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Is There a Post-Soviet Model of Diversity Policy?

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Abstract

After the outbreaks of ethnic violence in the late 1980s – early 1990s, ethnic heterogeneity has not been among the major challenges to the stability of post-Soviet Eurasian states. This situation prompts a closer look at how the post-Soviet governments tackle ethnic diversity of their countries. One may conditionally regard "state responses to ethnic diversity" or "totality of national policies aiming at the accommodation of ethnic heterogeneity" as a single policy area. The author argues that over the last quarter of a century, former constituent entities of the Soviet Union except for the Baltic States have demonstrated similar steady patterns of diversity governance. The major points are that the post-Soviet countries have been implementing basically the same model; this model was inherited from the communist past; until recently it has demonstrated viability and contributed to political stability. The model's main features appear as reconciliation of conflicting principles and claims through 'systemic hypocrisy'; (2) 'symbolic production' of social reality as a substitute to instrumental policies; co-optation, control and marginalization of potentially troublemaking public activists and activities through neo-patrimonial institutional settings. The comparison of authoritarian (such as Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia) and pluralist regimes (Moldova and Ukraine) shows that all these countries employ basically similar approaches. The difference is that authoritarian regimes are capable of keeping mass-media, education and civil society activism under a strict control and thus employ manipulative techniques deliberately, while pluralist regimes reproduce eclecticism on ideology and political action due to a shaky balance of political forces and the lack of institutional capabilities leading to inertial scenarios. A significant feature of these policies is that they are a continuation of Soviet policy-making in ethno-national sphere as it was formed in late 1980s prior the USSR's breakdown.

Keywords: diversity governance, post-Soviet countries, institutionalization, official narratives, bi-lingualism

INTRODUCTION

My point of departure is that the viability of post-Soviet multi-ethnic statehoods (including unrecognised entities such as Abkhazia and Transnistria) and their capacity of tackling ethnopolitical challenges, beg a closer look at the post-Soviet diversity politics and policies. This examination is a complex issue since it requires separating the outcomes of deliberate strategies of diversity management (governance *per se*) from the societal sources of ethnopolitical stability (the general design of the given societies). The issue also prompts questions about the said policies' origins, major features and perspectives. My argument is that despite multiple differences among the post-Soviet polities their elites resort to similar (if not identical) policy strategies and tools, institutionalize ethnic and linguistic diversity in a similar manner and achieve similar outcomes.

The current scholarly debates on ethnopolitics and the management of diversity in post-communist countries and beyond perpetuate – explicitly or implicitly – three ideas. (1) The regulation of ethnocultural diversity must be ideally based on robust organisational settings and comprehensive legislation, which would channel the expression and reconciliation of group interests and create institutions serving the protection and promotion of group 'interests' and 'identities'. (2) Diversity policies in the post-Soviet countries are mainly flawed, out of date or in a state of transit and need to be rectified. For example, it is already a mantra for the Council of Europe to refer to the Ukrainian laws on minorities and languages as vague and outdated.[1] (3) Post-Soviet (and broader post-communist) ethnopolitics should be transformed in accordance with the principles and templates imported from 'older' European democracies and based on the argument briefly described above in item 1.[2]

However, all three premises are based on questionable assumptions, and the post-Soviet Eurasian[3] countries provide some empirical grounds for this. Overt ethnic conflicts erupted mainly in the late 1980s or immediately after the Soviet Union's collapse while afterwards

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[1] For example, see: "Application of the Charter in Ukraine. Initial monitoring cycle. Report of the Committee of Experts on the Charter," adopted on 27 November 2008, ECRML (2010) 6, para. 57, https://rm.coe.int/16806dbb45 (accessed on 19 July 2018); "Second Advisory Committee Opinion on Ukraine," adopted on 30 May 2008, ACFC/OP/II(2008)004, para. 61; "Third Advisory Committee Opinion on Ukraine," adopted on 22 March 2012, ACFC/OP/III(2012)002, para. 35; "Fourth Advisory Committee Opinion on Ukraine," adopted on 10 March 2017, ACFC/OP/IV(2017)002, para 45, https://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/ukraine (accessed on 19 July 2018).

[2] W. Kymlicka, *Multicultural Odysseys, Navigating the New International Politics of Diversity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 173–246.

[3] The terms coined recently for denoting the Soviet successor states excepts for the Baltic countries which are already EU members; see V. Gel'man, "The Vicious Circle of Post-Soviet Neopatrimonialism in Russia," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 32, no.5 (2016): 455–73.

ethnopolitical cleavages have not been among the major challenges to the new countries' stability and governmentality. Many post-Soviet countries pursue their diversity policies in legal and institutional frameworks established long ago, sometimes even prior to the Soviet Union's breakdown. Post-Soviet diversity governance has existed for more than a quarter of a century without serious turbulence, and thus it worthy of scrutiny.

Since 1991, it has been a commonplace for most analysts to regard Ukraine as suffering from weak and corrupt statehood;[4] besides, many have commented on its internal divides and cleavages on linguistic, ethnic, and cultural grounds.[5] However, Ukraine has proved remarkably durable in Post-Soviet period. During the political turbulence which started in the winter of 2013/14, the scenario of Ukraine's breakdown along regional, linguistic and cultural lines was not realised; the country withstood both internal conflicts and external military aggression albeit having lost a relatively small portion of its territory. Moreover, after the *Maidan* events and the Russian invasion, ethnonational issues have not figured among the major challenges to the Ukrainian statehood and until 2017 were not among the most acute issues on the public agenda.[6] Much earlier, the separatist pro-Russian movement in Crimea of the early 1990s was tamed in 1995 by political means, and the new regime of territorial autonomy demonstrated its viability until the Russian annexation in 2014.[7] Sharp conflicts around the repatriation of the formerly deported Crimean Tatars and their claims were not fully resolved but rather mitigated, and the Crimean Tatar movement became an ally of the central Ukrainian government (at least until the Party of Regions came to power in 2010).[8]

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[4] *Politics and Society in Ukraine*, edited by P. D'Anieri, R. S. Kravchuk, and T. Kuzio (London: Westview Press, 1999); *Society in Transition. Social Change in Ukraine in Western Perspectives*, edited by W. Isajiw (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Pres Inc., 2003); S. Kudelia, "The sources of continuity and change of Ukraine's incomplete state," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 45 (3-4) (2012): 417–428; T. Kuzio, "Twenty years as an independent state: Ukraine's ten logical inconsistencies", *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 45, no. 3-4 (2012): 429–38.

[5] L. W. Barrington and E. S. Herron, "One Ukraine or many? Regionalism in Ukraine and its political consequences," *Nationalities Papers* 32, no.1 (2004): 53–86; L. Barrington and R. Faranda, "Reexamining Region, Ethnicity, and Language in Ukraine," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 25, no.3 (2009): 232–56; I. Katchanovski, *Cleft Countries. Regional Political Divisions and Cultures in Post-Soviet Ukraine and Moldova* (Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag, 2006).

