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POLITICAL MOBILIZATION OF RUSSIAN SPEAKERS AS A CHALLENGE FOR UKRAINE'S ETHNIC POLICY?

Summary:
Ukraine has been an independent state for 25 years. During the years of independence the democratic world blamed Ukraine's political elite for the reluctance to carry out political, economic and social reforms in the country as well as for the lack of sustainable development, corruption in the state apparatus, unfair elections and administrative pressure. However, in the field of language policy and interethnic relations, Ukraine managed to gain success. Ukraine was one of the few post-Soviet states where there was no interethnic conflict.

Over the years of Sovietization in Ukraine, as in the most countries of the former Soviet Union, almost everyone understood Russian. It was spoken by many, but only in the imagination of Putin's propaganda did the Russian speakers suffer harassment. The political mobilization of Russian speakers has got its momentum in 2014.

We are convinced that Putin doesn't play fair, despite his desire to convince everybody that he does! In fact, the "protection" of Russians and Russian speakers was one of the reasons for the annexation of Crimea and aggression in Eastern Ukraine. The media in the Russian Federation (as well as the media from around the globe that had received their salary from the Kremlin) constantly repeated and still repeat "the Russians (Russian speakers, whatever) need protection from nationalists in Kyiv..."

Applying the value free approach, we try to determine whether this political mobilization of Russian speaking Ukrainian citizens could be Putin's labelled cards, a threat to the territorial integrity of Ukraine. Do Russian speakers face an oppression, which the Kremlin propaganda constantly speaks of? Is it possible to communicate freely in Russian in Ukraine without any fear of xenophobia? Could multiculturalism practices be helpful in Ukraine?

Keywords:
Russian speakers, aggression, multiculturalism, ethnic group, language.

Introduction

So called interethnic relations' conflict potential in post-Soviet countries was, and still is, relatively high (Chechnya, Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, etc.). However, in Ukraine there were no conflicts on ethnic ground for more than 20 years. The situation changed in 2013 after the Revolution of Dignity, the annexation of Crimea and Russia's intervention in Eastern Ukraine. There is a point of view that the ongoing war (conflict) in Eastern Ukraine (some parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, which hardly make up 3 percent of the territory of Ukraine) is a civil war. Such a view unfortunately can be found even in articles published in recognized academic journals. That is the result of Russia's soft power in action. As time passes it is hard to ignore the conflict in Eastern Ukraine is not a civil war, but rather a hybrid Russian-Ukrainian war. Such wars have happened throughout history, but this one is probably the first where all the methods and tactics of hybrid wars are in use. There was a fear after the Revolution of Dignity that due to the strong pro-European vector of Ukrainian foreign policy people inhabiting Eastern Ukraine (or business structures in Eastern Ukraine) would lose their economic preferences with Russia, would be bankrupt, and people would become jobless. There were also huge expectations that Russia would incorporate Eastern Ukraine after Crimea's annexation, and the population in that region would immediately benefit from the elevated Russian living standards. We stipulate that if there was some ethnic component in the conflict than it was created artificially by Russia and Putin's propaganda. Russian speakers in Ukraine (and in Eastern Ukraine, particularly) suffer negative political mobilization which aims to destabilise Ukraine from inside and then turn Kyiv back to the pro-Moscow foreign policy vector. Russian speakers in Ukraine seem to be hostages of Putin's geopolitics more than they are separate political subjects.

Statistical analysis was widely used in this paper. As mentioned below, there is a huge gap in time in official poll data which was held in 2001. Nevertheless, the ethnic map of Ukraine has not changed dramatically since 2001, which has been proven unofficially by think tanks and NGOs. Interviews and papers from opinion makers, politicians, and officials were used widely when writing this paper.

Mainly we aim to analyze official documents, interviews of Ukrainian political leaders, and analysts done by prominent global media. One point must be made clear: in this paper, we are dealing with military conflict between two states (the Russian Federation and Ukraine) and international aid to Ukraine including non-lethal military equipment. So some information concerning diplomatic and political designs at the time this paper was submitted could be classified. By comparing facts and information from open sources, official documents and press releases and interviews in the media, we try to conclude: is it a Ukrainian crisis, as the events in Eastern Ukraine are often referred to in global

media? What is the ethnic map of Ukraine? What is the attitude of Ukrainian speakers, bilinguals and Russian speakers toward Ukrainian independence, sovereignty, political institutions, the annexation of Crimea and the conflict in Eastern Ukraine? And could American or Canadian models of multiculturalism be applied in modern Ukrainian society?

Political Mobilisation of Russian Speakers in Ukraine

The state with elements of polyethnic society is a historically formed political and social reality in Ukraine. Its ethnic and cultural diversity before the times of the Ukrainian sovereignty (1991) hindered the consolidation of Ukraine's political nation. One of the most prominent objectives of governmental policy after re-gaining independence was to overcome the cultural separation of Ukrainian society it inherited from the past through a long existence of its territory in different countries (Austrian-Hungarian Empire, Russian Empire, Romania, Poland, etc.). During times of Ukraine's statelessness (or surrogate Soviet-era stateness), Ukrainian ethnic culture (in its broadest sense) could not fully implement the integrative creation of Ukraine's political nation. The main reason for that was its forced secondarity comparing to cultures that dominated and had political and other priorities in states Ukrainian territories belonged to. So it was in the past, and in Soviet times, when Ukraine was united but had no sovereignty and was not the subject of international relations. Since then, Ukraine has retained significant differences in the structure of the ethnic, linguistic, cultural, ideological, geopolitical and other orientations of its population. These differences produce contradictions on the basis of relevant interests. The establishment of the Ukrainian political nation has been slow yet irreversible. This permanence has become completely obvious since the Revolution of Dignity in 2013 and the Russian annexation of Crimea.

