



ЯЗЫКОВАЯ ПОЛИТИКА

LANGUAGE POLICY

УДК 81'272

DOI: 10.37892/2713-2951-2021-2-6-61-128

THE FORMATION OF LANGUAGE POLICY IN RUSSIA'S REPUBLICS IN THE EARLY 1990S: IDEOLOGIES, INTERESTS, INSTITUTIONS

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The struggle of political elites for power was cited as the main reason for the designation of the state languages of republics as the key device of language policy during the USSR disintegration. Indeed, political actors in republics raised the agenda similar language problems and proposed similar ideas and alternatives for their solution in the parallel processes of democratization, nation-building and state building of the period of social and political changes of the early 1990s. Partly, this policy borrowing could be explained by the fact that the actors were largely constrained in policy choices by institutions and other structural factors. Yet, to explain the policy formation only as an outcome of the conflict of interests channelled by institutional settings is to underestimate the role of human agency. The significance of agency most perceptibly manifested itself as the conflict of ideas and values at the stage of the formation of policies in republics. The purpose of this paper is to study language policy formation in the republics of Russia in order to contribute to the elucidation of the role of ideologies, interests and institutions in the structure-agency debate. I study policy formation diachronically, contrasting the Soviet and post-Soviet periods and following the interplay between policy and its environment through its substages, as well as and synchronically across republics. In this mixed study, the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data on the republics of the North-West and the Volga and Ural region allows demonstrating that the interaction of actors on the "language issue" was characterized not so much by a conflict of interests as by a conflict of ideologies, which was expressed in the "nationalist" and "democratic" discourses and fuelled them. The rise of ideologies resulted in the change of social and political order, including language policy formation.

Keywords: policy formation, language policy, state languages, ideology, ethnic mobilization, national republics, Russian Federation



ФОРМИРОВАНИЕ ЯЗЫКОВОЙ ПОЛИТИКИ В РОССИЙСКИХ РЕСПУБЛИКАХ В НАЧАЛЕ 1990-х ГОДОВ: ИДЕОЛОГИИ, ИНТЕРЕСЫ, ИНСТИТУТЫ

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Борьба политических элит за власть называлась в качестве основной причины установления государственных языков республик в качестве главного инструмента языковой политики в период распада СССР. Действительно, политические акторы в республиках поднимали для включения в повестку схожие языковые проблемы и предлагали аналогичные идеи и альтернативы для их решения в параллельных процессах демократизации, государственного строительства и нацестроительства периода социальных и политических изменений начала 1990-х годов. Частично, заимствование политики можно объяснить тем, что акторы были в значительной степени ограничены в выборе политики институтами и другими структурными факторами. Вместе с тем, объяснять формирование политики только в качестве результата конфликта интересов, предопределенного институциональными рамками, – значит недооценивать роль активной деятельности человека (англ. human agency). Значение активной деятельности проявилось наиболее заметно в качестве конфликта идей и ценностей на этапе формирования политики в республиках. Целью данной статьи является изучение формирования языковой политики в республиках России для того, чтобы способствовать пониманию роли идеологий, интересов и институтов в дискуссии о структуре и активной деятельности. Я изучаю формирование политики диахронически, сравниваю советский и постсоветский периоды и исследую связь между политикой и ее средой на подэтапах, а также синхронно в республиках. В этом смешанном исследовании анализ количественных и качественных данных по республикам Северо-Запада, Поволжья и Урала позволяет показать, что взаимодействие акторов по поводу «языкового вопроса» характеризовалось не столько конфликтом интересов, сколько конфликтом идеологий, который выражался в «националистском» и «демократическом» дискурсах и питал их. Подъем идеологий привел к изменению общественного и политического строя, в том числе формированию языковой политики.

Ключевые слова: формирование политики, языковая политика, государственные языки, идеология, этническая мобилизация, национальные республики, Российская Федерация

In the processes of the disintegration of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) of the late 1980s, the designation of state languages became the main device of language policy first in the union republics (SSRs) and later also in the autonomous republics (ASSRs). From the instrumentalist account of the rise of nationalism that cause or at least contributed to the USSR collapse, it was suggested that language status planning was pursued by the titular political elites in republics whose interest was to use the requirements of language knowledge as an instrument to ensure their exclusive access to power, because local Russians typically had a poor or no knowledge of titular languages [Guboglo, 1998]. This argument by analogy was extended from SSRs to ASSRs. Yet, almost all

ASSRs of Russia designated both the titular languages and Russian as their official state languages, which largely prevented their use as a political instrument.

The attempt to explain the policy outcome by the interests of actors was a welcome break among studies on Russia's language policy that would typically use the historical-structural approach (on the approach, see [Tollefson, 2015]) but not the history of ideas. However, interests can be also structurally determined by institutions. "New institutionalism" focuses on studying institutions, that is, formal and informal rules that have constraining and enabling effects on the behavior of individuals and groups. The institutionalist account of the rise of nationalist movements points at the central role of republics and other "ethnic institutions" "established to oversee a state's interactions with ethnic groups" as a structural factor that provided ready-made channels for ethnic mobilization (see, e.g., [Gorenburg, 2003: 3–5]). According to the institutionalist logic, political entrepreneurs had an interest in pursuing mobilization for taking control over political institution and, thus, grabbing political power. From this perspective, I argued that the official status of languages was another ethnic institution [Zamyatin, 2014, 2020].

Yet, both interest-based and institutionalist accounts tend to oversee the role of ideas and, thus, fail to address properly the problem of social structure and human agency, which is topical also in the field of language policy and planning [Johnson, 2018: 63–64]. Many activists participating in mobilization were driven not so much by self-interest but had complex motivations that included ideological beliefs. The recently renewed attention in political science to agency came out of understanding that the actors' motivations are based not only on interest pursued in institutional setting but also on ideas, (national) sentiments, feeling of belonging, beliefs, that is, on ideologies. Ideology is typically defined as "the underlying non-formal but logically consistent set of ideas about the structure of the world – and how the world should be structured" [Sauerland, 2015: 571]. Ideologies not only legitimate the existing social order but also constitute that order in the first place and – thus construct social agency. Institutions incorporate the underlying ideologies, while changes in ideology can trigger institutional change [Meyer et al., 2009: 3, 9].

Materialists, be they Marxists or rational choice theorists, may see also ideas merely as instruments that actors use to pursue their interests. Yet, reducing the idea of official language status to an asset in a political conflict, they admit some agency of the elites but underestimate the influence of policy environment, first of all, the role of institutions, ideas and ideologies in shaping policy interests. For constructivists, not only institutions promote identities, helping individuals to construct their values, but also ideas and values are the foundation of institutions and shape actors' beliefs and



interests. In calculating the utility of certain policy option, actors' motivations include ideas stemming from the given institutional setting and their own policy beliefs [Beland & Cox, 2010: 9–11].

Furthermore, both the instrumentalist and institutionalist varieties of constructivism correspond with the elite theory and fail to account for the perspective of pluralist theory of political power with its focus on mass politics, the involvement of mobilized masses and the interaction between masses and elites in the process of policy formation that characterized the time of political change. Yet, the social movements research points at the key role of ideologies and discursive frames in mobilization processes [Johnston & Noakes, 2005]. While the “new institutionalist” approaches of normative, rational choice, historical and sociological institutionalisms focus on structure, discursive or constructivist institutionalisms show how ideas and discourses affect social change [Schmidt, 2010]. Thus, a study that would take into account not only interests or institutions but also ideas in shaping policy would allow better understanding of policy choice people make.

The aim of the paper is to compare the role of ideas and ideologies as well as interests and institutions in policymaking in Russia's republics following the public and political debates on the national and language issue in order to understand the drivers of change and continuity in policy formation. Policy entrepreneurs drew from policy ideas elsewhere to promote their position and presented similar ideas concerning language status planning in the public debate in all republics. In a cascade effect, ideas, including the idea of state languages, moved from republic to republic but had to be tested in concrete situations with unique distributions of political resources in every republic.

From a comparative perspective, I will study language policy formation in the republics of Karelia, Komi, Mari El, Mordovia and Udmurtia titled after the Finno-Ugric groups as well as of Bashkortostan and Tatarstan after the Turkic groups of the Volga region and the Urals. Occasionally, I will give examples also from Chuvashia that in general is a less confrontational case because the titular group had a significant demographic majority both in the population and among the elites. The republics present an interesting selection of contrasting cases, ranging from “leveled co-official status”, as in Tatarstan or the Komi Republic, up to the failure to introduce the titular language as the state language in Karelia. Despite structural similarities in the ethno-political and sociolinguistic situations of the republics, their policies were formed along different trajectories.

In the conceptual framework of the theories of language policy, I will study language policy as a public policy based on the stage approach that models it as a sequence of stages from policy formation and adoption to its implementation and evaluation [Kirkwood, 1989: 2–5]. Policy formation as the first stage of the political process takes place within a certain policy environment on a policy venue that is characterized by a certain set of actors, who were led not only by their interests but also by

ideas about how the issue should be addressed. Their shared ideas about a policy are policy images. Policy actors are not only official policymakers, the central and republics' authorities, but, especially at the times of change, also non-governmental participants. I will use the multiple-streams framework that models policy formation as joining together streams of problems, policies and politics [Kingdon, 2013]. Whether three components of the political process – the problem situation, the policy in its substantial dimension (policy) and its procedural dimension (politics) – meet in one locus, is largely dependent on time and chance [Zahariadis, 2007].

The three streams roughly correspond with three substages of policy formation: problem definition, agenda-setting and policy formulation. It has to be noted though that, while the distinction of the substages is useful for analytical purpose, in reality these are often parallel processes, when for an issue to be defined as problem and to enter the political agenda, there is the need for the sets of problems and solutions and the political will to meet in one “policy window”. Thus, it makes sense to organize the study of policy formation respectively: first, in policy's interaction with the environment and, second, in its three substages.

Accordingly, in the first part, I will study some qualitative and quantitative data on the link of policy with its environment in order to explore its temporal (historical and sociological) and spatial (geographical and institutional) dimensions that determined change and continuity in policy during the USSR disintegration. First, I will chronologically outline the Soviet national-state construction as well as the launch and development of the nationalities policy and language policy from its early stage to the policy shift and the late stage in order to provide details for comparison of the circumstances of policy formation in the early Soviet and post-Soviet periods. I will also focus on some outcomes in terms of the resulting institutional design and the scope of measures in education and mass media provided for the titular groups of the ASSRs. Second, I will study the sociological processes, analyzing available statistical and survey data to evaluate the Soviet policy impact on the titular groups of the ASSRs. I will focus on some key aspects of their ethnic and sociolinguistic situations along such macrosociological indicators as demographic change and language retention rates as well as language knowledge and language use among the titular groups (the revised data are partly from [Zamyatin, 2018]). Third, I will follow the emergence of national movements during *perestroika* and explore the influence of ideologies in language policy formation in the USSR, SSRs and ASSRs as part of political change in the context of the USSR disintegration.

