100.

Table 1. Ethnic structures in the Belarus in 1989, 1999 and 2009

Declared nationality	1989		1999		2009	
	Population (in thousands)	Percentage	Population (in thousands)	Percentage	Population (in thousands)	Percentage
Belarusians	7 905	77.9%	8 159	81.2%	7 957	83.7%
Russians	1 342	13.2%	1 142	11.4%	785	8.3%
Poles	418	4.2%	396	3.9%	295	3.1%
Ukrainians	291	2.9%	237	2.6%	159	1.7%
Jews	112	1.1%	28	0.3%	13	0.1%
Others	84	0.7%	83	0.6%	295	3.1%
Sum	10 152	100%	10 045	100%	9 504	100%

Source: E.Mironowicz, *Polityka etniczna Białorusi*, [in:] *Polityka etniczna współczesnych państw Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, H.Chałupczak, R.Zenderowski, W.Baluk (Eds.), Lublin 2015, p.101.

The abovementioned results indicate a clear increase in the tendency for Belarusians to self-identify with this nationality and inversely proportional to the number of individuals who declared to be a member of Russian, Polish, Ukrainian or Jewish communities. Providing that since the state gained independence, apart from the emigration of Jews, the country did not face any other people migrations which indicates a gradual ethnical and national unification of the Belarusian society as well as the activities by the authorities to encourage this process. Nevertheless, as pointed out by Eugeniusz Mironowicz in his work dedicated to some of those issues we discuss in this article, even though we could vaguely call it a state assimilation with a considerable level of caution, we absolutely cannot speak of an assimilation in the Belarusian culture. It has been shown by studies regarding the mother tongue and the language of household communications that there has been a sharp russification process causing a reversal from the Belarusian language which carries a lot of the Belarusian traditional and cultural heritage³.

The development of ethnical policies of the contemporary Belarusian state could be divided into two discernible phases. The first one took place just after it became independent and could be described by implementing solutions which bear a similarity to other post-soviet and post-socialist countries in the Central and Eastern Europe. The second phase which is still happening now, began in 1995 along with the centralisation of the state authority and rejecting the parliamentary political system and the process of re-birth of the Belarusian national identity⁴.

Belarus entered the first phase "inheriting" the legal system from the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic. Amid the legal acts from that period, three of them concerned the issue of ethnicity and its protection. The Penal Code of BSSR from 1961, after nu-

³ Ibidem, p.103.

⁴ See e.g.: E.Mironowicz, *Historia państw świata XX wieku, Białoruś*, Warsaw 2007; E.Mironowicz, *Specyfika zmian ustrojowych na Białorusi po 1990 roku*, [in:] *Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia w procesie transformacji i integracji. Wymiar polityczny*, H.Chałupczak, M.Pietras, P.Tosiek (Eds.), Zamość 2010, pp.159-174.

merous modifications in 1989, presumed a sentence of a fine or up to three years of imprisonment for instigating national, racial or religious hostility as well as subjecting to indignity. The legal act from 26 January 1990 established Belarusian as the national language however it incorporated Russian as a language for communication between the Republic's nation members while giving a lot of freedom for integrating native languages in schools and cultural facilities⁵. As far as the culture itself is considered, the act from 4 January 1990 regulates the rights of minorities to establish schools of the national language, theatres as well as publishing houses, museums, cultural and educational associations and national culture centres⁶.