[6] The adoption of the controversial Law on Education in September 2017 drastically restricting the use of minority languages in the school system, the Constitutional Court's abrogation of the Law on Fundamentals of the Language Policy in February 2018, and the elaboration of the new rather restrictive draft laws on minorities and languages denote a new significant turn in the Ukrainian diversity policy.

[7] G. Sasse, *The Crimea Question: Identity, Transition, and Conflict* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2007), 175–274.

[8] A. Wilson, "The Crimean Tatars: A Quarter of a Century after Their Return," *Security and Human Rights* 24, no. 3-4 (2013): 418–31; D. Wydra, "The Crimea Conundrum: The Tug of War between Russia and Ukraine on the Questions of Autonomy and Self-Determination," *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 10, no. 1 (2004): 121.

It is a widely accepted view, that the Russian Federation in the 1990s was a weak state facing disintegration along ethnic lines and a country that lacked any consistent and efficient policy of diversity management and broader nation-building.[9] Among the major problems were conflicts between the central government and regional elites; the activisation of peripheral radical nationalists; internal separatism in multi-ethnic republics such as Dagestan or Kabardino-Balkaria; inter-regional territorial claims (such as the conflict between North Ossetia and Ingushetia in North Caucasus); the demands of the formerly deported peoples; controversies, and irregularities generated by internal and external migration. However, looking retrospectively at the major ethnopolitical issues voiced as threats except for two – the separatism of Chechnya and the activities of the far-right Russian nationalism – were resolved or substantively mitigated by the year of 2000, prior to the overt authoritarian turn. Most problematic ethnopolitical situations were transformed so that they ceased to be threats to stability and governability of the country. This was achieved by means, which were at odds with liberal-democratic ideals, but were based on political manoeuvring rather than violence and coercion. Since then ethnic claims or grievances have not played a significant role in Russian politics.[10]

Below I will address the ways how ethnic and linguistic diversity is institutionalized in course of deliberate state action and the outcomes of such institutionalization. A question I raise here is whether the former constituent entities of the Soviet Union (except for the Baltic States) had demonstrated similar steady patterns of diversity governance and even more – a similar model.

THEORETICAL REMARKS

The paper addresses (1) the modes and outcomes of the institutionalisation of ethnicity depending on the degree of the said institutionalisation; and (2) the role of governmental action (or omission) in the pursuit of institutionalisation.

Diversity, which is to be accommodated, is denoted below with an umbrella term 'ethnic', that "easily embraces groups differentiated by color, language, and religion; it covers

[9] P. Rutland, "The Presence of Absence: Ethnicity Policy in Russia", in *Institutions, Ideas and Leadership in Russian Politics*, edited by J. Newton and W. Tompson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 116–36; G. Smith, "Russia's politics of multicultural recognition," *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice*, 10, no.2, (1998): 165–71.
[10] E. Giuliano and D. Gorenburg, "The Unexpectedly Underwhelming Role of Ethnicity in Russian Politics, 1991–2011," *Demokratizatsiya* 20, no. 2 (2012): 175–88; M. A. Alexseev, "Decentralization Versus State Collapse: Explaining Russia's Endurance," *Journal of Peace Research* 38, no. 1, (2001): 103.

'tribes,' 'races,' 'nationalities,' and castes".[11] For this paper, there is no need to clarify how exactly diversity based on ethnicity or nationality is conceptualised and termed in certain circumstances.

The term 'institutions' generally means

'patterns of activity' according to which actors conduct their material lives (rules, routines, habits, scripts, roles etc) and 'symbolic' or meaning systems (beliefs, values, principles, paradigms, frames, ideologies, theories, schemas etc) through which they make sense of the world.[12]

Political institutionalisation — "the process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability"[13]— in the context of ethnic policies and the treatment of ethnic categories takes a variety of forms. An important divide is between formal and informal institutions.[14] The latter mean "rules of the game" structuring political life which are "created, communicated, and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels".[15]

There is a difference between so-called "instrumental" and "symbolic" policies: the former can be viewed as activities having "resource effects" while the latter have "interpretative" ones.[16] Symbolic politics and policies although they do not generate a direct substantive effect, indirectly shape political processes by creating and imposing meanings and interpretations, as well as forming and channelling public claims and expectations.[17] Recent trends in institutional theory prompt consideration of public discourses among the forms of political institutionalisation.[18]

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[11] D. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 53.

[12] R. Friedland and R. Alford, "Bringing Society Back in Symbols, Practices, and Institutional Contradictions", in: W.W. Powell and P.J. DiMaggio (eds.), *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 232-266, at 232.

[13] S. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 12.

[14] H.-J. Lauth, "Formal and informal institutions," in *Routledge Handbook of Comparative Political Institutions*, edited by J. Gandhi and R. Ruiz-Rufino (New York: Routledge, 2015), 56–69.

[15] G. Helmke and S. Levitsky, "Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda," *Perspectives on Politics* 2, no.4 (2004): 725. See also J. Allina-Pisano, "Sub Rosa Resistance and the Politics of Economic Reform: Land Redistribution in Post-Soviet Ukraine," *World Politics* 56, no. 4 (2004): 554–81; G. O'Donnell, "Illusions About Consolidation," *Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 2 (1996) 34–51.

[16] A. L. Schneider and H. Ingram, "Social Constructions in the Study of Public Policy," in *Handbook of Constructionist Research*, edited by J. A. Holstein and J. F. Gubrium (New York: The Guilford Press, 2008), 207.

[17] M. Edelman, *Politics as Symbolic Action: Mass Arousal and Quiescence* (Chicago: Markham Publishing Company, 1971), 7–45.

[18] P. Hall and R. Taylor, "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms," *Political Studies*, 44, no. 5 (1996): 936–57; V.A. Schmidt, "Taking Ideas and Discourses Seriously: Explaining Change through Discursive Institutionalism as the Fourth 'New Institutionalism'," *European Political Science Review* 2, no. 1 (2010): 1–25.

For the purpose of this paper, I distinguish between 'strong' and 'weak' institutionalisation of ethnicity. 'Strong' institutionalisation means (1) embeddedness in official norms and formally prescribed or sanctioned organizational structures; (2) clearly designed, comprehensive and structured explicit rules; (3) the mechanism of implementation and enforcement backing the rules; (4) consistency between 'talks' and 'actions' or between different 'actions' of the stakeholders, mainly public bodies.

On the contrary, 'weak' institutionalisation is about (1) a high degree of informality and a big role played by informal institutions; (2) uncertainty of rules and their broad character making them open to interpretations; (3) the lack of mechanisms for implementation and enforcement or insufficiency of their competencies and capabilities; (4) "systemic hypocrisy",[19] i.e. inconsistencies between what the stakeholders are saying and what they are doing as well as within their narratives and course of action.