In the second part, I will analyze policy documents and media publications to understand the policy discourses and to test a correlation between the phases of the formation of the titular national movements and the Russian counter-mobilization with the substages of the formation of the new

nationalities policy and language policy in post-Soviet Russia. I will study the three substages of policy formation in republics, structuring this section accordingly. While in reality the substages are often interrelated and mingled, their analytical distinction allows revealing the roles of different actors of policy process. First, I will study early media publications, *Obkom* policy documents as well as programmatic documents of national organizations to understand what concerns were raised in public debates, what trends in the language environment were defined as the policy problems and what ideas were proposed to solve them. Second, I will study the documents of the peoples' congresses and the local Russian nationalist organizations to understand what demands from authorities on actions were included as issues in the political agenda. Third, I will study shorthand reports and verbatim records of the parliamentary and committee debates on draft laws to understand what issues were most discussed and what alternative courses of action proposed by politicians. On each substage, I will first provide the background, then outline summaries of the different developments in individual republics (for in-depth case studies, see [Zamyatin, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c] and, finally, observe the commonalities of policy formation.

While there are numerous studies into different aspects of the language policies of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, the cases of other republics are less studied. My main sources are the collections of documents on individual republics that include also mass media publications on the topic [Karely, 1989, 1992, 2005; Karel'skoe nacional'noe dviženie, 2009, 2012, 2018; Nacional'nye otnošenija v Komi ASSR, 1991; Štrichi etnopolitičeskogo razvitija Komi respublik, 1994; Nacional'nye dviženija Marij El, 1995, 1996; S'ezdy naroda mari, 2008; Obščestvennye dviženija v Mordovii, 1993; Mordovskoe nacional'noe dviženie, 2003; Ponimat' drug druga, 1990; Fenomen Udmurtii, 2002, 2003; Suverennyi Tatarstan, 1998; Jazykovaja politika v Respublike Tatarstan, 1999; Respublika Tatarstan, 2000; Etnopolitičeskaja mozaika Baškortostana, 1992; Etnopolitičeskie processy v Baškortostane, 1992].

Research on the rise of nationalist movements in the republics of post-Soviet Russia pointed at the key role of ethnic institutions as mobilization channels for identity building and the self-interest of political elites in pursuit of institution-building and policy formation but paradoxically had a blind spot in regard to the significance of nationalist and democratic ideologies in these processes. With the USSR collapse, the notion of ideology became unpopular being associated with Marxism. At the same time, the researchers' dismissal of the nationalist, revivalist and other ideological rhetoric as just a smokescreen for self-interest of elites is itself a manifestation of the Marxist understanding of ideology as "false consciousness". This study advances the recently renewed scholarship on ideational interpretations of political processes. It argues that language policy formation was not only an

outcome of the activities of policy entrepreneurs driven by self-interest within the institutionally restricted field of opportunities but also of the actors' motivations rooted in ideologies and expressed in discourses as part of institution-building. The findings of this article advance beyond the instrumentalist and institutionalist accounts the debate about the impact of nationalism on Russia's state building and identity building.

1. Soviet Language Policy and Its Impact on Sociolinguistic Trends

1.1. Policy Development: Historical Context

The Establishment of USSR and the Early Soviet Nationalities Policy

In the Marxist thinking, nationalism was seen as an ideological weapon of the bourgeoisie, but national liberation movements were considered revolutionary. Thus, the proletariat must have first won in the national state. In the Russian Empire, ethnic Russians composed only slightly more than half of the population. To win, it was in the interest of the Bolshevik Party to gain support both of Russians and non-Russians. Promoting international class solidarity of workers, the Bolsheviks also had to take into account the high level of the country's diversity. It became the task of Joseph Stalin to formulate the Party's stance on the national question and to reconcile it with Marxism. In his 1913 work, Stalin gave his famous definition of the nation, which among his characteristic features listed a common language, and advocated for territorial autonomy as the state-building model [Stalin, 1953: 304]. The Party leader Vladimir Lenin endorsed in 1914 the right of nations to self-determination of the oppressed peoples and their liberation to become the Party's slogan [Lenin, 1972: 393–454].

Immediately after taking power the new Bolshevik government, the Council of People's Commissars, proclaimed in November 1917 in the Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia equality and sovereignty of the peoples of Russia and their right of a free self-determination. Therefore, national self-determination became the foundational principle of the state building, "Soviet national-state construction", that had to be pursued on the nation-state model, and was intended to solve "once and forever" the "national question". It was both a pragmatic step to path the way to the world revolution not against but along the nationalist sentiment and also an idealist attempt to advance the equal rights of citizens and the equality of all nations and nationalities.

The need to advance internationalism without provoking nationalist resistance predetermined the duality in the goals of the Soviet nationalities policy that promoted both unity and diversity, although shifting the emphasis in their balance, throughout the Soviet period and beyond. The Soviet ideology claimed to combine "national" and "international" in their dialectics, while both Russian



nationalism coined as “great power chauvinism” and local “bourgeois” nationalism of non-Russians were explicitly denounced and substituted with the adherence to “proletarian internationalism”.

The All-Russian Congress of Soviets formally instituted the Russian Soviet Republic in January 1918 that according to its constitution soon became the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR). It was the affirmative action of the Soviet Government towards minority nationalities that allowed creating the institutional basis for their national development through the national delimitation and the creation of national territorial units [Martin, 2001: 2–4]. Due to the mixed character of ethnic settlement, the national delimitation faced difficulties had to ensure the numerical majority of the ethnic groups after which national territorial units were titled (hence – “titular nations” and “titular nationalities”). Soon, the other republics were created either as ASSRs of the RSFSR or nominally independent People’s Soviet Republics usually after the military conquest by the Red Army.

The local activists inspired by the Bolshevik ideas were not passive in this process and acted in the name of their peoples pursuing nationalist mobilization, the purpose of which was institutional recognition. For example, in the Volga region of Russia, the Bashkirs held two All-Bashkir Congresses (Kurultai) already in summer 1917. The Third All-Bashkir Constituent Congress elected in December 1917 the Bashkir Government. Under the prospect of military defeat, the Bashkir Government agreed in 1919 to join the RSFSR on the basis of a bilateral treaty as the only Autonomous Republic to do so [Schafer, 2001]. It was followed by the Autonomous Tatar Republic created in 1920. The attempt to create a joint Tatar-Bashkir republic failed. The Tatars were by far the largest non-Russian group on the territory of the RSFSR and even aspired without success for the status of SSR [Smith, 1999: 50, 98].

After the national congresses of the peoples, the national statehood of other groups was proclaimed by a nationwide referendum or a Congress of Soviets decision. For the first time in history, ethnic various groups, including the Finno-Ugric peoples, obtained their national statehood in form of autonomous regions (ARs) [Kulikov, 1993: 44–130; Lallukka, 1990: 61–63]. In 1920, the Chuvash, Mari and Votyak (Udmurt) ARs as part of the Nizhny Novgorod Territory. In 1921, the Komi AR was delineated as part of the Northern Territory. The Karelian Toilers Commune was created in 1920 and upgraded its status to an Autonomous Republic in 1923. The Chuvash AR upgraded its status to an Autonomous Republic in 1925. The Mordvin AR was established from the Mordvin District as part of the Middle Volga Territory only in 1930, inter alia, because of their wide territorial dispersal. Another problem was whom to count as peoples and whether the region’s title should reflect dual identities of Mordvins as Moksha and Erzia [Gurjanov, 1987: 87–88].



The 10th Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in 1921 condemned “the anti-Party deviations on the nationalities question, great power chauvinism and local nationalism, which were a grave danger to communism and proletarian internationalism”. At the same time, the Congress discussed practical issues of national self-determination. Despite the proclaimed equality, not all peoples qualified as nations due to their lower levels of socio-economic development. Thus, self-determination was to be tailored in different forms for different groups. While the ASSRs initially had the right to a certain degree of decision-making, implementing their cadre, educational and language policies, the ARs were not different from regular Russian regions in their subordination to the central and territorial authorities except for guaranties of some cultural and linguistic rights. At the same time, the Congress decided to help the non-Russian peoples to catch up in their development and to consolidate their Soviet statehood in appropriate forms.

In 1922, Joseph Stalin was elected the Party General Secretary at the Plenum of the Party Central Committee. He proposed to incorporate also the nominally independent Soviet Republics of Ukraine, Belorussia, Transcaucasia, Khorezm and Bukhara as autonomous republics into the RSFSR, but Vladimir Lenin objected and, instead, proposed to create a Union of federated republics. When the First All-Union Congress of the Soviets adopted the Treaty on the Creation of the USSR in 1922 and the Second Congress of the Soviets ratified the Soviet constitution in 1924, the republics found their place in the hierarchical structure of the Soviet state. The USSR composed of fifteen SSRs, the state’s first-layer units, which even were granted “the right to freely withdraw from the Union”. The largest among SSRs was the RSFSR. ASSRs and ARs as well as ordinary territorial units became the second-layer units in the federation, territorially within and administratively subordinate to the RSFSR or the other SSRs. The next layer were autonomous districts (ADs) and national districts, the latter for the peoples of the North and Caucasus, as well as village councils and kolkhozes. Finally, personal nationality of each Soviet citizen from 1932 was fixed in (internal) passports [Martin, 2001: 9–10]. Nominally a federation, after its consolidation the USSR worked in reality as a highly centralized state, while the proclaimed sovereignty of its republics remained on paper [Martin, 2001: 13–14].

At the 12th Congress in 1923, Joseph Stalin identified great power chauvinism as the greater danger than local nationalism. The Congress introduced the policy of “indigenization”, according to which the presence of non-Russians in the Party and the state apparatus was to be strengthened. These measures resulted in the emergence of the first generation of national cadres – “national communists” – and national intellectuals – “national intelligentsia” – who had to disseminate the communist ideology to the masses. By mid-1930s, the share of the titular nationalities reached almost proportional representation among the Party members in all Volga-Turkic and Finno-Ugric

autonomies, but their share among the employees of the central administrative and managing apparatuses remained significantly lower than their share in the populations (see Table 1 below). For example, the employees included only 16.7% Karelian, 17.6% Mordvin and 35.4% Mari in 1933, 34.2% Udmurt in 1932 and 64.4% of Komi in 1931, 38.5% Tatars in 1936, 25.6% Bashkirs in 1933. Yet, their shares were even lower among the personnel, technical specialists or in academia, who remained mostly Russian [Nacional'naja Politika VKP(b), 1930: 135–164, 197–224; Simon, 1991: 1–19; Kulikov, 1993: 170–203].

Early Soviet Language Policy in the ASSRs of the RSFSR

The non-Russian masses did not know Russian, so the communist message had to be disseminated in their vernaculars. The early Soviet nationalities policy was characterized by its measures of “positive discrimination” also in the language sphere through unprecedented language planning efforts. Along the national-state construction and “indigenization”, language policy became another crucial aspect of nationalities policy. On the “language question”, Vladimir Lenin already in 1914 spoke out against the compulsory state languages, primarily Russian, because, in his opinion, the element of coercion would put him in a privileged position compared to other languages [Lenin, 1972: 17–19]. He further wrote that the official designation of Russian would “provoke conflicts” and “only create obstacle to its spread for objective reasons” [Lenin, 1972: 71–73]. This attitude to state language became dominant due to the special role of Lenin’s works as the expression of “objective scientific canon”, which later only personally Stalin was in the position to interpret [Yurchak, 2006: 73–74].

