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Historiographical Paper

Soviet Nation- Making. Nationality Policy of the Formative years of the Soviet Union and Subsequent Language Policy Development.

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Soviet Nation- Making. Nationality Policy of the Formative years of the Soviet Union and Subsequent Language Policy Development.

I.   Introduction

Like some other concepts lacking a generally accepted definition, nationalism has been differently defined and perceived, once stated as 'notoriously difficult to define'.[1] Furthermore, it is argued that causes of nationalism can also vary. Despite some of the nationalists' ideologies claiming that nation serves as the basis for the state, historians present a different perspective with the state playing an important role in formation of nations.[2] To further illustrate theoretical complications, another interpretation of origin of nationalism is based on a rather different justification, at the core of which is individual's need for psychological identification. Despite unlike definitions, some historians such as Eric Hobsbawm and Ernest Gellner define nationalism from a political perspective. Stressing the historical era the former provides with an analysis of the historical development of nationalism since the French Revolution.

Probing the evolutionary nature of nationalism, Hobsbawm thus focuses on various historical periods, including the notorious form of nationalism founded on ethnicity- based identity such as of Germans, for instance, in the late 19th century. While some scholars such as the ones mentioned earlier refer to nationalism as a 'political ideology' with an indispensable element of political entity or state, political scientist and Soviet and South Caucasus historian Ronald Grigor Suny however mentions another form of nationalism such as the one based on a 'homogeneous ethnic core'.[3]

Although mentioning Hobsbawm's definition and supporting his argument, Suny likewise presents an alternative interpretation of nationalism based on ethnic homogeneity contributing

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[1] Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities.* London and New- York: Verso, 2006.
[2] Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past Nationalism, Revolution and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford, Stanford University Press), p. 97.
[3] Ibid.

to nationality consolidation. Indeed, in this thesis, focusing on Soviet republics, unlikely solely one form of nationalism can be discussed or applied.

Considering the focus of my thesis, the Russification policy lacking finite theoretical explanations, I nonetheless tried to present nature of research conducted in this area. While indicating the necessity for further research, I however found sufficient evidence and discussions on the topic. In the context of the policy of Russification in the form of promotion of Russian, one undoubtedly encounters discussion of national sensitivities over the status of national language or nationalists' and intelligentsia' concerns over decreasing fluency in their native languages. While presenting the increasing function of Russian, a set of explanations of this process should indeed be given and will be reviewed below. Furthermore, for purpose of a better understanding of the following material, I would like to provide a short description of the intended master's thesis for which this historiographical paper is written.

Short Description

The study and presentation of Belarussians' and Kyrgyz' public and official response to the Soviet efforts of establishing Russian as the second native language in the republics and common language of the USSR, are the intended areas of research of the master's thesis. Indeed, the Russian language in Belarusian SSR remained popular after the collapse of the Soviet Union, indication of successful Soviet language policy. Being one of the other former Union republics of the Soviet Union and having a similar Soviet administrative structure, the Kyrgyz SSR as had the Belorussian SSR experiences influence of Russian language and culture.

The period which will be under the study is between 1970 and 1980, during which a number of main legislative items of Soviet language planning appeared. Furthermore, a number of the Union conferences on accelerating the study and teaching of Russian in public educational institutions in non- Russian republics were organized. The Soviet high ranking

authorities' language planning which in fact represents the deliberate Russification process by the institutionalization of Russian in public schools and other domains threatened the status and function of national non- Russian languages. Furthermore, while in the aim of creation of a single Soviet socialist community the Soviet leadership aimed at improving the use and knowledge of a common language, the Soviet authorities' language policy actually generated national resentments of what was generally viewed as a *forced Russification.*

In general, one of other explanations of increased use and propaganda of Russian has been the Soviet authorities' goal of drawing together diverse nationalities. Furthermore, in addition to practical matters for creating one language one can however encounter the ideological purposes of creating one Soviet society.

