

## **Introduction**

A great amount of research in the twentieth century has been dedicated to the problem of ethnicity. Particular attention to this issue was given after the fall of Communism, due to peculiarities of it in the region. However, as Taras (1997) notes, even though the collapse of the Soviet Union brought about new interests, not all the outcome of that new attention of scholars have been very satisfying.

The purpose of the study is to reveal the peculiarities and main patterns of the development of the Soviet ethnic policy from 1924-1991. The research is designed in the light of the issue of ethnic conflicts in the territory of the FSU. We tried to develop the topic in the context of ethnic conflict analysis, thus contributing to the broader theory of ethnicity. The purpose from the practical point of view is that it could bring some insights to the questions of unitarism, federalism, to the issue of decentralization of the government, especially when it concerns multinational states.

It is aimed to find the relationship between the Soviet policy toward nationalities and development of ethnic conflict in the region, as well as reveal factors contributing to that development. By arguing that "... political imperative of successive empires--Ottoman, British, and Russian-- has been to disarm national aspirations, whether through force, provision of economic development, or skillful use of intrigue within indigenous elite" (Bremmer, 1997, 4), we try to reveal the framework within which that imperative occurred.

"It was the national conflict that proved the most fundamental threat to Soviet stability" (Bremmer, 1997, 3). However, the Soviet Union was one of those rare cases of history, when more than a hundred nationalities claiming that territory their homeland coexisted (virtually peacefully) in one state for several generations. Ter-Gabrielyan (1999) in this respect notes that

that type of pluralism where territorial unit corresponds to ethnic unit is possible only under tyrannical regimes. As regime democratizes, the growing tendency of lower status ethnic group to grasp the formal power results in political conflict, taking the form of ethnic one.

To describe the logic of Soviet nationalities policy development the paper would attempt *to give general tendencies, patterns of its development and to give the connection of it with the evolution of ethnic conflicts in the territory of the former Soviet Union.*

Being in some sense different from, in the other similar to the previous waves of ethnic conflicts in twentieth century<sup>1</sup>, ethnic strives on the territory of the former Soviet Union occurred in the environment of the transition. Hence, the search for legitimacy in newly emerged states undermines many peculiarities of ethnicity question. Ethnic policy in the former Soviet Union left its legacy on the evolution of ethnic conflicts during Soviet rule and in transition period. The study of it could reveal some facets of ethnicity issue development.

In this essay we argue that one of the main impacts on the development of ethnic relations was the sphere of cultural, symbolic meanings. More broadly, Soviet policy on nationality question, trying to foster the unique multiethnic “Soviet people” in essence intensified ethnic awareness.

The first part of the essay will dwell on the theoretical assumptions concerning the ethnicity issue. It will include the two main lines of thought in this respect: primordial and instrumentalist approaches. Then the peculiarities of ethnic conflict on the territory of the FSU, as well as those of "nationalities' policy" will be argued. The second part will introduce the main patterns along which the ethnic politics developed in historical perspective. Along with this line the evolution

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<sup>1</sup> Rappoport identifies three waves of ethno- religious conflicts in 20<sup>th</sup> century, where the first one was brought by the brake up of the British, French and other empires. Second one, occurred from 1945 to 1990 in the Middle East, Africa and Asia and the third one was the collapse of Soviet Union and Yugoslavia (Rappoport, 1997)

of identified ethnic conflicts will be outlined. The last part will concentrate on the characteristics of ethnic conflict and will trace their relationship with ethnic policy.

Thus, the examination of Soviet ethnic policy, identification of the nature of the ethnic conflict in the USSR and further development of analytical framework within which factors contributing to this or that evolution of ethnic conflicts could be discussed, may serve as a step in exploration of a unique and peculiar issue called "ethnicity."

## **Part One**

In this part the discussion of the contending views on the theory of ethnic conflict and its various facets is laid out. In particular here are examined the peculiarities of ethnic conflicts at the territory of the FSU and the characteristics of ethnic politics conducted by the SU government from 1924 to 1991 are also examined.

### **Defining the Theoretical Framework**

It is very difficult to set the boundaries between the sociopolitical and ethnic realm of the conflict in the SU. In Tishkov's (1992) (cited in Aklaev, 2000) opinion, any manifest confrontation along ethnic lines is the defining trait of an ethnic conflict. Rykalina (1995) also stresses that the multiethnic composition of the population of almost all the Soviet successor states means that virtually any domestic social conflict acquires an ethnic dimension. And here the main ways of thought among the scholars concerning the "ethnicity" issue become outlined. Some (primordialists) call that primordiality (overpowering, ineffable quality) is attributed by the individuals to the ties of religion, blood race, language, region and custom. The emphasis here is placed on "primordial affiliations": the in-group feeling that characterizes every human group,

the hostility felt for all "others", etc (Jourek, 2000). Ethnic conflict, according to this viewpoint is simply the open expression of latent, permanent attitudes. For example Connor (1994) (cited in Melberg, 1998) states, that "the national bond is subconscious and emotional rather than conscious and rational in its aspirations." The critique of this line of thoughts is that the primordialists have very static and naturalistic view of ethnicity, it is argued by the opponents argue, that people have the capacity to assume different identities in different situation.

Others (instrumentalists)- treat ethnicity as a social, political, and cultural resource for different interest and status groups. The proponents of this point of view are criticized for failing to take seriously the participants' sense of the permanence of their ethnies and for underplaying the affective dimensions of the ethnicity. For example, ethnic violence by Melberg (1998) is defined by well- known Prisoner's dilemma categories. Ethnic violence requires actors who are willing to risk their lives ("cooperate") and it seems that this action cannot be consistent with the assumption of rational and selfish players (who would defect) (Melberg, 1998). It is useful to bring the point of view of the other eminent representative of this line of thought, that of Russel Hardin (1995, cited in Melberg, 1998):

"Individuals have identified with groups so strongly that they seem to forgo their personal interests while seeking their group's interests...There may be foolishness, craziness, morality and extra-rational group identification at work for many participants in violent ethnic conflict. But there are given their field of play by the individually rational tendencies to group identification".

According to some scholars (Bowen, 1998), the term "ethnic conflict" misguides scholars, as soon as "...it has become a shorthand way to speak about any and all violent confrontations between groups of people living in the same country" (Bowen, 36, 1998). He argues, first, that ethnic identities aren't ancient and unchanging, but rather a product of modern politics. Second, that these identities do not motivate people to persecute and kill rather the social and economic

change, which seems to favor the other group, generates fear and hate. And third, that it is not ethnic diversity itself that leads to violence, but "the number of ethnic groups and their relationships to power, not diversity per se, that strongly affect political stability" (Bowen, 41, 1998).

From these two lines of thought (primordial and instrumental) we can argue about the causes of the ethnic conflict. To some scholars (Lake, Rothchild, cited in Baird, 2000), ethnic conflicts arise from competition over scarce resources and the conflicts could be resolved if the parties could compromise so that it will allow both sides an access to a scarce resource. However, as Baird notes, concerning many conflicts on the territory of the SU, it is difficult to find such source lying at the center of the tension. One could argue that sources of ethnic conflict are laid in economic transition. Rather, as the studies of Paul (cited in Baird, 2000) show, tensions seem to rise not in times of economic transition, but in times of political transition when "the power of one group relative to the other was shifting" (Baird, 2000). True, the transition is accompanied by the transformation of political institutions- ethnic tension is used by the elite to distance themselves from the old regime (Ropers, 12, cited in Baird, 2000); institutions and ideologies that were used in past are now de-legitimized and thus rising politicians use the only means "currently available" to mobilize the society- the ethnicity (Gellner, in Baird, 2000). However, as Baird notes, ethnic tensions do not exist only in states in political transition.

Melberg (1998) argues, that these two theories could be mutually complementary in that sense that both explain different motivations that are mutually dependent. As Ellingsen (2000) points out there are three broad preconditions for a group "to mobilize to violence":

- Common identity. These are factors based on language, history, and religion. These factors seem to be more important than territorial boundaries and seldom match them perfectly, which in its turn make the ethnic identity particularly conflict prone.
- Frustration, which happens when expected need satisfaction increases linearly over time, whereas the actual need satisfaction levels off after some time.
- Opportunity. This one is well- designed in a rational- actor model of political violence, when “organization, resources, and opportunity become available” and “people mobilize for collective action including rebellion, if they calculate that it is in their interest to do so”.

The listed facets of ethnicity are of great importance. However, it is useful for the analysis of the impact of policy on ethnic conflict development in historical perspective to trace the evolution on cultural level, while not diminishing the political- social factors as well. So, in this research we will use the Young’s (1995) concept of ethnicity, where the ethnicity rests upon a singularly potent set of symbolic resources and affective ties, but operates in a fluid and changing way in the political arena. The units of identity are not timeless, but evolve in the social praxis. Thus, Young’s (1995) definition “lies in his identification of the three main and interactive nexuses of relevant ethnic expression ” (Le Vine, 1997), that is in the sphere of “collective primordial meanings,” in its uses of in the politics of resource allocation (instrumental sphere, according to other researchers), and in the socio- political construction- the making of collective meaning and identities.

The important and underlying feature of ethnicity is not “what is it” but “what it is perceived to be” (Connor, 71, 1996). For example, Azeris, “probably a mixture of ethnic groups in the

region that were converted to Islam” (Baird, 2000) think that they are the pure descendants of Caucasian Albanians. The ethnic ties cannot be changed, they are perceived to be “the most reliable social unit, an outgrowth of family” (Baird, 2000) and in time of change they become the only constant one.

In this respect it is important to analyze the issue of identity and that of territoriality. What is it- an epiphenomenon derived from economic or technological factors or independent variable? Deconstructivists, such as Hobsbawm (1983), and Anderson (1985) argue that nation is an epiphenomenon. They treat nations as a kind of “imagined community,” the successor of the “religious community” and “the dynastic realm”(Armstrong, 25, 1995). Here Anderson admits, that “all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact are imagined” (ibid,25). Other scholars argue that any kind of socialization makes “world closeness” artificial rather than biological in origin. And further, “protection against chaos is achieved by a construction of history that establishes a “memory” shared by all socialized individuals in the collectivity” (ibid,26). Thus if the memory is socially constructed is that permanent or somehow evolves along continuum? “In a long perspective,- argues Armstrong,- it appears that the nation, or nationality fits in a continuum of identity structures including at least religion or class” (ibid,26). The strength of “boundary mechanisms” (semiotic) characterizes all the elements of that continuum. In this respect it is important to view the role of religion and as the term ethnoreligious implies, the categorical distinction between religion and ethnicity is slippery. From here we can departure that temporal linkages between ethnicity related issues must be explored instead of resorting to direct comparison of isolated elements.

Ethnicity is a sense of ethnic identity (Brass, 1995), which has been defined by De Vos (in Brass, 1995) as consisting of the “subjective, symbolic or emblematic use by a group of people...

of any aspect of culture, in order to differentiate themselves from other groups". An ethnic group, concludes Brass, is a subjectively self-conscious community that establishes criteria for inclusion into and exclusion from the group. Dragunsky (1993, cited in Aklaev, 2000) brings the essential role of identity in ethnic conflict development on the territory of the FSU and distinguishes two major periods in the process of the "imposition of ethnicity" upon Soviet ethnopolitics: (1) the introduction of obligatory inclusion of each individual's ethnic identity in his official documents (passports); and (2) the salience of ethnic identity during the collapse of the communist ideology and political system, when "imposed ethnicity" became the major instrument of political mobilization and activity of large social groups.

That issue becomes particularly important when we analyze "national identity" in time of nation-building. Nation-building needs a politically defined territory. As Kolsto (2000) defines, "the degree of territoriality or territorial attachment of various ethnic groups in a polity can be a highly charged political question" (ibid,229). The territoriality is determined not only by demography, geography and history but also by perceptions and ideas (Kolsto, 2000). Territoriality is, thus, important with the connection with national identity. So, what is the impact of policy on two facets of ethnic conflict: on identity and perceptions of territoriality formation? Those questions would be addressed in this research.

According to Baird, there are four aspects of modern interethnic conflict: the symbolic "identity" nature of the conflict; the value-related nature of the issues in conflict; the mass-societal level at which the conflicts played out; the lack of central control for either side of the conflict. Each conflict is mainly a conflict over identities, and thus over symbols (Baird, 2000). As Nodia (cited in Otirba, 2000) shows, each side of Abkhazian conflict was radically different in answer to the question "what is Abkhazia?", because for Abkhazians the answer is "Abkhazia



is Abkhazia”, for Georgians- “Abkhazia is Georgia”. “Ethnic conflict is over the right to have an identity, the right to claim certain symbols as one's own, the right to be equal to others, and often the right to exist” (Baird, 2000). The other aspect is the value-related nature of the issues in the conflict. As Baird puts it, “while a person who believes in abortion might be persuaded to disavow this belief, an Abkhaz is much harder to convince that he is not Abkhaz, but merely a confused Georgian.” These feelings are intensified when there is murder on the basis of one’s nationality. The third factor is that it based on “masses”. “Elite-outbidding” (Sisk, in Baird, 2000) occurs when elite trying to get power manipulates a group's ethnic identity. As Lake and Rothchild (in Baird, 2000) argues, “ethnic activists and political entrepreneurs are as much a product as a producer of ethnic fears”, Paul (in Baird, 2000)- ethnic entrepreneurs may play an inciting role, but their role is not necessary.

Thus, it can be said that in sense of explaining different mutually reinforcing factors the two theories intersect. In this respect the process of identity formation has a great impact on the development of ethnic conflicts. As the major lines of ethnicity related issue along which the discussion will proceed are given, the remaining topic in this section is the definition of conflict and the outline of its main characteristics.