However, one of Ukraine's hallmarks has always been its specific cultural tolerance, its ability to perceive and absorb other cultures and views. Being parts of different states, this tolerance caused the erosion of the Ukrainian nation building process. The rise of Ukraine as a sovereign state enabled the transformation of weaknesses into creative possibilities. The status of the Ukrainian language (as the only state language) and support for other ethnic groups in Ukraine gave impetus to the formation of Ukraine's political nation based on mutual achievements.

In this paper, we will not discuss whether it is Russian aggression in Ukraine or "civil war" (the message widely supported and shared by Russian propaganda). It seems there is enough evidence for Russian aggression. We suggest browsing the internet, where one will find a great deal of photos and video content which clearly show Russian aggression in Ukraine. By this we do not only mean the obvious annexation of Crimea, as it is clear to the rest of the world except Russia that this was a direct violation of international laws, but

also the aggression in Eastern Ukraine. Many major news outlets' websites dedicate a great deal of space to collecting all possible facts on Russian aggression in Ukraine[1] as well as reports in recognized world media: facts on the deployment of Russian regular servicemen[2], Russian weapons (weapons produced and used only by Russian Armed Forces)[3], Russian-marked armored vehicles (allegedly somewhere in Pskov, Kaluga, etc.)[4] and the imprisonment of Ukrainian troops, Russian officers and soldiers who are on duty (reportedly after being captured on Ukrainian ground)[5]. The InformNapalm, one of the largest volunteer communities, conducted a set of presentations on August 28, 2015, which were dedicated to the systematization results of the OSINT investigations regarding the Russian military forces present in Eastern Ukraine. The volunteers have the biggest at that moment database with the evidence of the Russian aggression: at the moment of the presentation the database consisted of 116 incidents with more than 60 Russian military units and formations[6]. On August 19th, 2016, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine shared an updated presentation of defense intelligence from Ukraine on its website, which showed the strengthening of a Russian group of forces near the Ukrainian border[7]. On August 31, 2016, international OSINT group Bellingcat released a report called *Russia's War in Ukraine: the Medals and Treacherous Numbers* regarding medals Russian soldiers and officers received from the government *during peaceful times*. The group identified Russian servicemen who published imagery of awarded medals and this imagery are valuable because most of the higher

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[1] *Evidence of Russian Aggression in Ukraine. Related News Evidence of Russian Aggression in Ukraine,* Censor.Net.ua,
<http://en.censor.net.ua/theme/399/Evidence+of+Russian+aggression+in+Ukraine>
(1.08.2016).
[2] M. U r b a n, *How many Russians are fighting in Ukraine?,* BBC.com, 10.03.2015,
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31794523> (2.08.2016); M. Bushuev, *Evidence mounting of Russian troops in Ukraine,* Dw.com, 4.03.2015, <http://dw.com/p/1ElAd>
(1.08.2016).
[3] L. S c h l e i n, *Evidence Grows of Russian Military Involvement in Ukraine,*
Voanews.com, 1.06.2015, <http://www.voanews.com/a/growing-evidence-of-russian-military-involvement-in-ukraine/2803192.html> (1.08.2016); S. Walker, *Putin Admits Russian Military Presence in Ukraine for First Time,* TheGuardian.com, 17.12.2015,
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/17/vladimir-putin-admits-russian-military-presence-ukraine> (1.08.2016).
[4] J. T r e v i t h i c k, *This tank is Russia's secret weapon,* TheWeek.com
<http://theweek.com/articles/630001/tank-russias-secret-weapon> (1.08.2016).
[5] *Evidence of Russian Aggression in Ukraine. Related News Evidence of Russian Aggression in Ukraine,* Censor.Net.ua,
<http://en.censor.net.ua/theme/399/Evidence+of+Russian+aggression+in+Ukraine>
(1.08.2016).
[6] *Russian Presence. Incidents and Units Numbers,* InformNapalm.org, 20.08.2015,
<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/159jVqzSfz5gR-0YwsdnbeQMsNNEOwnhjJswkvqQNqm8/edit#gid=0> (27.08.2016).
[7] *Ibidem.*

Russian medals have a consecutive numbering, explicitly stating the number of medals awarded so far. So, imagery from two medals awarded at different dates allows us to calculate the number of awarded medals between both dates. The number of awarded medals, compared to the years before 2014, suddenly and strongly increased in 2014 and 2015. The large number of awarded medals "For Distinction in Combat", 4300 awards between 07.11.2014 and 18.02.2016, strongly suggests larger combat operations with active Russian military involvement in this period. Generally, the data suggest that more than 10,000 medals of all four considered types were awarded in the considered period. Therefore, we conclude that thousands of Russian servicemen participated in 2014 and 2015 in combat operations and were awarded with medals for their actions in these operations[8].

It could be stated that officially Russia did not recognize its involvement in Ukraine, but the Bellingcat experts' findings strongly contradict the Russian positions (that there were no Russian servicemen on duty were involved in larger combat operations in 2014 and in the first two thirds of 2015). This finding raises the fundamental question in which undeclared war the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation were involved in this period[9].