Here strong and weak institutionalisations are taken as ideal types than a concrete theoretically grounded tool of measurement. Besides, both kinds of institutionalisation shall be understood as characteristics of certain practices rather than of a certain society at large. 'Strong' and 'weak' types of institutionalisation are rather parts of a scale than two distinct and separate areas with a strict dividing line in between, and that the practices of both kinds may coexist in a certain state.

The institutionalisation of ethnicity as well as any other institution building is an outcome of the given social order with its balance of the stakeholders' power, authority and resources rather than exclusively a product of governmental action. However, the latter component is important, and singling out the outcomes of governance from general social conditions and broad societal processes is a challenging analytical task.

Such notion as 'diversity policy' in the meaning of a coherent strategy and institutional setting is nebulous and questionable.[20] Nevertheless, one may conditionally regard "state responses to ethnic diversity" or "the totality of national policies aiming at the accommodation of ethnic heterogeneity"[21] as a single policy area deserving analysis as such although it may be unpredictably broad and have no clear and fixed boundaries.

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[19] N. Brunsson, *The Organization of Hypocrisy. Talk, Decisions and Actions in Organizations* (Chichester, N.Y.: John Wiley & Sons, 1989).

[20] See B. O'Leary, "Governing Diversity", in *Routledge International Handbook of Diversity Studies*, edited by S. Vertovec (New York: Routledge, 2015), 203–15.

[21] B. Rechel, "Introduction,", in *Minority Rights in Central and Eastern Europe*, edited by B. Rechel (London: Routledge, 2009), 3–16.

Governmental or, broader, mainstream elite strategies for the regulation of ethnic diversity vary from accommodation to marginalisation or elimination of differences;[22] moreover, elements of divergent approaches may coexist in concrete legal and political frameworks. Acknowledging this, I want to place emphasis on the depth of institutionalisation of ethnic policies and its effects. My hypothesis is that the articulation of groups as addressees and building blocks of diversity policies generates similar effects regardless of the policies' intention and the degree of ethnic groups separation. The reasons are that a formal or informal institutionalisation of groups constructs group interests, empowers ethnicity-based public and private actors and creates 'breeding ground' for making group-based claims.[23]

This paper does not offer a tool or scale for assessing or measuring the efficacy of ethnic policies. There are, however, two basic indicators that can be used to make general conclusions, namely, (1) the maintenance of a low level of violence and direct coercion in ethnopolitics; (2) the ability of the government to keep the situation under control and to impose of its own agendas and goals.

SOCIETAL FEATURES OF POST-SOVIET EURASIA

All post-Soviet statehoods and political regimes, both in recognized and unrecognized entities, despite various economic disbalances and institutional deficiencies demonstrate a high degree of viability. All are market economies with varying degrees of openness to the outside world and of state interventionism. Some (such as Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia) function as pluralist democracies;[24] some (Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, Uzbekistan etc.) have authoritarian regimes; a few occupy a position in between and can be characterised as competitive authoritarian regimes[25] (Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and internationally unrecognized polities such as Abkhazia and Transnistria). For the purpose of this paper, it makes sense to

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[22] O'Leary, *op.cit.* note 20.

[23] N. G. Jesse and K. P. Williams, *Identity and Institutions: Conflict Reduction in Divided Societies* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005); D. Rothchild and P. Roeder, "Power Sharing as an Impediment to Peace and Democracy," in *Sustainable Peace: Power and Democracy after Civil Wars*, edited by P. Roeder and D. Rothchild (Ithaca, N.Y.; London: Cornell Univ. Press, 2005), 29–50.

[24] According to the Freedom House assessment for more than 10 years, these three are "partly free countries"; see "Freedom – Freedom in the World 2017," https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2017 (accessed 26 July 2018).

[25] S. Levitsky and L. A. Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

distinguish between the countries of "feckless pluralism" with competitive politics and the countries of "dominant power" without elite rotation.[26]

Despite significant differences, most post-Soviet countries essentially still have too much in common – they share such features as the symbiosis of formal and informal institutions,[27] affiliation of businesses with governmental offices and the capture of state apparatus by rent-seeking groups.[28] The existent social and political systems can be characterised as neo-patrimonialism, i.e. political and economic domination of closed elite groups based on clienteles (relations of personal loyalties) and patronage (exchange of resources provided to social groups to political loyalty).[29] Neo-patrimonial systems may evolve in the direction of monopolisation of political and economic control by one corporate group in a country, but in some cases the equilibrium of competing elite groups or clans preserves political pluralism and some degree of civil and political liberties.[30]

Not all countries of post-Soviet Eurasia deserve attention from ethnopolitical perspective because of their demographic composition and political relevance of ethnic or linguistic issues, but most can be characterised as multi-ethnic or as having a significant share of ethnic minorities and as multi-lingual. One can say that ethnopolitics and linguistic issues are most salient in the largest post-Soviet countries – Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine, also in Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Uzbekistan as well as in non-recognised Abkhazia and Transnistria. Belarus can be added to the list because of the coexistence of Belarusian and Russian languages when the latter prevails.[31] A similar emblematic case is Ukraine; the ethnic and linguistic

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[26] T. Carothers, "The End of the Transition Paradigm," *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 1 (2002): 10–14.

[27] A. Polese and J. Morris (eds.) *Informal Economies in Post-Socialist Spaces: Practices, Institutions and Networks* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

[28] K. Dawisha, *Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia?* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014); G. Easter, *Capital, Coercion, and Postcommunist States* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012); H. E. Hale, *Patronal Politics: Eurasian Regime Dynamics in Comparative Perspective*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); A. Melville and M. Mironyuk, "'Bad Enough Governance': State Capacity and Quality of Institutions in Post-Soviet Autocracies", Post-Soviet Affairs, 32 (2) (2016): 132–151

[29] D.C. Bach, "Patrimonialism and neopatrimonialism: comparative trajectories and readings", *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 49 (3) (2011): 275-294; G. Erdmann and U. Engel, "Neopatrimonialism Reconsidered: Critical Review and Elaboration of an Elusive Concept", *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 45(1) (2007): 95-119.

[30] About the applicability of the neo-patrimonialist theoretical framework to post-Soviet realities see: Gel'man, *op.cit.* note 3; H.E. Hale, Patronal Politics: Eurasian Regime Dynamics in Comparative Perspective, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); H. Hale "Correlates of clientelism: political economy, politicized ethnicity, and post-communist transition", in: H. Kitschelt, S. Wilkinson (eds.) *Patrons, Clients, and Policies. Patterns of Democratic Accountability and Political Competition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 227-250; O. Fisun, "The Future of Ukraine's Neopatrimonial Democracy", *PONARS Eurasia*. Policy Memos No.394, at: http://www.ponarseurasia.org/memo/future-ukraine-neopatrimonial-democracy.