As with any other social phenomena, there is no single and universal definition of ethnic conflict. Different definitions reveal some facets of the issue. Zerkin (1998) identifies ethno-national conflicts<sup>2</sup> as multidimensional function of social, economic, political and cultural characteristics of ethnoes and nations (Zerkin, 1998, 281). The conflict evolves around discrimination of interests (legal, economic, cultural, etc). He shows that there are subjects of ethno- national conflicts (national minorities, elites, etc) and agents of conflict ( those groups,

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<sup>2</sup> According to him, "ethnos" characterizes community of people by innate natural characteristics, whereas the idea of "nation" represents sociocultural notion (Zerkin, 1998, 278).

which are organized into national movements). The growth of ethnic conflict involves more and more elements of subjects of conflict: first, it is more active part of intelligentsia or bourgeoisie; then the other stratas of population become involved into conflict and agents of conflict become organized (Zerkin, 1998, 283).

Jourek defines ethnic conflicts as ones, which arise as a result of the clash of interests or group rights. Melberg (1998) argues in this respect, that only when a person is selected because he/she belonged to one particular ethnic group we have a clear example of ethnic violence. To Miall (cited in Baird, 2000), ethnic conflicts involve the rights of ethnic groups to maintain their identity, to have equal status with other groups and to have equal access to decision-making. In some multiethnic societies this or that ethnic group finds itself in a position when it feels the threat to its identity, which can lead to frustration and polarization. According to Baird, modern ethnic conflict is fought between two groups- dominant and oppressed. Here it is essential to state a fact often neglected by scholars-- topic investigated by us shows the failure of such assumptions. Concerning the conflicts on the territory of the FSU it is necessary to distinguish between the conflicts within the country (Kirgiz minority's rights in Uzbekistan) and those arising from the incorporation of the land of this or that republic into the other. The latter ones are not the conflicts within the state, rather intrastate. If not- they could have been resolved by local administrative means and integrative policies. The very fact of the existence of such type of conflict in the territory of the FSU, which was the consequence of arbitrary division of the territories, proves the need for further elaboration of the term "ethnic conflict" concerning this type of conflicts on this or that stage of development.

What are then, "nation", "nationality", and "ethnic group"? In the Covenant of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, article 6 (cited in Wansai, 2000) "nation" is

defined as a “group of human beings which possesses the will to be identified as a nation or people and to determine its common destiny as a nation or people, and is bound to a common heritage which can be historical, racial, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, territorial or religious”, and further, “a section of a people constituting a minority, living on a portion of its ancestral territory, incorporated into a State, other than a State represented by that people, is included in this Article’s definition”. This distinction (national and ethnic) may be put on the other ground, proposed by Ellingsen (2000), who argues that the territorial- political unity known as *la patrie* with roots in the French Revolution of 1789 has competed with the German national romantic concept of *das Volk*, based on a common language, religion, culture and history.

Rappoport (1997, 5) presents several characteristics of ethno-religious strife in 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as:

- the boundaries of existing states never coincide with ethnic communities;
- most struggles last for a long time, on the average six time longer than wars between states;
- issues of identity lying at the heart of these conflicts resist compromise;
- when several relatively equal concentrated groups prevail, the violence would be the most distractive;
- as parties strive for exclusive control of space, ethnic cleansing is to be expected;
- each struggle have a distinctive pattern of spatial dispersion;
- space or geography normally determines, which foreign states are more persistently involved in ethnic strife.

Kovaks (1998) presents such social issues as "social stratification" (which shows that in societies where social class is synonymous with ethnic membership, ethnic relations are more likely to occur), "discrimination" (where public policies can fuel ethnic conflict by restricting the

economic activities of certain ethnic groups or by limiting political participation), "group identity" (in ethnically divided societies, where group identity is strong the conflict is very likely to appear), "size of ethnic group" (when different ethnic groups are too small and weak to control the center, interethnic cooperation is more likely to result). The other issue concerns the cohesion of the group, where if that is strong it is more likely for agents to evolve into struggle for self-determination.

Gurr (1994, cited in Ellingsen, 2000) combining other research, presents a list of causal factors in ethnic violence: (1) the smaller group may come to fear that it will be demographically overwhelmed, losing its identity due to coercion and assimilation (Cringhton, MacIver, 1991), (2) both sides experience fear of domination by the other, (3) intraethnic politics grows into a competition in "ethnic outbidding" (Rothchild, 1991). Ellingsen (2000) after analyzing the vast array of ethnic conflicts proves, that countries, in which the size of the dominant group is less than 80% of total population are more prone to domestic conflict than countries in which the dominant group equals or is higher than 80% of total population. Besides, conflict is higher with several groups than with few or many groups. The point that the bigger the size of the largest minority the more likely is the occurrence of domestic conflict can be said to be very disputable. Moreover, the lower the socioeconomic level, the higher risk of domestic conflict (Ellingsen, 2000).

We see that the theoretical explanations intersect, complete each other or present contradictory approaches. The views presented here need further elaborations, where opinions of the other schools of the ethnic conflict theory will also be presented in this part of the essay. So, in order to see how the politics impacted on this or that causal factor, we should trace the peculiarities of the ethnic conflict on the territory of the FSU.

## **Peculiarities of Ethnic Conflicts in the Territory of the FSU**

Ethnic conflict appears to be a permanent form of social and political struggle in the modern world. (Jourek, 2000). The breakup of the USSR brought to the end not only a great multiethnic empire, but also marked the launch and in many cases the continuation of the whole array of the ethnic conflicts. Payin (1996) brings the following numbers: twenty ethnonationalist conflicts were identified on the territory of the FSU from 1988-1991. To Alaev (1998) between December 1986 and December 1995 a total of over hundred such conflicts were registered on the territory of the FSU. Summarizing all the data published in the press, the number of dead, including missing persons, goes to 80,000 (Alaev, 1998). According to the USSR Interior Ministry a total of 782 people were killed and 3,617 wounded in such conflicts in 1991 alone. Other social casualties are the refugees, whose number in 1991 had reached 710, 000. By December 8, 1991 (the date of the official dissolution of the USSR), the number of registered ethnoterritorial claims amounted to 168. That was twice as many as in March 1991 and four times as many as in 1990. Nine percent of the territory of the former USSR is being contested in two or more disputes (Aklaev, 2000). In the early 1980s, a team of US researchers led by George Demko (1991) started to generalize and map territorial claims advanced by various national movements and revealed that practically all former Soviet Republics have some type of border dispute with their neighbors. There is a consensus among scholars that the former Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia alike have experienced several different kinds of ethnic conflict, many with deep historical roots, rather than a single type. Therefore, it is not helpful to view all post-Soviet ethnic problems as involving the same grievances, issues, and remedies. The variety of ethnic disputes and their causes is reflected in the different typologies of ethnic conflict in the post-Soviet space that can be found in the recent literature.

The first proposed typology of conflict emphasizes the role of political elite in the conflict development. For instance, Payin (1996) distinguishes several types of "inter-ethnic" conflicts, which "interacting with one another produce a cumulative effect," such as:

- "conflicts of uncontrolled emotions" (riots and pogroms), in which the new elites, in pursuit of their political objectives, direct the public's anger and resentment toward other ethnic groups as scapegoats (anti-Armenian feelings at the start of Dushanbe disturbances of 1990);
- "conflicts of ideological doctrines". These ones have deep historical causes. Here political demands bear a strong nationalist tinge. Such conflicts have "non-pragmatic" character (e.g. Karabakh case). Among the conflicts of "ideological doctrines" are the following: (1) conflicts over the administrative status of a territory (e.g. Abkhazia case), (2) conflicts between the titular nationality and ethnic minorities which concern the rights of the minorities in the newly independent states (inter-ethnic confrontation in Baltic region in Moldova); (3) consequences of deportations of peoples in 1937-1944 under Stalin to regions of forced resettlement or during their return to the ethnic motherland.

-conflicts of "political institutions". The conflicts of this type are rooted not only in ideological doctrines, they also represent the conflicting political interests of different parties, political alliances, and institution of government (territorial dispute between Russia and Kazakhstan). As Payin (1996) notes, "with time, nationalist movements have turned from political opposition into a political base for the leadership of the republics; republics have turned into independent states and territorial claims have become elevated to the level of government policy."

Another kind of conflict typology combines a typology of the conflicting units with that of the conflicting issues, which merely lists the existing topics without giving theoretical foundation

for them. An example of this can be found in Etinger (1993, cited in Aklaev, 2000). Etinger suggests the following classification of conflicts between nationalities within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS): (1) *territorial* conflict associated with the issue of reunification of separated ethnic groups (Nagorno- Karabakh and, partially, South Ossetia); (2) conflict stemming from the desire of an ethnic minority to exercise the right to self-determination by creating an independent state (Abkhazia case); (3) restoration of territorial rights to those who had been subjected to forced deportation (the conflict between the Ossetians and the Ingush over the Prigorodnyi district); (4) territorial claims of a post-Soviet state to a neighboring successor state (claims of Estonia and Latvia to some areas of Russia's Pskov region); (5) conflicts that emerged as a result of arbitrary territorial changes made in the Soviet era (the Crimea and, potentially, boundary issues in Central Asia); (6) conflicts associated with the material interests of the ruling elites (Grozny or Kazan, on the one hand, and Moscow, on the other hand); (7) conflicts associated with factors of a historical nature, preconditioned by the traditions of a long-standing struggle for national liberation against the parent state (the confrontation of the Confederation of Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus and the Russian administration); (8) conflicts caused by the presence of "deported peoples" on the territory of other republics (the Meskheta Turks in Uzbekistan, the Chechens in Kazakstan); (9) conflicts associated with discrimination against the ethnic Russian population in post-Soviet states; and (10) linguistic disputes disguising ethnopolitical grievances and status claims of ethnic groups (Gagauzia and the Trans-Dniester area within Moldova).

Medvedev (1993, *ibid*) believes that the initiation and escalation of ethnic conflict are, in fact, results of the processes of national self-determination that arose in the wake of *perestroika* and directed to the establishment of the priority of the collective rights of an ethnic group over

the rights of the individual. The main conflict-generating factors, according to Medvedev, are disintegration of state structures of society at all levels; confrontation between regional elites and the center; struggle between ethnic elites for positions of power; conflict between nationalist and former communist forces, or the disguise and conservation of the communist regime by means of sovereignization (the Central Asian case); consolidation of pro-imperial political forces; and the absence of political strategy on the part of conflict participants.

The third kind of typology, almost self-evident, is based on the underlying "matrioshka" type nationalism which reflects the hierarchy of ethnoterritorial units within the former Soviet Union and, to a considerable extent, of post-Soviet Russia as well. While producing broad categories as possible basis for theoretical assumptions, this typology also allows one to evolve the discussion of identity formation, territoriality and role of elite formation in the conflict. Thus, Zerkin (1998) identifies three types of ethnic conflict in the SU. The first one was among "the center" (federal state) and republics. The other one was within the republics, among the ethnic majority an ethnic minority. The third one were the conflicts among the ethnic structures not having the state status within Russia. Zerkin's (1998) main idea is that ethnic conflicts came into force in 1985-87 years, however we argue that the latent period of conflict evolution, or formation were seen long before the end of the century. Yaroschuk (1991, cited in Aklaev, 2000) identifies five main spheres of conflict in the USSR: (1) relations between the central Union authorities and the Soviet republics; (2) relations between the Soviet republics; (3) relations between the government of a Union republic and ethnoterritorial autonomies within the Union republic and also between the autonomous formations in the republic; (4) the status and problems of ethnic minorities that do not have an ethnoterritorial formation within a Union republic; and (5) the



status and problems of divided ethnicities. The subdivision of the USSR into Union Republics was the prerequisite for the development of nationalist separatist movements.

Bremmer's approach states the relationship between a constituent actor-types of national conflicts (Bremmer, 1997), i.e. relations between the center, titular nationality and non-titular nationality, where the word center will be called as a term interchangeable with the state and government, as an institution which holds the power to use coercive force; titular nationality- is the nation, which for any numbers of economic, demographic, cultural, political reasons has been vested with administrative power in a given region, as opposed to non- titular one.

According to Bremmer (1997), while “titular ” relates to the special status of a nation in relation to the “center,” (Russians in Russia), that status varies with hierarchical rank (Russian in Armenia). Thus, nations could be considered titular and nontitular in different contexts. The author here argues about the difference among the status of titular nationalities. That is the first-order (Union republics) and second-order (ASSR) titular nationalities. So with this four actor-type fifteen types of interactions are possible with hypothesized objectives of each actor-type (table 1).

The center- titular nationality relationship was one of integration- liberation, where Center tried to integrate: “to establish a singular set of overarching norms and values” (Bremmer, 1997,15), and titular nationality tried to liberate, that is to thwart external rule. The relationship of center- second-order nationality was one of integration- collusion, where the center as in the first case tried to integrate, and second-order nationality- to collude with the center (as it found itself threatened by titular nationality “directly above it”). The latter case is true with center-non-titular nationality relationship, but here the center tried to assimilate the non-titulars. The relationships of first-order titular- first-order- titular, second-order- titular- second-order- titular,

non-titular- non- titular were one of competition having different sources, such as land, political influence, natural resources, etc. The remaining three dyads are first-order titular- second-order- titular, first-order titular- non- titular, second-order- titular- non-titular- where their objectives were described by Bremmer as domination-liberation.

Table 1

	Center	First-order titular	Second-order titular	Non-titular
Center		Integration	Integration	Assimilation
First-order titular	Liberation	Competition	Domination	Domination
Second-order titular	Collusion	Liberation	Competition	Domination
Non-titular	Collusion	Liberation	Liberation	Competition

It is worth keeping in mind that the dissolution of the USSR in 1991 provided for the disappearance of two upper-level types of ethno-political conflict: conflicts between the Soviet federal center and Union Republics, and between Union Republics. All the remaining types, though modified, have persisted in the successor states (Bremmer, 1997, Taras, 1997).

Yarugina and Marchenko (1992, cited in Aklaev, 2000) note that the new type of ethnic conflict on the territory of the former USSR is related to the legacy of unresolved ethnoterritorial problems (Crimea in Ukraine, Abkhazia within Georgia, the Dniester area within Moldova, etc.). Since the disintegration of the USSR, conflicts in the Russian Federation have followed a

process of ethnoterritorial "sovereignization" which repeats previously existing patterns of conflict: (1) conflicts between the federal center of the Russian Federation and republics within Russia (former autonomous republics of the RSFSR), and (2) conflicts between either ethnically defined republics and/or between ethnically defined republics and non-ethnically defined regions (oblasts and krais), between republics and ethnic minorities within a republic, etc.