But what were the reasons for Russia's destabilisation in Ukraine now? The most common answers to this question have fallen into one of two categories: ethnicity and economics. The first view expects 'rebellion' to be more likely and more intense in areas that are home to large concentrations of ethno-linguistic minorities – in this case, Russians or Russian speaking Ukrainians[10]. Shortly after the annexation of Crimea, Vladimir Putin stated in his annual question-and-answer session on April 17, 2014: *As you know, President Yanukovych refused to sign the Association Agreement with the EU. No, he did not refuse to sign it, but said that he could not sign it on the EU conditions, because it would dramatically worsen the socioeconomic situation in Ukraine and affect Ukrainians. Yanukovych said that he needed more time to analyse the document and to discuss it together with Europeans. This provoked public unrest that eventually culminated in an unconstitutional coup, an armed seizure of power. Some liked it, and some did not. People in eastern and southeastern regions of Ukraine were worried about their future and the future of their children, because they saw a rapid growth of nationalist sentiments, heard threats and saw that [the new authorities] wanted to invalidate some of the ethnic mi-*

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[8] *Russia's War in Ukraine: the Medals and Treacherous Numbers,* Bellingcat.com, 31.08.2016, <https://www.bellingcat.com/wpcontent/uploads/2016/08/RussiasWarinUkraine_TheMedals_and_TreacherousNumbers-4.pdf> (31.08.2016).
[9] *Ibidem.*
[10] Y. Zhukov, *The Economics of Rebellion in Eastern Ukraine,* VoxUkraine.org, 10.11.2015, <http://voxukraine.org/2015/11/10/the-economics-of-rebellion-in-eastern-ukraine/#imageclose-17419> (27.08.2016).

norities' rights, including the rights of the Russian minority. On the other hand, this description is relative, because Russians are native persons in Ukraine... The essential issue is how to ensure the legitimate rights and interests of ethnic Russians and Russian speakers in the southeast of Ukraine[11].

The rhetoric of the Russian President hardly changed in two years later, when during the Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum in 2016, Vladimir Putin said that the West backed the *coup in Ukraine* and frightened Russian speakers and that the West supported separatism in the Russian Federation after the collapse of the USSR: *When we were able to cope with this we are faced with another problem. Well, there is no Soviet Union anymore, but for some reason the West needs to constantly move to Russian borders,* admitted Putin during his speech. He also said that the West supported the color revolutions, which *led to chaos*[12]. In addition, the Russian President assured that he would work with the opposition if *hey legally came to power. We have worked with them. Was it necessary to bring the coup's victims', causing civil war which scared the Russian-speaking population in the southeast of Ukraine in Crimea. For what is it?* Finally, Putin also stated that the participation of Russia in the conflict in Donbas was *a necessary measure*[13]. Unfortunately, it is hard to disagree with Timothy Snyder: *The grotesquerie remains politically relevant as Europeans discuss the future of Ukraine. Russia's leaders maintain that they have the right to dictate a constitutional structure to Ukraine that would allow Russia permanent control over the parts of the southeast that it now occupies while giving these districts the power to block any major initiative in Ukrainian foreign and domestic policy. The rationale that is given for this kind of radical federalization is that the Ukrainian government prevents people from expressing themselves in the Russian language. Europeans who know neither language and remain far removed from the conflict are sometimes inclined to accept this argument. They should not. If Europeans allow Russia to take control of the Ukrainian state, they will be setting a precedent for the invasion of one European country by another as a legitimate way to achieve political goals, and undermine basic structure of European political life as a whole*[14].

It is also obvious that such statements from the political elite considering so-called *fear for Russian speakers* could provoke people in Russian speaking

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[11] *Transcript: Vladimir Putin's April 17 Q&A,* WashingtonPost.com, 17.04.2014, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/transcript-vladimir-putins-april-17-qanda/2014/04/17/ff77b4a2-c635-11e3-8b9a-8e0977a24aeb_story.html> (27.08.2016).

[12] T. Kusok, *Putin poskarzhyvsia, shcho Zakhid naliakav rosiiskomovnykh v Ukraini*, Pravda.com.ua, 17.06.2016, <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2016/06/17/7112138/> (27.08.2016).

[13] *Ibidem.*

[14] T. Snyder, *Ukraine's easy, misunderstood Babel,* Politico.eu, 3.07.2015, <http://www.politico.eu/article/crisis-in-ukraine-talk-shows-in-language-war/> (27.08.2016).

regions to have different reactions. Moreover, various fake stories and even gossips were born. Pavel Dytiuk, a senior fellow at the Institute of Psychology of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine, believes that a so-called *gossip-bogey* exists in order to intimidate the local population and to prevent any action. As an example, he points out *Bandera's trains* (trains packed with far-right nationalists that should *put Crimean peoples on their knees*, though no one has ever seen these trains) and the *Right Sector* (a far-right organization which has no representation in Ukrainian parliament nor local councils). It seems everything depends on how we want to use the gossip. It could either work to strengthen the fear and say that *fascists came to kill everybody who is against them* or the same gossip can be used in a different light. It *mobilizes* the population to come out to block the way, remove a part of the rail and *resist*. Thus the task in Crimea to mobilize the population has been completed[15].

And here we come to the moment that an alternative explanation for conflict in Eastern Ukraine is economic opportunity costs. According to this view, as income from less risky legal activities declines relative to income from rebellious behaviour, participation in rebellion should rise. In his article in the "Journal of Comparative Economics" (and partly presented in the Ukrainian web based media "Vox Ukraine") Yuri M. Zhukov, Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Michigan, evaluates the relative explanatory power of these two perspectives, using new micro-level data on violence, ethnicity and economic activity in Eastern Ukraine. He found that local economic factors are stronger predictors of rebel violence and territorial control than Russian ethnicity or language. One of the key findings was that there was little evidence of either a "Russian language effect" on violence, or an interaction between language and economics. The impact of prewar industrial employment on rebellion is the same in municipalities where a majority of the population is Russian-speaking as it is where the majority is Ukrainian-speaking[16]. It appeared that *where economic dependence on Russia was relatively low, municipalities with large Russian-speaking populations were more likely to fall under rebel control early in the conflict. The "language effect" disappeared in municipalities where any one of the three industries had a major presence. In other words, ethnicity and language only had an effect where economic incentives for rebellion were weak*[17].