After introducing the thesis topic, I would like to proceed to the discussion of nationalism in general and discussion of formation of the Soviet Union in particular. Elaborating on literature of creation of the Soviet Union, a period of cultural development of many ethnic groups is particularly emphasized, which I also presented in the following paragraphs.

II.   Nationalism as a Political Ideology

Hobsbawm's book is considered to be an illuminating historical analysis, which however largely focused on modern European history.[4] An essentially important book in the study of nationalism *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* however lacks an analysis of regions or examples beyond the European sphere, thus being less specialized in non- European regions. Despite its valuable content, the book is nonetheless European oriented, which is not in the geographic orientation of the study- cases of this thesis. Moreover, besides having a particular geographic focus, the book was published at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Thus becoming inappropriate for thorough understanding of Soviet and particularly post- Soviet states, this book gave way to other later works which

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[4] Hobsbawm, Eric. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

therefore render more relevance, furthermore enhancing earlier publications. Despite its Eurocentric focus, Hobsbawm's book however became an invaluable material on modern nation- states for Soviet and Russian studies scholars such as Ronald Grigor Suny, Ben Fowkes.[5] Focusing on a topic relevant for the thesis, Astrid S. Tuminez, indeed provides with theoretical formulations of nationalism fitting more in the context of the USSR.[6] Furthermore, historian, Thomas Ewing, who studied the concept of ethnicity in schools through experiences of several teachers from the Caucasian region in USSR, claimed that in contrast to the definition of 'national' referring to certain historical processes and collective identity formed through a common history, the national in the Soviet context usually signified 'populations that had been designated by the government as residing in a particular territory, using a distinct language'.[7]

Despite resembling other authors' works on nationalism such as Gellner, Hobsbawm, Tuminez similarly identifies the concept of nationalism as a political ideology. Claiming nationalism being as a political concept, she states criteria such as existence of nation with identifiable members, its distinct nature, and status of 'an independent political entity'.[8]

Additionally, she distinguishes between ethnic pressures and nationalist ones, further arguing for political nature of nationalism. While stressing complications arising from ethnic pressures, she claims that they can become nationalistic once being based on demands for an independent state, thus becoming nationalist.

a. The formation of nations after the Revolution of 1917

Although diverse in nature the nationalism had a particular purpose for the Bolsheviks when they seized power in 1917. While some major works on nationalism offer a theoretical

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[5] Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2005), 3.

[6] Tuminez, Astrid. "Nationalism, Ethnic Pressures, and the Breakup of the Soviet Union." *Journal of Cold War Studies* 5, no.4 (2003): 81- 136.

[7] Ewing, Thomas. "Ethnicity at School: 'Non- Russian' Education in the Soviet Union during the 1930s." *History of Education* 35, no.4-5 (2006): 499- 519.

[8] Ibid., 85.

framework for understanding evolution of nationalism, scholarly work on nationalism in the formative years of the Soviet Union however stresses the role of Bolsheviks which was crucial in nationalizing the former territories and peoples of the Russian empire. While assigning an influential role to the communists, a Soviet and Russian history expert, Francine Hirsch finds other's influential roles such the one of the ethnographers who assisted in formation of ethnic composition of Soviet Union.[9] Indeed, according to her, among the principal decision makers were undoubtedly ethnographers, helping to define the concepts of 'nation' and 'nationality'.

Sharing kinship on the aforementioned criteria of language, culture, ethnicity, many nation republics were thus formed in the Soviet Union. The same nation- states which were categorized during the Bolshevik era acquired independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, in spite of true cultural kinship bonding ethnically homogenous people, the nations were constructed.