We see that the mainstream of typologies stems from the problems arising from the territorial division of the SU along ethnic lines. So, further we would dwell on the theories analyzing causes of ethnic conflicts.

At least two sets of causes of ethnic conflict in the former Soviet Union are identified and discussed in the literature: (1) causes related to Soviet and pre-Soviet legacies, and systemic causes; and (2) causes resulting from the process of rapid sociopolitical change itself, specifically from economic reform and processes of postcommunist democratization.

The broad set of factors are those which are derived from the legacies of the Soviet period in general and the legacy of institutionalized ethnicity, the nexus between ethnicity and territoriality, and the ethnopolitical hierarchy of inequalities in particular (Aklaev, 2000 )<sup>3</sup>. Other legacies of the past include socioeconomic disequilibria and the unbalanced socioprofessional structures of different ethnic groups, as well as the history of assimilation and cultural discrimination under the Soviet regime, which increased the salience of language and religion as sources of ethnic conflict (ibid). It is vital to take into account the critical role of the ethnohierarchical structure of the USSR "federation," the "matrioshka" type federalism which constituted the structural setting of ethnopolitical conflicts. Ethnicity was institutionalized on the group level by the creation of a federation of ethnoterritorial units, governed by indigenous political elites and organized into an elaborate administrative hierarchy (ibid). As it is argued

further, the degree of economic, cultural, political, and many other rights and the opportunities to satisfy the interests of many peoples depended on the status that was ascribed to an ethnicity within the rigid structures of the USSR federation. Only fifty-three of the more than one hundred Soviet nations were officially identified with a particular territory and so afforded rights by virtue of their national-territorial status--the so-called "titular" nationalities. Fifteen national groups were given the highest status of Soviet Socialist Republics (SSRs) or "Union Republics," which together encompassed the entire nation. Directly accountable to and within the territories of the Union Republics, in the order of descending status, were twenty Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics (ASSRs), eight Autonomous regions (*oblasti*), and ten Autonomous districts (*okruga*). The rights of each of these formations were enumerated in the Soviet Constitution, including areas of dependence, guaranteed institutions, rights of autonomy and--in the case of the Union Republics--secession. Finally, there were also "peoples without territory," i.e., without ethnoterritorial formations of their own, which, under Soviet conditions, meant deprivation of any collective rights of the ethnic group.

Glezer and Streletsky (1993, cited in Aklaev, 2000) identify six types of causes of ethnoterritorial conflicts currently prominent in the successor states: (1) claims for a change of the national state to which the territory belongs; (2) claims for change of belongingness and status of the territorial unit; (3) lack of autonomy of ethnic groups and desire to attain autonomy; (4) ethnic heterogeneity of an ethnoterritorial formation; (5) problems of ethnic groups divided by national political borders; and (6) physical inability of a given ethnicity to live on a territory because of its environmental degradation. Ethnopolitical conflicts of the first two types make up two-thirds of the total number of disputes. The authors go on to identify five stages in the escalation of territorial ethnic conflicts: (1) claims put forward in the form of a declaration; (2)

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<sup>3</sup> We divide here these two sets, although they could be considered not separately.

introduction of ethnoterritorial claims accompanied by the supporting activity of the masses; (3) conflicts without human casualties; (4) interethnic clashes resulting in casualties; and (5) interethnic wars. Of the total number of ethnoterritorial disputes, 40 percent have not gone beyond the second stage and 15 percent are beyond the third or fourth stage. The Karabakh-Azerbaijan, Georgia-Ossetia, Georgia-Abkhazia, Ossetia-Ingush, and Moldova-Pridnestrovje conflicts are at the fifth stage of interethnic warfare (Aklaev, 2000).

Brown (cited in Jourek) having summarized the scholarly literature on the causes of ethnic conflict, set them up in four main categories: structural factors (weak states, intra-state security concerns, ethnic geography), political factors (discriminatory political institutions, exclusionary national ideologies, elite politics), economic/social (discriminatory economic system, "trials" of modernization) and cultural/perceptual factors (discrimination against minorities and the factors which have to do with group histories and group perception of themselves and others) (Jourek).

As Tishkov (1992, cited in Aklaev) notes, "the peculiarity of the development of interethnic relations on the territory of the former USSR consists, in the author's opinion, also in the coexistence of two ethnic systems within its boundaries, the "centralized" and the "dispersed" systems, as well as in the absence of ethnonational statehood for the numerically large Russian ethnic group".

More broadly, ethnic conflicts in FSU are pre-determined by historic circumstances and triggered by the difficulties of the transitional period. Thus, according to scholars (Miller, 1992, cited in Aklaev, 2000), nationalism was the only efficient means of achieving massive mobilization which resulted in the irreversible disintegration of the totalitarian regime. It is true to say that any political conflict on the territory of the FSU acquired ethnic dimension as it was on ethnically diverse and patchwork populated area, however, the ethnic politics as unique

feature brought its seal on the evolution of the ethnic conflict. So it is essential to reveal the role of politics in the process of conflict development, to find out the link of the former to the causal factors of conflict, as well as to identify the impact of ideology.

### **Contending Views on Peculiarities of Ethnic Politics Conducted by the Soviet Union Government from 1924-1991.**

As Shah (2000) points out, "the age of nationalism, and the concurrent assumption that people could be cajoled, persuaded, or coerced into subsuming ethnic divisions into a more inclusive ideological identity, on a broad scale, didn't work.s"

Every social conflict takes place within a social structure that qualifies it in various ways. As Esman (1997) argues, "ethnic politics constitutes an important dimension of public affairs, pervading the environment in which public administration functions" (Esman, 1997). Esman shows two expressions of the relationship between public administration, economic development and ethnic politics. First, internal structures of public administration contain rewards for ethnically identified communities. "The criteria and the practices governing recruitment to valued positions reflect quite accurately which ethnic community is effectively in charge" (Esman, 1997). Second, public administration is the "principal" channel through which resources are distributed.

The collapse of Russian Empire was itself a big ethnic conflict. The SU inheriting many traits of dealing with it and brought its new unique ones to resolve the problem. In the first years of formation some territories were given independence (Poland, Finland), the others were organized into federal state USSR with the right of republics to secede ( Zerkin,1998,291). Marxist doctrine in essence implies the notion that "...two neighbors are of different backgrounds- ethnic or

otherwise- but have enough food to eat and a means to live comfortably, they will coexist peacefully” (Avakyan, 1991). The principle of internationalism was declared as official principle of the state. As Zerkin (1998) notes both integration and differentiation of national-ethnic groups occurred in the FSU. The nationalities question "... was supposed to occupy only a minor role , a question of form in the constitutional structure that in turn had to carry out the directions of the superior party structures (Fowkes, 1997). However, the politics of “russification”, repressions, deportations are vivid examples of importance of ethnicity question in such multiethnic society as was the FSU.

State strategies, according to Ter-Gabrielyan (1999), could be classified into two types- strategies of confrontation (state tries to coerce ethnic groups, f.e. by prohibiting the use of other than state accepted languages), which could evolve onto assimilationist policy; and strategy of accommodation (this one is seen mainly in well-established democracies). For the Soviet Union various types of strategy of confrontation could be identified according to Ter-Gabrielyan (1999), such as cultural genocide (in Karabakh), forced migration (deportation of Turks-Mesketians), ethnic cleansing (events in Gali region of Georgia). As Ter-Gabrielyan (1999) states, the policy of assimilation can be a result of deliberate state policy or/and a result of structural inequality in the positions between dominant and marginalized ethnic groups. Here we should note that assimilationist policy besides its inclination toward particular ethnicity was also a part of more broad strategy- strategy of building "a new man" with different psychology and different values.

In this analysis one specific element of the Soviet nationality politics requires a special attention, that is the so called “fifth point,” the record of nationality in Soviet passports. This point implied an obligatory identification for all citizens according to nationality. A man, as

Soviet authorities stated, had two identities- first he was Soviet, then he was the bearer of one of 120 nationalities.

When the passport was first (1932) introduced, each person was permitted to choose his/her nationality. In the future, when new citizens were given the passport, they automatically inherited the nationality of their parents. If the parents were of different nationalities, the citizen was obliged to choose either the nationality of mother or of father. Francine Hirsch (cited in Simonsen, 1999) describes that process as "... a spectacular effort to make sense of the USSR's mosaic of peoples," with "...deciding which peoples should feature on the official lists of census nationalities and which ones should be merged with their neighbors or 'simply' eliminated"(Simonsen, 1999). The inclusion of the fifth point shows the contradictory character of the first stages of the USSR's ethnic politics. On the one hand that inclusion served as preservation of ethnic identity, on the other hand, motivated by the Stalin's doctrine of "rassvet" (flourishing), "sblizhenie" (coming closer), "sliyanie" (merger) the record of national identity should have marked the first stage of "peoples' development."

It is worth to mention two polar views of scholars on this issue. Some (Brubaker, Hajda, 1993) say that the Soviet state not only passively tolerated but actively institutionalized the existence of nationalities, as soon as it established nationhood and nationality as " fundamental social categories sharply distinct from the overarching categories of statehood and citizenship" (Hajda, 1993).

Others (Zaslavsky, in Simonsen, 1999) occupy a different position, arguing that the Soviet politics actually served to "water down" ethnic particularities, and prepare the way for a homogenization of the population of the USSR. According to him, passport system indeed established "rigid" boundaries between ethnic groups. However, in practice, as cultural



assimilation was rapid among new ethnic middle class (as the most educated, more readily accepted Russian language and culture), national intelligentsia lacked the incentive to further develop its ethnic language. Passport system "protected" the ethnic group's middle class against competition, thus, this ethnic groups "will stand naked and exposed to rapid assimilation: they will have lost all ethnic, linguistic and cultural characteristics" (Zaslavsky, cited in Simonsen, 1999).

The point is, that there were two parallel processes, one of cultural assimilation of non-titular minorities and republics' elite and the other of the encouragement of the culture of specific ethnicity. While some ethnic groups were granted territory and "the written history of the land", the others were doomed to extinction, as they represented the minority in the terrain of Republic's titular nationality. The titular nationality's culture was protected insofar as it assumed the fitness into the constructed image of Communist society development. Once the ethnicity as category began to express itself in broader terms, it was brought into the ground (at least in perceptions of Soviet leaders). One of the numerous examples of it- the events in Yerevan at 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Genocide. The tools of cultural assimilation (the overwhelming number of Russian schools in Union Republics, the quantity of printed books) were the boundaries within which the ethnic aspirations were doomed to be held. As Zaslavsky quoted Kulichenko, one of the scholars of Soviet ideology, the danger was not in the awakening of ethnic consciousness and feelings as such, but rather " the greater danger lies in allowing such processes to develop spontaneously, without any guidance" (Kulichenko, 1972, cited in Simonsen 1999).

So, the question is what were the factors that contributed to the presentation of the fifth point? The analysis is going on three levels: political, cultural and economic. The same line is also introduced when we analyze the USSR formative years.

One of such factors is that compulsory identification of the fifth point in 30s became the tool of repressions of various ethnic groups. That process continues in World War Two and after. Simonsen (1999) notes the factor of administrative control, not only relating to ethnicity but also in a wider context. The internal passport for decades were closely related to the system of residence (propisky) permission.

The other factor is that that by playing "ethnic card" and processing the well-designed image of "friendship" of people in connection with ideological doctrines, the system tried to construct the Communist culture on the level of value system. To Reshetar (1989) the federal system was adopted to facilitate pursuit of "the goals of military defense and expansion and to restore Moscow to the status of imperial capital"(Reshetar, 1989, 212).

However, at the same time the fifth point served to inhibit a shift of cultural identity and to promote cultural assimilation. As Veljko (in Simonsen, 1999) points out, one of the unintended consequences of Soviet nationality policy was the ethnic homogenization in Union Republics "since even in cases of mixed marriages children often choose to be members of the titular nationality in order to be eligible for preferential treatment" (in Simonsen, 1999). That process took place mainly in Union Republics and to a lesser degree in RSFSR. As it is said when you choose one big stone, you inevitably at the same time lose the other one, and as Brubaker (in Simonsen, 1999) notes, "...the internal passport and fifth point were not intended by the Soviet authorities to play the role they in fact did. Rather, it was an irony of history... that nationality became and remained a basic institutional block of the avowedly internationalist, supra-nationalist, and anti-nationalist Soviet state."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> In 1997 the new passport system was introduced in Russia, where there was no obligation to note the belonging to this or that nationality.

Then, summarizing all above mentioned information, what are the factors that destabilizing the situation on the territory of the FSU helped to promote the unleashing of inter-ethnic conflicts? Scholars (e.g. Alaev) put them in the following broad categories:

- the economic crisis, aggravated by the breakdown of the relations of unitary economic complex, decline of the standard of living and unemployment
- “geopolitical interests toward the colossal den of the anguished “bear” on the part of the far abroad and not-so-far abroad ” (Alaev, 1998)
- The multinational nature of the country and the “mosaic-like and mixed-settlement” patterns (Alaev, 1998).

So, according to the above mentioned the following characteristics of the ethnic conflict could be identified: political-economic, demographic, cultural-historical. Among demographic characteristics it could be mentioned the distribution of nationality composition of the USSR, the change of the ethnic group's share of population over the period of time<sup>5</sup>, as well as population size. That will reflect the mosaic- like patterns of the settlement of peoples. Among politico-economic characteristics could be outlined the political status in the FSU, the power-relationships among the actors involved, the role of elite, geopolitical interests. Historical-cultural characteristics comprise the issue of language, historical patterns, identity-related issues. These are the more important ones included in broader categories, that simplify the comprehension of the ethnic scene and gives better understanding of the comparative framework's variables, which will be used further.

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<sup>5</sup> This characteristic can't be used alone as a factor to explain the issue.