[31] J. J. Smolicz, and R. Radzik, "Belarusian as an endangered language: can the mother tongue of an independent state be made to die?" *International Journal of Educational Development* 24, no. 5 (2004): 511–28;

diversity of Ukraine centres on Ukrainian-Russian linguistic and ethnic dichotomy coupled with uneven distribution of both ethnicities and the users of either language across the country.[32]

A feature of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Moldova is also a wide societal bilingualism. The language associated with the 'titular' ethnicity functions in many spheres of public and private life on a par with Russian while in some spheres such as business or printed media Russian dominates.[33] There is abundance of evidence that this dichotomy either in Ukraine or such countries is Belarus and Moldova cannot be adequately comprehended in terms of groups or communities with clear boundaries. In Ukraine, there is even no chance of drawing a boundary between Ukrainian-speakers and Russian-speakers;[34] the same is true for Belarus.[35] Moldova is more polarised, but there is no sharp divide between the two linguistic and informational space – most Moldovans speak Russian as the second and even mother tongue and also engage in labour migration to Russia while more than 30 per cent non-Moldovans can communicate in the state language.[36] A specific feature of most post-Soviet countries is that the groups nominally deemed as non-Russian ethnic minorities tend to use predominantly the Russian language and to opt for education in Russian.[37]

Most Eurasian countries are neither fully cohesive/ integrated nor deeply divided along ethnic and linguistic lines (despite inequalities, discrepancies, and tensions) in terms of party

M. Giger and M. Sloboda, "Language Management and Language Problems in Belarus: Education and Beyond," *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 11, no. 3 (2008): 315–39.

[32] J. Besters-Dilger, ed. *Language Policy and Language Situation in Ukraine: Analysis and Recommendations* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2008); L. Bilaniuk, *Contested Tongues: Language Politics and Cultural Correction in Ukraine* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005); S. Shulman, "The contours of civic and ethnic national identification in Ukraine," *Europe-Asia Studies* 56, no.1 (2004): 35–56.

[33] A. Pavlenko, "Multilingualism in Post-Soviet Countries: Language Revival, Language Removal, and Sociolinguistic Theory," *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 11, no. 3-4 (2008): 275–314.

[34] J. Casanova, "Ethno-Linguistic and Religious Pluralism and Democratic Construction in Ukraine," in *Post-Soviet Political Order: Conflict and State Building*, edited by B. R. Rubin and J. Snyder (New York and London: Routledge, 1998),75–96; V. Kulyk, "Constructing common sense: Language and ethnicity in Ukrainian public discourse," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29, no. 2 (2006): 281–314; O. Protsyk, "Majority-Minority Relations in the Ukraine," *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe* 7, no. 1 (2008), http://www.ecmi.de/fileadmin/downloads/publications/JEMIE/2008/issue%201/1-2008-Protsyk.pdf (accessed 26 July 2018); V. Stepanenko, "Identities and Language Politics in Ukraine: The Challenges of Nation-State Building," in *Nation-Building, Ethnicity and Language Politics in Transition Countries*, edited by F. Daftary and F. Grin (Budapest: OSI, LGI/ECMI, 2003), 107–37; M. Riabchuk, "Two Ukraines' Reconsidered: The End of Ukrainian Ambivalence?" *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 15, no. 1 (2015): 138–56.

[35] N. Bekus, *Struggle over Identity : the Official and the Alternative Belarusianness* (Budapest-New York: CEU Press, 2010), 151–55; G. Ioffe, "Understanding Belarus: Questions of Language," *Europe-Asia Studies* 55, no. 7 (2003): 1009–047.

[36] Calculated in accordance with: "Demographic, national, language and cultural characteristics. Table 8. Population by main nationalities, mother tongue and language usually spoken." Population Census 2004. National Bureau of Statistics of Republic of Moldova, http://www.statistica.md/pageview.php?l=en&id=2234&idc=295 (accessed 25 July 2018).

[37] Pavlenko, *op.cit.* note 33.

politics, spatial distribution of ethnicities, the design and content of education, the development of media, and migration patterns. Along with widespread bilingualism and the lack of segregated informational spaces, one should mention the marginal position of ethnicity-based parties of minorities and the voting of 'non-titular' population for mainstream electoral lists and candidates.

MAJOR ETHNOPOLITICAL FEATURES

At first glance, 'nationalities policies' are not uniform in terms of macro-perspectives,[38] i.e. at the level of general nation-building goals and concepts throughout the region. Most Eurasian countries evolve as 'nationalizing states'[39] supposed to reaffirm the privileged position of their core ethnicities and to serve primarily their needs.[40] On the contrary, Russia still remains a 'multinational federation', and the law generally avoids explicit references to any founding ethno-nation. A similar example is unrecognised Transnistria.[41] Belarus with some reservations looks alike, as a country which does not place emphasis on the support of its ethnonational core.[42]

The realities in all cases differ from the declared ideal. One can fully agree with Brubaker that the 'nationalization of state' is not a coherent model, but an ideal type, and in reality, it manifests itself as a range of practices.[43] There is also a bundle of practices aimed at the opposite or on freezing the *status quo* despite official declarations. In numerous occasions throughout the post-Soviet space, declared intentions are not implemented, or the implementation often lags behind declarations, the rules of the game formulated in law are ambiguous (or are lacking at all), and the pursued policies are eclectic or inconsistent.

There are numerous similarities between 'nationalizing' and 'non-nationalizing' polities. Everywhere the framework ideological formula of nation-building and diversity governance

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[38] O'Leary, *op.cit.* note 20, 203–4.

[39] R. Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed. Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 9.

[40] Michele Commercio argues that all post-Soviet states can be characterized as 'nationalizing' "because they seek, albeit to varying degrees, to promote the core nation through formal policies and/or informal practices"; M. E. Commercio, *Russian Minority Politics in Post-Soviet Latvia and Kyrgyzstan. The Transformative Power of Informal Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 18.

[41] A. Osipov and H. Vasilevich, "The phenomenon of Transnistria as a model of post-Soviet diversity policy," *ECMI Working Paper No.96* (2017), http://www.ecmi.de/publications/detail/96-the-phenomenon-of-transnistria-as-a-model-of-post-soviet-diversity-policy-363/> (accessed 25 July 2018)

[42] G. Ioffe, "Culture Wars, Soul-Searching, and Belarusian Identity", *East European Politics and Societies* 2, no. 2 (2007): 348–81.

[43] R. Brubaker, "Nationalizing States Revisited: Projects and Processes of Nationalization in Post-Soviet States," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, no. 11: 1785–814.

includes explicit or implicit recognition of the founding or core ethnic or cultural category; the idea of supra-ethnic nation as the entire citizenry regardless of ethnic origin; the acknowledgement of the country's multiethnicity as a reality and a value that is to be respected; equality of citizens and the prohibition of discrimination and incitement to ethnic hatred; a general acknowledgement of the need to create opportunities for the development of different cultures of languages.