The huge amounts of micro-data used by the researcher look quite convincing. Despite the ethnocentric media coverage of this war in Russia and

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[15] *Ekspert rasskazal, kak vo vremia "russkoi vesny" duryly krymchan,* FreeCrimea.com.ua, 5.07.2016,
<http://freecrimea.com.ua/165324/2016/7/5/Ekspert_rasskazal%2c_kak_vo_vremya_%22r
usskoy_vesny%22_durili_krymchan> (27.08.2016).

[16] Y. Zhukov, *Trading Hard Hats for Combat Helmets: The Economics of Rebellion in Eastern Ukraine,* "Journal of Comparative Economics" 2016, Vol. 44, No 1, p. 11.

[17] Y. Zhukov, *The Economics of Rebellion in Eastern Ukraine,* VoxUkraine.org, 10.11.2015, <http://voxukraine.org/2015/11/10/the-economics-of-rebellion-in-eastern-ukraine/#imageclose-17419> (27.08.2016).

sometimes in Western media: *The data show that attempts to divide Ukraine along ethnic or linguistic lines are likely to fail. These results can also explain why the conflict has not spread beyond Donetsk and Luhansk. Home to a large concentration of enterprises dependent on exports to Russia, highly subsidized and traditionally shielded from competition, the Donbas became exposed to a perfect storm of negative economic shocks after the Euromaidan. No other region in Ukraine, or the former Soviet Union, has a similarly vulnerable economic profile. Without a compelling economic motive, a pro-Russian rebellion is unlikely to occur elsewhere in Ukraine*[18].

So as we can see, there was no reason to call the aggression *the protection of Russian speakers*. They were used as a reason and tool to destabilise Ukraine, turn it back from the Euro-Atlantic foreign policy vector and get it back into the sphere of influence of the Russian Federation.

Ukrainian/Russian Speakers in Ukraine: Statistical Analyses

Let us take a look at the language issues in Ukraine. According to the Constitution of Ukraine – *The state language of Ukraine is the Ukrainian language. The State ensures the comprehensive development and functioning of the Ukrainian language in all spheres of social life throughout the entire territory of Ukraine. In Ukraine, the free development, use and protection of Russian, and other languages of national minorities of Ukraine, is guaranteed*[19]. In 2005, only 35% of Ukrainian citizens were in favor of a single state *and* official language – Ukrainian being the one, with the possibility of other languages used at the household level. The situation changed in 2015 when the majority (56%) of respondents believed that in Ukraine the only official language should be Ukrainian, and the Russian language and languages of other national minorities can be used at the household level. Around a quarter (24%) of respondents thought that the Ukrainian language should be the state language, and Russian should be official in some regions of Ukraine. 14% of respondents were in favor of two official languages – Ukrainian and Russian. The options that stated that Russian should be the state language, and Ukrainian should be official in some regions, as well as Russian should be the state and official language support 1.4% and 1.1% of respondents, respectively[20].

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[18] *Ibidem.*

[19] *Constitution of Ukraine (2004, amended 2016)* (English version), Legislationonline org, <http://www.legislationline.org/documents/section/constitutions/country/52> (10.12.2016).

[20] *Identychnist hromadian Ukrainy v novykh umovakh: stan, tendentsii, rehionalni osoblyvosti. Informatsiino-analitychni materialy do Fakhovoi dyskusii "Formuvannia spilnoi identychnosti hromadian Ukrainy: perspektyvy ta vyklyky" 7 chervnia 2016r.* Razumkov.org.ua, 7.06.2016, <http://razumkov.org.ua/upload/Identi-2016.pdf> (27.08.2016).

According to a 2001 official poll the population of Ukraine is 77% Ukrainian and 17% Russian. No other ethnic group comprises more than 0.57% (Byelorussians)[21]. Unfortunately the next poll is scheduled for 2020, so for scientific research we need to use these data. A survey conducted in December 2015 by the Razumkov Centre, one of the leading Ukrainian think tanks, makes it possible to assess the link between linguistic identities of its citizens and other aspects. This relationship is evaluated through a comparison between the three groups of respondents – depending on the language they speak at home (mostly Ukrainian – 50% of respondents; sometimes Ukrainian, sometimes Russian bilinguals – 25%; mainly Russian and Russian only – 24%). Here and below there are some other findings from that survey[22].

Among the citizens of Ukraine, almost half (47%) identify themselves as Ukrainian speakers. For Russian speakers and the bilingual population they first associate themselves with their town or village (43% and 42%, respectively) and identify with Ukraine second (respectively, 30% and 38%). People identified themselves with their region: 15% Russian speakers, 11% bilingual and 10% of Ukrainian citizens and with the Soviet Union – Russian 4%, 3% and 1% bilingual Ukrainian. It is also notable a different feeling of civil belong among groups in Ukraine who speak Ukrainian, Russian or both languages. His Ukrainian citizenship is somewhat to be proud for Ukrainian speakers – 81%, 64% for bilinguals and 47% Russian speakers. Also it is noticeable that 39% of Russian speakers are either not proud or rather not proud (bilinguals – 28%, Ukrainian speakers – 13%). In all three groups, the majority perceives Ukraine as their motherland and would choose it if there was a choice. However, 10% of Russian speakers do not perceive Ukraine as their motherland and 24% would not choose it as their country if there is a choice, and 23% are undecided on the choice. Among Ukrainian speakers and bilingual citizens, most would choose to live in the European Union or in Ukraine, while 1% and 3% respectively would choose to live in Russia. Among Russian speakers the majority would also like to live in Ukraine or in the EU, but 13% would choose to live in the Russian Federation. Being proud of their country is necessary for more than half (56%) of the Ukrainian speaking respondents, while half (51%) of the Russian speakers put personal well-being as priority[23].