In practice, the Congresses of Soviets and the Central Executive Commission of the Bashkir and Tatar ASSRs as well as the Komi AR, the highest political authorities of the newly created autonomies, took the decisions to introduce the official use of the titular languages in documentation management of the Soviet and state apparatus for the time being on equal footing with Russian. The vision for the future was to manage public affairs fully in these languages. This precedent created a ground for later argumentation that in effect they became their state languages, but the necessary explicit symbolic recognition was absent. The spread of the titular languages throughout the state apparatus in practice turned to be slow, inter alia, due to some real difficulties in corpus planning. Furthermore, in the Finno-Ugric ARs the language spread was never achieved first of all due to the negative attitudes among the remained in the predominantly Russian administrative and managing personnel [Tatary i Tatarstan, 2007: 48–52]. The principal change was not reached during a short implementation period of one decade until the subsequent policy reversal since the mid-1930s [Simon, 1991: 20–40; Kulikov, 1993: 170–203].



At the same time, the accomplishments of early Soviet language planning were remarkable in terms of the spread of literacy, the creation of mass media and national schools operating in those languages. The industrialization and collectivization pursued during the first two five-year plans 1928–1937 destroyed traditional lifestyles and embroiled also the peoples speaking Finno-Ugric languages in the wave of modernization and urbanization. The implementation envisaged also a cultural change to be achieved through the Soviet cultural construction, including language construction as part of efforts to develop written forms [Simon, 1991: 41–60. Although some efforts were directed at the development of Proletkult or tertiary education, I will illustrate below the scope of measures taken in this decade only on the examples of the two fields that truly influenced lives of all: education, especially after the introduction of universal compulsory education in 1930, and access to printed matters.

The starting point and, thus, policy effect was uneven for titular nations and nationalities of SSRs and ASSRs as well as between republics in each category. Before the revolution, there were dozens of Tatar-language schools and madrasa with thousands of students. In contrast, only insignificant numbers of smaller groups became literate and were educated mostly in Russian or on the immersion scheme. In the early Soviet education, the use of ‘national language’ as the medium of instruction marked a school as national, which were most monolingual school in SSRs [Kreindler, 1989: 49–50]. Yet, national schools in autonomies were often bilingual.

For example, according to the 1927 All-Union School Census, more than 80% Tatar and about 44% Bashkir schoolchildren in their ASSRs had their native language of instruction. For the Komi and Mari schoolchildren in their ARs, the respective numbers were 48.6% and 49.8% for native instruction and 49.9% and 46.4% for bilingual teaching. In contrast, only 19.4% Mordvin and 7.5% Udmurt schoolchildren in the ARs had native instruction and, accordingly, 42.6% and 75.5% were taught both in their native and Russian languages in four-grade primary school but continued in secondary school only in Russian. About 20% Karelian schoolchildren in primary school had mostly Finnish as their language instruction, because Karelian as part of the “Finnicization” was considered a dialect of Finnish, and the rest were educated in Russian. In absolute numbers, 33,998 schoolchildren were educated in Udmurt, 27,080 in Mari, 16,575 in Komi and 16,377 in Karelian and Finnish [Nacional'naja Politika VKP(b), 1930: 277–279, 294; Lallukka, 1990: 67–68; Smith, 1999: 157; Klementiev, 2013: 15].

In 1938–1939, when the peak in opening national schools has already passed, the titular language was the language of instruction for 16.5% schoolchildren in Karelia (along with 10.6%, who were instructed in the titular “Karelian and another” language, presumably Russian, because from



1938 the use of Finnish was stopped), 58.8% in Komi (and 24.6% in two languages), 29% in Mari (and 21.7% in two languages), 34.3% in Mordovia, 19.3% in Udmurt (and 20.7% in two languages) in Udmurtia, 69% in Chuvash in Chuvashia, 10.5% in Bashkir and 31% in Tatar in Bashkiria, and 46.8% in Tatar in Tataria, the rest having Russian as their language of instruction in all republics [Kulturnoe stroitelstvo, 1940: 75–77]. Thus, accounting for the shares of the groups in the population, most titular schoolchildren were educated in their native language. Yet, the immersion model was in use when more titular children received native language instruction in primary school, but their share dropped in secondary school [Lallukka, 1990: 68–69].

In 1913, more than 26,000 book titles were published in Russian with an annual edition of about ten million exemplars and only 267 titles and about one million exemplars in Tatar (including Crimean Tatar), 57 titles and about 100 thousand in Chuvash and 17 titles and about 27 thousand in Mari and none in other languages under consideration. After the 1917 revolution, the literature appeared for the first time in some languages, like Bashkir, Karelian or Mordvin languages, and written forms were created for some languages. There were attempts to create alphabets based on the Latin script, for example, also in Karelia or Komi [Khansuvarov, 1932]. In 1927, about 25,000 book titles and about nineteen million were published in Russian, 374 titles and about one and half million in Tatar, 87 titles and about 205 thousand in Bashkir and 83 titles and about 220 thousand in Chuvash, 46 titles and about 144 thousand in Mari, 53 titles and about 108 thousand in Komi, 65 titles and about 162 thousand in Udmurt and 63 titles and about 174 thousand in the Mordvin languages [Nacional'naja Politika VKP(b), 1930: 299; Kulturnoe stroitelstvo, 1940: 206–208].

In 1938, 30,300 book titles were published in Russian with an annual edition of 545,730 thousand exemplars. The corresponding figures were 89 titles and 546 thousand in Karelian, 156 titles and 723 thousand in Komi, 112 titles and 524 thousand in Mari, 161 titles and 1,435 thousand in Mordvin, 66 titles and 878 thousand in Udmurt, 172 titles and 1,673 thousand in Bashkir, and 403 titles and 5,900 thousand in Tatar. Volumes in all libraries of the USSR according to languages in which they were printed counted: 36,575,000 in Russian, 1,168,000 in Ukrainian, 289,000 in Tatar, 213,000 in Yiddish, 63,000 in English, 48,000 in Arabic, 35,000 in Uzbek, 25,000 in Votyak, 23,000 in “White Russian”, 22,000 in Chuvash, 17,000 in Kazakh, 11,000 in Bashkir, 9,000 in Mari, 8,000 in Latvian, 7,500 in Finnish, all other languages have less than 5,000 volumes each in the whole USSR [Kulturnoe stroitelstvo, 1940: 206–207].

Altogether 6,360 newspapers were published in Russian with an annual edition of about 5,878,500 thousand exemplars. The corresponding figures were six for Karelian and four for Finnish, with about 2,700 thousand exemplars together, 17 newspapers and 4,000 thousand in Komi,



16 newspapers and 4,500 thousand in Mari, ten and 5,000 thousand in Mordvin, 21 newspapers and 8,400 thousand in Udmurt, 28 newspapers and 65 thousand in Bashkir, and 124 newspapers and 52,000 thousand in Tatar. A total of 1,406 journals were published in Russian with the annual edition of 238,200 thousand exemplars. The corresponding figures were one journal and 25 thousand in Karelian, one journal and 13 thousand in Komi, one journal and two thousand in Mari, four journals and 18 thousand in Mordvin, one journal and six thousand in Udmurt, 4 journals and 44 thousand in Bashkir, and 11 journals and 662 thousand in Tatar [Kulturnoe stroitelstvo, 1940: 214–215, 221].

Policy Shift and the Late Soviet Policy in the ASSRs of the RSFSR

However, since the mid-1930s, the balance in the goals of the Soviet nationalities policy shifted from the catching-up development of the non-Russian nationalities towards the regional economic development at the expense of diversity. The policy of indigenization lost its momentum and the representativeness of most titular groups in the state apparatus of the ASSRs decreased. As part of the Stalinist purges, the repressions targeted also republics' leadership, national communists and intelligentsia who were accused of local "bourgeois nationalism" that now was declared "a greater danger" [Kulikov, 1993: 204–248]. In 1937, national units below the level of ARs and ADs: national districts, village councils and kolkhozes were abolished and, thus, national minorities lost state support for the maintenance of their ethnic and linguistic identity and in effect were encouraged to assimilate [Martin, 2001: 412–413].

Nevertheless, the main pillars of the Soviet nationalities policy – political status of "ethnic institutions", cadres policy and language-cultural policies – were further developed. The façade of the Soviet institutions was sustained also for the following decades. Moreover, many ARs were even upgraded in 1934–1936 in their political status to ASSRs. The Eight All-Union Congress of Soviets adopted the new 1936 USSR constitution according to which replaced itself with the USSR Supreme Council (Verkhovnyi Sovet SSSR) as the supreme governing body, establishing a nominal element of "shared rule" in form of the Council of Nationalities as its second chamber. However, the Constitution asserted the "leading role of the Communist Party", which in reality had all political control over the state apparatus. The Party Congress continued nominally to elect the Party Central Committee, but Stalin consolidated his "cult of personality" and de facto had supreme power.

According to the USSR constitution and the RSFSR constitution, ASSRs entered the RSFSR directly and their titular nationalities were declared to have reached the socio-economical stage of the "Socialist nations". However, since the mid-1930s economy consideration were given priority and the goal of ensuring the titular majorities in ASSRs through national delineation was dropped. One of the

goals of the Soviet industrialization policy was to bring specialists and labor from other republics. Significant portions of titular populations were encouraged to out-migrate to other regions. After the decades-long population mixing together with some rearrangement of the territories and borders based on the economic principle, ethnic Russians started to outnumber the titular groups in many ASSRs (see Table 1 below). By 1989 about three fourths of Tatars and Mordvins, a half of Chuvash and Mari, 40% Bashkirs, a third of Udmurts and Karelians and up to a sixth of Komi lived outside their titular ASSRs [Lallukka, 1990: 135–136].

Part of nationalities policy is cadres policy in SSRs and ASSRs. The Party functioned on the principle of “democratic centralism”, although the SSRs nominally had their own communist parties. The leadership down the power pyramid was in hands of the first and second secretaries of the SSRs’ communist parties and the Party regional committees in the ASSRs and other regions (hereafter jointly referred as *Obkoms*). The *Obkom* first secretary had the power and was a public figure. At the same time, the second secretary was not a mere deputy but an institutionalized check on power of the first secretary typically responsible for cadres policy. It is a common place that in the decades after the Stalin’s death times a bureaucratic practice was normalized, when the titulars of the SSRs and ASSRs were typically appointed the *Obkom* first secretaries while the position of the second secretary was more and more given to an ethnic Russian [Miller, 1977: 6–8].