Amid acts constituting the law of ethnic policies of Belarus in its first development phase, the following should be featured: the national minorities act, the freedom of religious beliefs and organisations' act, children's rights act, the Republic of Belarus' Constitution and a list of bilateral agreements signed with the neighbouring countries. The first, and at the same time the most important one, was signed on 11 November 1992. It did not allow for a discrimination of rights and liberties of minority representatives due to their affiliation or demanding their declaration in that respect. Moreover, it contains a catalogue of guaranteed rights such as: the right to receive support from the state with regards to culture, national and general education, the right to use the national language including the right to print and distribute information in that language, to seek contact with their minorities representatives outside the country, the freedom of beliefs, as well as fulfilling national and ritual ceremonies in their language, the right to protect national traditions, development of artistry and folk, establishing their cultural associations and exercise passive electoral rights. The act from 17 December 1992 regarding the freedom of religious beliefs and organisations allowed each citizen the freedom of thought, belief and religion according to their preferred traditions. The 1993 children's rights act allows for education and upbringing of every child in its native language, widening the scope previously limited to schools only to orphanages and boarding houses. In the Republic's Constitution adopted on 15 March 1994, arguably the most important legal act in the state, there is relatively very little content regarding ethnic issues. It obliged the state to regulate the relations between social and national communities based on assuming everyone is entitled to equal rights, taking responsibility to protect the historical and cultural heritage of all their communities. One of its most in-depth articles regarding ethnical issues indicated that everyone has a right to retain their nationality as well as no one shall be forced to define or disclose it. The contempt of national dignity is subject to punishment as per the law; everyone has the right to use their native language and choose their preferred language of communication while the state guarantees the freedom of choice for the language of upbringing and education. The rights of some of minorities were additionally ensured by bilateral agreements with some of its neighbouring countries such as Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine. Russia represents an exception since Belarus signed numerous agreements with Russia, however none of them contain any regulations concerning minorities. As a result, Russians resid-

⁵ See E.Mironowicz, *Polityka etniczna Białorusi*, [in:] *Polityka etniczna współczesnych...*, J.Chalupczak, R.Zenderowski, W.Baluk (Ed.), Lublin 2015, pp.106-107;

⁶ See T.Gawin, *O bycie Polakiem. Polacy w Białoruskiej Socjalistycznej Republice Sowieckiej 1944-1991*, Grodno-Białystok 2013, pp.486-488.

ing within the country were treated as a part of the Belarusian nation which seems quite natural given that the representatives of this group held prominent state offices and their language and culture dominated in all social and political spheres of the Republic⁷.

A decisive moment for the change of direction for ethnic policies were Belarusian's presidential elections in 1994 won by Alexander Lukashenko. Intending to strengthen his position, this politician began an offensive against Belarusian Popular Front, the main political power behind the legal acts concerning ethnic policies until that moment and which simultaneously postulated for the need of rebirth of Belarusian culture and language. From this moment on, there have been changes in the existing legal acts the goal of which were to gradually blur the dividing lines and ethnic clashes. Combining it with a particular status of Belarus, it led to a reversal to a state from before independence, namely the fading of the division for the titular nation and minorities. As a result of a referendum in June 1995, Russian was reinstated as an official language along with the Soviet state symbols, after some slight modifications. In the following years, there were numerous legal acts adopted which categorically forbade any discriminations regarding languages, cultures or persons due to their nationality, race or religion. It ultimately meant protection for the privileged position of the Russian language and practically blocked the rebirth of the Belarusian culture and language as propagated by the BPF⁸. The new reforms regarding the language, minorities culture or children's rights only escalated the situation. Even though a part of them undeniably adheres to international standards, due to the passivity of the administration acting on behalf of the state ideology, the interested party rarely holds them accountable to those regulations⁹.

The National Minorities Coordinative Council under the Minister's Council was the first ethnic policies' subject of the independent Belarus created solely with that purpose in mind. In the following years, the objectives regarding ethnic issues were ceded to the subsequent State Committee concerning Religion and Nationality, later known as the Religion and Nationality Committee and, existing until the end period concerned by this study – the Office of the Plenipotentiary for Religion and Nationality. In practice, it was still the same subject under a changed name, slightly re-organised but with the same set of objectives which included e.g. participation in forming and implementing ethnic and religious policies, formulating solutions, observing the situation as well as protecting the rights and liberties guaranteed by the law. In 2011, as a part of those objectives, a first, long-term plan of ethnic policies known as the Programme for development in regarding religion, interethnic relations and the cooperation with countrymen residing outside the country 2011-2015. In essence, it represented nothing groundbreaking as its entirety was already warranted by the existing laws compiled in one,

⁷ See e.g. E.Mironowicz, *Problemy etniczne w ustawodawstwie Republiki Białorusi. Ewolucja i charakter zmian prawnych w latach 1990-2000*, [in:] *Pogranicza. Księga jubileuszowa profesora Andrzeja Sadowskiego*, M.Bieńkowska, W.Żelazny (Eds.), Białystok 2015, pp.357-371; T.Białek, *Międzynarodowe standardy prawa mniejszości narodowych i ich realizacja na przykładzie Białorusi, Litwy i Ukrainy*, Warsaw 2008.