While possessing distinct culture, language or territory, smaller nationalities were nonetheless conceived to belong to the larger ones. For instance, the Soviet Russia incorporated many autonomous republics or provinces with peoples with their own culture, language, territory.[10] The federative structure of the Soviet Union indeed represented different nationalities, which were however hierarchically categorized, with the greater constitutional rights for a higher unit.[11]Concerned with the study of the formation of the Soviet Union while emphasizing the role of ethnographers, Hirsch's *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of Soviet Union* helps to understand artificial formation of nations on a historical example of the Soviet Union. Besides sharing the common kinship, the nationhood

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[9] Hirsch, Francine. *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005.

[10] Dostal, Petr & Hans Knippenberg, "Russification of Soviet Nationalities: The Importance of Territorial Autonomy." *History of European Ideas* 15, no. 4-6 (1992), 631- 638.

[11] Ibid., p. 632

was indeed institutionalized within the Soviet states. Soviet leadership's role in providing with cultural rights the nationalities within the Soviet Union, has also been studied. While recent publications on the formation of Soviet nationalities have undoubtedly great value, the earlier works are also important.

Besides the efforts of contemporary scholars such as Hirsch, published in 1954 Richard Pipes' *Formation of the Soviet Union* nonetheless represents the first detailed and compact study on the nationality topic during the revolution period in Russia. Moreover, besides presenting the first comprehensive work on the topic, Pipes offers the first accounts of nationalist struggles among the peoples of Central Asia and other insufficiently investigated peoples.[12]

b. Bolshevik's nationality approach in development. Depiction of the Soviet Union as an empire

Furthermore, as one of the indications of the deliberate nation- building, one characteristic of the Lenin leadership and his time can be presented. The historian Terry Martin, the author of the book *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations, Nationalisms in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* point to educational expansion of the period which was accompanied with cultural and linguistic development in the non- Russian regions in the early periods of the Soviet Union.[13]

Martin presented a comprehensive study of national policies which the Soviet leadership developed at the outset of the Soviet nation- building. Presenting one of the recent efforts in providing a framework to situate the Soviet nationality policies, *The Affirmative Action Empire* offers new insights into how new institutions and identities emerged due to the Soviet policies.

Importantly, educational institutions such as schools became one of the institutions whose number drastically grew with the establishment of the Soviet Union, thus significantly

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[12] Pipes, Richard. *The Formation of the Soviet Union*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954.
[13] Martin, Terry. *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923- 1939.* Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001.

improving schooling in national regions. For Terry Martin writing on the topic, the Soviet

nationality policy, the broader modernization process of the early years became a key

explanatory factor, as result of which the cultural development such as development of the

non- Russian literary languages, intelligentsia, publishing was possible.

While providing with a better understanding of the early years of the Soviet Union's

nationality policy, Martin also referred to personalities such Lenin and Stalin who were quite

committed to development of non- Russian cultural forms. An editor and author of the article

'The Changing Status of Russian in the Soviet Union', compiled together with other

commentaries in the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language,* Isabelle Kreindler

expressed the view that Lenin had a genuine attitude towards his language policy, contrasting

others' in perceiving the Lenin's policy as the means for the consolidation of the Bolshevik

and Soviet powers.[14]

After the collapse of the Soviet Union a new paradigm indeed modified literature on the

role of the Soviet regime, as a result of which the former territorial policies became

considered as part of imperial agenda of the Soviet leadership. Representing major republics

of the Union, the major nationalities were deliberately created, thus characterizing the Soviet

Union as an empire.[15] Besides, if the Soviet Union is an empire has been differently

answered.[16] Claims about the imperial nature of the Soviet government illustrated by the

center- periphery relationship between Moscow and other republics outside Russia indeed

exist.

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[14] Kreindler, I. "The Changing Status of Russian in the Soviet Union." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 33 (1982): 7- 41.

[15] Simon, Gerhard. *Nationalism and Policy Toward the Nationalities in the Soviet Union: From Totalitarian Dictatorship to Post- Stalinist Society* (Boulder: Westview, 1991); Suny, Ronald Grigor. *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993; Slezkine, Yuri. "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism." *Slavic Review* 53, no.2 (1994): 414- 52; Hirsch, Francine. *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005.
[16] Beissinger, Mark R. *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet Union.* New- York; Cambridge Unuiversity Press, 2002.