## **Operationalization of Research Questions**

Thus, it is tend to find the relationship among the evolution of the ethnic conflict and nationality policy of the FSU. So, in accordance to the purpose of the study and above mentioned propositions we identified the following research questions:

1. What were the general tendencies of ethnic policy development from 1924-1991?
2. What was the Soviet policy toward identified ethnic conflict in specified period of time?
3. What were the characteristics of identified ethnic conflict in the Soviet Union?
  - demographic characteristics
  - politico-economic characteristics
  - historical-cultural characteristics
4. What were the differences and similarities among the characteristics of identified ethnic conflicts?
5. What were the differences and similarities among studied ethnic politics?

## **Methodology Presented**

In this essay we are going to use comparative framework, one that tends to assert differences and similarities of each ethnic conflict. Further, we need to analyze the data and find main patterns of policy development. Finally, we will analyze consequences of ethnic policy in 1991-1996. Thus, using historical approach, analysis of different historical and secondary sources, it is tended to construct comparative framework, which would serve as a base for an analytical research.

In our paper we take the one proposed by Bremmer (1997), as that framework allows best of all to follow to the patterns of ethnic politics development in the FSU. Ensuring in this research

that model, we thus try to conceive the peculiarities of the issue by tracing the main politico-administrative lines of “the resolution of nationality question” in the FSU.

Bremmer’s proposed typology although is reflected in broad terms; it lets to conduct the analysis in accordance with its category, leaving much room for changes within this framework. In this essay it was tried to dwell on along these lines and to take cases of “liberation-domination” dyads, as soon as they are of primarily importance to the focus of this research. We aimed to integrate in our model the conflicts that are/were among the three actor-types, i.e. first-order titular, second-order titular and non-titular ones. It was tended to trace the politics of the center toward the actors of the conflict of each case. However, we purposely omitted the second-order- titular- non-titular case, as their case bears strictly local character and if so they should be analyzed in broader context which do not coincide with the purpose of this particular study.

Thus, we will study three relationships among the actor- types<sup>6</sup>:

- first-order titular and second-order titular (Georgia-Abkhazia case) liberation-domination
- first-order titular and non-titular (Karabakh-Azerbaijan case) liberation-domination

For each case historical-cultural, demographic and polical- economic characteristics are identified, based on which the further analysis is given.

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<sup>6</sup> While the Transcaucasia is viewed as the hottest spot in terms of actual interethnic violence, Streletsky (1993, cited in Aklaev) warns that the successor states in post-Soviet Central Asia can be regarded as potentially even more explosive because of the legacy of territorial demarcation of the 1920s, which is still vastly perceived as unjust by many regional ethnic groups.

## **Part Two**

### **The Analytical and Historical Foundation of Ethnic Politics**

#### **Conducted by the SU**

First let us see the framework of ideas along which the further politics later developed. The main idea of the theory of Marxism regarding the ethnic issues is that “the working class already by its nature is free from the ethnic prejudices, and its all-spiritual development is humanistic and internationalist”(Marx, cited in “National Politics of CPSU”, 1981). There are two progressive but contradictory forces, according to Marx. First one is the tendency toward free national development, and the other one is toward internationalization, toward assimilation. The "oppressing nations do not let oppressed one to develop" (ibid, 1981, 15), so the tendency toward internationalization in capitalist world leads to the inequity of nations. Thus, the foundation of contradictions is social inequity. That means that conflicts among the nations will disappear with the liquidation of class antagonisms, see classes. The struggle of proletariat against bourgeoisie is nationalistic in form but internationalist in the essence (ibid, 1981, 9).

Lenin describes the essence of bolshevik nationality policy in the following terms: (1) the struggle against the nationalism of any type, (2) the unity of workers of different nationalities, (ibid, 3) the struggle against the "Great Russian nationalism"(ibid, 10). As argues Simonsen, Lenin's in 1920s distinction between "oppressed" and "oppressing" (Russians- Velikorosses) peoples clearly did influence the Soviet policies. Self-determination in this case is the "tool" toward "coming closer" of nations in "right" way and toward "right" result. However, as it was later stated by Bolsheviks, "the right on self-determination is inferior to the right of worker class for the confirmation of its power” (from the speeches, Kuleshov, 1997, 279).

In 1913 Stalin wrote a brochure “On National Question”, which marked the lines of Stalin’s policy toward nationalities. This work treated “cultural autonomy” as bourgeois, “...although for many ethnoses, and for diasporas in particular, its organization in our <Soviet> time would have been the first acceptable step toward self-determination”(Alaev, 1998). Stalin divided all the peoples by the level of their ”development”- those, which attain high level of maturity, and those that do not. Later this principal outlook was marked in putting the peoples in Socialist Republic, Autonomous Republic, Autonomous Region, and Autonomous Okrugs, which besides the political-administrative division put differences in rights. As Alaev (1998) concludes, one of the results of this politics was that “over a hundred peoples didn’t acquire any territorial political formalization and remained without a statonim in such repressive conditions a number of ethnoses were doomed to extinction.”(Alaev, 1998).

So, according to this work of Stalin, as national movement is a bourgeois movement (the bourgeoisie of an oppressed nation struggles against the bourgeoisie of the ruling nation for national self-determination and for the right to exploit its own tribes-people) and in the Soviet this class was eliminated, so did the national movements. The principle of internationalism was laid in the foundation of favorite Communist mottoes.

Thus, what type of territorial- administrative division was the most coherent in this respect? We should note here that after the so called February Revolution, the plan of national-state construction had changed (1981). If the first plan (on the second session of Russian Communist Party) was to create a centralized state in oblast territorial autonomy terms, afterward that plan was changed and the new one became to create a federation of Republics as the transitory step toward the fusing of the nations. The final result- the creation of a formal federation was reached

through the steps dictated by the historical developments and political necessity for bolsheviks at that time. In this section it is tried to reveal the patterns of the prehistory of the USSR.

**Prehistory of Soviet state formation: 1917-1920.** The collapse of Russian empire was itself a big ethnic conflict with the disintegration along ethnic lines and with the formation of nation states (Hajda, 1993). With the advent of Provisional Government in February 1917, new changes in the nationality politics of RSFSR were not conducted (Kuleshov, 1997). The old (before 1917 designed) administrative division remained in Russia till 1918. Aiming to strengthen the executive vertical line, Provisional Government had its Nationalities' Office. In 1917 national movements, new national parties began to activate. That period is characterized by so called "regionalism" with wide range- from the demands of cultural autonomy to the intentions to secede (Kuleshov, 1997). For example, if before the 1917 the organizational center for Muslim movement was Duma fraction, on that base the whole structure of Muslim nationalist movements were formed afterwards.

On June 10, 1917 the Ukraine declared a national- territorial autonomy, in response to which the Provisional Government refused to accept the Declaration. That triggered even more the process of "regionalism." If Mensheviks position in this field was to create cultural-territorial autonomy at that time, Lenin claimed for self-determination, the well-known motto of Bolsheviks. Already in the first months of Soviet rule, Bolsheviks showed, that "the most important thing for them is the strengthening of their social model and its potential expansion in broader geopolitical areal" (Kuleshov, 1997, 207).

On November 2, 1917 (after the Revolution) Soviet Government adopted the "Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia". This document promised the non-Russian nationalities complete equality, the right of self-determination, including the right to secede. The Soviet



regime by that recognized anticommunist Ukrainian People's Republic and new government of Finland (Reshetar, 1989). In February 1918 the Transcaucasian Seim was created, in April- the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic was declared, which dissolved in May. In the same month Republic of Armenia, Republic of Georgia and Republic of Azerbaijan were created. In the second half of 1917 the Union of the Mountainous Peoples declared the Mountainous Republic, which was liquidated in 1919 by General Denikin. In December of 1917 the People Republic of Moldavia (Republic of Bessarabia) was created. So, in 1917 the Russian Empire began to disintegrate precisely along ethnic lines: Finland, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine, Belarus, Armenia, Georgia declared their independence; native governments were formed in Central Asia and Volga- Ural region (Hajda, 1993).

In 1918 the first Constitution of RSFSR was written which assumed the administrative division on national-territorial principle (as the old one). According to the Constitution of 1918, the division of the Federation should have been done by ethno- territorial principle. (article 49, (d), Constitution of the Russian Federation, 1918). The Constitution didn't define the difference between the autonomous and sovereign part of Russia. During the Civil War and economic crises a whole array of self-proclaimed governments of oblasts were declared (Kuleshov, 1997). The tendency toward decentralization continued. By 1918 there were 20 such territorial units in the newly emerged Russian Federation. In 1918, on the third All-Russian convention of the Soviets, Russia was declared as the federation of regions, created on national as well as territorial principle. So, in January 1918 Soviet Russia was a Federative Republic with Donsk, Kuban etc. Republics.

Soviet Russia invaded Armenia in November 1920<sup>7</sup> and in February 1921 Georgian SSR (Reshetar, 1989,15). Between 1918-1920, the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh stood up to defend their homeland. In 1918, when Republic of Azerbaijan was created the dispute over Nagorno Karabagh began which lasted in 1918-1920.

**Karabakh--Azerbaijan conflict development.** In December 1920, the authorities of newly-created Soviet Azerbaijan declared the renunciation of their claims to the territories of Karabakh, Nakhichevan and Zangezour and the were admitted as part of Armenia and on 12, June, 1921 the Soviet of the People's Commissars of Armenia adopted a decree declaring Nagorno Karabakh an inalienable part of Soviet Armenia (Hovhannisyian, 1996). However, the Chairman of the Council of people Commissars of Azerbaijan Narinmanov changed his position by arguing that by that “we gave rise in Azerbaijan anti-Soviet groups” (from historical certificate in Hovhannisyian, 1996). On 4, July, 1921 the session of the Bolshevik Party Central Committee’s Caucasus Bureau decided to leave the region in Armenia (ibid). However, by a judicial decision taken by the Bolshevik Party Central Committee’s Caucasus Bureau on July 5, 1921, Nagorno Karabakh was incorporated into Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist republic.

As Goble argues (in Hovhannisyian, 1996), by creating asymmetric power relationships among the regions, Stalin could pass his politics more easily. The unknown example of Karachai/ Balkar peoples is the other example of that policy. The Karachai and the Balkars are essentially the same people, whereas the Kabardins and the Cherkess speak two different dialects of common language. These peoples in Stalin era were forcefully divided into Karachaevo-Cherkessia and Kabardino- Balkaria administrative units (Connor, 1996). Migdalovich (in

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<sup>7</sup> Legran, B. (the Plenipotentiary Representative of RSFSR in Republic of Armenia) in 1920 wrote (cited in Kuleshov, 235):"By the moment of military actions in Armenia the inner coup d'état was prepared, when from the important positions were removed not reliable people, and by plan the Government of Armenia should had asked to bring the Red Army into the Republic".

Hovhannisyan) argues that the decision was to lure Turkey. Freyer (ibid) argues similarly, that is the Soviet- Turk relations played a definite role, as the passing of Nagorno Karabagh to Azerbaijan was a concession in political relations of Soviet Russia with Ataturk's Turkey. Garbis Armen (cited in Papazian, 1990) presents evidence that it was Lenin "who was eager to see Ataturk's emerging realm joined to the emerging Soviet State." That policy led to the Treaty of Kars (Sep.-Oct. 1921) by which to Ataturk's Turkey Kars, Ardahan, Surmalu were given; Akhalkalak and Akhaltsikhe were given to Georgia; and Nakhichevan was given to Azerbaijan -- all these territories were historically Armenian (Garbis Armen, 1990).

In 1923, part of the territory of this area was formed into the Autonomous Oblast (region) of Nagorno Karabakh, and was later renamed the Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Oblast.

**Georgia- Abkhazia conflict development.** The idea of a Caucasus Confederation had its origins in the spring of 1917. Caucasian unity was proclaimed at the first Congress of Mountainous Peoples in May 1917 in Vladikavkaz with Abkhazia in it. In November of the same year the Abkhazian people's Congress in Sukhumi elected the first parliament-- the Abkhazian People's Council. The situation in North Caucasus very quickly altered with the increasing savagery of the civil War and the formation of the Terek Soviet Republic in March 1918 (Lakoba, 1997). On 11 May 1918 the independence of the Caucasus Mountain People' s Republic and its separation from Russia were announced. This Republic included Dagestan, Chechen-Ingushetia, Ossetia, Kabarda, Karachai-Balkaria, Abkhazia, and Adigeia.

The Transcaucasian Democratic Federal Republic broke up after the formation of the Mountain People's Republic and on the same day-26 May 1918- the Democratic Republic of Georgia was proclaimed, with Abkhazia outside the Georgian territory. On 17-19 June 1918, troops from Georgian Republic supported by Germany landed in Sukhum and virtually occupied

the country (Lakoba, 1997). In March 1921 Georgia SSR recognized Abkhazia under Lakoba as a Soviet Republic. That status remained unchanged till April 1930; afterwards Abkhazia became autonomous Republic. In 1919 the Supreme Soviet in Abkhazia was elected, which in 1920 presented to the Uchreditelnoe Sobranie of Georgia three projects of Abkhazian Constitution (Gogsadze, 2000). In 1921 the Democratic Republic of Georgia adopted a Resolution by which Abkhazia was admitted as an “autonomous unit of the Republic of Georgia” (Gogsadze, 2000). The Abkhaz administration was autonomous in all spheres except military, external, financial, lawmaking, custom, transport, agrarian spheres. So, it is evident that it was autonomous only in very narrow sense. Abkhazia in 1921- “the nation of proletariats” (Otirba, 2000)- acquired a statehood, but the name was given, as Otirba (2000) shows, not by the name of nationality, but by the name of territory. As after the Bolshevik Revolution Nestor Lakoba led Abkhaz peasants in an effort to prevent the “annexation” by Georgia, heroes- revolutionaries were at the same time the heroes of the movement for freedom and statehoodness (ibid).

**The SU creation.** By 1921 the Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian Republics had entered into treaties that governed military, economic, external affairs till 1922, when non-Russian Soviet republics and Far Eastern Republic (liquidated in 1922) signed a protocol that RSFSR would represent them at the Genoa Conference (Reshetar, 1989).