Being patriots of Ukraine consider themselves 86% of Ukrainian speakers, 70% bilinguals and 55% of Russian speaker respondents. Therefore, 34% of Russian speakers, 17% bilinguals and 8% Ukrainian speakers do not consider them-

[21] *About number and composition population of Ukraine by data All-Ukrainian population census '2001 data,* 2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua,
<http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng/results/general/nationality/> (27.08.2016).
[22] *Identychnist hromadian Ukrainy v novykh umovakh: stan, tendentsii, rehionalni osoblyvosti. Informatsiino-analitychni materialy do Fakhovoi dyskusii "Formuvannia spilnoi identychnosti hromadian Ukrainy: perspektyvy ta vyklyky" 7 chervnia 2016r.,* Razumkov.org.ua, 7.06.2016,
<http://razumkov.org.ua/upload/Identi-2016.pdf> (27.08.2016).
[23] *Ibidem.*

selves as patriots. Thus, in Ukrainian society issues of language and patriotism are directly related. All groups of respondents agree that in order to be considered a patriot, a person first must cultivate a love for Ukraine among their children, care for the welfare of their family, have respect for their country, its symbols, laws and government institutions, should know their country's history and culture and be ready to fight for the rights and freedoms and to protect the international reputation of the country. Being ready to defend the country against enemies and defend its territorial integrity as required for a patriot was estimated highest among Ukrainian speakers and lowest among Russian speakers. For Russian speaking respondents, the Ukrainian language and the constant use of it are much less important than for Ukrainian speakers and bilinguals.

There are very noticeable differences concerning the respondents' readiness to defend their country. In particular, 46% of Russian speakers are not prepared to defend their country in any way (on the battlefield or participate in volunteer movement), only 9% of them are ready to take weapons in hands, and another 24% are willing to participate in volunteer activities. Among Ukrainian speakers 23% of the respondents are prepared to protect Ukraine in arms, and 37% are those willing to participate in volunteer activities. Among bilinguals the results are, respectively, 14.5% and 31%. The differences in views are seen in relation to Ukraine's independence and its state symbols. Thus, 81% of Ukrainian speakers would support independence in a referendum, 64% of bilinguals, and 46% of Russian speakers would support independence. All the groups were most proud of or positive about the state symbols and attributes of Ukraine such as the flag, emblem, anthem, national currency and Ukrainian as the state language. Answers to questions regarding the overall assessment of the conflict in Ukraine show a very noticeable difference in approach between the Ukrainian and Russian speakers. Ukrainian speakers see the conflict as an aggressive war by Russia against Ukraine (65%), while the relative majority (31%) of Russian speakers consider the conflict as a fight between Russia and the U.S. for influence, and equal share (25%) perceive the political situation as the war of Russia against Ukraine and civil conflict in Ukraine. Bilingual citizens are more likely to support the assessment of the conflict as a war by Russia against Ukraine (42%). If 61% of Ukrainian speakers and 41% of bilinguals place the responsibility for the conflict on Russia, the Russian speakers (43%) place the responsibility on Ukraine and Russia equally. Another 16% of the Russian speakers tend to blame Ukraine first[24].

Summarizing the findings of this research, we can make some conclusions. These studies suggest that the language factor significantly affects various aspects of the identity of the citizens of Ukraine. Thus, the factor of the Ukrainian language combines with a higher level of national identity, patriotism, support of independence and readiness to protect their country, the need to be proud of Ukraine's achievements and evaluation of achievements and attitude to state

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[24] *Ibidem.*

symbols. Ukrainian speaking respondents are supporters of democracy; most of them share the goals and values of the Maidan. Among Russian speakers, only a third of them certify as speaking fluent Ukrainian, while among bilingual respondents only 59%. Most Ukrainian speakers and a relative majority of bilinguals support the current status of the Ukrainian language as being the only state language. If among Ukrainian speakers and bilinguals prevail Ukrainian national identity, two-thirds of Russian speakers claim different from the language's factor identity (regional identity, etc.).

Ukrainian cultural tradition is dominant among Ukrainian speakers and bilinguals. Almost half of the Russian speakers consider themselves to be the bearers of Ukrainian and Ukrainian-European cultural traditions, almost a quarter – the Soviet and only one in ten – Russian cultural traditions. Russian speakers are more likely to see Ukraine in the future as a state with regional multiculturalism. Ukrainian speakers feel themselves to be more European than other groups. For all groups a major obstacle to feel themselves to be Europeans is the material factor, but for Russian speakers cultural differences play a significant role too. So the use of the Russian language leads to the apparent weakening commitment to the Western vector of foreign policy and the strengthening of the pro-Russian orientation. Even during the war (Russia's aggression in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine), nearly half of the Russian speakers reported a positive or neutral attitude toward the authorities of the aggressor, while the overwhelming majority of Ukrainian speakers have a negative attitude towards them. Obviously, the differences in these estimations can cause tension between different groups of Ukrainian society. Russian speakers are more inclined to distance Western Ukraine from other regions and support the autonomy of the regions more. However, in all groups the vast majority do not support the secession of their regions from the state and their autonomy (independence).