After presenting the discussion of how the nationalities were formed and emphasizing an important development characteristic, I would like to continue with the main focus of the historiographical paper, the discussion of publications on the Soviet language policy. Presenting the discussion on formation of the Soviet Union, I aimed to help the reader apprehend how the nations were formed and indicate the role of the Bolsheviks, whose one of the leaders, Lenin played an important role in development of non- Russian languages and prevention of Russian influence. Among the Soviet language scholars' writings Lenin has indeed been universally cited (see below).

III.   Introduction to the scholarly work on Soviet Language policy

Well established as a Soviet Union and post- war European scholar, Norman M. Naimark claims that the Russian historiographical tradition like the Western one was often determined by individual political interests and positions, pointing to 'unmistakable' politics of history.[17] While focusing on the history of the emergence of post- war Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe, the scholar raises another problem – the dominance of the Russian perspective, considering that most of the research in Russian historiography on the topic was done at the Russian institutes in Moscow. One of the explanations that Naimark presented was that the archives focusing on the Soviet role in postwar Eastern Europe were situated in the capital of Russia, Moscow. Being part of the Soviet history, research of Soviet language policy has been nonetheless conducted by many Western scholars relying on various archive sources, including the documents smuggled to the West, such as censored materials in the form of samizdat publications.

Besides official sources, other sources representing grassroots and dissident activities, such as samizdat publications, became used as sources for research.

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[17] Norman Naimark, "Post- Soviet Russian Historiography on the Emergence of the Soviet Bloc," *Kritika: Exlorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 5(3) (2004): 561.

The historical period the following paragraphs covers stretches from the Lenin to the Brezhnev leadership of the Soviet Union. Illustrating the historical development of the Soviet language policy, however the paper presents focuses of scientific publications on the topic. With coverage of the topic, the paper will therefore present an overview of the published literature. Furthermore, while presenting scholarly work, the paper will also mention their sources from which evidences were drawn and available resources which helped to write and argue. To illustrate the increasing application and status of Russian, many scholars find evidences as presented in statistical reports, such the number and percentage of people speaking Russian or the number of schools instructed in Russian, Soviet legislative decrees, periodical articles and oral histories, statements, and school teachers' experiences.

However, before proceeding to the next sections, I would like to clarify the use of one of the concepts. Many of the concepts are quite straightforward; however the concept of national such as national language, national schools, national republics should be apprehended as *non-Russian* language, school or republic. In the paper where the word *national* is used, it always refers to non- Russian, non- Russian ethnicity, non- Russian nationality, schools, as used by many scholars researching the subject.

Embodying a wide range of ethnicities, the Soviet Union's major national republics can indeed be clustered according to national and geographic characteristics. Thus, they can be clustered according to European, Asian and Caucasian identities and regions. The Belarusian SSR as its neighboring republics such as Ukraine and a number of the Baltic States represented the European nationalities. In addition to these European nationalities, other nationalities can be assigned with the Asian and Caucasian identities, all forming the Soviet

Union's group of major nationalities.[18]Like other four republics, the Kirghiz SSR was part of the Asian group, more specifically the Central Asian one.

Imposing Russian in the republics of its European region, in Ukrainian and Belarusian SSRs in particular, the Soviet Union however aimed to underpin their East Slavic identity, emphasizing their relative closeness to the Russians.[19]

The scholars such as a historian, Yaroslav Bilinsky justified Russification there based on relatively close languages and cultures of the Slavic populations, while emphasizing that study of Russian was equally advanced in republics with their own national language which is linguistically and culturally distinct. Nonetheless, scholars such as Bilinsky, and others, studying the Soviet leadership's official language policy and practice, documented concerns of increasing instruction in Russian in many national republics, including the Slavic ones.