⁸ See E.Mironowicz, *Polityka etniczna Białorusi*, [in:] *Polityka etniczna współczesnych...*, H.Chałupczak, R.Zenderowski, W.Baluk (Eds.), Lublin 2015, pp.112-119.

⁹ See T.Gawin, *Zwycięstwa i porażki. Odrodzenie polskości na Białorusi w latach 1987-2000*, Białystok 2003, pp.145-6

complex document¹⁰. Researchers and law experts are unanimous that the existing law in the Belarus conform to the standards of international law regarding the protection of national and ethnic minorities. However, if we take a closer look from a pragmatic angle, we could see a discrepancy between the regulations and their actual execution. Even though Minsk authorities do not discriminate any of those groups, each of them is subject to scrutiny. The Republic's ethnic policies could be considered a typical state assimilation, the goal of which is avoiding any possible conflicts based on nationalities and limiting the form of exuding ethnic and cultural differences which could ultimately lead to said conflicts. The two most significant criteria in such system which an individual needs to fulfil are Belarusian citizenship and obedience to the state apparatus. The policies of such kind suggest that the approach of Belarus is closer to the earlier Soviet ethnic policies rather than the contemporary ones.

2. The Russian Federation ethnic policies

The Russian Federation, apart from the Federal Republic of Germany, is a second European country in the Central-East where the model and structure of ethnic policies is completely different from other neighbouring countries. Similar to the case of BRD, the form of the federation is a significant differentiating factor while this is dominant factor for Germany, in Russia it appears that historical events concerning USSR, contemporary ethnic structures and the territorial extent combined with the authoritative methods of governance play a much bigger role.

Undeniably, the image of contemporary Russia, while considering all aspects in the country beginning with politics through economy up to everyday life of its citizens, was shaped by the events of the previous century and the communist reign. National issues are no different. The responsibility for the contemporary ethnic image within the Federation and the current ethnic categories are a legacy from the Bolsheviks who postulated self-determination of nations and the right for territorial independence in order to gain support of the biggest non-Russian communities in the Imperium. As a result, by the law of the USSR was a creation of federation nations in which ethnic and national minorities were guaranteed by the Union republics, autonomic republics as well as autonomous districts¹¹. Such stratification was a consequence of a 1930 system of the Soviet society based on a particular division per nation, nationality and ethnographic group defined by Soviet ethnographers. Although, as indicated by some researchers, some of those groups were pre-defined by the authorities and their status was dependent on the group size and the stage of its internal development¹². For some, a number of cases could possibly be called ethnic engineering consisting of construing nations through institutionalising their ethnicity by creating quasi-states based cultural and religious patterns as well as local differentiations¹³. Depending on the form of each community, it would be eligible for one of the

¹⁰ See E.Mironowicz, *Polityka etniczna Białorusi*, [in:] *Polityka etniczna współczesnych...*, H.Chałupczak, R.Zenderowski, W.Baluk (Eds.), Lublin 2015, pp.119-134.

¹¹ Z.Szmyt, *Likwidacja autonomii etnicznych w Rosji. Przykład Buriatów agińskich*, 01.04.17, <http://www.etnologia.pl/swiat/teksty/likwidacja-autonomii-etnicznych-w-rosji-1.php>

¹² See W.Zajączkowski, *W poszukiwaniu tożsamości społecznej: inteligencja baszkirska, buriacka i tatarska wobec kwestii narodowej w Cesarstwie Rosyjskim i ZSRR*, Lublin 2001.

¹³ See V.Tishkov, *Requiem for Ethnos. Research in Social and Cultural Anthropology*, Moscow 2003.

forementioned form of autonomy. Within those, they could develop and sustain their culture, language and traditions to a limited extent. These restrictions ceased to be valid after the dissolution of the Soviet Union when ethnicity became one of the fundamental forms of collective identity. Along with this ethnic mobilisation, regional autonomy was on the rise and resulted in a full autonomy for some of those regions. Those which were within the borders of Russia tried to take advantage of the Yeltsin's liberal approach and the vulnerability of the central authority as much as possible. Nevertheless, all those attempts were put to an end after changes introduced by Vladimir Putin's administration.