There are also differences between different linguistic groups in estimating the conflict in Eastern Ukraine regarding the following issues: who is responsible for the conflict, assess ways of conflict resolution, methods of coexistence with the occupied territories, the attitude to the citizens who supported the so called "DPR" ("Donetsk People's Republic") and "LNR" ("Luhansk Peoples Republic") and the trials of the militants who committed heavy crimes during the conflict. As a result we see that the Ukrainian speakers place more responsibility for the conflict on Russia. There is a more noticeable military solution for the conflict and isolation of the occupied territories. Ukrainian speakers are less likely to understand and forgive the supporters of the so called "DPR/LPR" and members of their armed forces. Bilinguals and especially Russian speakers often place responsibility on both countries or on Ukraine alone, assess conflict on positions common in Russia's political discourse, tend to provide support to the occupied territories by granting them special status and are more tolerant to the supporters of the so called "DPR/LPR" and the members of their armed groups. However, the most important thing is that the existence of these differences does not negate
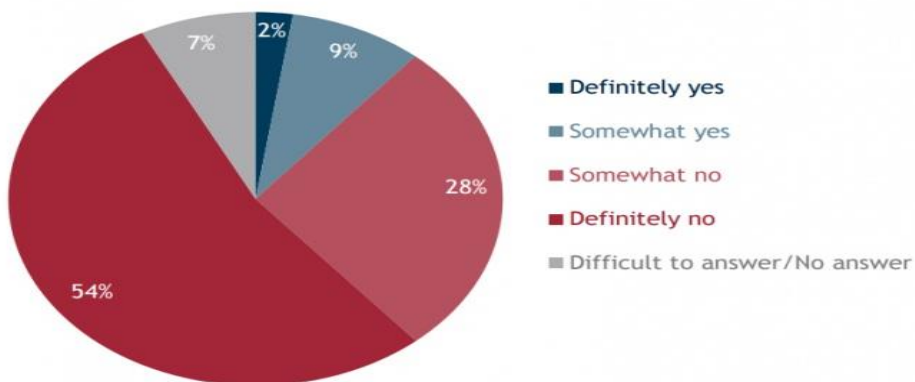
the possibility of reaching an understanding on key issues (especially taking into consideration consensus in all groups over the most fundamental issues of the existence of the state – the perception of Ukraine as a homeland, patriotism and support for the territorial integrity of the state). We believe that the featured issues should be emphasized and taken into consideration while making political decisions in this area and especially during the formulation and implementation of an integrated coherent policy of Ukrainian national identity.

Coming back to Russian speakers and bilingualism in Ukraine it is notable to cite Timothy Snyder, the Housum Professor of History at Yale University, who was invited to one of the political shows in Kyiv, Ukraine in July, 2015 who stated that *for Russia to invade Ukraine to protect the right of Ukrainian citizens to express themselves in the Russian language makes no more sense that Germany invading Switzerland to protect the rights of its German speakers, or France invading Belgium to protect the rights of its French speakers*[25].

There was another survey conducted by Rating Group Ukraine on behalf of the International Republican Institute in November 19-30, 2015, called *Public Opinion Survey Residents of Ukraine*. There are also some interesting findings from Table 1:

Tab. 1. Do you feel that the Russian-speaking citizens of Ukraine are under pressure or threat because of their language? (Question only fielded in Donbas oversample)

Do you feel that the Russian-speaking citizens of Ukraine are under pressure or threat because of their language?
(Question only fielded in Donbas oversample)

- 2% Definitely yes
- 9% Somewhat yes
- 28% Somewhat no
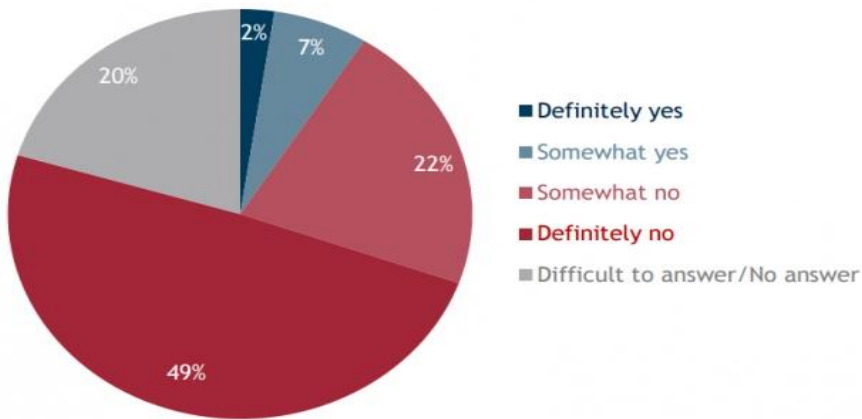- 54% Definitely no
- 7% Difficult to answer/No answer

Source: *Public Opinion Survey Residents of Ukraine. November 19-30, 2015,* Iri.org, <http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/2015_11_national_oversample_en_combined_natl_and_donbas_v3.pdf> (27.08.2016).

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[25] T. S n y d e r, *op. cit.*

We see that 82% of residents of unoccupied territories of Donbas are sure that there is no harassment of Russian speakers in Ukraine (and 54% expressed their position strongly). 11% see the existence of such oppression (but convinced by this are only 2%), and another 7% were undecided.

Tab. 2. Do you support the decision of the Russian Federation to send its army to protect Russian-speaking citizens of Ukraine? (Question only fielded in Donbas oversample)