For example, the ethnic fundamentals of Ukraine are reflected in the 1996 Constitution and several pieces of legislation. The 'Ukrainian nation' is pointed out as the basis of the state in contrast to the 'Ukrainian people' in the meaning of the entire citizenry, but numerous constitutional and legal provisions on equality of all citizens serve as a counterbalance. The presumed fundamentals of the Russian nation-building are also ambiguous.[44] The Russian Constitution and legislation do not single out Russians as the founding ethno-nation, but this is counterpoised with numerous official statements emphasizing the leading role of the Russian cultural core.[45] Besides, the entire discourse of the country's integrity, the leading role of the state language (Russian) and the need to secure equal rights of all citizens turns out to justify further centralization and homogenizing policies in all spheres of public life.[46]

Historical narratives and sets of symbols officially authorized or commissioned are as a rule eclectic, and this corresponds to the fact that in certain countries divergent versions of historical truth inevitably coexist. The mainstream justifications and formulae of nation-building usually combine references to ethnonational version of the country's history with sometimes positive attitudes to the Soviet period. The symbolic recognition of the given ethnic nation's distinctiveness and victimhood figures concurrently to Soviet symbols and legacies such as the acceptance of the Soviet World War II narratives and modes of commemoration. Even more, the official ideological formulae can be interpreted, mastered and endorsed by different segments of the population in a variety of ways.[47]

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[44] O. Shevel, "Russian Nation-building from Yel'tsin to Medvedev: Ethnic, Civic or Purposefully Ambiguous?" *Europe-Asia Studies* 63, no. 2, (2011): 179–202.

[45] V. Putin, "Rossiya: natsionalny vopros?" [Russia: nationalities question?], *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 23 January 2012; H. Blakkisrud, "Blurring the boundary between civic and ethnic: The Kremlin's new approach to national identity under Putin's third term," in *The New Russian Nationalism. Imperialism, Ethnicity and Authoritarianism. 2000–15*, edited by P. Kolstø and H. Blakkisrud. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 249–74; P. Kolstø, "The ethnification of Russian nationalism." in *The New Russian Nationalism. Imperialism, Ethnicity and Authoritarianism. 2000–15*, edited by P. Kolstø and H. Blakkisrud. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016; Rutland, *op.cit.* note 9, 123–29.

[46] F. Prina, *National Minorities in Putin's Russia. Diversity and Assimilation* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

[47] K. Rees and N. W. Williams, "Explaining Kazakhstani identity: supraethnic identity, ethnicity, language, and citizenship," *Nationalities Papers* 45, no. 5 (2017): 834–35.

The officially authorized version of the Belarusian history and the rationalizations of nation-building refers to the heritage of Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the legacies of Belarusian nationalism, achievement and World War II sufferings within the Soviet period, the need to create 'Slavonic brotherhood' and the goal the secure the country's integrity and prosperity regardless of its populace's ethnicity.[48]

Before 2014, the government of Ukraine did not have a coherent narrative about the Ukrainian history and the main features of its nationhood; ethnonationalism was combined a tribute to the Soviet past and to allegiance to the European integration and liberal values.[49] Besides, each new president emphasized new issues, and the policy was not consistent. Generally, with some reservations, the government (primarily under President Kuchma in 1994 – 2004) sought to gain support from different segments of the population (Russian-speakers vs Ukrainian-speakers; Ukrainian nationalists vs their opponents including people nostalgic to the Soviet past and supportive to the integration with Russia) and thus tolerated divergent views, tried to please different audiences and whenever possible avoided to address issues that could cause protest.[50] In the post-Maidan period, the new government promotes Ukrainian ethno-nationalism and fights the Soviet symbols, but the Soviet heritage is still present primarily in the commemoration of World War II since neither party is able to suppress the opponents or create a common dominant narrative acceptable for all.[51]

Throughout the former Soviet Union, languages are widely perceived and referred to in legislation and practical policies as attributes of ethnicities. As a rule, the status of the 'titular' language as the sole state language (as in Ukraine, Moldova or Kazakhstan) corresponds with the symbolic ethno-national underpinning of the state. In practice, the governments and policy-makers cannot but recognize that Russian remains the *lingua franca*. A combination of official nation-wide preference of the sole state language is combined with limited attempt to introduce it in practice and with tolerated bilingualism in public sphere.[52] Regardless of the mainstream

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[48] N. Leshchenko, "A fine instrument: two nation-building strategies in post-Soviet Belarus," *Nations and Nationalism* 10, no. 3 (2004): 333–52; Bekus, *op.cit.* note 35, 211–20.

[49] G. Kasianov, '"Nationalized" History: Past Continuous, Present Perfect, Future', in *A Laboratory of Transnational History. Ukraine and Recent Ukrainian Historiography*, edited by G. Kasianov and P. Ther (Budapest, New York: CEU Press, 2009), 7–24.

[50] Y. Grytsak, "Razvitie ukrainskoj kul'tury pamjati posle 1991 goda: primer Stepana Bandery" [The development of Ukrainian culture of memory after 1991: the example of Stepan Bandera], *Forum noveyshey vostochnoevropeyskoy istorii i kul'tury*, 14, no.2 (2017), 178–90.

[51] A. Wylegała, "Managing the difficult past: Ukrainian collective memory and public debates on history," *Nationalities Papers* 45, no. 5 (2017): 780–97.

[52] B. Bowring, "The Russian language in Ukraine: complicit in genocide, or victim of state-building?" in *The Russian Language Outside the Nation. Speakers and Identities*, edited by L. Ryazanova-Clarke (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 56–78; Kulyk, *op.cit.* note 34; D. Arel, "How Ukraine has become more Ukrainian," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 34, no. 2-3 (2018): 186–89.

official rhetoric, all these countries' linguistic policies basically do not rest on restrictive and punitive measures. The laws on languages in post-Soviet Eurasia lack certainty, and the status of languages remains not clearly defined although Russian gains varying degrees of constitutional or legal acknowledgement (as in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, and Tajikistan). As a result, the authorities enjoy a deal of flexibility in the implementation (or non-implementation) and further justifications of their activity and inactivity. In fact, the practice is regulated by *ad hoc* political considerations combined with vague formal and flexible informal rules. Formal principles as well as legislative and governmental prescriptions concerning the use of languages or education can be circumvented, renegotiated, reinterpreted in multiple ways or ignored.[53]

In the promotion of cultural and linguistic homogeneity, 'non-nationalizing' states also combine ambiguous formal rules, homogenizing policy and the rhetoric of multilingualism. In the cases of Belarus and Transnistia these policies favour the Russian language as a state language that is at odds with their founding declarations.