The current national structure of Russia is a direct result of USSR's national policies. The aforementioned ethnic engineering led to an emergence of groups currently existing on Russia's territory.

Table. 2. National structures in Russia 2010

Declared Nationality	Population (in thousands)	Percentage
Russians	111 016	80.64%
Tatars	5 310	3.87%
Ukrainians	1 928	1.41%
Bashkirs	1 584	1.15%
Chuvash	1 435	1.05%
Chechens	1 431	1.04%
Armenians	1 182	0.86%
Avars	912	0.66%
Mordvins	744	0.54%
Kazakhs	647	0.47%
Azers	603	0.44%
Dargin	589	0.43%
Udmurts	552	0.40%
Mari	547	0.40%
Ossetians	528	0.39%
Belarusians	521	0.38%
Kabardians	516	0.38%
Kumyks	503	0.37%
Yakuts	478	0.35%
Lezgins	473	0.35%
Buryats	461	0.34%
Ingush	444	0.32%
Other	4 810	3.51%
Undefined	5 630	-

Source: Own elaboration based on: *Russian Census 2010 final results*, 01.04.17, <http://sputniknews.com/infographicks/20111222170405728/>

Undeniably, Russians hold a dominating position in the Federation's society (over 80% of declared). The subsequent places based on both the numbers and the percentage above 1% threshold are taken by Tatars (3.87%), Ukrainians (1.41%), Bashkirs

(1.15%), Chuvash people (1.05%) and Chechens (1.04%). Under the aforementioned threshold, there are as many as 16 different ethnicities such as Armenians, Avars, Mordvins, Kazakhs, Azers, Dargin people, Udmurts, Mari, Ossetians, Belarusians, Kabardians, Kumyks, Yakuts, Lezgins, Buryats and Ingush people. More than 3% of respondents represent other nationalities, not enlisted in the published results of the census while the ethnicity of 5,630,000 inhabitants of Russia, for different reasons, could not be defined. A national and ethnic structure of such complexity allows the authorities to choose from two possible scenarios for managing ethnic policies. The first one, liberal, allowing for an extensive autonomy or the second, centralised, which involves assimilation and forming a collective identity as citizens. In spite of the former approach incorporated in Russia in 1990s, the latter was far closer to the Soviet model and thus became a part of the existing policies, in the administration of Vladimir Putin.

In order to define ethnicity in USSR, categories of national politics were used more frequently than the ethnic policies terms. The national politics were defined to observe the current state and the development of the ethnical identity in a multinational society. It also included the creation of a system of managing institutions and organisations while respecting the laws for ethnic communities and their citizens as well as maintaining the culture, tradition, language within one country and different settlement types. Such broad understanding of this topic encompassed various interethnic relations and their issues such conflicts as well as the possible ways to avoid and solve conflicts¹⁴.

The Russia of 1990s was dominated by Yeltsin's liberalisation, enthusiastically exploited by various communities. The titular ethnonational groups adopted constitutions extending the scope of their independence from the federal state and highlighting the key role of the titular nation of the Republic or an autonomous district. State authority attributes were created, and some communities even managed to negotiate some form of independence related to taxes. A vulnerable Russian state, constantly at risk for dissolution, was ready to cave to some local ethnic elites in exchange for loyalty and ensuring law and order within those ethnic territories¹⁵. A proof of that lies in a document called the State Strategy for National Policies in the Russian Federation adopted on 15 June 1996 which defined it as "[...] as a system of modern views, regulations and priorities within the scope of federal state institutions as well as the authorities subjected to the Russian Federation [...] regarding interethnic relations"¹⁶. The following fragments reads that this concept "attempts at ensuring unity and integrity of Russia in its new, historical phase of nations' development as well as initiating meaningful cooperation and the flowering of the national culture and language"¹⁷.

With the arrival of Putin's administration which occurred in a period of a relative political and economic stability, the central authorities began a slow, gradual process of restricting independence for particular Federation's subjects. Local authorities were ex-

¹⁴ W.Baluk, *Definiowanie etnopolityki w państwach Europy Wschodniej (Białoruś, Rosja, Ukraina)*, [in:] *Polityka etniczna. Teorie...*, H.Chałupczak, R.Zenderowski, E.Pogorzała, T.Browarek (Eds.), Lublin 2015, p.96.

¹⁵ See Z.Szmyt, op.cit.