Do you support the decision of the Russian Federation to send its army to protect Russian-speaking citizens of Ukraine?
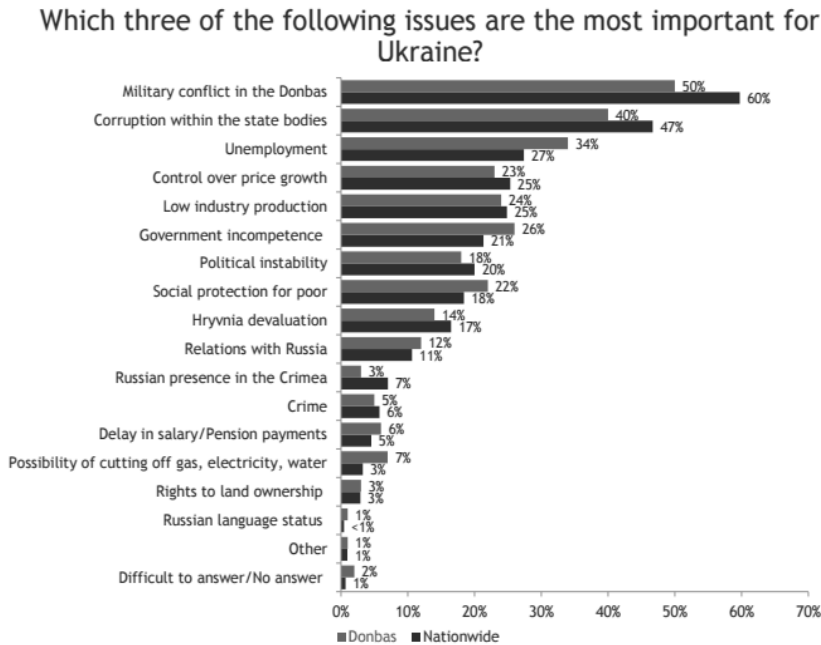(Question only fielded in Donbas oversample)

Source: *Public Opinion Survey Residents of Ukraine. November 19-30, 2015,* Iri.org, <http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/2015_11_national_oversample_en_co mbined_natl_and_donbas_v3.pdf> (27.08.2016).

As we see from Table 2, 71% of the surveyed residents of Donbas said they would not support Russia's decision to send Russian troops in *to protect Russian-speaking citizens of Ukraine* (49% of them definitely do not support this), 9% supported the decision (including the 2% who were completely sure), and another 20% were undecided (which is comparatively high).

From Table 3 we can make the conclusion on the importance of Russian language status for the people of Donbas and in Ukraine.

<u>Tab. 3.</u> Which three of the following issues are the most important for Ukraine?

Which three of the following issues are the most important for Ukraine?

Source: *Public Opinion Survey Residents of Ukraine. November 19-30, 2015,* Iri.org, <http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/2015_11_national_oversample_en_co mbined_natl_and_donbas_v3.pdf> (27.08.2016).

Moreover, in Ukraine, the tragic and controversial Kivalov-Kolesnichenko *On the Principles of the State Language Policy* of 2012 is still formally in force, despite all the tensions in the Parliament. After coming to power in 2014, President Petro Poroshenko declared that the language policy in Ukraine will be amended, but at the present time (September 2016), the repeal bill has not been signed, although it was not vetoed by the President. Its current status is *ready to be signed*[26]. So it is hard to see what suppression of Russian speakers Vladimir Putin observed in Ukraine.

The President of the United States of America, Barack Obama, commented on the situation with Russian speakers in Ukraine after the G7 Summit in Germany on June 8, 2015: *The costs that the Russian people are bearing are severe. That's being felt. It may not always be understood why they're suffering, because of state media inside of Russia and propaganda coming out of state media in Russia and to Russian speakers. But the truth of the matter is, is that*

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[26] *Proekt Zakonu pro vyznannia takym, shcho vtratyv chynnist, Zakonu Ukrainy "Pro zasady derzhavnoi movnoi polityky",* Rada.gov.ua,
<http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4_1?pf3511=45291> (27.08.2016).

the Russian people would greatly benefit. And, ironically, one of the rationales that Mr. Putin provided for his incursions into Ukraine was to protect Russian speakers there. Well, Russian speakers inside of Ukraine are precisely the ones who are bearing the brunt of the fighting. Their economy has collapsed. Their lives are disordered. Many of them are displaced. Their homes may have been destroyed. They're suffering. And the best way for them to stop suffering is if the Minsk agreement is fully implemented[27].

After Putin made it clear that he considered Russian speakers in Ukraine to be endangered, it looks like the frequently repeated joke in Ukraine – *I'm afraid of speaking Russian now, because Putin might want to protect me* – is not funny anymore[28].

Polyethnic State and Multiculturalism Issues in Ukraine: American/Canadian Practices

As we mentioned above, according to a 2001 official survey, Ukrainians make up 77.8% and Russians make up 17.3% of the total population of Ukraine. This means these two ethnic groups comprise more than 95% of the Ukrainian nation (and no other ethnic group make more than 0.6%)[29]. That is why we cannot say that Ukraine is polyethnic or a multinational state. We believe that Ukraine could be referenced as a *state with elements of multiethnicity*, as a state where one ethnic group dominates (Ukrainians), and there is a large national minority group (Russians) and a lot of smaller national minorities and ethnic groups.

Does the policy of multiculturalism suit the Ukrainian reality? Considering the experiences of the U.S. and Canada we will try to evaluate this question. Methodologically these are not completely proper examples as the U.S. and Canada are classic polyethnic states instead of Ukraine; but due to strong positions of multicultural politics in North America we believe their practices should be examined.

The main features of Canadian multiculturalism originated in international documents which were intended to protect against discriminatory manifestations of ethnic, cultural or religious minorities who differ on grounds of origin, language, culture, religion or race. The first impetus for the theoretical background of multiculturalism was an effort by Canadian sociologists to explain

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[27] *Remarks by President Obama in Press Conference after G7 Summit,* WhiteHouse.gov, 8.06.2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/06/08/remarks-president-obama-press-conference-after-g7-summit> (27.08.2016).

[28] I. V o r o b i o v, *Why Ukrainians Are speaking More Ukrainian,* ForeignPolicy.com, 26.06.2015, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/06/26/why-ukrainians-are-speaking-more-ukrainian/> (27.08.2016).