Non-Russians would typically pass throughout their careers in the home republic and have to fulfill “electoral appeal” having the knowledge of the local culture and language and “representing” the titulars but unreservedly loyal to the federal center. The Russians were usually rotated from elsewhere to avoid drawing on the local Russian communities and would have “rational-technical qualifications” [Miller, 1977: 8–10, 22–23]. More precisely, the areas of substantial expertise in the titulars’ career paths would come from the *Obkom* ideological-propagandist departments, also teaching and the local state apparatus while among the Russians from industry and also in the cadres departments [Miller, 1977: 24–25, 31–32].

In language policy, this change marked the prevalence of the linguistic territoriality principle over the personality principle. The ASSRs constitutions mentioned the official functions of the titular and Russian languages as the languages of “the management of public affairs” and “judicial proceedings”, again without explicitly establishing their status of state languages but implying that they had an official status. In line with Stalin’s definition of the nation, social functioning of languages became connected to territories. In effect, the system was based on language homogenism, an aspect of nationalist ideology holding that nation, territory and language should coincide (spread also in European nation-states, see [Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998]).

Beyond that, the Russian language started to be promoted among non-Russians, initially justified by practical considerations such as the need for a common language. The introduction of the compulsory study Russian as a subject by all students in 1938 created the ground to supplant the native language of instruction [Blinstein, 2001]. Starting in the late 1930s and especially towards the end of World War II, the authorities began to emphasize the special position of ethnic Russians, who retained the right to speak their language moving to other SSRs, as well as to foster the Russian culture and language.

In the late Soviet period, the political status of nations changed somewhat that caused also changes in cultural and language policy. In 1961, the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) passed the new CPSU Program that announced the goal of “the further rapprochement (sblizhenie) of nations”, while the report of the “CPSU First Secretary” Nikita Khrushchev mentioned that this process would eventually lead to their full merger (sliyanie)”. According to the Program, “[t]he Russian language had effectively become the common language of communication and cooperation of all the peoples of the USSR” [Programma KPSS, 1961]. In ten year, at the 24th CPSU Congress, the General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev introduced the idea that “a new historical entity of the Soviet people” was forming on the territory of the USSR, which had Russian as “the language of the Soviet people”.

Already since the late 1950s, the Soviet state began to withhold support for smaller languages, and also the positions of the titular languages of the ASSRs deteriorated. The major vehicle of assimilation of non-Russians in the RSFSR was the gradual substitution of instruction in the native languages with instruction in Russian after enforcement by the 1958 education reform of free choice in language learning. Notably, language teaching and printed matters were typically provided only in titular republics. Their volumes depended de facto on the status of nations and nationalities in the Soviet hierarchy [Zamyatin, 2012b].

In the aftermath of the reform, the titular languages remained the medium of instruction in all ten grades only in the Tatar and Bashkir ASSRs. However, the number of children having the Tatar language of instruction declined from 210,000 in 1970–1971 to 104,000 in 1980–1981 and to 61,000 in 1987–1988, covered only about one quarter of the titular schoolchildren in the republic [Tatary i Tatarstan, 2007: 44–46]. The number of children having the Bashkir language of instruction declined from 74,000 in 1970–1971, to 68,000 in 1980–1981 to 44,000 in 1988–1989, that is, covered only about one third of the titular schoolchildren in the republic [Safin, 1994]. In the Finno-Ugric ASSRs, the volume of native instruction dropped from seven to three grades by 1972. Native instruction stopped altogether in the Komi and Udmurt ASSRs by 1976. In the Mari and Mordvin ASSRs, native



instruction was retained only in rural schools. It remained relatively stable in Mari with 8,200 in 1980–1981 to 8,700 in 1990–1991 and declined in the Mordvin languages from 11,700 in 1980–1981 to 4,700 in 1990–1991. In the Karelian ASSR, native instruction stopped already before the reform [Klementiev, 2013: 15–16].

Moreover, children's access to the learning of their native language as a subject also significantly decreased. From the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, the number of children learning the Komi language as a subject declined from about 25,000 to 15,000, the latter figure representing only about a quarter of the Komi pupils in the republic. From the early 1970s to the late 1980s, the number of children learning the Mordvin languages dropped from 77,000 to 24,000, the latter figure being perhaps less than 15% of all Mordvin pupils. From the late 1950s to the mid-1980s, the number of children learning the Udmurt language as a subject declined from about 32,000 to 29,000, the latter figure being about a third of Udmurts of school age [Lallukka, 1990: 183–191]. Thus, an entire generation of parents emerged who had never had native language instruction and were fluent in Russian.

The production of printed matters in the Finno-Ugric languages has been carried out almost exclusively by publishing houses of the titular ASSRs. The use of these languages in publishing also significantly decreased especially in the post-war decades. Karelian remained a language without a written form. In 1946–1955, average annual numbers of titles of books and brochures published in Komi was 61.1, in Mari 88.2, in the Mordvin languages 81.4 and in Udmurt 59.1. In 1976–1985, the corresponding figures were 21.9 in Komi, 42.6 in Mari, 46.6 in the Mordvin languages and 27.9 in Udmurt. For comparison, 186 was the number of book titles in Tatar in 1986 [Tatary i Tatarstan, 2007: 79]. According to a rough estimation, the average annual numbers of titles of books and brochures dropped by half during this period [Lallukka, 1990: 191–194]. This is also true, for example, for Bashkir with the numbers dropping from 142 book titles in 1965, 126 in 1980 to 120 in 1988 [Safin, 1994]. At the same time, the numbers and circulations of journals and newspapers remained relatively stable, albeit quite low in absolute terms.

In the late Soviet period, the *laissez-faire* approach prevailed when the state restrained from directly regulating language issues, because current processes met the policy goals of the “drawing together and merger” of the Socialist nations. The 1977 Soviet constitution included the formulas “the languages of SSRs and ASSRs, ARs and ADs”, referred also as “titular languages”. Yet, after the public protests against these steps, the Transcaucasian SSRs were allowed designating in the new 1978 constitutions their titular languages as the state languages. In ASSRs, the new constitutions again mentioned only the languages of

“the management of public affairs” and “judicial proceedings”. Still further steps were taken to enhance incrementally the position of Russian in the education acts of 1973 and 1978.

1.2. Sociolinguistic Conditions of the Titular Groups in the ASSRs

Demographics and Language Knowledge

The policy developments had their impact on the sociolinguistic situation and contributed to ethnic assimilation and extensive language shift from non-Russian languages to Russian in the titular republics but especially elsewhere, because many individuals of the titular nationalities out-migrated to other regions. Ethnic assimilation during the Soviet times is well documented and could be followed, for example, based on the data of Soviet population censuses. It has to be remembered, however, that the change in the absolute numbers and shares of groups in the population was caused not only due to natural growth or assimilation but also the enlargement of the territories of some republics, for example of Udmurtia in the 1930s, outmigration of the titular groups and immigration of Russians and others, especially to Karelia and Komi (see Table 1).

Table 1

Dynamics in absolute numbers and shares of the titular groups in relation to the total population of the republics and their language retention rates (census data)

Republic	Komi	Mari	Mordva	Udmurtia	Karelia	Bashkiria	Tataria
1. Total population of the republic (thousands)							
Census 1926	207	482	1,328*	756	269	2,665	2,594
Census 1939	319	579	1,188	1,219	486	3,158	2,915
Census 1959	816	648	1,002	1,337	651	3,341	2,850
Census 1970	965	685	1,030	1,418	713	3,818	3,131
Census 1979	1,118	703	990	1,494	736	3,844	3,435
Census 1989	1,251	749	963	1,605	790	3,943	3,641
2. Titular group (thousands)							
Census 1926	191	247	427*	395	100	625	1,164
Census 1939	231	273	405	480	109	671	1,422
Census 1959	245	279	358	476	85	737	1,345
Census 1970	276	299	365	484	84	892	1,536
Census 1979	280	307	339	480	81	935	1,641
Census 1989	291	324	313	496	79	863	1,756
3. Share of the titular group in the total population of the republic (%)							
Census 1926	92.3%	51.4%	32.2%*	52.3%	37.4%	23.5%	44.9%
Census 1939	72.5%	47.2%	34.1%	39.4%	23.2%	21.3%	48.8%
Census 1959	30.1%	43.1%	35.7%	35.6%	13.1%	22%	47.2%
Census 1970	28.6%	43.7%	35.4%	34.2%	11.8%	23.4%	49.1%
Census 1979	25.3%	43.5%	34.3%	32.1%	11.1%	24.3%	47.6%
Census 1989	23.3%	43.3%	32.5%	30.9%	10%	21.9%	48.5%
4. Report knowledge of their titular native language in the republic (%)							
Census 1959	93.8%	97.8%	97.3%	93.2%	80.9%	57.5%	98.9%
Census 1970	86.7%	95.8%	96.2%	87.7%	71.7%	63.2%	98.5%
Census 1979	80%	93.7%	94.3%	82.3%	61.2%	64.4%	97.7%
Census 1989	74.4%	88.4%	88.5%	75.7%	51.5%	74.7%	96.6%



Continuation of Table 1

5. Report knowledge of their native language in the RSFSR as a whole (%)							
Census 1926	n/a	99.4%	93.8%	99%	98%	n/a	98.9%
Census 1939	95.3%	98.7%	88.6%	97.3%	90.6%	58.3%**	97.7%
Census 1970	83.4%	91.9%	79.7%	83.5%	63.9%	66.2%**	90.5%
Census 1979	76.9%	87.7%	74.6%	77.6%	56.5%	67%**	88.1%
Census 1989	71.0%	81.9%	69.0%	70.8%	48.6%	72.3%**	85.6%

* At the time of the creation of the Mordvin District in 1928.

** The share of those with the Bashkir native language among the Bashkirs in the USSR.

Language shift remained less discernible. The shift was not always to Russian but also, for example, to Tatar among the Bashkirs. In Bashkiria, the Tatars are numerically a larger group than the titular Bashkirs. Almost half of Bashkirs used to declare Tatar as their native language, although by 1989 this share decreased to 20%. However, for all groups the main trend was the steady growth of those who declared Russian as their “native language”.

There are some methodological problems with the Soviet census data on nationality and language. In particular, the data on language retention rates are not very informative because they were based on the subjective interpretation of the respondents and likely underestimate the extent of linguistic assimilation. The term “native language” began to be interpreted in the later Soviet population censuses not as one’s mother tongue but as the language of one’s ethnic affinity, thereby avoiding tension between one’s identity and a lack of language knowledge. For that reason, the data on the command of a language and on actual language use are more illustrative of the sociolinguistic processes [Lallukka, 1990: 71–82].

Language Use

First of all, during the late Soviet decades, titular groups reached a high level of national language-Russian bilingualism patterns, while local Russians remained practically monolingual. Seppo Lallukka has demonstrated how different patterns of bilingualism contributed to the language shift as the numbers of “native monolinguals” and “unassimilated bilinguals” dropped and the numbers of “assimilated bilinguals” and “assimilated monolinguals” grew steadily [Lallukka, 1990: 194–207]. Lallukka found a correlation between urbanization and the processes of language shift and assimilation.