After the Civil War bolshevic leaders needed to pass from the treaty- based politics to “stronger” one was needed more and more. Kuleshov (1997) argues that the main step was done in 1922 during the Ukrainian Communist Party Central Committee meeting. The question about the creation of the Special Commission on nationality issue was put for debate. The Commission was created and Stalin was declared a Chairman. The main debate was evolved along two lines: some communists called for Confederation on the base of Union Treaty (which could be

annulled), the others claimed that the issue of nationalities should be already “thrown away as useless one in Soviet Republic” (Kuleshov, 1997, cited from the materials of the Central Archive).

In August 1922 the project of the resolution on the relations between the RSFSR and independent republics was signed by Stalin. That plan, later called the “plan of autonimization” was rejected by many leaders of the Communist Party, and especially Lenin. It, in particular stated, that the external, military, transport, financial affairs of independent republics were to join with those of *RSFSR*; narkomats (ministries) of provision, labor, national economy of that republics were subordinated to the directives of the corresponding narkomats of *RSFSR*; the organs of the struggle against the counterrevolution was subordinated to those of *RSFSR* (emphasis added); other narkomats such as education, justice, internal affairs, health, social security were left under the local subordination (the project of Resolution, 1922). We see that the first plan suggested by Stalin emphasized the role of RSFSR. However in October, 6, 1922 the other project, called “union”, the “Resolution on the relations between the Russian Federation and independent Republics” was put on the floor for the debate in the 1922 Session. The Resolution was passed and in December, 30, 1922, the Soviet Union of four republics (as confederation) – Russian Federation, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic , Transcaucasian Soviet Socialist Republic (Armenia, Georgia, Abkhazia, Azerbaijan) <sup>8</sup>(which was declared in December, 1922)- was declared. As it is said in that declaration- “the core conception of construction of the Soviet authority ... put the wide masses of the Soviet workers on the way of one united (or unified) family” (Declaration about the formation of the USSR, December, 1922).

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<sup>8</sup> In 1921 Abkhazian Union Republic was established, which entered the Transcaucasian Federation as a treaty partner with the Georgia Soviet republic.

As Kuleshov (1997,235) notes, "the unclear scheme of the federation of Soviets, which gave a foundation for autonomous actions had changed by more clarified image of the union of the nations (the federation of soviet national republics but not the federation of the Soviets)". So, the state autonomy began to confess only for narods (peoples) which had their Soviet but not for the every regional Soviet as was in 1918.

Having studied the relevant literature we have figured out that the patterns of ethnic conflict development would be best presented if divided into the following order:

1. 1924-1930- Policy of Nativization.
2. 1930-1941- The Policy of Titular Nationalities' Identity Construction.
3. 1941-1945 -The Policy of Deportations
4. 1953-1964 - The Policy of Rehabilitation
5. 1964-1985 - Regional Elite Formation
6. 1985-1991 - Broad Concessions to the Nations

### **1924-1930- Period of Broad Accommodation with Nations. Policy of Nativization.**

In 1920s, as Russian Great Chauvinism was declared the main threat to interethnic relations. Bolsheviks launched a program of nativization - " a program of large scale concessions to the national minorities" (Hajda, 1993). As Hajda argues, in part this aimed to "sensitize" Russians and other non-natives to their local ethnic environment and the recruitment of indigenous personnel into government service and Communist party membership. The policy really resulted in great achievements in the field of language and cultural development: expansion of linguistic studies; creation of native terminology; development of written languages for small ethnic

groups;<sup>9</sup> usage of non-Russian languages in publishing; creation of a large network of scholarly institutions in union republics (Haida, 1993).

The policy of nativization was accompanied with the displacement of ethnic Russians from the autonomous republics. This process called “Nativization” by some scholars is considered as oppression against ethnic Russians. Yet other scholars claim the opposite with the main argument being that it no way contributed to the preservation of their identity by Russians. The first step in this nativization process was the renaming of the Russian Communist Party into the Union Communist Party in 1925. Besides, in the Constitution of the RSFSR there is no article about the right of secession. Russians even had no their own governing bodies (all was governed from the Center).

The consequence of the Soviet authorities’ aim to keep the total number of ethnic categories down is that assimilation would take place between non-Russians on a local level. As the number of ethnic categories was reduced and most "ethnic villages" and "ethnic districts" were abolished as part of the shift in policies in the 1930s, individuals belonging neither to the Russian nor the titular nationality would find themselves drifting uncomfortably in a culturally and linguistically two-polar system (Simonsen, 1999).

In these years the People Commissariat on Nationality Affairs was created with the purpose to "help to the organizations of national Republics, to work with national cadres, to take part in the creation of some important documents on nationality's issues"(Kuleshov, 1997, 282). This Commission consisted of national Commissariats (on Polish, Armenia, Jewish, Muslim affairs) and *otdels*- sectors (on Kirgiz, Mari affairs). They informed about the activity of Soviets to "non-Russian peoples." With that the special organs in the Republics were created. By the end of the Civil War, various Communist Universities of National Minorities were created. Narkomnats (People Commissariat of nationalities) began to edit the newspapers on more than 20 languages. It is interesting to bring the Resolution of Narkomnats (1920, “The politics of the SU for three

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<sup>9</sup> For languages that had employed the Arabic script, the Latin alphabet was introduced as more suitable than

years”) according to which it had to collect the information contributing to the issue of “new administrative division” on the territory of RSFSR. According to it, the following information should have been collected: “from the ethnic composition”, would the new division fit the economic situation in the region, what is the resolution of the local Soviet, what would be the situation among classes after the division, what is the percentage of Russians in the region. This information was to show which policy must be worked out to better fit the existing situation.

In the Central Committee in the 20s there was a special Nationalities’ sector. During that period there was even a suggestion not to divide the nationalities on national-territorial basis, but to unify them on the basis of work activities performed in the area. Thus, the suggestion was to create a cultural autonomy. But on this, as Kuleshov (1997) notes the Party put its taboo, as soon as it rejected the very notion of cultural-national autonomy. However, those actions contributed to the increase of the "cultural level" of the local nationalities (ibid). The Commission on Special Fund of Enlightenment of minor peoples can be brought as an example. 1924 is the year when a number of scholar literature published on ethnic issues was prohibited. All those who tried to step back from the Marxist-centralized model of the Party-State became one of the first victims of the regime. The main demand of the "Labor opposition" was for communist parties of the local nations to enter the Comintern on equal basis with the RKP (further, CPSU). The other suggestion was to increase the role of the Republican "khozraschet" (household accounting) with diminishing importance of the Central Planning Agency in the economy.

The end of the 1920's is full of contradictions in this field. On the one hand, the process of party-bureaucratic centralization was underway, while on the other hand, the number of national-territorial units was increasing. In the beginning, the national peculiarities were still taken into consideration. The Courts of Sharia and Adat were still functioning among the Muslim

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Cyrillic (Hajda, 1993).



population. However, the principle of “one nation- one state” took strength in these years. As Kuleshov (1997) argues, the regime deprived the other nations of the right to be the subject of self-determination by relating the notion of the state to one particular nation. In the end two priorities—the advantage of the oppressed in the past nation and interests of economic development—were taken into consideration (ibid.). Personal sympathies of the leaders and the lobbying of the local elites had a great impact on the political decisions. The desire of the regime to remake the national-territorial administrative division along the “preferable” lines brought to the policy of displacement.<sup>10</sup>

Based on the formation of national-statehood, Soviet ethnographic and political classifications draw a sharp distinction between “native” (korennoi) and “non-native” (nekorennoi) populations of a given ethnoterritorial unit. In this scheme, Armenians who have lived for several generations in the city of Baku are considered to be “non-natives” in Azerbaijan, whereas Azerbaijanis who were born and raised in Iran and who in the past decade came to Baku as refugees from the Khomeini revolution are considered to be “natives” of the Azerbaijani republic ( Saroyan, 2000).

### **1930-1941- The Period of Industrialization. The Politics of Titular Nationalities’ Identity**

#### **Construction.**

In late 1920s the policy of nativization and NEP were abandoned in favor of “building socialism.” With the goals of industrialization and collectivization, non- Russian “bourgeois nationalism” replaced Russian “great chauvinism”. Russian again became obligatory in schools Latinization of alphabets was abandoned in favor of the Cyrillic script, some languages of

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<sup>10</sup> E.g. during the process of formation of the Mountainous Republic 17 Cossack villages were annexed, which lead to bloody conflict.

ethnically small groups were withdrawn as impractical (Hajda, 1993). Numerous replacement of entire peoples were done in favor of the particular territorial division.

Up to the census of 1926 Mingrelian, Svans, Laz figured separately. In 1930 census, they all were treated as Georgians. The status of Abkhazia as a Union Republic was changed in 1931 when Abkhazia became a part of Georgian Republic as an autonomous republic. Beginning from the 1930s, Soviet Georginization policy changed place names and guaranteed Georgians key official positions (Dale, 1997). At that time Armenian schools were closed, broadcasting from Armenia was forbidden, the economic development of the region was slowed down. Since mid-1930s no Armenian Church had operated in Karabagh, yet mosques operated freely. The Government encouraged the resettlement of Azeri peasants in the region. As a result there was no growth in Armenian population in the region. Other national minorities almost disappeared in Azerbaijan- Talishes is the vivid example. That process continued even further in the period of war. It should be noted here that beginning from this period the intensification of the so-called “Russification” takes place. That drive was strengthened even further in later period along with the other reflections of “ nationalities’ policy.”

### **1941-1945 The World War Two. The Politics of Deportations**

In 1941 the experiments in demography continued further. That year Germans, the descendants of settlers who had come in the 16 and 17 century, were transported to Siberia from the Volga German Autonomous Republic (which ceased to exist), from around the Black Sea, the North Caucasus and Transcaucasia (Hewitt, 1993). In 1944 250,000 Crimean Tatars, 40,000 Balkars (Krag), most of the Karachais, of the Kalmyks, 80,000 Ingush (Krag, 1992), 400,000 Chechens (Krag) were deported to the east (Hewitt, 1993), Koreans from the Far East, Germans

from the Volga region, Crimean Tatars, Chechens, Mesketians Turks also were forced to leave homelands (Hajda, 1993). The territories were “re-appointed” among neighboring administrative units-- part of the Karachai lands and of Chechen-Ingushetia to Georgia, and part of Ingush territory to Ossetia (Hewitt, 1993). The war gave an impetus to officially sanctioned Russian nationalism (Hajda, 1993). At that years Russian Orthodox Church was rehabilitated.

In 1944 all Abkhaz-language schools were shut down and replaced with Georgian schools (Hewitt, 1993). Following the World War II Beria orchestrated resettlement of Georgians into Abkhazia to work in agriculture and expanding industry. In 1945-1946 the use of Abkhaz in schools was replaced by Georgian and there were no further publications in the Abkhaz language till 1979.

#### **1953-1964 Post Stalinist Period. The Politics of Rehabilitation**

That years some historic figures were rehabilitated and the greater activity in publishing of non-Russian literature was introduced (Hajda, 1993). Amnesties in 1955-1956 released millions from labor camps. In 1956-1957 the deported peoples were rehabilitated and allowed to return to their homelands. The territories of Karachais and Chechens were returned to these peoples, but not the territories of Ingushes (Hewitt, 1993). In 1964- the rehabilitation of the Germans of the Volga.

However, in that peroid the Russification drive also intensified, particularly concerning the realm of education. In 1958, an educational reform allowing parental choice in the language of school instruction for children between their native language and Russia. At the same time the study of the local language in Russian schools were made optional, which stirred much opposition in the republics (Haida, 1993). The reform nevertheless were adopted. more hours

were added for Russian language and the study of it began to be introduced in the curriculums at the early stages of learning.

The campaign of the late 1950 of the opening lands of Virgin Lands brought into Kazakhstan an influx of Russians and Ukrainians that reduced the Kazakh to 30 % of population in their own republic. The same population change was in Estonia and Latvia were promoted industrialization led to the influx of Russians to the regions (Hajda, 1993).

In 1958 ethnic conflicts in Grozni were registered. In 1967, ethnic tensions in Karabagh took a violent forms with consequent repressions of hundred of people. The other event is that in 1960 the Ministries of the Interior of Union Republics were dismissed, and their functions were transferred to the USSR Ministry of the Interior.

### **1964-1985 Period of Stagnation. Regional Elite Formation**

Hajda (1993) notes, that at that time three set of contradictory developments were evolving in the realm of ethnic politics. That is: an intensification of the Russification drive, strengthening of local elites in the republics and the rise and suppression of national dissident movements. The notion of “soviet people” emerged and “buttressed by this new ideological justification the Russification campaign went far beyond the officially enunciated goal of promoting bilingualism” (ibid).

The 1977 Constitution reflected a further shift in the division of powers at the expense of the union republics to the advantage of Moscow (Reshetar, 1989). There were even a proposal to “erase” the borders and ban the status of republics. For example, if the 1936 Constitution referred to the “sovereignty” of union republics, the 1977 one referred to “sovereign rights”, which are to be protected by the USSR. The slogan was that economic considerations should

overwhelm ethnic ones- the case of Ferghana valley, which was divided among three republics is an example. At the same time Brezhnev's personnel policy had an effect of the strengthening of local elites (Haida, 1993). He enunciated a policy of "trust in cadres"- as they demonstrated loyalty to central government decisions, the cadres received stability in their tenure. That resulted in an enormous length of life in office, development of strong client-patron relationships, "growing self-confidence of republican elites"<sup>11</sup> (Hajda, 1993). As scholars shows, national dissident movements arose in 1960s due to the perceived threat of Russification: in Ukraine the primary anxiety was around the issue of language, in Lithuania- around the rights of Catholic Church, in Armenia- on Diaspora issues and territories of Nagorno Karabagh and Nakhichevan, in Latvia- around the threatening demographic situation due to the immigration of Russians (ibid). Jews demanded the right to emigrate to Israel, Crimean Tatars began their drive for lost territories. Only Muslim Republics, Belarus and Moldova were not noted by any type of such movement (ibid). The main instruments for expressing grievances were the petitions, samizdat publishing, occasional demonstrations. The regime responded in continuous arrests.