[29] *About number and composition population of Ukraine by data All-Ukrainian population census '2001 data,* 2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua, <http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng/results/general/nationality/> (27.08.2016).

the importance of diversity in society as well as the importance of preserving ethnic and religious differences of various groups. The next step was to mark the contribution of non-indigenous peoples in the political process of the country, its culture and its own enrichment. So in 1971 the official multiculturalism policy in Canada became a mainstream public policy.

Multiculturalism is also seen as antidiscrimination legislation, which makes it easier to integrate members of ethnic groups in the new social and political life. Therefore, the Government of Canada provides social assistance to ethnic groups, including the process of education, ensuring welfare and engaging immigrants or ethnic groups in the political process and social life of Canada. A package of social and economic benefits are provided, guaranteed and have a legal basis under multiculturalism. So being a member of an ethnic group means not only being an object of cultural services, but also gives members a way to incorporate themselves into vital spheres of political and social life. In Ukraine, there is a strong background for the official policy of multiculturalism regarding historic tolerance inside Ukrainian society. And that could be a benefit for the Russian ethnic group.

As Dickinson suggests, *the linguistic pluralism is a product of Ukraine's rich multicultural heritage, which stretches back for centuries. A melting pot land for as long as anyone can remember, Ukraine's multicultural past has helped foster a climate of tolerance that provides Russian-speakers with the kind of freedoms their Russian neighbours can only dream of*[30].

Finally, the policy of multiculturalism serves as a guarantee and legal confirmation of the legal rights of ethnic, cultural or religious minorities. Going back to the legislation of Canada and the U.S., providing ethnic groups with certain benefits isolates them in a group, called special group rights. Using the principle of impartiality and keeping cultural tolerance protects the legal rights of people and preserves their own cultural and linguistic heritage, ethnic origin, religion and the right for protection from discrimination on various grounds.

The Canadian and American experience can become a role model for Ukrainian ethnic policy as there are more than 120 ethnic groups, minority communities and refugees in Ukraine, and each of them are entitled to protection and the promotion of their culture. Canadian practices are a model for the international community regarding multicultural policies. For Ukraine, the Canadian experience of identity politics is a valuable example of the protection of national cultural values and the harmonization of national ethnic policy, including the history of national minorities in the national cultural heritage. Despite the difference in the form of government, the territorial structure, etc., relevant elements and mechanisms can improve the level of policy formulation and implementation. This includes encouraging experts and organizations of national

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[30] P. D i c k i n s o n, *Ukraine is World's Freest Russian-Speaking Country,* Bunews.com.ua, 4.07.2015, <http://bunews.com.ua/society/item/ukraine-is-worlds-freest-russian-speaking-country#.VZtAM1aL50A.twitter> (27.08.2016).

minorities to cooperate with government institutions when forming ethnic policy priorities.

However, we should admit the fact that multiculturalism policy could eventually lead to strong separatist tendencies in some ethnic groups. This political discourse began to threaten the social integration of European states, which caused public concern and the ruling elites of European nations. Instead of a classic multiculturalism policy, an intercultural dialogue based on the principle of reciprocity should take place; the process of cultural exchange must be a two-way road. Though multiculturalism should support and preserve diversity, it certainly includes the potential threat of the division and separation of ethnic groups. To avoid this risk (as in the case of the Russian ethnic group in Ukraine) ethnic policy based on the principles of multiculturalism needs to be balanced by other measures to achieve national consolidation, such as the creation of a unified educational, informational and cultural space; the introduction of patriotic education and the development of civil spirit; a consensus on the sphere of language policy; and the distribution of social and political values throughout society that is recognized as important and common to the political nation. Those values should serve as a foundation for the construction of the Ukrainian national identity common to all citizens[31].

But applying multiculturalism principles in Ukraine are not possible within the current "Russian-speakers-are-endangered" Kremlin discourse. Moreover, key principles of multiculturalism existed in peaceful Ukraine before 2013. Now suffering war trauma, Ukrainian society has some forecasts for its existence as *the danger of radical nationalism in Ukraine should not be denied, though this is a threat to the Ukrainian state in the first place, not to Russia or ethnic Russians… A weakened, egoistic Europe that abandons its own values will both strengthen Putin's regime and push Ukrainian society into ethnic nationalism as the only remaining option*[32].

Conclusion

In the case of Ukraine, there is a huge difference between ethnic Russians and Russian speakers. That exists due to the legacy of the Soviet Union (Sovietisation, Russification, etc.). Russia's policy of *protection for Russian speakers over the globe* is understandable from the position of Russian citizens, but is meanwhile unacceptable in the case of Ukraine. There was no real threat to Russian speakers in Ukraine from the times of the Revolution of Dignity until now. In order to keep Ukraine under its influence, the Kremlin used the label *endangered Russian speakers*. Today's Russian policy towards Ukraine should

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[31] A. K o l o d i i, *Amerykanska doktryna multykulturalizmu i etnonatsionalnyi rozvytok Ukrainy*, "Ahora" 2008, Vol. 6.

[32] T. Z h u r z h e n k o, *Hybrid Reconciliation,* Eurozine.com, 8.04.2016, <http://www.eurozine.com/pdf/2016-04-08-zhurzhenko-en.pdf> (2.09.2016).

be evaluated as not friendly. Its support of the Russian speakers in Ukraine is a real threat to territorial integrity of Ukraine. Using state controlled mass media to produce fraudulent stories was not fair to disintegrate Ukrainian society and put the state's territorial integrity and independence under question. In reality, Russian speakers in non occupied territories of Ukraine feel free to speak any language they want – either Russian or Ukrainian – but Russian speakers in the occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts suffer from this "care" from the Russian Federation. Multiculturalism in Ukraine is possible, but a complete restoration of the territorial integrity is needed. Moreover, Russia ought to see Ukraine as an independent subject and actor, not merely an object of the Kremlin's policy.

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