The special laws on minorities (such as in Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova) or ethnicity-related issues (Kazakhstan and Russia) are broad in scope, declarative and contain vaguely defined provisions; the lack of specific legislation (such as in Georgia or Kyrgyzstan) or non-articulation of controversial issues can be also deemed as forms of ambiguity. More important is the degree of coherence in general principles, discursive and practical patterns demonstrated by public authorities and their civil society counterparts in the ways they frame and discursively reproduce ethnic heterogeneity in their countries. For example, the Constitution and legislation of Kazakhstan avoid explicit references to the country's multi-ethnicity or group entitlements for securing – even symbolically – the unitary character of the state.[54] In the meantime, Kazakhstan has a system of nationalities' representation (People Assemblies at the national

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[53] See: A. Polese, "Language and Identity in Ukraine: Was it Really Nation-Building?"*, Studies of Transition States and Societies*, 3, no.3 (2011): 36–50; R. Isaacs and A. Polese, "Between 'imagined' and 'real' nationbuilding: identities and nationhood in post-Soviet Central Asia," *Nationalities Papers* 43, no. 3 (2015): 371–82.

[54] V. Kim, *Epoha sozidanija : analiz social'no-politicheskih i konstitucionno-pravovyh vzgljadov pervogo prezidenta Respubliki Kazahstan* [The Epoch of Creation: an Analysis of Socio-political and Constitutional-legal Views of the first President of Republic of Kazakhstan] (Almaty : Devir, 2005), 57, 91, 97; R. Nurmagambetov and S. Ukin, *Konstitucionnoe pravo Respubliki Kazahstan: uchebnoe posobie* [Constitutional Law of Republic of Kazakhstan: a Textbook] (Almaty: Zheti Zhargy, 2015), 52–3; G. Sapargaliev, *Konstitutisonnoye pravo Respubliki Kazahstan. Akademicheskiy kurs* [Constitutional Law of Republic of Kazakhstan] (Almaty: Zheti Zhargy, 2006), 15–35, 83–8, 93–7.

and regional levels), a network of minority NGOs under state control and a system of education in languages other than Kazakh.[55]

Specialized public bodies for the pursuit of diversity policies (such as the Bureau for Inter-ethnic relations in Moldova or the Department of Nationalities and Religious Affairs at the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture) as a rule do not have definite functions and competences. Consultative bodies for minority issues under public agencies are also non-influential and do not play a significant role in deliberations and decision-making.[56] Ethnicity-based non-governmental organisation mostly restrict their activities to cultural affairs. Ethnicity-based political parties (if they are not prohibited at all like in Russia or Belarus) are marginal entities. People of minority origin who would like to engage in politics join the mainstream political parties and follow their parties' agendas.

In brief, the main features of the framework post-Soviet model appear as (1) eclectic narratives about nationhood, combining elements of 'ethnic' and 'civic' nationalism and mixing conflicting views and claims; (2) unclear and loose legislation about ethnicities and languages; (3) its flexible and inconsistent implementation; (4) weak or absent ethnicity-based public organizational frameworks. One shall also add to the list (5) the co-optation of potentially troublemaking public activists and activities through patronal institutional settings, but this issue can be hardly addressed in detailed in a single paper. All this allows us to talk about common patterns that reproduce a similar vision of nationhood and the weak institutionalisation of ethnic and linguistic heterogeneity.

THE ORIGINS

Both the official discourses and practical activities targeting multi-lingualism and multi-ethnicity in most newly independent states reproduce the basic of the Soviet 'nationalities policy' of the late 1980s with some excerpts such as the homage to the role of the communist

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[55] B. Dave, "Management of Ethnic Relations in Kazakhstan: Stability without Success," in *The Legacy of the Soviet Union*, edited by W. Slater and A. Wilson, (Basinstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 83–100; G.N. Musabaeva, "Aktual'nye voprosy mezhetnicheskih otnoshenii v Kazahstane i mezhdunarodnoe sotrudnichestvo," [Topical issues of interethnic relations in Kazakhstan and international cooperation] *Vestnik Tverskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta. Seriya Pravo*, no. 28 (2011): 31–40; S. Zhetpysbaev, "Etnokul'turnye ob'edinenija v Respublike Kazahstan i ih rol' v konsolidacii grazhdanskogo obshhestva" [Ethnocultural associations in Republic of Kazakhstan and their role in the consolidation of civil society], *Gumanitarnye Nauki v Sibiri* 24, no. 1 (2017): 86–90.

[56] M. Biaspamiatnykh, A. Osipov, F. Prina, I. Pushkin, and H. Vasilevich, *Politika upravleniya ethnoculturanym raznoobraziem v Belarusi, Moldove i Ukraine* [Policies of Ethno-Cultural Diversity Management in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine] (Vilnius: European Humanities University, 2014).

party and Leninism and the acknowledgement of the USSR's unity. James Hughes and Gwendolyn Sasse wrote about the "de-institutinalisation" of formal arrangements of multi-nationality in the first years after the Soviet Union's breakdown.[57] This judgement looks correct with regard to the Soviet all-Union institutions and the Baltic States; a further extrapolation of this interpretation must be an exaggeration.

By the Soviet Union's collapse, the official approach was also eclectic both at the level of the Union and its constituent republics. It combined the acknowledgement of ethno-national statehood with rhetoric of 'internationalism' and civil equality; while the symbolic recognition of linguistic and cultural pluralism did not entail respective practical measures. References to multi-ethnicity were not followed by the institutionalization of ethnic communities and their boundaries; cooperation between official authorities and ethnicity-based non-governmental organizations did not envisage any independent role of the latter but rather compliance with the agendas imposed by the government.

An interesting indicator is the long life of some national language laws. Belarus, Moldova, Russia and Uzbekistan still employ the legislation on languages (with some amendments) adopted in 1989 - 1991, i.e. before the Union's dissolution; Ukraine used the law designed under the same model from 1989 to 2012. One may assume that this framework was and still remains suitable for most domestic stakeholders.

The Soviet legislation on languages was declarative, vaguely formulated and open to interpretations; its implementation was done on an *ad hoc* basis. The republican laws on languages, adopted mostly in 1989, established the languages of their 'titular' ethnicities as the state languages while Russian was defined as the "language of interethnic communication" with multiple albeit unclear functions. Republican laws also declared the right to choose individual linguistic identification; reaffirmed a general principle of respect and protection to all languages; and implied the opportunity of an individual to live and communicate in public domain with one functional language of the person's choice (in fact, either the state republican language or Russian). This conceptual triad (state languages – Russian as the language of interethnic communication – minority languages in places of the bearers' compact settlement) was replicated in the all-Union law on language while Russian was also granted the status of the state language of the USSR, and therefore obligatory for federal institutions.

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[57] J. Hughes and G. Sasse, "Conflict and Accommodation in the Former Soviet Union: The Role of Institutions and Regimes," *Regional & Federal Studies* 11 no. 3 (2001): 231.