The Russification process indeed provoked negative attitudes and concerns over the status of national republics' languages, with clear signs of resentment in the Caucasian region. Nonetheless, while the advancement of Russian raised apprehension of patriots of the native languages and other strata of populations it is also viewed as a beneficial process in terms of opportunities for advanced education and modernization for some peoples. Importantly, the increased use and study of Russian started undere Lenin's successors, indicating a progressive process.

a. Lenin's policy of equal cultural rights

Indeed, even when studying the Soviet language policy in the 1970s, for instance focusing on the Tashkent conference 'The Russian language – the language of friendship and cooperation of the peoples of the USSR', most of the scholars in this area mention Lenin's

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[18] The major nationalities had a Soviet Socialist republic status, given in total to 15 distinct national groups (Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Moldavians, Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Tadzhiks, Kirghiz, Turkmens, Georgians, Armenians, Azerbaijanis).

[19] Bilinsky, Yaroslav. "Expanding the Use of Russian or Russification? Some Critical Thoughts on Russian as a Lingua Franca and "The Language of Friendship and Cooperation of the Peoples of the USSR." *Russian Review* 40, no.3 (1981): 317- 332.

principle, equality of languages constituting part of his nationality programme. While emphasizing Lenin's policies, the reference to Lenin thus helped to illustrate contrasts in the language policies within the Soviet leaderships.

Dismissing the idea that Lenin's language policy was based on seeking mere political benefits, a historian, Isabella Kreindler believes that 'Lenin's language policy derived from deeply held convinctions'.[20] The scholar uses her earlier research which was presented in some other jounals, proving 'Lenin's sincerity'. What she finds and supports her view are two facts – Lenin's upbringing and 'unequivocal and consistent' attitude towards the language as both before and after his rule. Furthermore, besides finding some evidences in Lenin's earlier years for the support of her claim, Kreindler also relied on Lenin's ideas about Russian and its role for non- Russians and linguistic achievements of smaller nationality groups such as Ossetians, Udmurt, pointing to Lenin's linguistic programme whose principle of equality of languages became especially attractive and popular.[21]

Despite disagreeing over sincerity of the Lenin's policy, Kreindler resembled other authors in stressing Lenin's principle of equality of languages. To illustrate importance of every language, under the years of Lenin's rule, one should consider the fact, which Bilinsky presented in his article that political writings were translated in many non- Russian languages, which became less practiced under the successive leaderships.[22] Furthermore, to contrast the language situation under Lenin with other Soviet leaderships, such evidences and other such as statistical evidences have been used.

b.   The First Decree on Compulsory Russian Language

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[20]Isabella Kreindler, "Lenin, Russian, and Soviet Language Policy," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 33 (1982): 131.

[21] Ibid., 130.

[22] Yaroslav Bilinsky, "Expanding the Use of Russian or Russification? Some Critical Thoughts on Russian as a Lingua Franca and "The Language of Friendship and Cooperation of the Peoples of the USSR," *Russian Review* 40, no. 3 (1981): 319.

While Russian was well advanced in the republics in the 1960s, 1970s, there were earlier decrees on institutionalization of study of Russian such as the 1938 decree, which was on compulsory Russian study. An author of the article discussing the decree of 1938, Peter Blitstein's analysis became one of the main contributions focusing on advancement of the Russian language in the Stalin's period, in *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation- Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin,* edited by Ronald Grigor Suny, widely known for his research on the Soviet Union and nationality question.[23] The author as other authors in the book studied the inconsistencies in the Bolshevik attempts to form a new type of state, which did have in fact many uncertainties. Nonetheless, while others focusing on some subjects, Blitstein found that the promotion of the Russian language was indeed under in practice.