Only in 1979 in response to protests, Soviet authorities instituted "Abkhazization" affirmative action policy that reinstated Abkhaz language instruction and assigned people of Abkhaz nationality to official positions. In 1978 130 Abkhaz intellectuals wrote to Brezhnev, asking to join Russia. Moscow although refused to change the status of the Republic, made a number of cultural and economic concessions. The Pedagogical Institute in Suchumi was transformed into a full University, TV and additional print media in Abkhazia were established, Abkhaz were promised 40% of government and judicial posts.

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<sup>11</sup> One of the theories on devolution of the SU is suggested by Przeworsky, where he argues that it was the "sclerosis" of the bureaucratic administrative structure of the USSR that brought it to the end.

The death of Brezhnev in 1982 marked the former KGB's chief Andropov's rise to the power who started a campaign of replacement of incompetent and corrupt officials. The assimilationalist policy was intensified (Hajda, 1993). Nationalism in the Army grew to an enormous degree.

### **1985-1991 Period of “Perestroyka.” Broad Concessions to the Republics**

In 1985, Andropov's protégé and young reformer- Gorbachev came to power with the declining economy as his main concern (ibid). Beginning with the implementation of the measures against corrupted officials and anti-drunkenness campaign he soon started the transformation called the “perestroyka” (rebuilding) with “glasnost” (openness) and “uskorenie” (acceleration). Gorbachev initially gave little attention to nationalities question, claiming that this problem was successfully solved in the SU. However, the Party's secretary for ideology, Ligachev aiming to transform Brezhnev's principle of “exchange of cadres” which resulted in “parochial localistic sentiments” (in Hajda, 1993) tried to make steps toward the tighter central control and greater intermixture of personnel (ibid). That received much opposition in republics. For example, when a politician of Russian nationality was appointed as the first secretary of Kazakhstan, demonstration against it were held in Alma-Ata in 1986.

Malkova (in Kolsto, 2000, 231) defines the following stages of political exploitation of territoriality:

- the damage the Communist regime had caused to the ecology and environment of the national homelands was exposed,
- numerous calls for political and economic independence from the national territory were done,

- territoriality was turned into a weapon against aliens, migrants, newcomers, occupants (1989-1990),
- by the end of 1991 all union republics gained independence.

In 1987, many demonstrations were held as one nationality after another started calling attention on their grievances. Jews demonstrated with the demand to emigrate to Israel, Armenians –to join Nagorno Karabakh with Motherland, Crimean Tatars – to return to their homelands, Balts - to condemn the invasion of Soviet troops into their countries in 1939.

In the summer of 1988, Gorbachev called the nationalities question the “most fundamental and vital question facing the society” (Hajda, 1993). He claimed for more decentralization, for more autonomy to union republics, etc.

In 1988, the Article 6 that gave to Communist Party the monopoly on the power in the SU was abrogated and non-party candidates won in Armenia in 1990, later in Baltic states and Georgia. The new Parliament of Lithuania proclaimed its independence, which resulted in economic blockade of the republic. By 1991, all republics declared their sovereignty, which led to the “war of laws,” when as the republics asserted the primacy of their laws, and Moscow of its. Center stationed troops in the Karabakh, South Ossetia, tried to seize strategic communication points in Vilnius. In March 1991, referendum was held on a new Union Treaty among republics, which was boycotted by some of them. In 1991, February referendum was held for the independence of Lithuania, in March - of Georgia. In September 1991, the USSR accepted the independence of Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia. In September 1991, Armenia became independent republic. Other autonomous republics claimed for sovereignty for themselves. In August 1991, Party officials attempted to seize the power in Coup finally discrediting the authority of the Center. The republics declared their independence one after another, despite

Gorbachev's effort to "save the Union" by negotiations. In the last month of 1991, the leaders of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus announced about the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States, and the resignation of Gorbachev on December 25 simply confirmed the reality that the USSR had already ceased to exist.

As Kremenyuk (1996) puts it, a specific policy regarding ethnic conflicts was formulated for the whole of the USSR in these years. "While the central government was counting on the "winning" approach and used force in Tbilisy (1989), Baku (1990), and Vilnius (1991) in order to put down nationalist uprising, the republican governments, while resisting the policy of Moscow, were applying those same methods against their own ethnic minorities in Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kirgizstan, Uzbekistan and even in Lithuania against the Russian speaking minority".

The period from 1988-89 is characterized by more close attention to ethnic issues, than it was in 1985, when Gorbachev declared that there was nothing to solve concerning nationality question. In 1989 there was announced a special session of Central Committee on National relations. At that session Gorbachev read the speech "About the Deformations in national policy", in which he spoke about the inversions of principles of federalism, condemned the process which was apparent in republics, that is- "the narrowing of the rights of the sovereign republics and autonomies", etc (Kuleshov,1997, 348). Furthermore, the law "On the Procedure for Solving Issues of Secession of a Soviet Republic from the USSR" was adopted on April 3, 1990, which provided autonomous regions the right to determine independently by referendum the fate of this or that region- whether to secede or to remain within the USSR.

The identified conflicts along with marked differences have many similarities in their characteristics of development. Both began with the petition (without proper answer of the



Center) periods. Then the “war of laws” between the center and republics, first-order and second-order republics, titular-non-titular ethnic groups evolved. That time was accompanied by massive displacement of the people and erupted violence.

**Azerbaijan- Karabakh conflict development.** As petitions for reunification Nagorno Karabakh with Armenia were continued throughout the Soviet period, “perestroyka awakened new hopes.” In the second half of 1987 more than 80,000 people signed a petition demanding reunification with Armenia. In October, 1987 hundreds gathered in Yerevan to protest clashes in the Armenian village of Chardakhlu and to call for the annexation of Karabakh.

On February 20, 1988 a session of the Regional Council of the People’s Deputies of NKAO applied to the Supreme Council of the USSR with a petition to transfer the region from Azerbaijan to Armenia. Pogroms in Sumgait (at the end of February), Baku, Kirovabad came after it. Hundreds of Armenians were killed and wounded. The number of refugees reached thousands. The official answer of Azerbaijani side was on 13 , June, 1988, when the Presidium of Supreme Council of Azerbaijan rejected the petition of NKAO Supreme Council. The Presidium of Supreme Soviet of the USSR on 23 March, 1988 also rejected it. Instead on 24 March, 1988 it adopted a decision on “Measures for the acceleration of the socio-economic development of NKAO in 1988-1998”. On 15 June 1988 the Presidium of Supreme Council of Armenia by a special resolution agreed Karabakh to unit with Armenian Republic and ask the Supreme Council of the USSR, Supreme Council of Azerbaijan SSR positively resolve the petition of NKAO. In summer 1988 deportations of Armenian population of the northern part of Karabakh began.

On 21 September 1988 Moscow declared emergency situation on the territory of NKAO and brought troops. On 1 December the members of “Karabakh” Committee were arrested. The

blockade by Azerbaijan of railways, gas, other transport means began. In January 1989, the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR introduced a special form of temporary governance in NKAO. The same day, a Committee of Special Government in NKAO, chaired by A. Volsky was formed, which dissolved in November, 1989. Its responsibilities were transferred to the Organizational Committee for NKAO of the Azerbaijani SSR.

In July 1989 the nationalist Azerbaijani Popular Front holds its founding congress. In September 1989 the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan issued a declaration of sovereignty which include the provision the Azeris is the official language of the republic. In the law on sovereignty passed in Azerbaijan in October 1989, reference is made to the Soviet Union not as a federation of union republics but as a federation of nations. In this way, the Azerbaijanis consider their republic and their nation to be interchangeable, effectively excluding resident non-Azerbaijanis from political representation (Saroyan, 2000).

On 1 December the National Council of Nagorno Karabakh declared about the unification with Armenia. The referendum took place on December 10, 1991 to support of full independence. Azerbaijan seceded from the USSR by a Declaration adopted by the Supreme Council of the Azerbaijani SSR on August 30, 1991 (not by referenda). In 1990, Soviet troops were deployed into Azerbaijan. By the time Azerbaijan declared its independence in 1991, it was in a war with Armenia.

On 2 September, 1991, three days after the declaration of independence of Azerbaijan, the joint session of deputies of NKAO and Shaumyan district declares the Nagorno Karabakh Republic, but not its independence (Hovhannisyanyan, 1996). It remained on the Soviet territory till the referenda. On November 23, 1991, Azerbaijan abolished the autonomy of Nagorno Karabakh.

On 10 December, 1991-the referenda, where 95% of population of NK voted for their independence. On 28 December, 1991 the first Parliament was elected and on 6 January 1992 NK was declared independent. By the end of 1992 Azerbaijan controlled the half of the lands of NK. On 9 May- the noteworthy point- the liberation of Shushi, then Lachin. By the 1994 NK controls all its territories. In 1994 the new period- period of peace process was launched by cease-fire, which lasted till now.

**Georgia- Abkhazia conflict development.** In December 1988 a draft of the State Program for the Georgian language was published. The program called for a Georgian-language test for entry into higher education. In March 1989, 30,000 citizens of Abkhazia signed a petition to secede from Georgia and join to Russia. Georgians answered with their own demonstration for sovereignty but including anti-Abkhazian demonstrations (Baird, 2000). Those demonstrations in Tbilisy were suppressed by Soviet forces. In July- 1989 Tbilisy State University established a branch in Sukhumi and Georgian professors refused to teach there “as long as Russians and Abkhaz were allowed to lecture there” (Baird, 2000). The violence erupted.

In 1990 the “war of laws” began, when the Abkhazian government called for the independence, and Georgian annulled it. In its turn Abkhazian side annulled the 1921 decree that incorporated Abkhazia into Georgia, etc. In August 1990 Georgians changed the law to exclude regional parties from the upcoming Georgia Supreme Soviet. As response, Abkhaz delegates declared Abkhazia a sovereign Republic, and in December elected Ardzinba. In December 1990 the South Ossetian parliament also voted for declaration of the sovereignty of the region.

In the March 1991 Abkhazia participated in the referendum on preserving the SU, when Abkhazians voted for by 98.4% from 52.4% of electorate. Abkhazians claim that step was done as counterweight to Georgia. In the spring of 1991 Abkhaz and Georgians (opposition) had

worked on the law for the region which would guarantee the Abkhaz delegates 28 seats, Georgians- 26, other groups-11. Georgians in Abkhazia launched a campaign of non-compliance. In May 1991 when Gamsakhurdia was elected president, no such votes were held in South Ossetia or Abkhazia. In July 1991 a law on citizenship is adopted which provide automatic citizenship to residents who have lived in Georgia for ten years and who have a command of the Georgian language.

Spontaneous acts of violence continued till July of 1992, when at the conflict took the other turn. In July 1992 Parliament of Abkhazia decided to return to the Constitution of 1925 by a vote of 35 to 30 (Baev, 2000). The Georgian State Council annulled it. Gamsakhurdia (ex-president of Georgia) entered to Abkhazia to seek for supporters against Shevarnadze the current President of Georgia. That was used as Shevarnadze to move troops into Abkhazia. By august the war over Abkhazia had begun. In the mid-October Gamsakhurdia forces were advancing on Kutaisi in central Georgia and threatening to move on to Tbilisy; to deal with the threat, the Georgian government called upon Russian troops, in exchange for which Tbilisy promised to comply with Russian insistence to join the CIS. Troops were moved into Abkhazia, and on August, 18 attack on Abkhaz Parliament was conducted. Ardzinba withdrew to Gudauta. By October, 1992 Georgians troops seized the north, on October, 23 in Sukhumi burned the state archive and the archives of the Institute of Abkhazian language, History and Literature (the fact which again emphasized the symbolical aspect of such kind of conflicts). In 1993 the Georgians held Sukhumi but they had to attempt to deal simultaneously with “Zviadists” in western Georgia. In September 1993 Georgians troops were expelled from Abkhazia.

Both the Abkhazian conflict and Karabakh conflict raged on 1994 when cease-fire stuck.

**Concluding note.** We see, that there were several contradictory developments in the patterns of historical evolution of nationality policy. First one is that the Russification drive were reinforced: in 1930-1953 by Stalin's policy of managing ethno-territorial division and cultural affairs; in Khrushchev period by fostering pro-Russian language reforms; in Brezhnev period by adoption of Russian nation's mission as the "unifying role in the Soviet society"; in Andropov's period the trend was beginning to dismiss corrupted local officials and substitute them with the Russians; in Gorbachev period that trend continued, but it was stopped by resistance in the republics.

Second, from the politics of nativization the process of fostering ethnic awareness began. The ethno-federal division of the USSR, the existence of the fifth point in the passports of Soviet citizens and mentioned politics of nativization played an opposite to Russification role. It in essence creates the foundation for ethnic identity formation and creation of cross-nationalities contact. Besides, the base for local elite formation was put. Although from one side the regional elite existed, which played its role in ethnic conflict development, from the other side, the elite (before the national movement's start) was the link among the center and republics.

Thus, we gave the patterns of development of the relationships among the center and republics, the existence of two patterns, which from our perspective seem to be contradictory. The first trend was the reflection of an objective to create homogeneous "Soviet people," the second one is the existence of a strong center on multiethnic base. The contradiction of these two objectives led to the contradictions in the policy trends. We also should take into account the formation of cross-ethnic contacts, which was used as a tool and result in the implementation of the main policy objectives. In the following sections we will give the characteristics of ethnic conflicts, providing the link with the evolution of policy.

## Comparative Analysis of Characteristics

Variables of cultural characteristics are the following: promotion of ethnic culture and language, expansion of native-language schooling, promotion of ethnic symbols. In case of politico-economic characteristics we identified- preferences for members of the titular ethnic group in top administrative positions, privileges in basic laws. And in the case of demographic-change of the population in the period of time.

**Demographical characteristics.** There were 22 nationalities in the SU whose number exceeded a million (Russian – 50.8% in 1989, Ukrainians, Uzbeks, Belarusians, etc). Major non-Russian peoples comprised 44.9%, with Russians – 95.7%. Minor ones – 96 peoples numbered in aggregate just under 11 million. As of 1989, according to census data, some 60 million people in the former Soviet Union (20 percent of the total population) lived outside of their home ethnic administrations or were members of groups without home administrations.