According to the data obtained by Lallukka, the knowledge of Russian improved to the point that it generally started to be better than the knowledge of one’s native language. His data on oral and literary competence and language preferences suggested that such competence was more developed in Russian and people were yielding to preferring this language when it was necessary to use their literary skills. People’s skills in Russian improved when it came to speech, reading and writing, while

reading and writing in one's native language had notably worsened, partly due to the workings of the school system and the availability of printed materials. For example, in 1973–1974, only 59.6% rural Mordvin-Moksha respondents in the Mordvin ASSR reported that speak, read and write freely in their language while 40.6% reported that they could only speak freely but not read and write, and 0.8% either only understand or have no command of the language whatsoever [Šaljaev, 1982]. The data on the Komi also demonstrate that by the early 1980s, they knew Russian better than their native language (see Table 2).

Table 2

Command and preferential use of the Komi language and Russian by components of the language: rural Komi in 1981 (%; adapted from [Rogachev, 1984: 9-10; Lallukka, 1990: 214])

	Speech	Reading	Writing	Speech	Reading	Writing
	Have a free command of the language in the designated component			Language preferences in regard to the components		
Komi	96.8	67.7	64.4	61	10.1	13.5
Russian	85.3	83.8	82.7	19.3	62.8	60.7
Both equally	n/a	n/a	n/a	19.7	27.1	25.8

In the data, over 80% of respondents claimed to command Russian freely in the three components, while for Komi, the reading and writing skills were less developed. Accordingly, most Komi preferred to read and write in Russian, which turned their native language into a spoken vernacular. This also corresponded to the data on the patterns of reading books and periodicals. Adult Komi showed the best competency in their native language, while the young and old generations lagged far behind. Lallukka attributes this outcome to the rise and fall of native-language education in the ASSRs. His conclusion is that Russian had become the language of the written word for the broad masses of titular groups [Lallukka, 1990: 214–216]. The data on reading habits are illustrative of this fact (see Table 3).

Table 3

Reading of periodical publications and books by Mordvins in the Mordvin ASSR in 1973–74 (%; adapted from [Gurjanov, 1987: 92; Lallukka, 1990: 215–216])

	Rural	Urban	Urban: Creative Intelligentsia	Rural	Urban
	Reading of periodical publications			Reading of books	
Only Russian	70.8	88.2	18.5	36.3	45.9
Russian and Erzia/Moksha	26.3	11.3	81.5	46.5	42.2
Only Erzia/Moksha	2.9	0.5	0	17.2	8.9

Regarding language use in one's family, Russian had penetrated family life in such a way that, while the bulk of adult Mari still used their native language in communication with parents and spouses, only a portion did so in communication with their children (see Table 4).

Table 4

Language used in communication by adult Mari with members of their family (% , adapted from [Образ жизни, 1989: 148-150; Lallukka, 1990: 212])

	With One's Parents	With One's Spouse	With One's Children	of School Age	of Preschool Age
1973: Russian	4.6	8.1	14.8	n/a	n/a
1973: both	15.2	20.9	19.3	n/a	n/a
1973: Mari	80	70.8	65.6	n/a	n/a
1985: Russian	8.2	16.4	33.4	31.5	35.1
1985: both	17.2	22	23.2	23.7	22.5
1985: Mari	74.1	60.4	42.3	43.4	41.4

Further, a strong swing to Russian occurred during the decade across generations but especially among children. Language use strongly correlates with a person's place of residence: in 1985, about 80% of parents in the capital city of Yoshkar-Ola spoke Russian to their children, while in the villages only 5–6% did so. Therefore, the data show that a considerable portion of families failed to transmit their language to the next generation [Lallukka, 1990: 211–213].

Moreover, the native languages were much less often used at work or at public meetings than at home, and over the decades, this gap widened. The data show that most rural dwellers spoke their native language at home and more than half also spoke it at work, which Seppo Lallukka attributed to the relative ethnic homogeneity of the villages. The relevance of the latter factor could be seen, for example, in patterns of native language use at work among Komi lumberers, which depended on whether their share of the workers was less than a quarter (lumberers A) or almost a half (lumberers B, see Table 5).

Table 5

Use of native languages and Russian by Mordvins, Udmurts and Komi in the titular republics in various domains of daily life (% , adapted from [Gurjanov, 1987; Lallukka, 1990: 208])

Republic	Mordvins		Udmurts			Komi			
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	lumber A	lumber B	village	lumber
	1973–4	1973–4	1968	1968	1979	1970–1	1970–1	1981	1981
Native language									
At home	91.6	21.7	78	15	73	27.6	70	71.2	19.3
At work	61.8	1.8	62.7	5.3	48.4	4.7	13.6	36.3	0.5
At public meetings	31.9	1.1	47.1	6.9	25.2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Russian and native language									
At home	5.3	26.5	9.2	24.5	17.6	20.9	12.7	21.4	38.2
At work	32.2	26.5	22.8	16.8	36.1	22.6	26.6	54.1	48.2
At public meetings	26.1	3.8	22.3	3.6	21.3	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Russian									
At home	3.1	51.8	12.8	59.6	9.1	48.6	16	7.4	42.5
At work	5.9	71.7	14.5	77.9	15.1	72.5	59.5	9.3	51.3
At public meetings	42	95.1	30.6	89.5	52.6	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

However, the dynamics of native language use at work during the decade in Udmurtia was that the number dropped to less than half even in rural areas. Moreover, Russian became the dominant language of socio-political life in villages and was most often used at public meetings. In urban areas, Russian had become the sole medium of communication in all three domains for the majority of Mordvins and Udmurts. Lallukka demonstrated that ethnic intermarriage was a factor that strongly affected domestic language behaviour [Lallukka, 1990: 207–211]. Further, the use of Russian increased in correlation with the level of education: white-collar and highly skilled workers showed an increased use and competency in Russian, while unskilled laborers were more likely to use native language.

The language shift was much more advanced among the young cohorts, which can be seen very well in the data on rural Karelians (see Table 6).

Table 6

Language knowledge and use by the age cohorts of Karelians in rural areas
(%, adapted from [Klementiev, 2013: 18])

	Age group	16–19	20–24	25–29	30–34	35–39	40–49	>50
Knowledge of Karelian	Fluent	83.5	72.7	87.4	96.2	95.1	96.9	96.6
	Understand, express	8.9	17.2	9.6	2.1	1.8	2.9	2.4
	Understand, do not speak	7.6	10.1	3	1.7	3.1	0.2	1
Fluent	Karelian	39.1	31.7	57.3	58.8	55.9	75.3	75
	Russian	40	39.5	20.9	18.9	12.8	7.4	13.7
	Both	20.9	28.8	21.8	22.3	21.3	17.3	11.3
Native language	Karelian	64.2	68.6	84.9	85.9	90.3	94.1	96.5
	Russian	25.4	26.4	12.9	10.2	9	4.3	3.2
	Both	4.4	4.2	2.2	3.9	0	0.6	0
Speak at home	Karelian only	45.3	31.3	46.9	37.3	32.3	44.2	56.8
	Russian only	31.9	36.1	23.2	27.2	25.2	19.6	14.3
	Both	22.8	33.5	29.9	34.9	42.5	34.4	25.6
Speak at work	Karelian only	8.8	4.5	17.3	12.8	11.2	22	26.5
	Russian only	58.3	67.5	45.2	47.1	46.8	34.5	25
	Both	32.9	26.9	32.8	39.3	41.3	42.8	45.9

In the case of the Karelians, an important factor at play was the absence of schools offering the native language as the language of instruction. Language shift among the Karelians was more advanced than in other republics, but the same processes were also characteristic of the other titular groups, for example, among rural Mordvins [Vavilin, 1989]. Based on the observed processes, Lallukka concludes that Russian became the language used in all domains, while the prestige and the scope of the social functions of the titular languages narrowed considerable especially during the last Soviet decades, leaving them mostly in the private sphere [Lallukka, 1990: 216].



Language Attitudes and Ideologies

By the time of the USSR's collapse, the titular languages had become stigmatized *de facto* minority languages that were practically not used at all in official contexts except for symbolic purposes. The mechanism of how the ethnic groups and their languages became stigmatized lies in the social structure that is the system of socioeconomic stratification. Scholars typically distinguish between the vertical and horizontal types of ethnic and social stratification, where either one group is subordinated to another group or groups form segments across social divisions [Horowitz, 1985]. Subordination manifests itself in varying access to higher education and white-collar jobs, as well as in socioeconomic inequality. In segmented societies, the ethnic identity of an individual does correspond with his or her social status. In reality, both stratification and segmentation typically co-exist.

In Russia, the populations of republics represent a variety of patterns of stratification [Drobizheva, 2003]. In some republics, for example, in Tataria or Yakutia, the titular group and local Russians had roughly similar employment structures and competed for jobs, although there was still a greater concentration of titular groups at the lower end of stratification ladder. For example, in the Tatar ASSR in 1979 among ethnic Tatars 51.4% were industrial workers, 17.9% office workers and 30.6% peasants; among ethnic Russians 65.3% were industrial workers, 28.7% office workers and 6% peasants [Tatary i Tatarstan, 2007: 93–94]. In most republics, the ethnic Russians typically had higher education levels and were overrepresented among the Party members and in white-collar jobs (see, for example: [Belorukova, 1986; Zamyatin, 2016b: 223]).

Language ideologies link beliefs about value of languages with the ideas about their place in society. If ideologies hierarchize languages, the corresponding attitudes are reproduced through language practices that normalize not only this linguistic hierarchy but also social stratification. As a result, a hierarchized social order emerges where the upward social mobility of minorities is connected to acculturation and assimilation into the dominant group. Despite the early Soviet attempts to promote the titular languages, these remained associated with rural “low culture” and Russian remained the language of urban “high culture”. Thus, not only languages attitudes were at stake but also the attitudes to the titular cultures and identities themselves [Zamyatin, 2018].

There was steady and massive but gradual migration of the titular groups to the cities in the process of urbanization. As a result, the second generations typically became assimilated, and no significant urban segments of the titular groups emerged. Social differentiation between urban and rural dwellers largely continued to overlap with the ethnic cleavage between ethnic Russians and the titular groups in the ASSRs. By the start of the new era, the vertical type of stratification still characterized their ethnic and socioeconomic situation. Their adaptation and acculturation strategies in the

predominantly Russian urban surroundings have undermined ethnic solidarity among them and contributed to the blurring of ethnic boundaries on the way to assimilation and the spread of the perception of Russian as the language of socioeconomic advancement. In a vicious circle, this type of ethnic stratification gives ground for instances of prejudice and discrimination typically expressed through verbal abuse and limited access social resources, such as equal access to education, good jobs – and power. The titular groups remained a “Subaltern” in a colonial situation sustained by racism [Zamyatin, 2016b: 222–224].