¹⁶ W.Baluk, *Definiowanie...*, [in:] *Polityka etniczna. Teorie...*, red.H.Chałupczak, R.Zenderowski, E.Pogorzała, T.Browarek, Lublin 2015, p.97.

¹⁷ Ibidem.

pected to reconcile their republics' constitutions with the federal law and remove all regulations about the sovereignty of those republics. The most radical evidence of these new regional policies in the first decade of 21st century was abolishing a list of autonomous districts as well as some of the bigger federation subjects such as krajs or oblasts¹⁸.

The next step was a State Strategy of National Policies until 2025 signed by the president in 2012. It is a manifesto that outlines real problems and constitutes a blueprint of the national policies within the Federation. According to the objectives, in order to minimise tensions and problems regarding ethnicity, what is needed is a pre-defined forming of the state nation bound by a collective identity based on the common Russian history, culture and language. The main means of forging this identity will be a wide educational and promotional campaign of pro-state attitudes as well as activities aimed at integrating the immigrants with the society¹⁹.

In June 2012, a new federal authorities subject was established and until this moment the only one concerning the issue of ethnicity. It is called the Presidential Council for Interethnic Relations. Its main goal is to develop the state policies regarding interethnic relations. It is a presidential consulting and advisory body created in order to ensure the cooperation between subjects and federal authorities' organs as well as local authorities, associations and science professional circles and other organisations dealing with the implementations of the Federation's public policies. Amid the main objectives of this Council, the following should be highlighted: assessing the concepts and assumptions for state policies, outlining methods, forms and stages of their implementation, studying change proposals and, as mentioned before, ensuring the interethnic cooperation²⁰.

Contemporary ethnic policies of the Russian Federation and the Federal Republic of Germany could appear comparable, mainly due to the similarities deriving from the structural frame of the country. However, this is where the similarity ends. Despite some shortcomings, the overall status of minorities in Germany could be considered decent and the state policies adhere to standards. The same cannot be said about Russia. In spite of the ethnic issues building up, the efficiency of Kremlin policies should be assessed with a healthy dose of scepticism. It is mainly the result of the lack of repercussions and representing a utilitarian attitude, using the situation to accomplish short-term political goals. Russian authorities' scope of activities should not be in fact called ethnic policies which are aimed at efficiently solving problems of national and ethnic minorities. On the other hand, Putin's administration does seek to accomplish that by clearly indicating the priority calling their policies national. Thus, it is futile to expect any improvement for this situation on the horizon and for the Russian standards to be comparable with the European.

3. Ethnic policies in Ukraine

In the beginning of 1990s, Ukraine, as each country in this part of Europe, was faced with a challenge of reforming its structures to fit the new geopolitical reality.

¹⁸ See Z.Szmyt, op.cit.

¹⁹ K.Chawryło (Jarzyńska), *Rosja: Kreml krystalizuje koncepcję polityki narodowościowej*, 02.04.17, <http://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/analizy/2013-01-09/rosja-kreml-krystalizuje-koncepcje-polityki-narodowosciowej>

²⁰ See *President of Russia: Presidential Councils*, 02.04.17, <http://en.kremlin.ru/structure/councils#institution-28>

Gaining independence in 1991 meant a necessary and profound transformation of almost every facet of the public life. A diverse ethnic structure of the society, an advanced russification as well as a rebirth of Ukrainian national and ethnic identity and separatist movements of some of the regions – all those factors contributed to make the issue of the state and direction of ethnic policies one of the most pressing issue in the public sphere. The complexity of this problem resulted in framing the Ukrainian ethnic policies in a very broad structure including not only minorities constituting an integral part of society but also a titular nation of the country and more. They also encompass the Ukrainian diaspora, people deported due to ethnicity and returning to their homeland – Ukraine as well as refugees and immigrants. Beginning with 1990s until almost 2015, Kiev's authorities succeeded in managing those policies very peacefully, avoiding any major conflicts. It was highly beneficial in making a society which is open, tolerant, free from prejudice related to ethnicity or nationality. It forcefully changed in 2014, after the annexation of Crimea and the emerging Donbas conflict. During the making of this study, it is difficult to say where those changes will lead. On the one hand, the authorities voice a reassurance of the previously agreed policies. On the other however, in such situation, the activities aiming at neutralising ethnic separatists' groups and a national consolidation seem only natural. As indicated by some researches, in case of the current situation in Ukraine, the ethnic policies of this country become a vital element of the process consisting of: a necessity to rebuild and stabilise the political system (including national security, ensuring sovereignty and territorial integrity), a normalisation of relations with neighbours (especially Ukrainian and Russian relations) as well as a rebuild of social and ethnic peace²¹. The efficiency of this process could only be determined in a matter of years.