The expectations were among scholars that modernization stimulating mobility and interregional migration would lead to the greater heterogeneity within republics and further to homogenization of population adopted Russian language and assimilated to the Russian nationality. In fact, the opposite occurred. While the SU became ethnically more diverse, most republics became ethnically more coherent (at least not in that quantities as was expected). Except Slavic Group and Georgians all Republics returned to their Homelands (Goskomstat data, 1989). Soviet politics as one prominent scholar notes, “produced an adamant insistence on residence for all members in a homeland”(Armstrong, 1995, 33). Even the Russian minorities in republics tended to withdraw to traditional Slavic homelands. Thus, the soviet policy “has sought “fraternal” intermingling but in fact has produced a rising tide of territorial exclusiveness” (ibid, 34).

Russians showed drop in their share of the total population to 50.8%, together East Slavs from 1959-76.2%, dropped in 1979 to 69.8 %, Other republic nationalities (except Latvians and Estonians) were marked by a significant population increase, in the case of Muslim republics- by double population growth (Hajda, 1993).

In 27 of 35 autonomous republics, autonomous oblasts and autonomous okrugs of Russia, the senior titular nationality was a minority in the homeland's population (Roeder), but this was not traced in the union republics.

One of the important issues in this field is the "ethnic re-identification". It is worth to mention here the study of Anderson and Silver (in Simonsen, 1999) conducted in the USSR between 1959 and 1970, which illuminates the processes that took place in the demographic situation. The main finding was that the largest proportions shifting identities were ASSR- level nationalities whose official territories were located in the RSFSR. The two most extreme cases, according to estimates, were the Karelians and Mordvinians, of which respectively 16-18% and 14-16% of the 0-38 age group had re-identified in the mentioned period. For the great majority of the union republics the study showed very small changes.

The study of Terentova in the 1960-69 (in Simonsen, 1999) showed, that in the union republics a majority of teenagers with one parent of Russian and one of local nationality would prefer the local one. In the RSFSR the trend was different. E.g. in Chuvash ASSR teenagers with one Russian parent and one parent of local nationality would choose the latter in only 2.2% of the cases.

The second issue is the study of censuses of that time, which could reveal the policy's preferences. As censuses estimates, whereas in 1927 172 nationalities had received official status, a mere 106 were included in the 1939 list (Simonsen, 1999). By 1940 the list included

only 59 nationalities. In 1959 126 nationalities were identified, in 1970-122, in 1979-123, in 1989-128.

The census of 1937 was declared faulty, as soon as it didn't fit into the numbers of total population announced by Stalin, in essence there were too little, and as a consequence the 1939 census didn't reflect the reality. By 1939 census the limit of the population of this or that nation to be included into the census was 20, 000. That showed the tendency of assimilation of non-titular nationalities into titular ones. So, in 1939 census there were no such nationalities, as Udins, Shors, Abazins, etc. Into the Uzbek nation were included Kipchaks (34,000), Kuramas (50,000), into Tatars –Mishars(243,000), Kriashens (101, 000) into Azeris- Karakalpaks (26,000), into Georgians- Agars (71,000), Megrelians (243,000), Svans (13,000), Lazes (0.6 thousand) etc. (1939 census). It is seen by these numbers the emphasized role of titular nationalities given by the center. By cultural assimilation, by merely not even naming in the census whole peoples were doomed to extinction and in time of Soviet collapse they were already largely assimilated into titular groups. As Hajda (1993) argues, "heightened ethnic awareness since the late 1980s has to leave the small nationalities untouched, but overall they are too few in numbers to pose a threat to anyone and , as far as can be determined, have not become parties to interethnic strife".

The situation in Karabakh and Abkhazia although different, continues the above mentioned propositions (Table 2). In NKAO Armenians share of the population as we see exceeded 70%. In case of Abkhazia it was around roughly 18%. However, in two cases we see the decrease of the share of two nationalities of the population in respect to titular groups<sup>12</sup>.



Table 2

	1926	1939	1959	1979
<u>Karabakh</u>	89.1	88.0	84.4	75
Armenians				
Azerbaijanis	6	9.3	13.8	24
<u>Abkhazia</u>	26.6	18.0	15.1	18.0
Abkhazians				
Georgians	39.4	29.5	39.1	45.5

In both Karabakh and Abkhazia, almost all cities and regions were multinational. At the village life level there was a strong tendency toward nationally compact populations. In case of Abkhazia Soviet authority institutionalized both macrointegration through Sukhumi's economic position and microdifferentiation through employment and residence patterns, creating patchwork patterned prewar population. The Abkhazians assert that the losses suffered during their displacement to Turkey in the nineteenth century is the source of their demographic weakness. In 1930 numbers became a key to Abkhaz concern: while there had been 3,474 Mingrelians and 515 other Georgian speakers in Abkhazia in 1886, by 1979 of the population of 486,082 only 83,097 were Abkhaz, but Georgian speakers numbered 2113, 322. While Abkhazians were strongly worried about the demographic situation, constituting minority in their own republic, Armenians of Karabakh feared the repetition of the "Nakhichevanization" of the region, which was marked by sharp decline of the share of Armenian population (Avakyan, 1991). In two cases the frustration of demographic situation among "non-titulars" is evident.

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<sup>12</sup> The table is constructed using the numbers of the following censuses: 1925,1939,1959,1979.

So, here it is clear that two processes occurred in time. First, the republics became more coherent in ethnic composition (unlike the autonomous republics of the RSFSR). Second, the assimilation of non-titulars into titular ones occurred. It would be more plausible argue, that the analyzed characteristics are represented as indicators of deeper processes. Before proceeding to the issues of political characteristics it is useful to discuss two related topics that is to outline the main changes in administrative-territorial division and to show the ethno-federal character of the USSR structure.

### **Ethno-federal structure of the USSR and main administrative changes conducted.**

The main administrative changes in the territorial division of the USSR were done in the following direction. In 1924 it was decided to reorganize the Autonomous Turkestan Republic into Uzbek SSR, Turkmen SSR, Kara-Kyrgyz autonomous oblast as part of RSFSR, Autonomous Tajik SSR as part of Uzbek SSR, to connect Kyrgyz part of Turkestan to Kyrgyz Autonomous SSR as part of RSFSR. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzia till 1936 remained Autonomous Republics. In 1934 Jewish Autonomous region was created on the Amur river, later that fact was described as the achievement of Jews, however, it was also supposed that the inhabiting of this region would strengthen the defense of Soviet-Chinese border. The Transcaucasian Soviet federation is divided on three SSR: Armenian, Georgian, Azerbaijan. On 13 July 1939 USSR occupied Polish lands (so called Western Ukraine and Western Belarus was annexed to Belarusian SSR. In August 1940 from Moldavian Autonomous Republic and annexed in that year part of Bessarabia Moldavian SSR was formed, the Northern part of Bukovina was annexed. On 3 August - Lithuania, 5 August - Latvia and on 6 August of 1940- Estonia were occupied and became Soviet Socialist republics. Tuva autonomous oblast was incorporated into USSR as part of RSFSR on 11 October 1944, which in 1961 became Autonomous Republic.

Karelian ASSR in 1940 became Karelo-Finn SSR, which was liquidated later. As the War World Two began Germans of the Volga ASSR was liquidated and the territories were given to RSFSR, and in 1956 the Crimea was given to Ukraine. No major division were done afterwards.

The sovereignty of union republics was symbolical one, however, for non-Russian nationalities their relative standing in the hierarchy of political units was important (Hajda,1993). The higher ranking provided a broader scope for study and official use of their languages, for greater latitude in administrative decision-making of elite, besides, it had effect on national pride and ethnic attitudes (Hajda, 1993).

Officially the federal structure was the following. Bicameral legislature with the Supreme Soviet and the Soviet of Nationalities was created. In the Soviet of Nationalities- 32 deputies from the union republics, 11 from autonomous one, 5 from autonomous region and 1 from autonomous okrugs were represented (art. 110, 1977 Constitution of the USSR). The Union Republics were vested with seal and flag, their own constitutions, supreme soviets, courts, council of ministries. They had the right to change the administrative- territorial division within its territory (art .79), etc. However, the main “responsibility” of the republic is “to be conducive to liabilities of the USSR” (art. 77). Autonomous Republics enjoyed all of these except the flag and seal, besides they had separate representation in the USSR Supreme Soviet of Nationalities. Its territory could not be changed without the agreement of the Autonomous Republic (art. 84). Autonomous Oblast (region) was subordinate to the government of the Union Republic in which territory it was. Unlike the ordinary region it had separate representation in the Soviet of Nationalities and could delimit its districts. Its law is adopted by the Supreme Council of the union republic under which jurisdiction it was (art. 86). National area- okrugs were established for the numerically small peoples of the Soviet Far East and Far North (Reshetar, 1989, 216).

They were incorporated into regular oblasti and kraya and differed from autonomous regions in not having separate statute (single law pertained to all national areas). The Union Republics had the formal right to secede from the USSR (art.72 of 1977 Constitution). They were limited in their scope, for example in case of the divergence of the law of the republic the all-union law counterweight (ibid, art. 74), besides the territory of the republics could be changed with the agreement of both republics, however only after the confirmation by the USSR bodies.

**Politico-economic characteristics.** In explaining ethnic conflict one should analyze on two levels. First, the initiation of the conflict itself can be seen as the result of rational choice by the political leaders (Melberg, 1998). Second, there is need to explain why their emotive appeals work so well among the population.

Roeder argues, that Soviet politics ensured the role of local elites, who monopolized the mobilizational resources "essential to sustained, large-scale political action" (Roeder, 2000). Within the homelands this cadre was assigned the task of creating a new official and "monopolistic cultural elite." For example, whereas Georgians constituted only 67% of their home republic population in 1970, they constituted 83% of the student body of the Republic's higher institutions (in Roeder, 2000). It is therefore clear that ethnic machines actually supported politicians and their strategies within the administration of the republics.

As Hajda (1993) notes, admission into the elite was conditioned by loyalty to the center and implementation of regime's policies. Elites were interested the regime as the mediating linkage between the central authorities and the non-Russian population.

Two threats shook these ethnic machines: threat of democratization under Gorbachev, and the threat of losing their patrons in Moscow (Roeder, 2000). These changes effected in defensive responses from many leaders. Laitin (1998, cited in Melberg, 1998), by analyzing the role of

elite in the conflict development, argues, that by the time of the Soviet state collapse, it was very difficult for leaders trying to rule from “decaying center” or leaders of ethnically distinct regions within a state, to properly calculate the balance of power. Melberg’s analysis shows more thoroughly the process. He states, that there are two kinds of temporary opportunities when a state collapses. Both the population at large and minority within a region may think that they have “*temporary*” opportunity to gain independence. It is very difficult for new authorities to promise the minority that as long as you agree to our independence you will be treated well.<sup>13,14</sup>

The *nomenklatura* may keep their power over the territory and maintain control over the bulk of the large-scale property located on the territory by declaring the supremacy of the local laws. The ethnic factor serves as a filter and helps to get rid of competitors (Volkov, 1992, cited in Aklaev, 2000).

Another point of view is represented by Roeder, who in his book "Liberalization and Ethnic entrepreneurs in the Soviet successor states" shows the role of elite in the ethnic conflict development and asserts that at the center of the conflict is "the competition among the post Soviet politicians fighting over the division of the Soviet state and manipulating certain institutions of ethnofederalism to their advantage". Moreover, most severe ethnic confrontations have resulted from acts of regional officials challenging the political leaders of the governments of successor states (Abkhazia); the agendas of regional officials seek to manipulate the mechanisms of regional government to ensure their own political survival; liberalization although a secondary cause, nevertheless intensified ethnic conflicts by strengthening the powers of these officials relative to the central government.

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<sup>13</sup> Both our cases started claim for secession before the Union Republic’s claim.

<sup>14</sup> Melberg here brings the example of Latvia and Estonia before independence, when the Popular Fronts in both Republics endorsed the principle to giving citizenship to everybody living in the country. Many Russians voted in favor of Estonian and Latvian independence but after they were not given the right of citizenship. Andrej

Elaborating more on the issue of "ethnofederalism" and emphasizing it, he states, that in the 15 successor states there are over 1,300 dyads that could potentially erupt in interethnic conflict, where 119- are hierarchical dyads between the titular nationality of the successor state and a major ethnic groups within that state. Ethnofederal dyads were 17 times more likely to lead to armed conflict than other hierarchical dyads and over 217 times more likely than all other dyads. Three of 5 ethnofederal Republics (RSFSR, Azerbaijan, Georgian, Tajik, Uzbek) are in crisis- Russia, Georgia, Azerbaijan.

Thus, he suggests the hypothesis that "the institution of ethnofederalism created in the Communist era encouraged leaders within the homelands to create ethnic machines", "... which turned to ethnic strategies as away to save these machines and to improve the chances of their own survival in a rapidly changing environment" (Roeder, 2000).

According to Roeder, liberalization led to the disintegration of centralized ownership of assets and provided many new opportunities for regional authorities to seize those assets, besides it left regional officials in a stronger position to build loyal constituencies. So, liberalization strengthened the power of regional leaders. Meanwhile, the opposite could also be marked. That is the liberalization brought to the loss by local authorities Moscow's sponsorship. It seriously undermined local officials' position and legitimacy in changing environment. During the Perestroyka period center could not easily replace this ethnic machine since the policy of nativization was predicated on the monopolistic role of the local elite and the suppression of alternative ethnic elites. The influence of economic liberalization on ethnic conflict should be understood in the context 'of the attempt of regional officials to survive in a rapidly changing political environment by playing ethnic card" (Roeder, 2000).

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Pantelejevs (the leader of a faction in Latvian Saeima) said: "...this was a conscious lie in order to avoid human casualties"(1997, cited in Melberg, 1998).