In general, the new normative and political framework of the late 1980s was designed as (1) a compromise, a set of friendly gestures towards different political forces and demographic categories; (2) a primarily symbolic policy; (3) a broad framework allowing for a variety of *ad hoc* interpretations. There are no reasons that the successor states pursued a sophisticated strategy of mastering the Soviet legacy from the very outset. Rather, one may say that they were developing under an inertial scenario pragmatically adopting the Soviet mechanisms.[58] It would be incorrect to say that the Soviet 'nationalities policy' can be regarded as a 'good practice', but the Soviet rule provided templates and models ready for action. Loose formal institutions in the area of diversity governance were combined with hidden and partly informal rules and techniques of management through the party apparatus and security services. The collapse of the latter component quite unexpectedly opened up a window of opportunities. The new statehoods were unable to pursue a strict nationalizing policy or did not have a clear idea of doing it. Inconsistent formal rules together with ambiguous mainstream discourses about nationhood and its founding principles created opportunities for compromises and flexible adaptive strategies of the populace, and the best example would be again Ukraine.[59]

In both cases a deep transformation of linguistic and cultural characteristic of the society (either 'nationalization' or further Russification) would bear risks and require unaffordable resources. Where deep institutional changes were not feasible, the elites opted for the symbolic production of statehood with both 'nationalizing' and 'multi-national' features. Different views on the historical past of the newly independent states (or sub-state units in Russia) and their desired ethno-cultural and linguistic profile in most cases cannot be reconciled discursively and institutionally, therefore the elites have to stick to eclectic rhetoric and address different audiences with different and even incompatible messages.

POLITICAL CONTEXTS AND EFFICACY

In pluralist Eurasian states, the endurance of the features listed above looks like an inertia of the Soviet period coupled with the lack of governmental resources either to introduce a complex system of power-sharing and positive action or to suppress groups not fitting into the ideal of homogeneous nation-state. Fragile governments avoid potentially destabilizing effects;

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[58] O. Hrytsenko, "Imagining the Community: Perspectives on Ukraine's Ethno-cultural Diversity," *Nationalities Papers* 36, no. 2, (2008): 218.

[59] Kudelia, *op.cit.* note 4; Biaspamiatnykh et al. *op.cit.* note 56; A. Lagutin, "Ethnicheskiye aspekty institutsionalizatsii politicheskogo protsessa na Ukraine" [Ethnic aspects of institutionalization of the political process in Ukraine], *Politicheskiye Issledovaniya* 11, no. 4 (2001): 100–07.

seek loyalty simultaneously of 'titular' and 'non-titular' populations. An additional factor is political competition; the ambiguity of ethnocultural policies can be interpreted sometimes as a part of "pluralism by default"[60] and sometimes as "pragmatic pluralism"[61], i.e. opportunistic decisions involving coalitions with competitors or adversaries.

With regard Moldova and Ukraine, one can definitely talk about some sort of pendulum over the last quarter of a century: while one presidency or the ruling coalition accelerates 'nationalizing' policy (as in Moldova in 1990 – 1994 and from 2009 on; in Ukraine in 1992 – 1994, 2005 – 2010 and from 2014 on), the succeeding centrist or centre-left governments (1994 – 2009 in Moldova; 1994 – 2004 and 2010 – 2014 in Ukraine) pursue a more balanced and in some respects pro-minority policy.[62]

In case of authoritarian regimes, one should rather talk about a deliberate policy of control and manipulation. The rulers of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia possess a will and capacities to inhibit unwanted activities and to avoid or mute everything that bears a risk of destabilization. In practice this leads to a control over both minority and majority nationalist organizations, the official promotion of 'unity' and 'civil integration' along with the celebration of multi-ethnicity.[63] The existing authoritarian regimes, i.e. in Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia and even Transnistria effectively invest in non-conflictual narrative of multi-ethnic accord along with the affirmation of homogeneity based on some cultural 'core'.[64] The discourses of ethnicity-based subnational statehood in combination with multiethnicity, civil unity and equality of rights are translated to the populaces of the republics within Russia.[65] A similar mix

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[60] L. Way, *Pluralism by Default. Weak Autocrats and the Rise of Competitive Politics* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015).

[61] B. A. Ruble, *Second Metropolis: Pragmatic Pluralism in Gilded Age Chicago, Silver Age Moscow, and Meiji Osaka* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

[62] Biaspamiatnykh et.al *op.cit.* note 56, 249–51; one should add that ups and downs can be observed in ethno-cultural and linguistic policies of Belarus.

[63] A. Burkhanov and D. Sharipova, "Kazakhstan's Civic-National Identity: Ambiguous Policies and Points of Resistance," in *Nationalisms and Identity Construction in Central Asia: Dimensions, Dynamics and Directions*, edited by M. Omelicheva, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), 21–35; N. Oka, "Managing Ethnicity under Authoritarian Rule: Transborder Nationalisms in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan," IDE Interim Report, 2007, pp.8–10, http://www.ide.go.jp/library/Japanese/Publish/Download/Report/pdf/2006_04_31_all.pdf (accessed on 19 July 2018); Rees and Williams, *op.cit.* note 47.

[64] M. Laruelle et S. Peyrouse, *Les Russes du Kazakhstan. Identités nationales et nouveaux États dans l'espace post-soviétique* (Paris: Maissonneuve et Larose: IFFAC, 2003); Bekus, *op.cit.* note 35, 211–220; A. Burkhanov, "Kazakhstan's National Identity - Building Policy: Soviet Legacy, State Efforts, and Societal Reactions," *Cornell International Law Journal*, 50, no. 1 (2017): 1–14; Ö. Kesici, "The Dilemma in the Nation-Building Process: The Kazakh or Kazakhstani Nation?" *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, 10, no. 1 (2011): 31–58; M. B. Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002), 30–71; Prina, *op.cit.* note 46; Osipov and Vasilevich, *op.cit.* note 41.

[65] V. Tolz, "The search for a national identity in the Russia of Yeltsin and Putin," in *Restructuring Post-Communist Russia*, edited by Y. Brudny, Jonathan Frankel, and Stefani Hoffman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 165.

in a smaller degree can be observed in Uzbekistan with regard to autonomous and also presumably ethnicity-based) Karakalpakstan.[66]

Post-Soviet governments are sending mixed messages to their populaces, and all segments of their citizenry – both those seeking affirmation of the new ethno-national profile of their countries and those who wish to maintain the Soviet ethno-linguistic *status-quo* – can find out some discursive and organizational niches for themselves and their claims within the system. The major outcomes are that most inhabitants perceive the realities as legitimate because they find acceptable elements and options due to the system's flexibility and eclecticism. Generally, they have few incentives to engage in protest activities and to vote for the anti-system movements. Eclectic mainstream narratives enable the adherents of competing views not to feel excluded and encourage them to pursue their goals through the existing institutions. Speaking more broadly, the goal of peaceful coexistence within the given society can be a basis for an effective hegemonic strategy.