Apart from the events of the 21st century, all previous history of the country had a great impact on the national identity of Ukrainians and their ethnic structure. As a result, it also had a great impact on the contemporary ethnic policies of the whole state. From the first settlements on these lands, people were subjected to some form of authority from foreign nations. It made the process of forging a collective identity and consciousness much harder. It was no different during the period of USSR. Similarly to other former Soviet republics, the society had gone through a process of forming a mentality of a Soviet citizen, including russification depriving them of their original nationality. The end of the cold war and the dissolution of USSR brought the end to that dire process. It was only then, when a national identity for Ukrainian citizens could be reborn. It was what the native Ukrainian researchers called an "ethnic rebirth"²². It needs to be highlighted that it affected only a part of a society leaving out the others somewhat "behind" - disoriented, without a clearly defined linguistic and cultural identity²³. It appears that Kremlin used it swiftly to fuel Ukrainian conflicts and separatists' tendencies. They served as a pretence to engage and interfere directly in the issues of its South-West neighbour, the culmination of which we observed in Spring, 2014.

²¹ N.Teres, A.Jakubowski, *Polityka etniczna Ukrainy*, [in:] *Polityka etniczna współczesnych...*, H.Chałupczak, R.Zenderowski, W.Baluk (Eds.), Lublin 2015, p.481.

²² A.Fedorenko, *Problemy integracji kulturowej społeczeństwa ukraińskiego po odzyskaniu niepodległości*, „Problemy Społeczne i Ekonomiczne” 2004, 1, p.74.

²³ M.Riabczuk, *Dwie Ukrainy*, Wrocław 2005, p.23.

Apart from unfavourable conditions for an emergence of a national identity and historical reasons, another contributing factor concerns the borders of this country established in the first half of the 20th century and related ethnopolitical issues. Eastern Galicia, Volhynia, Northern Bukovina, Bessarabia, Zakarpattia and Crimea – all those regions have rich history, ethnic structures and a status which should be taken into consideration by ethnic policies. Even if only due to the aforementioned necessity to retain territorial integrity as well as social and ethnic peace. Despite the much larger and entirely natural interest of researchers and commentators in the Eastern Ukraine, it is not impossible that in the meantime, the aforementioned regions could potentially become hotbeds of ethnic conflicts and a source for separatist movements.

Table 3. National structure of Ukraine in 1989 and 2001.

Declared nationality	1989		2001	
	Population (in thousands)	Percentage	Population (in thousands)	Percentage
Ukrainians	37 419	72.7%	37 541	77.8%
Russians	11 355	22.1%	8 334	17.3%
Belarusians	440	0.9%	275	0.6%
Moldavians	324	0.6%	258	0.5%
Crimean Tatars	46	0.1%	248	0.5%
Bulgars	233	0.5%	204	0.4%
Hungarians	163	0.3%	156	0.3%
Romanians	134	0.3%	151	0.3%
Poles	219	0.4%	144	0.3%
Jewish	486	0.9%	103	0.2%
Armenians	54	0.1%	99	0.2%
Greeks	98	0.2%	91	0.2%
Tatars	86	0.2%	73	0.2%
Gypsies	47	0.1%	47	0.1%
Azers	36	0.1%	45	0.1%
Georgians	23	0.04%	34	0.1%
Germans	37	0.1%	33	0.1%
Gagauzians	31	0.1%	31	0.1%
Other	221	0.2%	373	0.7%
Sum	51 452	100%	48 240	100%

Source, author's own elaboration based on: A.Jakubowski, *Struktura etniczna współczesnej Ukrainy*, „Facta Simonidis” 2008, 1, p.104.

This national structure is a direct result of these territories rich history. This dataset includes results of census conducted in both 1989 as well as 2001. It allows for indicating a dynamic of changes not only in a general number of citizens but also each of the national and ethnic groups. The order of nationalities is identical in both years.