1.3. Political Change and Language Policy in the USSR, SSRs and ASSRs

National and Language Problems, Popular Demands and Authorities’ Inaction

By the time of the beginning of political transition, the Soviet policy of urbanization and mass population transfers between republics resulted in major demographic change, particularly in the Soviet Baltic republics, where the shares of newcomers rapidly increased. In the capitals of Latvia and Estonia, the titular groups soon composed already less than half the population. In order not to estrange the populations, the authorities were appointing representatives of the titular nationality to the leading positions in the Party and “nomenklatura”, or those in administrative positions in the state apparatus, for example, Party first secretaries in the SSRs, while more and more ethnic Russians would be appointed party second secretaries in charge of cadres policy as a check on first secretaries. Furthermore, since the 1950s mainly those functionaries were appointed in the Estonian, Latvian SSRs who were communist émigrés or their children grown up in the RSFSR and sent from there, and for whom Russian was their native language. In effect, in the late Soviet decades the Russian language began to supplant the local languages in the public sphere and power corridors also in the Baltic SSRs [Miller, 1977; Hodnett, 1978; Feest 2017].

This cadre policy has caused local elite concerns. Yet, the Soviet official ideology, notably the Party Program amended at the 27th CPSU Congress in 1986, claimed that “the national question, left over from the past, has been in the USSR successfully resolved” and claimed “further flowering of Socialist nations and nationalities”, “their drawing together and their merger” for the creation of a “unified Soviet people”. In this ideological setting, the state did not have at its disposal expertise and was continuously late with the reaction to the new challenges [Alpatov, 2000: 134–135]. The appointment of an ethnic Russian as the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Kazakh SSR provoked the first instance of ethnic violence in late 1986. Since 1987, ethnic tensions grew in the Nagorno-Karabakh ASSR and accumulated elsewhere.



The *perestroika* was launched at the Plenum of the CPSU Central Committee (CC) in January 1987. The General Secretary's plenary report on *perestroika* and the party's cadre policy admitted some deviations also in the sphere of internationality relations including "the incidents like the one that happened just recently" in the Kazakh SSR but qualified them as manifestations of "local nationalism" that was to be cured with "proletarian internationalism". One result was the rotation of party cadres, including most first party secretaries in the SSRs and ASSRs for his supporters often without taking their nationality into account despite the affirmation of the ethnic representation principle in the report. The first discussion on the problems of national education was held at the CC Plenum in February 1988.

Demands for policy actions stem from the definition of problems in the environment. The introduction of the policy of publicity and openness (*glasnost*) in 1987 made it possible to criticize the authorities in press, for example, on the issues of "uncontrolled immigration" or the environment and soon also on language and national issues. National intellectuals in the SSRs and ASSRs defined the situation with languages as a problem and dared to spread their concerns in the mass media, which became indispensable in agenda building.

Such triggers as the proliferation of knowledge about the Secret Protocol to the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact contributed to mass political mobilization in the Baltic ASSRs and the events like the rallies on its anniversary in August 1987. By the inaction of the authorities, the spring of 1988 was marked by a "crisis of confidence". With the progression of *perestroika*, the popular fronts in its support were officially created by October 1988 in the Baltic SSRs, pathing the way for mass political participation outside the CPSU. The popular fronts presented first ecological and later also national demands: to guarantee the designation of a state language and to sharply curtail or rather completely hold Russian immigration. In general, the devices like language status planning and the immigration restrictions are from the repertoire of practices of defensive nationalism. In the USSR, there were officially no state languages with some exceptions (see Section 1.1. above). The demand for state languages was presented, inter alia, with historical justification – in the interwar period, the independent Baltic republics had their own state languages.

During the political transition in the USSR, the policy venue changed, bringing in new political participants. Both the masses and elites participated in shaping the policies. In SSRs and ASSRs, mass social movements emerged based on alternative ideologies, including democratic movements and national movements. Later, the movements became the basis for the creation of political parties and interest groups formed as national organizations pursued certain visions on the national question. Pressure groups situationally formed into what I conceptualize as "titular" and



“Russian” elite segments within the regional elites. Within the segments, cultural and political elites formed advocacy coalitions. The cultural elites typically consisted of people in creative professions such as writers, scholars and teachers, and the political elites of “national cadres” of the CPSU and nomenklatura [Zamyatin, 2014: 60–64].

The spread of nationalist ideologies and ethnic mobilization resulted in the emergence of national movements. In the Baltic and some other SSRs popular fronts laid the foundation for the national movements. Miroslav Hroch defines popular national movements as “organised efforts to achieve the attributes of a fully-fledged nation” [Hroch, 1985: 66–67]. His famous model of the formation of national movements focuses on the interaction between elites and masses. He distinguishes Phase ‘A’, in which “activists devote themselves to scholarly inquiry into the linguistic, historical and cultural attributes of their ethnic groups”, from Phase ‘B’, in which “a new range of patriots” seek “to win over as many of their ethnic group as possible” and get politicians involved, and Phase ‘C’, when politicians persuade masses. Terry Martin suggested adding to the Hroch’s model Phase ‘D’, when politicians themselves take the role of activists in spreading the national message to initiate popular mobilization, as, according to him, happened in the early Soviet times [Martin, 2001: 15]. In effect, Martin’s elaboration provides additional details in revealing the circular character of ethnic mobilization and contributing to the ideational-institutional dynamics also in the late Soviet times.

Actions by Republics, Launch of Political Reform, Sovereignization and “Language Reform”

Under pressure from mass public movements, the central committees of the SSRs’ Communist Parties, run by national cadres, called for the inclusion of national and linguistic problems as issues in the political agenda. The new Baltic SSRs leadership recognized the fairness of the popular demands, including the demands to adopt a law on languages. A new commission of the Supreme Council of the Estonian SSR began to draft a language law [Zamyatin, 2013a: 126–129]. Further, the Baltic SSRs authorities requested the Union authorities to pay attention to the problems and to guarantee the sovereign rights of the SSRs.

At the 19th All-Union Conference of the CPSU in summer 1988, the CPSU General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev announced a political reform that had to achieve “democratization of the life of the state and society”, inter alia, through “Soviet parliamentarism” in form of a Congress of People's Deputies of the Soviet Union and a full-time Supreme Council [XIX Vsesojuznaja konferencija, 1988]. The event became an arena of heated debates and by a lack of consensus, instead of taking immediate actions, it was decided to arrange a separate CC Plenum on the issue, which was being planned for a few



years already. The conference in its resolution issued only some directives but in effect officially recognized the existence of problems also in “internationality relations”. Consequently, the CC letter committee “registered with concern a dramatic surge in incoming letters about “interethnic issues” to the CPSU from Soviet citizens and Party members of different republics. Between 1988 and the first half of 1989, some 57,700 messages related to national problems were received” [De Stefano, 2020: 55].

Top-level supporters of Mikhail Gorbachev, many from “the ideological-propagandist and foreign-policy nomenklatura of the CPSU, which was one with the top stratum of the ranking (academic) intelligentsia”, became known as the “democrats”. Their “cultural orientations, value systems, and mentality had become steadily more westernized in the preceding decades”. At the local level, the democrats recruited their supporters from the ranking intelligentsia and Komsomol. Komsomol, or the All-Union Leninist Young Communist League, hardly had any serious authority itself but was one of the channels of the nomenklatura recruitment, including national nomenklatura in republics. Many among the Party functionaries and nomenklatura with all their privileges opposed the reform and shared the ideology that should be defined conservatism rather than socialism or communism. “On the whole, these people maintained their traditional cultural orientations and mentality and had a material and psychological interest in preserving the existing order” [Ermakov et al., 1994: 41–42].

In spring 1989, the first competitive elections of people’s deputies took place and the First Congress of the People’s Deputies was held. Conservatives of the Party and nomenklatura gained the majority but an interregional deputy group in support of *perestroika* and democratization also emerged. Many leaders of the popular fronts were also elected. In effect, the Congress became an unprecedented political platform for expressing and legitimizing republics’ demands. For example, on the republics’ demand, the Congress established a committee that confirmed the existence of the secret protocols to the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact and condemned their signing as “a departure from the Leninist principles of Soviet foreign policy” [De Stefano, 2020: 55, 58].

Meanwhile, with no action from the center, the Baltic SSRs authorities took the risk of choosing the path of sovereignty. In November 1988, the Supreme Council of the Estonian SSR unilaterally proclaimed a declaration of state sovereignty, which became a policy document expressing an intention to raise political status and containing ideas for inclusion in the constitution. In December 1988, the Estonian SSR Supreme Council passed a constitutional amendment, according to which the republic was promulgated a sovereign state with the supremacy of its laws over the Union ones. In January 1989, it passed a law on languages, which established the titular Estonian language as the only state language of



the republic. The Latvian SSR and the Lithuanian SSR followed suit, proclaimed sovereignty and adopted corresponding amendments to constitutions and laws on languages [Zamyatin, 2013a: 126–129].

In the Estonian SSR, about a fifth of mostly Russian-speaking deputies of the Supreme Council voted against or abstained from supporting the sole state language out of the concern that individuals without the knowledge of the state language would be dismissed, even though the law envisaged four years for language study [Guboglo, 1998: 195]. The designation of the sole titular state languages in the Baltic and other SSRs and the introduction of their compulsory use resulted in forcing out of power corridors of the ethnic Russians and Russian-speakers, who typically did not know these languages. This effect was assessed as discrimination and was later conceptualized from an instrumentalist perspective as “mobilized linguicism” and an instrument in the struggle for power. In Estonia, the case was conceptualized as that of “language normalization” [Rannut, 2004].

Thus, the official designation of state languages in the Baltic SSRs launched the “language reform” in the USSR ([Neroznak, 1996]; in the international terminology “reform” implies narrowly the planning of a language corpus). In a cascade effect, during 1989 and by May 1990, all the SSRs except the RSFSR adopted laws on languages, in which in most cases they proclaimed the titular language as their only state language. The time factor was crucial. In the Baltic and some other SSRs, the popular fronts and parliaments simultaneously drafted laws on languages, and as a result of the compromise, the more radical projects of the popular fronts in many ways were used as the basis for the final text of the first versions of the laws. In the other SSRs, nomenklatura seized the initiative of lawmaking, which led to the adoption of “moderate laws”, that meant that many of them recognized some status of Russian [Guboglo, 1998: 391].

An Attempt of Soviet State Re-construction, Revision of Nationalities Policy and Language Policy

In summer 1989, further ethnic conflicts emerged, notably in the Fergana Valley. Finally, after such events and a debate in the Party press authorities reacted. To get ahead of the events and to lead the process, it initiated a public debate by publishing the CPSU Platform “On the Party’s Nationalities Policy Under Present Conditions” and arranging the CC Plenum “On the Perfection of Internationality Relations” to discuss the problems. The CC Plenum was held in September 1989 and approved the Platform. The CPSU Platform defined among the national problems “the erosion of the boundaries in competences of the Union and republics” resulting in their sovereignty remaining only on paper. Other listed problems that were said to have contributed to the negative tendencies were the consequences of the Stalinist mass repressions and extensive industrial-economic development [Materialy Plenuma CK KPSS, 1989].



In language policy, the Platform recognized that “the expediency of recognizing the state language of the nationalities, which gave the names of the union or autonomous republics”, falls within the competence of the republics themselves but it “should not lead to linguistic discrimination”, that is, without forcing the titular language use on Russian-speakers. The status of the state language was to mean “the expansion of its social and cultural functions” and other measures of language promotion. The document also recommended designating the status of Russian as the nation-wide state language that should function on equal-in-rights footing with the state languages of the republics.