Yet, being a complex multi- ethnic country, the Soviet Union nonetheless granted greater rights to main nationalities, assigning them with the greatest form of ethno-national autonomy.[24] Nonetheless, it is fair to acknowledge that many smaller non- Russian languages were especially developed under Stalin so to be employed in various language domains. Undoubtedly, with the development of written systems of languages in the formative years of the Soviet Union some regions with low literacy benefited.[25] However, other aspects more of authoritative nature such as Soviet authorities' restriction of native scripts for Turkic populations, Stalin's repression of the 1930s, were also in place during this formative period.

IV.   Types of Sources Used as Evidence of Russian Influence. Georgians' reactions.

As indicated above, censuses helped many scholars of the Soviet language policy to reveal the Russification process, for instance, based on increasing numbers of people of non- Russian

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[23] Blitstein, P., 2001. Nation- Building or Russification? Obligatory Russian Instruction in the Soviet Non-Russian School, 1938- 1953. In: R. Suny & T. Martin, eds. *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation- Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[24] Petr F. Dostal & Hans Knippenberg, "Russification of Soviet Nationalities: The Importance of Territorial Autonomy." *History of European Ideas* 15, no. 4-6 (1992): 631- 638.

[25] Michael Kirkwood, "*Glasnost* 'the national question' and Soviet language policy." *Soviet Studies* 43, issue 1 (1991): 61- 81.

origins claiming Russian as their native or second language. Undoubtedly, while in general the process of Russification reached all major nationalities, in some regions of the USSR the process was less or more successful. With use of statistics and other sources, most of the scholars differentiate between national groups. However, discussing the language policy in USSR, the scholars give preference to discussion of specific nationalistic groups such as Georgians, Armenians, Azerbaijanis, representing mostly the Caucasian nationalities. While there is evidence of the languages issues in these republics, some non- Russian republics were not documented as to have reactionary or opposing attitudes to the language reforms of the Soviet leadership as the former ones.

To illustrate the intensified Russification, Roman Solchanyk, an American historian and researcher, relied on statistics from the Soviet sources such as *Vestnik Statistiki, Sovremennye ethnicheskie protsessy v SSSR*.[26] From the latter source, he presented the table called as 'Pupils Attending Native- Language and Russian- Language General Education Schools in 1972 as a Percentage of 1965 in the Non- Russian Republics'. Interpreting the table, one can say that whereas Belorussia and Ukraine had a smaller percentage of students attending the native schools in 1972, representing more distinct cultural and language groups, the Soviet states of Central Asia experienced a greater proportion of students studying in national language. Nonetheless, apart from Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan, other republics had generally more students enrolled in the Russian language schools in 1972 than before. While having differences and similarities, the major national groups of the Soviet Union in fact differed in their reactions to the promotion of the Russian language.

Among many scholars, including Solchanyk or Bilinsky, the Georgians were found to have certain opposition to the Soviet leadership's language policy. Using some similar

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[26] Solchanyk, Roman. "Russian Language and Soviet Politics," *Soviet Studies* 34, issue 1 (1982): 23- 42.

statistics, a professor in the Russian and Slavic Studies, Theodore H. Friedgut discussed the

Georgian's reaction which took form of public debate and press discussions.[27]

Representing one of the Caucasian peoples of the USSR, the Georgians have often been

taken for an exemplary illustration of resentment of the Russifying policy.[28] With a long

history of national and cultural independence, the Georgians regarded the increasing status of

Russian quite sensitively, which explains their pugnacious response. To explain this, the term

of nation can help. Although arguments of nationalisms differ, the term of nation has been

less controversial. In addition to nationalism, nation has also to be defined. In the context of

several perspectives on nationalism, nation has been less problematic, thus frequently

referring to a community of people with similar culture, ancestry, ethnicity or language.