Such an environment with minimal requirements concerning linguistic and cultural integration and the opportunities to engage in non-political sphere offers a multiplicity of individual choices and strategies due to loose rules and informal relationships.[67] In terms of ethnic relations, the absence of rigid and restrictive institutional frameworks and strictly enforced normative requirements in language, citizenship, mass media and educational policies opens up numerous ways for adaptation; the outcome is the ultimate inclusion of people with different language and cultural preferences and divergent views on how the state and nation shall look like. The case of pre-*Maidan* Ukraine, described by Abel Polese, again looks like a good illustration of this:

> To be accepted as citizen of the Ukrainian state, people have officially to show some loyalty to the values proposed by the state. To see and present themselves as Ukrainian to the others, citizens have to adopt some of the fundamentals of a Ukrainian identity. One holds a Ukrainian passport and does not intend anything against the Ukrainian state. A positive attitude to the Ukrainian language will mostly be appreciated and allows people to feel Ukrainian and the state to think individuals are complying with expectations from above <…>. Within this framework, citizens are free to construct

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[66] I. Savin, "Karakalpakstan: a little-known autonomy in the post-Soviet Central Asia," 10 May 2018, http://www.icelds.org/2018/05/10/karakalpakstan-a-little-known-autonomy-in-the-post-soviet-central-asia/. (accessed 26 July 2018).
[67] Commercio, *op.cit*. note 40, 177.

their Ukrainianness the way they want, which could be termed national standardisation with a human face. Plausibility is given by acceptance, or at least non-rejection, of the role of the Ukrainian state, its symbols, the Ukrainian language and Kiev as the capital. In this way those living within the border of Ukraine form part of the 'imagined community' (Anderson 1991) as (potential) Ukrainians.[68]

The lack of segregated or ethnicity-based institutions or their weakness inhibits the reinforcement of inter-ethnic boundaries and dilutes potential collective claims. Potential dissident or protest voices from all sides can be incorporated into politics and the system of government and ultimately stick to the mainstream agendas.[69] One can rightly say, that such strategies combine features of "control"[70] and accommodation in the form of "centripetalism";[71] they ultimately seek to "disorganize the dominated" and lead to "privatizing" difference.[72] The distribution of material and non-material wealth through the web of clienteles and patronal relations create incentives for people and organizations who could speak on behalf of non-dominant groups to be part of the system and follow the mainstream rules of the game and protocols of communication.

Can such system a or its major elements be stable for a long time? On the one hand, they have been existing for more than 25 years and thus proved their viability. On the other hand, the general trend in all post-Soviet states is the persistent drift towards more rigid rules, more straightforward majority nationalism and more homogenizing practices.

On the one hand, the evolution of these countries is not necessarily direct and straightforward: Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine demonstrated ups and downs in their "nationalising" policies, and the pendulum might be still swinging. On the other hand, a weak institutionalisation and systemic hypocrisy must provoke new demands and conflicts. Unfulfilled promises must serve as a political resource for the majority nationalist opposition and a ground for making claims. The maintenance of status quo and the principle of *laissez-faire* in language policies are vulnerable to criticism as favouring of a 'stronger' segment of the population to the detriment of the allegedly disadvantaged ones. Besides, the policies of

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[68] A. Polese, "The formal and the informal: exploring 'Ukrainian' education in Ukraine, scenes from Odessa", *Comparative Education* 46, no. 1, (2010): 58.

[69] J. Ishiyama, "Institutions and ethnopolitical conflict in post-communist politics," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 6, no.3, (2000): 64-5.

[70] I. Lustick, "Stability in Deeply Divided Societies: Consociationalism versus Control," *World Politics* 31, no. 3 (1979): 325–44.

[71] O'Leary, *op.cit.* note 20, 204.

[72] *Ibid*. 205.

ethnic tolerance and the maintenance of cultural pluralism are in some cases associated with authoritarian rule and Russia's expansionism and can be abandoned after a certian regime's fall or transformation. Also, weak institutionalisation is criticised by international organizations since they prefer clear rules of the game and legally entrenched institutions.

However, a weak institutionalisation of ethnic diversity generally has worked out well in the specific post-Soviet environment with its atomised societies, neo-patrimonial politics and economies, corrupt and efficient state machinery, blurry social boundaries, passive civil society, wide bilingualism and cultural 'creolisation'.

CONCLUSION

After the outbreak of violent ethnic clashes in the late 1980s – early 1990s, i.e. the time of the Soviet Union's dissolution, ethnic heterogeneity has not been generally among the major challenges to the stability of post-Soviet Eurasian states. Most post-Soviet countries are still multi-ethnic but not deeply divided societies since there populaces have common institutions, public spaces and channels of communication. The achievement in part can be explained by the general social conditions of the Eurasian countries – politics and economies based on patronage and clienteles, limited state capacities, blurred social boundaries, and wide bilingualism. In part, weak institutionalisation is a by-product of deliberate strategies pursued by the governments.

State action concerning ethnic and linguistic pluralism in the post-Soviet countries looks alike and demonstrates the same features. All position themselves as nation-states justified by a mixture of 'ethnic' and 'civic' nationalism, all recognise ethnic pluralism, all swear allegiance to individual rights and citizens' equality, and all pursue 'nationalizing' and homogenizing policies in different scale and pace while reserving room for multi-lingualism and minority activism. The fundamentals of these polices can be described as (1) eclecticism and inconsistency in official narratives about ethnicity and nationhood; (2) the priority of 'symbolic production'[73] as a substitute to instrumental policies with implementing practices lagging behind, i.e. a 'systemic hypocrisy'; (3) the lack of rigid rules and weak enforcement mechanisms; a loose legislation open to interpretations and to informal practices; (4) inclusive

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[73] P. Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (London: Polity Press, 1993), 29–73.

politics allowing for the co-optation of spokespersons representing different groups of the population; (5) no or little investments into ethnicity-based organisational settings.

The combination of these features allows for talking about a distinct post-Soviet model of diversity governance. Another reason for singling out this type of policy is its source which is definitely Soviet. However, the master plans in authoritarian and pluralism countries have partly different origins; while in the former the current policies rest on a deliberate strategy of top-down manoeuvring and control, in the latter the inertial scenario is an outcome of an equilibrium between different group aspirations and of a weak state capacity. In both cases, the outcome is weak institutionalisation of multi-ethnicity that means lack of robust organizational settings, uncertainty of constitutive and regulating rules, eclectics of the mainstream narratives and a deal of informality.

The absence of rigid and restrictive institutional frameworks and of strictly enforced normative requirements concerning language, citizenship, mass media and educational policies opens up numerous ways for different groups' social adaptation and thus to social cohesion. The outcome is the peaceful coexistence of people with different linguistic and cultural preferences and different views on how the state and nation shall look like. The entire strategy based on weak institutionalizations and individual practices from within this framework is likely to be transplantable and applicable in other geographic and social contexts.