In March 1990, the Congress of the People’s Deputies elected the Supreme Council that passed a package of laws. Among others, the law on the issue of SSR’s secession from the USSR was passed (4 April 1990), the right to which was written in all USSR Constitutions but remained hitherto unregulated. The law on the foundations of economic relations (10 April 1990) and the law on the division of powers between the Union Center and the Subjects of the Federation (24 April 1990) delineated powers between authorities and equalized the rights of the SSRs and ASSRs. The Law on the Languages of the Peoples of the USSR (26 April 1990) enshrined this decision legally, recognizing the right of the SSRs and ASSRs to establish their state languages and securing the status of the official language of the USSR for Russian. It can be noticed that, the steps were in many aspect reactions that strived to accommodate the demands of the Baltic and other SSRs.

However, in many respects it was too late. In the Baltic SSRs, national independence movements very quickly reached the level of mass mobilization and demanded re-establishment of sovereign statehood and outright independence. In March 1990, the first alternative elections were held to all level of power. The popular fronts received a majority in the Supreme Councils of the Baltic SSRs. The Supreme Councils passed the declarations of the restoration of independence of the Baltic Republics announcing a transitional period that ended in full independence in connection with the coup attempt in August 1991.

Russian State Building and Formation of Russia’s Language Policy

Moreover, the confrontation between the Union authorities and the RSFSR authorities instigated the changes in the latter. In October 1989, the amendment to the 1978 RSFSR Constitution also established the Congress of the People’s Deputies of the RSFSR. The First Congress of the People’s Deputies was also elected in March 1990 with the Democratic Russia electoral bloc winning a plurality of seats and the failure of the communists and the bloc of “the people’s patriotic forces”. The Congress gathered in May 1990 and elected the RSFSR Supreme Council that now had the Council of Nationalities as the second chamber, in analogy with the USSR Supreme Council. The



Congress also elected the leader of the Democratic Russia bloc Boris Yeltsin as the chairman of the RSFSR Supreme Council.

In June 1990, the Congress passed the declaration on state sovereignty of Russia that unilaterally changed the institutional framework but ideationally was a continuation of the Soviet official rhetoric. The Declaration recognized a multinational people of Russia as the bearer of its sovereignty and, *inter alia*, established the supremacy of the RSFSR's laws over the USSR's laws. It also recognized the individuals' right to free development and the use of one's native language and the right of peoples to self-determination in chosen national-state and national-cultural forms, that is, a group right. Moreover, the Congress "confirmed the need of substantial broadening of the rights" of the ASSRs and other regions. The declaration debate was also the time when the language question was raised and discussed, although the final text of the document did not mention state languages. Neither did Russia pass its language law at the time [Zamyatin, 2020: 38, 42–43].

Meanwhile, from the late spring 1990, the rest of the SSRs, including the RSFSR, and the ASSRs started shaping their language policies on the basis of the USSR language law and separately of each other. After the spring 1990 elections, the elites also in ASSRs gained additional legitimation and started pursuing their own policies. Boris Yeltsin and the Russian leadership considered the ASSRs elites as allies against the Union Centre and did not want to lose their support by the acts such as designating Russian as the state language. At the 28th CPSU Congress in July 1990, Boris Yeltsin and other supporters of democratization resigned from the CPSU, deepening the conflict with the Union authorities. In August, Yeltsin undertook this tour to the Tatar and Bashkir ASSRs and encouraged the republics "take as much sovereignty as they could swallow".

Russia's sovereignization gave an impetus to the process coined the "parade of sovereignties". In the following months of 1990, the rest of SSRs, most ASSRs and even some ARs seized the opportunity and one after another passed their declarations on state sovereignty. Some ASSRs, first of all the Tatar ASSR, dropped the term "autonomous" from their name in effect claiming an upgrade of their political status to that of SSRs. Almost all ASSRs, among other things, proclaimed supremacy of their legislations and designated titular and Russian as their state languages. Thus, the status planning of languages became the main mechanism for regulating language issues not only in SSRs but also in ASSRs. Yet, this solution had to be adjusted to their political and language environments [Zamyatin, 2013: 129–131].

The Union authorities intended to prevent the centripetal tendencies. Yet, the work on a new union treaty was interrupted by the August 1991 coup d'état attempt. The August Putsch marked the defeat of the conservatives in the centre, the prohibition of the CPSU and boosted change also in the

(former) ASSRs, as it became likely that the USSR would dissolve. Russia's language policy formation finally reached its final stage in October 1991 with the adoption of the Declaration and the Law on the Languages of the Peoples of the RSFSR (RSFSR Law of 25 October 1991). The solution was for the first time to designate Russian as the state language of the RSFSR. Still, the proclaimed supremacy of in the (former) ASSRs' sovereignty declarations implied also their supremacy over the RSFSR's laws. A new Russian Constitution could have changed the situation but it was adopted only in December 1993. Therefore, while the adoption of Russia's language law and constitution narrowed the scope of the republics' policies, in the 1990s there still the separate central ("federal") policy and republic's ("regional") policies with language status planning at their core were pursued in parallel.

2. Post-Soviet Policy Formation and Policy Environment

2.1. Policy Environment and Problem Definition in the ASSRs

Background

The political environment of the USSR was characterized by a basic fact that there was a nominal separation of powers also between the RSFSR and its autonomies that in practice operated in a strictly hierarchical manner. At the time of social and political change the issue of genuine federalism came among the first on the agenda. Some ASSRs were more successful than others in contesting the central authorities in pathing the way to increasing their powers vis-à-vis the center, which became "asymmetrical federalism". The changes in the political system led also to the changes in the policy environment and stimulated demands for governmental action.

The policy environment encompasses both the political culture and socioeconomic conditions. Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba (1963) distinguish between parochial, subject and participant types of political culture. In a parochial political culture, citizen participation in policy formation is essentially non-existent. In a subject political culture, citizens may believe that they can do a little to influence public policy. In a participant political culture, citizens actively take part in politics. In the ASSRs of the RSFSR, there was a mix of a parochial and a subject political culture with small fragments of participant culture. With such a combination, civil society remained weak. At the same time, Tataria and Bashkiria as well as Karelia, Komi and Udmurtia were among highly urbanized and industrialized ASSRs with more active mass political participation. In Tataria, Bashkiria and Chuvashia, popular support for sovereignty was also high, which partly explains by demography and the more balanced patterns of ethnic and social stratification. Chuvashia, Mordovia and the Mari republic remained among the less economically developed, lacked economic resources and also had more conservative populations.



The combination of social and economic factors in the ASSRs resulted in different patterns of popular mobilization and sovereignization. Truly massive national movements arose as a rule in the republics with significant urbanized titular groups in major capitals, such as in the Tatar ASSR [Zamyatin, 2013a: 134–136]. The systemic crisis revealed social problems associated the patterns of ethnic and social stratification with unequal economic and educational opportunities among ethnic groups. However, the leadership of national movements in many autonomies, including the Finno-Ugric ASSRs, did not succeed in connecting the problem of the unfavorable socio-economic situation of the titular groups with political demands and receive public support and the level of ethnic mobilization remained low [Zamyatin, 2016b: 226].

Despite this, the necessity to discuss the problems publicly under the new policy of *glasnost* and the recognition of their existence at the 19th CPSU Conference gave to national nomenklatura a fair chance to raise the issues on the agenda. Terry Martin's findings about the special role of politicians in the USSR in instigating “from above” the emergence of popular movements apply also to the late Soviet period. Indeed, this typically were national nomenklatura members also in ASSRs, from the *Obkom* ideological-propagandist departments, who raised national and language problems in mass media because they had access to the documents on the progression of *perestroika* and had understanding of red lines for the issue to raise [Zamyatin, 2013a: 147–148].

Since the spring of 1988, in parallel with the development of the situation in the Baltic SSRs, individual publications on the national question and the place of languages in public life also began to appear both in the central press and in the main republican newspapers in all ASSRs. One of active discussions in 1988–1989 was in the magazine *Druzhba narodov* (*Friendship of Peoples*), where national writers agreed that the “Russification went too far” and the main problem was the narrowing of the function of non-Russian languages. This view was shared both by national intelligentsia and activists of a newly forming democratic movement. An alternative view that the development of Russian should be given priority expressed occasionally in the Komsomol Central Committee's magazine *Molodaya Gvardiya* was unanimously repelled [Alpatov, 2000: 136–138].

Naturally for the “administrative-command system”, the authorities down the power pyramid at the level of SSRs and ASSRs were ordered also to discuss the issues. After the CC Plenum in September 1989, the respective plenums were also held by the regional committees of the Communist Party of the ASSRs, the *Obkoms*, which signified the official recognition of the problems' existence also at the level of ASSRs. Based on the CPSU Platform, the ASSRs' *Obkoms* developed and the Supreme Councils approved programs or action plans “on the perfection of internationality relations”. Immediately, the number of media publications surged, and discussions on the topic have become



among the most acute and emotional. Despite *glasnost*, which was rather a substitution for the freedom of speech, self-censorship in ASSRs continued to exist. Under the new circumstances, the authors of the first publications still tried not to overstep the unwritten boundaries of official discourse, in particular, so as not to be accused of nationalism, which was a dangerous accusation in the context of Soviet history.

Problem definition is a social construction through “naming, blaming and claiming” that is contested by actors of different levels: not only elites but also those acting from below “in the name of the people”. Policy initiators in SSRs named the problems as “a departure from the Leninist principles of nationalities policy”, blamed the central authorities and the Party itself for the deviations and claimed the return to these principles as the solution. They used the authoritative role of Lenin’s work in the Soviet ideology to frame the issue in analogy to how Stalin’s cult of personality was denounced in the 1960s in the name of “returning” to Lenin’s original thought [Yurchak, 2006: 73–74]. As pointed above on the example of the condemnation of the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact, “a departure from the Leninist principles” was a standard formula for any policy field that appealed to Party conservatives promising moderate observable change. This framing by the policy initiators in SSRs succeeded with the republic’s elites and the public and prescribed to address the erosion the republics’ sovereignty through an increase of the powers of republics based on the right of the peoples to national self-determination.

Since 1988, national intelligentsia in the ASSRs initiated the creation of discussion clubs that from bottom-up started the process of problem definition in the language sphere. Intellectuals, who were often national cadres working in science or outright Party officials, characterized the linguistic environment in the ASSRs as dominated by the processes of the Russian language and its spread during the Soviet period, which led to one-sided national-Russian bilingualism and diglossia. The strife at upward mobility was accompanied by a mass shift from national languages to Russian. The publication in spring 1989 of the preliminary data of the last All-Union Population Census showed that language retention rates further dropped, thus adding to public awareness of these processes. With the arrival of *glasnost*, national intellectuals made public their concerns regarding the aspects of sociolinguistic conditions: native language loss, ethnic assimilation and negative demographic trends among the titular groups in many ASSRs. These discussions have contributed to the mobilization around identity issues and later resulted in the emergence of national movements that institutionalized themselves in form of “national organizations” from 1989.