As Suni (1999) argues, of eight republics of the “Southern Tier”, five (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan ) are ruled by former Communist first secretaries, and only in Armenia the nationalist opposition could maintain itself in a government. From the Soviet collapse the birth of fifteen fledging, not fully-formed states resulted. Where the nation and state coincided most successfully, internal conflicts were avoided (Armenia), where not-issues of inclusivity or exclusivity arose (Georgia) (Sun, 1999). So, the further investigation of the other set of characteristics- cultural ones is needed.

So, by fostering the development of separate forms of ethnic state administration to provide political representation for a range of distinct national communities and consolidating by promulgation of the policy of korenizatsiia, or nativization, a program of affirmative action in state, party, and economic administration, Soviet state fostered the development of local national elites to run the affairs of the newly forming national administrations. But while the policy of nativization afforded a privileged status to the titular nationalities, the policy at the same time disenfranchised the nontitular populations of the given territory.

**Historical-cultural characteristics.** Ethnic interests are more vividly seen in the culture. The importance of this field is often disregarded by political science. However, its thorough investigation could provide some answers on issues of ethnic politics. As Saroyan (2000) notes, “some of the major trends in ethnic culture of the post-Soviet period prefigured the contours of ethnic politics in the Gorbachev era ”. Thus, “the themes of yesterdays ethnic culture have often emerged as the issues of today’s ethnic activism” (ibid).

The history of colonization policies influences the world outlook and identity of both ethnic dominants and ethnic subordinates (Chernysh’s 1995, cited in Aklaev, 2000). In his view, the history of the Russian empire and subsequent Russification under the Soviet Union can account

for the shifts in the collective consciousness by which "Russian-ness" came to be perceived as "stateness." A number of authors (Klimova and Chalikova ,1991, cited in Aklaev) view the upsurge of politicized ethnic assertiveness and militant nationalism as the product of a deep crisis of values in postcommunist society. Every society needs a binding set of values and, since communist values and beliefs underwent massive erosion under *perestroika*, the need to replace the collapsed value system is often fulfilled by nationalism.

To Saroyan (2000), "the transformation of cultural institutions and practices played an important part in the Bolshevik vision of how to construct a socialist state". The production of new culture, according to Soviet communists, aimed to building of socialism. From late 20s and 30s in republics were created an entire network of cultural organizations, which were organized the creation "...not simply of a national culture in general, but of one that would contribute to the identity- formation and ethnic cohesion of politically designated titular nationality of each republic"(ibid). The important and predominant feature of that politics was that "a conception of national identity was inseparable from the given territory of the national republic " (ibid). Thus, the officially canonized history of the titular nationality and of Republic became interchangeable.<sup>15</sup>

This idea is particularly important, because this code "one republic - one culture" reflects the well-known formulation of Stalin's institutionalization "one nation-one territory- one republic". In this sense the status of "titular nationality" in a national-state administrative territory provided more than merely a nominal prestige, in fact such status entitled the given ethnic community to cultural hegemony within its own territory.

"While the culturally mediated "nationalization" of the republics often referred fact to ethnic traditions, the process of national-cultural construction developed not simply from the



amorphous activization of "tradition" by the cultural intelligentsia, but reflected the modern institutional innovations of Soviet national state formation " (ibid).<sup>16</sup>

As Cornell notes, with exception of Armenians and Georgians, the concept of nation was largely absent among the Caucasian peoples. For example, for Azerbaijanis the main identity was sub-national (khanates, clans) (Connor, 2000). With the consolidation of soviet power in 1920s the center created not only "Soviet identity" but also promoted the national identity especially in the first years of nativization (ibid). The tension between say Georgian and Abkhazian sever alleviated not simply by suppression but by overlapping common identity (ibid).

Before the Soviet period Azerbaijanis, known as "Tatars" or "Turks" were largely a peasant population with some presence in the Baku of the working class (Suni, 1999). The middle and upper classes of the region were Armenians and Russians (Suni,1999). Although the nationality of Karabakh Armenians were officially subscribed in their passports they were subjected to the cultural discrimination (Suni, 1999). Differing sharply in religion, cultural settings, etc., between Armenians and Azerbaijanis little marriage took place. The feeling were intensified by the historical memories of Armenians. Armenians preferred to speak Russian not Azerbaijanis and constituted a large part of Russian-speaking urban intelligentsia.

During the post-Soviet time national identity features played an essential role in nation-building processes in both regions. As Suni (1999) argues, Armenian internal stability was assist by three major factors. First, by a binding national discourse to which much of the population gave the government the legitimacy. Second, it was the most homogeneous republic in the SU.

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<sup>15</sup> In this way Azerbaijani historians produced the history of Azerbaijan back to medieval periods.

<sup>16</sup> For example, the formation of the Azerbaijani Writers' Union brought together writers mainly of Azerbaijani nationality to develop the Soviet Azerbaijani literature- not simply literature **in** Soviet Azerbaijan.

And third, the Communist Party of the Armenia peacefully surrendered power to the Armenian National Movement.

In opposite, “successive Azerbaijani governments found it nearly impossible to mobilize young men to fight for Karabakh“ (ibid) and articulate nationalism remained confined to urban intelligentsia. With the nationalist movement divided and disorganized, the Communist elite let the country into the independence. After Armenian military success the Communist government fell in May 1992. As Suni (1999) argues, an amorphous nature of Azerbaijani society presented Aliiev in 1998 an opportunity to mold that identity, but corruption and the fractured nature of Azerbaijani society has limited his ability mobilize his people.

A similar to Karabakh conflict over the organization and financing of ethnic cultural development has emerged in the case of Abkhazia (Saroyan, 2000). As scholars argue, this conflict has resulted not in greater protection of Abkhaz culture but in the activization of "anti-minority chauvinism" among the Georgians (ibid). The Abkhaz had an ambivalent relationship with Georgians- as their ancestors were part of ancient Georgian kingdoms, however they had never been assimilated into the Georgian nationality (Baird, 2000). Georgians view Abkhaz as “some kind of wild, uncivilized and uncultured people without their own ethno-cultural potential” (ibid, 84, in Baird). The history of Abkhazia is connected by Abkhaz intellectuals not with the history of Georgia (Gogsadze, 2000), but with the history of North Peoples (Otirba, 2000).

The suffered Georinization policies in Soviet years brought Abkhazians to the fear of extinction. As Khia Nodia asserts, “by the end of the SU there was only one element of the Abkhazian national vision which was quite unambiguous: Georgians were the enemy” ( in Otirba, 2000). Georgia’s exclusive nationalism in multiethnic country with less than 70% of

Georgians in the population of the republic, led to it the civil wars. Armenian, Abkhaz, Ossetian minorities were described by Gamsakhuria elected in 1990 as “guests”, “agents of the Soviets”.

So, while Armenia’s strong national identity helped in the transition to independence and stability, and Azerbaijan’s much weaker one hindered the creation of the new state, Georgia’s strong national identity aided to the disintegration of the state (Sunı, 1999).

The important topic in this respect is the issues of “territoriality”. In Stalin’s and as well as Lenin’s model of nationality, territoriality is an essential element of nationhood (Kolsto, 2000) and from the beginning of the SU the link between ethnicity and territoriality was strong. Not all nations got territory. Some were so small that they were even not under consideration, others (Poles, Greeks) had outboard the statehoods, so their status was out of Soviet politics. In the question of connection of territory and identity it is interesting to ring the words of Paul Goble, who notes that Russians enjoyed “extraterritorial status” (in Kolsto, 2000). As Hewitt (1993) notes, “if ever there was a region which, because of its rich patchwork of peoples, languages and cultures all dotted around an imposing mountain-terrain, was not a candidate for the arbitrary drawing of frontiers as part of the creation of states, such a region is surely the Caucasus” (Hewitt, 1993). Thus, Soviet policy created and fostered the connection of ethnic identity with the defined territory.

The hegemony of the titular nationality was reflected also in the cultural practices of ethnic minorities- that is "the cultural institutions for the so called "non-indigenous" national communities are weak, unlike in their home republic" (Saroyan, 2000). Moreover, they lacked the infrastructural support of the entire network of cultural organizations in the home Republic. The "compartmentalization" of ethnic culture was seen in ethnic practices. Whereas in home

Republics "national culture and history are conventional subjects of glorification, outside the Republic there is a virtual absence of explicitly ethnic themes" (ibid).

So, the Soviet motto one republic-one culture (the continuation of one-republic- one territory) put the status of titular ethnic group not just into nominal one, it reflected cultural hegemony. In cultural and politico-historical field that meant privileges in basic laws, promotion of titular culture, titular history, language, promotion of ethnic symbols, preferences for members of the titular ethnic group in top administrative positions.

The important topic in this respect is the issue of the language. As Alaev (1998) notes, six times conflicts (in the territory of the FSU, f.e. in Dniester and Gagauz conflicts) arose due to the creation of the language law, and in fourteen instances, the problem of language helped to promote an intensification of confrontation.

Language, besides its role in communication is also "an affective symbol of identity" (Hajda, 1993) and it was the particular target for soviet nationality policy. Most languages of the FSU fall into four language families : Indo-European, Uralic, Altaic, and Ibero-caucasian. Three factors are important here: proximity to Russian (for Slavic group is more vulnerable to russification), affinities among non-Russian languages themselves (Turkic languages were counterplayed), affinities with languages of contiguous foreign countries (the fear of the exposure to foreign media drove Soviet authorities to differentiate Soviet languages<sup>17</sup>) (Hajda, 1993).

Of all non-Russians, 85.4% claimed the eponymous language of their nationality as their mother tongue in 1989 (ibid). Language loyalty was declining most rapidly among the dispersed nationalities (Jews, Poles), then among Volga-Ural nationalities (Tatars), Ukrainians,

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<sup>17</sup> The example was the development of "Moldavian" language distinct from identical Romanian (Hajda, 1993).

Belarusians and Moldavians (ibid). In 1989 of all non-Russians 13.3% declared Russian as their first language (ibid).

To Laitin, Peterson and Slogum (1995) when “republican” languages were used not only for cultural expression but for administration level as well titular nationals have an incentive to remain unassimilated bilinguals, as their languages represent capital for jobs and opportunities.

The second language of Armenians in Karabakh was Russian, rather than Azerbaijani. Similarly, the second language of Abkhazians were Russian and Mingrelian, rather than Georgian (Hewitt, 1993). Abkhaz language from 1928 had been written in a Latin-based script. When all similar "Young written languages" had their scripts changed to a form of Cyrillic in 1936-1938, Abkhaz and the Ossetian of South Ossetia (in North Ossetia the script became Cyrillic-based) had theirs shifted to Georgian-based alphabets (Hewitt, 1993).

Both Karabakh and Abkhazian conflicts are better understood in the broader context of cultural and political rights of people and their administrative protection. Formal institutions by themselves don't provide the line to culture to evolve, however they constitute an important part in the evolution of the factors of socio-cultural network.

So, we see the existence of the following processes in light of nationality's policy of the SU. First, the fostering of ethnic identity of members of titular groups occurred. This later played its role in exclusive character of nation-building. Second the connection of that identity with defined territory resulted. That resulted in the fact that the perception of territory and that of identity did not match among the parties of the conflict. As a bright example here may be the following case: Armenians consider Karabakh as an inalienable historic and cultural part of the nation. Whereas, the Azeri side looked upon the region as 25% of their territory. This factor lies in the foundation of ethnic conflict. However, those scholars who try to give political resolutions to an ethnic

conflict often neglect it. Third the process of fostering of the feelings of frustration and fear among the members of non-titular group took place. This could be better expressed by the fear of demographic overwhelming of the titular group, of extinction of cultural- historical monuments, of being outnumbered in leading administrative positions, etc.

The above mentioned factors help us to see the essential role of cultural characteristics in the ethnic conflict, as well as the impact of politics on the molding of those specific facets of the problem.

## **Conclusion**

The disintegration of the SU brought to an end not only the multinational empire, it also ended an extraordinary experiment in management of ethnic problems. This experiment had at least three sets of contradictions that constituted what may be called the dialectics of Soviet multinationalism.

At the same time that regime attempted to efface ethnic distinctions and fashion a new supranational group consciousness, it recognized, legitimized, institutionalized and politicized ethnicity to an unusual degree. Defining the ethnic groups in political terms as nations and nationalities, and actually molding the national identities in Central Asia and other pre-modern regions, as well as recording the official administrative units in ethnical terms - the regime constantly contributed to the reinforcement of ethnic awareness.

There are several conclusions to be mentioned in the final part of the paper.

1. Contradiction is observed between the two major lines of Soviet nationality policy in the historical perspective: the policy of Russification/homogenization and that of Nativization. The contradiction is seen not in the different periods of policy development but in the very origin and nature of that policy. By promoting the policy of Russification the ethnic culture

was intended to alter in order to create a homogeneous Soviet people. On the other hand, through the pursuit of the Nativization policy there took place the changes in the territorial administration.

2. Demographic characteristics as indicators of policy impact show that Union republics became more coherent in ethnic composition whereas assimilation of non-titular ethnic groups took place.
3. Political-economic characteristics point to formation of local elites as the result of the priority given to titular nationalities. Granting politically defined territory to the ethnic groups brought about the situation where the perceptions of the territorial belongingness of ethnic groups and the actual political/administrative reality didn't match.
4. Another impact of the policy becomes evident while looking at cultural-historical characteristics of ethnic conflicts. Particular developments of ethnic conflicts are the outcome of fostering the feeling of the national identity, and its link with the perceptions of the territorial belongingness peculiar to ethnic groups. The growth of frustration among the non-titular ethnic groups caused by their dissatisfaction also appeared to be a contributing factor.

Thus, it can be stated that the policy influencing the above mentioned characteristics had its great impact on the emergence of ethnic conflicts and their evolution. Furthermore, the analysis of ethnic conflicts proved that the pursuit of particular ethnic policy is a dominant factor as far as the nature of ethnic conflicts is concerned.

The collapse of the Soviet Union is widely attributed to such patterns of the country as the concentration of the whole power in the hands of one leader, economic stagnation, power devolution, etc., that exhibited sharp contradictions and turns during different periods of Soviet history. However, this project, highlighting definite contradicting trends of ethnic policy during

the overall history of the SU, proved that the contradiction was already put in the blueprint of the country.



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