Over the course of these 12 years, the overall number of inhabitants reduced by a 3,000,000 whereas the number of Ukrainians increased by a slight margin of 100,000. Nevertheless, combined with the drop in other nationalities, it was just enough to visibly increase the percentage from 72 to 78%. The most numerous group from those minorities are Russians. Despite this decrease caused in part by emigration and in part by a gradual assimilation – they still constitute 17% of the society. Amid other ethnic and nationality groups, none of them represent more than 1% of the society and they are, among others, Belarusians (0.6%), Moldavians (0.5%), Crimean Tatars (0.5%), Bulgarians (0.4%), Hungarians (0.3%), Romanians (0.3%), Poles (0.3%), Jews (0.2%), Armenians (0.2%), Greeks (0.2%), Tatars (0.2%), Gypsies (0.1%) as well as Azers (0.1%), Georgians (0.1%), Germans (0.1%) and Gagauzians (0.1%). All of them, over the course of years between the census occurrences underwent bigger or smaller quantitative changes. The two groups where those changes were the most visible were Crimean Tatars and Jews. The number of the former rose fivefold. However this is not a result of an actual increase in population within this group but in fact a change in conditions for declaring affiliation with this particular group. It needs to be remembered that Crimean Tatars in USSR were one of the most relentlessly targeted ethnic groups and the affiliation itself could lead to a risk of persecution²⁴. The population of the Jewish minority however dropped by 80%. It was a result of an unencumbered possibility for Jewish people to emigrate to the States, Israel or Western Europe after the fall of communism. This is a cause behind this minority, only second to Russians in 1989, became 9th in 2001 with a percentage falling from 0.9% to as much as 0.2%.

The most important determining factors for the Ukraine's ethnic policies, apart from its history and nationality structures, are legal regulations – both domestic and international. One of the first Ukrainian legal acts concerning ethnic issues was USSR's languages act adopted on 28 November 1989 by the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and legitimate until 2012. This legal act acknowledged Ukrainian as the official language while granting a whole spectrum or rights to people speaking other languages. The former became a state language with an annotation that other languages can be spoken by all communities. Each individual was granted a right to learn in their native language making it an inalienable right of every Ukrainian citizen²⁵. These regulations were continued in the education's act adopted two years later and still legitimate today²⁶.

Another Supreme Council's legal act was the Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine adopted on 16 July 1990. It indicated that the authority is legitimised by the nation constituting all citizens regardless of their nationality or race. Hence, it guaranteed to all nationality and ethnic groups the right to unencumbered development concerning their nationality and culture²⁷.

One of the legal acts which played an influential role in the rebirth of the religious sphere and incidentally the Ukrainian collective identity and particular minorities was

²⁴ See e.g. S.Chazbijewicz, *Awdeł czyli Powrót. Walka polityczna Tatarów krymskich o zachowanie tożsamości narodowej i niepodległość państwa po II wojnie światowej*, Olsztyn 2001; *Ibid.* *Tatarzy krymscy. Walka o naród i wolną ojczyznę*, Poznań 2001.

²⁵ See N.Teres, A.Jakubowski, *op. cit.*, p.493.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, pp.494-495.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p.494.

the act "On freedom of conscience and religious organisations" adopted on 23 April 1991. It warranted everyone freedom of conscience and religion, it regulated the relation between the state and religious communities as well as outlines the principles for their registration and functioning²⁸.

Another important legislation concerning nationalities and ethnicity was Ukraine's Citizenship act adopted in 1991, however no longer legally binding. It was aimed at convincing Ukraine's citizens, especially minority members, that the newly created state will not deprive anyone of their citizenship or their rights²⁹. This citizenship was granted to all USSR citizens who at the time when Ukraine's independence was proclaimed permanently resided on the Ukrainian territories regardless of their race, nationality, religion or political affiliations. The claim for citizenship could be based on birth, descent, resumption or registration, the sole condition was a command of Ukrainian allowing for basic communication. Incidentally dual citizenship was not recognised which dismayed minority members. In 2000, it was decided there was a need to propose another legal act which was adopted a year later. Comparing to its predecessor, it is much more complex. It regulates the issue for obtaining the citizenship or claiming refugee rights with precision which was previously not included³⁰.