While being a particularly useful account of European nationalism, Hobsbawm's book

nonetheless touches upon nation especially focusing on conditions defining some groups as

nations. According to him, nation can be formed because of common language or ethnicity, or

otherwise including a mixture of criteria such as common territory, common history.[29]

Anthony D. Smith especially emphasizes the role of such attributes like language and other

cultural attributes as underpinning people's communal belonging and arising strong

attachments.[30]

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[27] Friedgut, Theodore."The Unity of Language and the Language of Unity, " *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 33 (1982): 79-89.

[28] Bilinsky, Yaroslav. "Expanding the Use of Russian or Russification? Some Critical Thoughts on Russian as a Lingua Franca and "The Language of Friendship and Cooperation of the Peoples of the USSR,"*Russian Review* 40, no.3 (1981): 317- 332.; Friedgut, Theodore. "The Unity of Language and the Language of Unity," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 33 (1982): 79-91; Roeder, Philip. "Soviet Federalism and Ethnic Mobilization," *World Politics* 43, no.2 (1991): 196- 232; Silver, Brian. "Social Mobilization and the Russification of Soviet Nationalities," *The American Political Science Review* 68, no. 1 (1974): 45- 66.

[29] Hobsbawm, Eric. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

[30] Anthony D. Smith, *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Hanover, University Press of New England, 2000), 5.

While acknowledging lack of theoretical clarity in nationalism, Smith and Anderson claim such cultural attributes indeed raise strong attachments.[31]

Interestingly presenting the Georgian case, Friedgut nonetheless claims that while some republics such the Soviet Georgian Republic contested the Soviet language policy, other republics reacted with less 'pugnacious pride'.[32] Finding most of the evidences of the Georgians' reactions in press discussions of the language question, the author also noted that for instance, in the Kirghiz SSR, the central media reflected the official allegation asserting the Russian as 'the language of Lenin, the language of friendship and brotherhood' which every citizen of the Soviet Kirghizia desires to learn.[33]

Raising apprehension among the non- Russian nationalities, with clear signs of opposition in Georgia and a few other republics, the policy of intensified study of Russian was nonetheless viewed positively by many Soviet authorities, including the representatives of the national republics. Following the position of central authorities, the director of the Russian Language Institute of the USSR Academy of Sciences, Fedot P. Filin, emphasized the goal of achievement of bilingualism in the USSR with Russian being as the second native language.[34]While proving the increasing status of Russian, many historians of this question used these and other officials' statements, serving to point to the actuality and importance of the language question. Referring to two important conferences on the Russian language Bilinsky as well as Solchanyk also stressed the political importance of the language policy.[35]

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[31] Ibid.; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London and New- York: Verso, 2006), p. 4.
[32] Friedgut, Theodore."The Unity of Language and the Language of Unity," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 33 (1982): 79-89.
[33] Ibid., 84

[34] Solchanyk, Roman. "Russian Language and Soviet Politics," *Soviet Studies* 34, issue 1 (1982): 23- 42; Filin, Fedot. *Russkii yazyk kak sredtstvo mezhnasionalnogo obshcheniya.* Moscow : Nauka, 1977.

[35] Ibid.; Bilinsky, Yaroslav. "Expanding the Use of Russian or Russification? Some Critical Thoughts on Russian as a Lingua Franca and "The Language of Friendship and Cooperation of the Peoples of the USSR,"*Russian Review* 40, no.3 (1981): 317- 332.

Widely cited by other authors, Ann Sheehy's article under the name 'The Tashkent Conference and Its Draft Recommendations on the Teaching of Russian' contained recommendations of the actual conference in its appendix, serving as a valuable resource for scholars such as Bilinsky and Solchanyk.[36] Representing landmark measures of increasing use and study of Russian, the two conferences of Tashkent in 1975 and 1979 were attended by Soviet teachers, academicians, politicians, however with a significantly greater number of politicians of high ranks at the second conference.

The scholars illustrated the opposition in the Caucasian region, while however neglecting attitudes of other main nationalities, which indeed represented a distant culture and language. There were many ethnic and nationality groups in USSR, however the Turkic peoples, mainly residing in the Central Asian region were also quite resistant to the linguistic acculturation. While showing the Georgians' open questioning of the language policy in public press, other scholars such as Brian D. Silver, Teresa Rokowska- Harmstone, found proof in numerical indicators. Nonetheless many of the authors here also refer to numerical tendencies. The tables and numbers in them illustrate the increase of Russian, yet they can also show predominance of the national languages.

Teresa Rokowska- Harmstone, an author of the article *A political perspective,* indicates the similar findings as shown somewhere else in the paper. While some being less Russified, other republics especially the East Slavic groups, such as Ukrainians, Belarusians were the most Russified. Lacking cultural and linguistic ties to Slavic populations, other union republics however show strong adherence to national languages. Nonetheless, Ukrainians, Belarusians also exhibit the similar tendency. What else important to note in the research on the language policy are scholars' common places of research such as schools. Although with

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[36] Sheehy, A., 1979. *The Tashkent Conference and Its Draft Recommendations on the Teaching of Russian,* s.l.: Radio Liberty Report.

schools being indeed the principal targets of the Soviet leaderships' language policies they therefore became important subjects for studying the Russification process for scholars.

Again emphasizing the Georgians' adherence to education strictly in Georgian, Rokowska Harmston indeed claims that 'Russian- language schools are seen as the most important influence in the process of 'Soviet internationalist' integration, more important than Russian- speaking work experience or service in the armed forces'.[37]Furthermore, this was not only presented among the foreign scholars, it was also publicized and published by the Soviet experts such as Bruk, Guboglo, and Soviet officials.[38] Undoubtedly, these censuses carry valuable information, nonetheless, they present picture mostly on the national and all-Union levels, thus dismissing tendencies within the republics themselves.

Interestingly, knowing high censorship in the Soviet Union, most of censuses reports are not questioned on their reliability or credibility. Following the legislative decrees, statements, and conferences such the ones in Tashkent, one can certainly conclude on the Soviet efforts of linguistic and cultural acculturation. Furthermore with the official statistical evidences supporting the fact of Russification, they remain unquestioned.

V.   Conclusion

To argue for increased Russification, most of the scholars worked with statistical information – depicting the increasing use and status of Russian. Most importantly, among other sources, were the Soviet periodicals that in particular supported many scholarly publications. The professor emeritus of political science and international affairs at the University of Delaware and Harvard graduate as a Soviet expert, Yaroslav Bilinsky likewise used statistical indicators illustrating linguistic assimilation especially in the later years. Reports such censuses of

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[37] Theresa Rakowska-Harmstone, "A Political Perspective," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 33 (1982): 108.

[38] Bruk, S. & Guboglo, M. "The Factors in the Dissemination of Bilingualism among the Nations of the USSR" *Sovetskaya Etnografia* 5 (1975): 17- 30.

various years were useful in indicating the percentage of people declaring Russian as their native language, students attending the Russian schools and school taught in Russian.

Despite studying the Soviet language policy, one nonetheless touches upon the study of the Soviet policies promoting national identities especially the ones formulated during the formative years. The Bolsheviks whose role in structuring national territories also constituted an important role in the formation of the Soviet Union thus approached the nationality problem as has been discussed earlier. Studying the nationality principles of the Bolsheviks, one certainly emphasizes the Lenin's period, claimed as particularly important development phases for many ethnic groups. Furthermore, Terry Martin's study indeed elaborated upon the Soviet efforts to increase literacy and schooling in national regions, as part of the modernization period.

Despite the main topic on Soviet language policy, general discussion on nationalism also became focus of this paper. Furthermore, the discussion on nationalism as a political concept was followed by the review of the Bolshevik's role in nationalizing the former imperial subjects.

While presenting evidences of the Soviet regime's purposeful Russification, most of the aforementioned authors don't however present the causes which drove to initiate this language policy.

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