The first legal act in which there was a complex structure of Ukrainian's ethnic policies was a declaration of Ukraine's nationalities rights adopted on 1 November 1991. It guaranteed all nationalities and ethnic groups residing within its territory equal political, economic, social and cultural rights while making discriminations based on ethnicity or nationality a criminal offence. In order to implement those resolutions, on 24 June 1992, the Ukraine's Verkhovna Rada adopted a legal act concerning national minorities which up until this moment constitutes the main guarantee for their rights. It was a first occurrence in the Ukrainian legal system to define national minorities which according to this legal act are Ukrainian citizens' groups of nationality other than Ukrainian who demonstrate a national identity and consanguinity³¹.

Assuming chronological order of adopting those acts, the subsequent determining act shaping the contemporary ethnic policies of Ukraine is its constitution. Apart from warranting fundamental rights and duties to all citizens and stipulating systemic issues, it distinguished four subjects of collective rights. Firstly, the nation of Ukraine (all citizens), Ukrainians (from an ethnic angle), native peoples and national minorities. Moreover, regulations incorporated there concern the country's territorial system and local governments as well as the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, citizenships, civil liberties, freedoms of religion, education, language and culture in a very broad understanding. It was partially a repeat of former acts and regulations³².

Amid all subjects of Ukrainian ethnic policies, either those who represent the state or national and ethnic minorities, a Committee on Human Rights, National Minorities and Interethnic Relations under the Verkhovna Rada plays an important role. Since 1997, it constitutes a legislative authority. In comparison to executive powers which are

²⁸ Ibidem.

²⁹ W. Baluk, *Koncepcje polityki narodowościowej Ukrainy. Tradycje i współczesność*, Wrocław 2002, p.206.

³⁰ See N.Teres, A.Jakubowski, op.cit. pp.495-496.

³¹ Ibidem, pp.496-497.

³² See *Ukraine's Constitution* as translated by E.Toczek, A.Kubik, Warsaw 2014.

not able to fully implement systemic ethnic policies due to continuous organisational changes, the Committee from the very beginning is a vital link in the decision process concerning Ukraine's nationality policies. As far as subjects of national and ethnic minorities are concerned, their functioning representative is a Commission for Interethnic Relations and the Protection of National Minorities of the Social Council under the Ukraine's Ministry of Culture³³.

As a result of dynamic changes occurring within Ukraine over the course of recent years, it is fairly challenging to predict the future of the ethnic policies thereof. As mentioned before, since the beginning of 1990s until almost 2015, the authorities in Kiev succeeded in maintaining peace and stability while avoiding any major conflicts on the background of nationality or ethnicity. It all took a turn in 2014 after the annexation of Crimea and the aftermath of the conflict in Donbas. The complexity of the domestic and geopolitical situation in Ukraine does not allow for comparing it to any other European state explicitly due to those special circumstances.

Conclusion

Each of the aforementioned states was forced to re-evaluate their policies regarding national and ethnic minorities. The assimilation policies gave way to integration policies. It was a direct result of abolishing the state ideology inspired by communism and Marxism-Leninism principles.

The political paths and directions chosen by states in Eastern Europe undergoing a systemic transformation were similar for the most part. Nevertheless, it changed in the middle of 1990s when Poland's Eastern neighbours, meaning former USSR countries, returned to minority assimilation policies while highlighting the status of the dominating nation. What is especially relevant, in most cases this was a voluntary change. In case of Belarus and Russia, it was related to Alexander Lukashenko and Vladimir Putin's rise to power combined with a turn in their political directions. Ukraine is a separate case where from 2014, ethnic policies are driven by external factors meaning the annexation of Crimea and the conflict in Donbas.

Both Ukraine and Russia signed the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages who also represent parties of this charter as well as the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. For obvious reasons, those countries are not bound by the regulations of the European Union. The only neighbour of Poland which is not signatory of any of the aforementioned documents is Belarus which remains only a part of the minority protections offered within the United Nations.

Taking all the above facts into account, we could conclude that ethnic policies of particular states in this part of Europe are essentially similar to each other. Despite fulfilling the formal and legal criteria, they depart both on conceptional and executional level from the desired ethnic policies.

³³ N.Teres, A.Jakubowski, *op.cit.*,p.508.

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