Therefore, national intelligentsia participated in the debate but it was national nomenklatura who added its own concerns, first of all, about cadres policy, and in a “top-down” process defined the



problems. For a condition to be converted into a problem, people must have some criterion or standard by which the troubling condition is judged to be unacceptable [Anderson, 2010: 81]. The Kremlin launched *perestroika* as an attempt to return to the “genuine Leninist course”. In this context, the conditions of language loss and ethnic assimilation were perceived as unjust and unacceptable by the standards of the Leninist principles of nationalities policy with its affirmative action approach. The framing of the language issues into the context of the Soviet national-state construction, national-territorial delimitation, the “indigenization” of the Party and state apparatus and language construction of the 1920s and 1930s opened up the opportunity not only to talk about problems in public, but also authorized national cadres to put forward linguistic and cultural demands from the republican governments and offered a ready-made model for their solution.

The clearest deviation was dramatic narrowing of the volumes of native language teaching in national schools in the last Soviet decade. The return to the Leninist course by the restoration of language teaching in national school was also most accessible administratively, because the standards were clear. After the February 1988 CC Plenum and the respective decree of the RSFSR ministry of education, only administrative decisions of ASSRs education ministries sufficed. For example, in accordance with the RSFSR education ministry recommendation, the Bashkir ASSR made the Bashkir language compulsory for study as a subject for all students. Notably, this measure had not provoked at the time any noticeable antagonism on the side of parents [Safin, 1994: 163]. Already from 1990, the numbers of national schools started increase in most ASSR. It was easier to justify the need to right some wrongs from the past than to develop a full-fledged language revival program. More difficult still was to link problems to new solutions that had not existed in ASSRs, first of all, state languages.

Republics

In the Bashkir ASSR, a *Society of the Bashkir Culture* was created in spring 1989 that in autumn 1989 was transformed into the Bashkir People’s Center *Ural*. In addition to the *Ural* Center, *Union of the Bashkir Youth* and the Bashkir People’s Party were created in 1990. In autumn 1989, a commission was created in the Supreme Council to prepare an upgrade of the ASSR’s status to a SSR. The Constituent Congress of the Representatives of the Bashkir People (Fourth All-Bashkir Congress) supported this request and also envisaged the establishment of Bashkir as a state languages and broadening of its functioning as the medium of instruction [Etnopolitičeskaja mozaika Baškortostana, 1992: 102–107]. Yet, the Bashkirs are numerically the third group in the republic, after the Tatars and the Russians. Furthermore, the presence of the Tatar community, that was even larger than the Bashkir community, made the situation complicated. The Tatars organized themselves into an *Ufa Club of a Tatar Culture already* in spring 1988 and established the Tatar Public Center of Bashkiria (TPCB).



The TPCB promised to support the claim of the Bashkirs for the status of a SSR, if it were to become a Bashkir-Tatar republic. The TPCB demanded also the status of a state language to Tatar in addition to Bashkir and Russian and developed a respective draft language law. The Russian nationalists supported this demand out of tactical reasons, and the Bashkir nationalists opposed this in order to prevent the Tatarization of Bashkirs. Opinion polls were regularly arranged to substantiate the arguments of the sides and provided fuel to the debate. According to the polls, in 1989 most Bashkirs and Tatars supported the establishment of three state languages, while most of the Russians supported only Russian as the state language. In 1990, the polls showed the change in the attitude among the Bashkirs, most of whom now supported only Bashkir and Russian [Kuzeev, 1994; Safin, 1994; Istoriya Bashkirskogo naroda, 2012]. This confrontation reached also the parliamentary debates held during the discussions of the declarations of state sovereignty and later drafts of the language law and the constitution (see next sections).

In Tataria, the debate was held mostly in Tatar and went largely unnoticed by the public at large also because of a limited access of the national movement to mass media. The problem was defined that the young people in Kazan lost their ability to communicate in Tatar due to the closing of Tatar-language schools back in the 1960s. The fear was expressed that the language might disappear in urban centers within the generation. The Tatar Public Center (TPC) was created at an organizational conference in autumn 1988. Its goals included, among other, the strife to a status of a SSR and the designation of Tatar as a state language. The change from the Cyrillic script was also discussed. Russian was mentioned as the language of internationality communication. The *Obkom* was suspicious but gave permission to hold the TPC constituent congress in spring 1989. Radicals insisted that the titular language should become the only state language of the republics, because, in their opinion, the parallel official status of the Russian language would impede the mandatory use of titular languages. However, this point of view seem too radical also to the leadership of national movements themselves. The congress's resolution did not mention Russian, thus avoiding to address the issue explicitly. The congress envisaged comprehensive bilingualism as the goal of language policy and the state-of-art of the equality of the Tatar and Russian languages as its result. According to its resolution, this state must have been achieved through the designation of Tatar as a state language of the republic. However, not only the population but also parts of the elites did not support the sole titular state language, that would also imply its compulsoriness. Parts of the urbanized titular elite had itself poor or no knowledge of Tatar and supported bilingualism. In response, the *Obkom* created a working group on internationality relation and arranged a roundtable on the issue. The roundtable suggested addressing the union authorities with the request to an upgrade the ASSR's status to a SSR. In the end



of 1989, the *Obkom* Plenum discussed the CPSU Platform and raised the problems of an upgrade of the republic's status to that of a SSR. In 1990, the TPC explicitly supported the establishment of two state languages. The contradictions led to its split in the TPC and the emergence of the *Ittifak* party in spring 1990 [Suverennyi Tatarstan, 1998; Kondrashov, 2000].

In Karelia, the first problem was the absence of a standardized written form. In the public debate led from 1988, national intelligentsia could not agree on which dialect should be chosen as the basis for creating the standard [Karely, 2005]. The official discussion of the state-of-art in internationality relations was arranged in the form of a scientific-practical conference in May 1989. The state-of-art was characterized as the one of “the real threat to the very existence of the Karelian people, its culture and language”. The conference resolution identified deviations from the Leninist principles of nationalities policy as the source of problems. At the same time, it avoided blaming anyone of ill intentions and rather spoke about “inconsistency”, “rush”, “negligence” and “excesses” in language policy as the reasons for the problems [Karely, 1989]. In language planning the resolution suggested to immediately initiating the creation of the Karelian written language; to introduce the Karelian language as a subject for ethnic Karelians in primary school in the areas with dense Karelian population. It was decided to create a Society of Karelian Culture soon renamed into the Union of the Karelian People. The Society did not initially require the status of the state language for Karelian due to a lack of the written form. Characteristically, the alphabets for two dialects were approved by a government decree in 1989. By the 1990 education ministry's decision, the language teaching was introduced in some schools from 1991.

In Komi, first publications expressing concerns about language shift that started to appear from summer 1988. In spring 1989, a conference was organized on the functioning of the Komi language that focused especially on problems of national schools. Accordingly, as in other ASSRs, the first step the authorities took was in the field of education: the ASSR's Council of Ministers passed a decree on measure for the further development of national schools and broadening of the teaching of the Komi language” of 1989. The problem was pointed out that a whole generation grew without the knowledge of the Komi language that had also from public domains. Based on the CPSU Platform, the *Obkom* developed and published for public discussion the Program of the Perfection of Internationality Relations. Interestingly, when approved by *Obkom* in autumn 1989, the program was received also the endorsement from the CPSU CC. The program defined narrowing of the use of the Komi language in the public sphere as the problem and suggested broadening its functions, inter alia, by designating it a state language of the republic along with Russian as a whole-state language. The publication of its draft initiated the first public debate in mass media. The *Obkom* also supported the creation in



December 1989 of a national organization *Komi Kotyr* as a successor to a similar organization of the early 1920s. Moreover, some national nomenklatura members joined the organization. *Komi Kotyr* did not focus on problems in its program but presented both political and cultural demands, including the demand to designate Komi as a state language. The national movement borrowed many of its programmatic ideas from the Popular Front of Estonia [Štrichi etnopolitičeskogo razvitija Komi respubliki, 1994: 12–32, 49–51, 118–125]. Soon, a national organization *Komi Voityr* as was created that initially had a national-nomenklatura wing and a national-democratic wing that opposed the CPSU. Its leadership choose the strategy of cooperation with the republic's authorities that led to a split of national movement.

In Udmurtia, national intelligentsia started arranging alternative non-official and non-communist gatherings in form of an *Izhevsk City Club of the Udmurt Culture* in 1988. Soon many of its members joined the *Society of the Udmurt Culture* that was created and headed by some national nomenklatura members and according to its December 1989 program took the CPSU Platform as the basis for its activities. The public debate was officially launched by the publication in January 1989 of the Plan of Practical Measures on the Perfection of Internationality Relations drafted by the *Obkom* Plenum resulting in more than two hundred articles. In the debate, the leading part played functionaries from the *Obkom* ideological-propagandist department who expressed their concerns especially about cadre policy and a narrowing use of the titular language in the public sphere. An alternative position was expressed through the voices in favour of the principle of voluntariness of language use and against discrimination. The bureau report at the *Obkom* Plenum in autumn 1989 emphasizes economic advantages in increasing self-governance that was envisage in the CPSU Platform. The Plan was approved by a decree of the Supreme Council and had a statement also on expediency of the official recognition of both the Udmurt and Russian languages as the state languages [Ponimat' drug druga, 1990: 5–6, 10, 11, 50–53, 89–122].

In the Mari Republic, the driving force of change became ethnic Mari members the *Obkom* of Komsomol. Activism resulted in the creation by the decision of the *Obkom* of Komsomol in February 1989 of an organization of the Mari creative youth *U Vij* that had among its goals the advancement of the Mari national culture and the “development of the Mari national self-consciousness”. Referencing the resolution of the 19th CPSU Conference, the reasons for the latter were expressed in concerns about the “loss of cultural traditions” accompanied by the “worrying processes of the disappearance of the Mari language”. By the end of 1989 with a tacit sanction of the CPSU *Obkom*, a national organization *Mari Ušem* was “revived” as a successor to a similar organization that existed in 1917 and 1918. Its constituent program of April 1990 blamed the Soviet Russification policy for a lack of



national kindergartens and schools especially since the 1960s, a consequent narrowing of the spheres of language use, the spread of the attitude of “linguistic nihilism”, all of which caused the language shift. At its constituent assembly in April 1990, *Mari Ušem* demanded the official recognition of the Mari language as a state language on par with Russian and advocated for the adoption of a language law. The status of the state language had to include compulsory bilingualism of officials in some spheres and the native language of instruction and upbringing. In 1991, the regional organization *Rus'* was created to express the interests of the local Russians. It supported the national-cultural revival and state sovereignty but against was national sovereignty (of the Mari people) [Nacional'nye Dviženija Marij El, 1995: 198, 230; Martjanov, 2006].

In Mordovia, national intelligentsia created a Mordvin social center *Velmema* in spring 1989 and expressed in its program concerns about the fate of national languages that are under threat due to urbanization and a lack of a national urban culture, negative attitudes and assimilation. Some of its more radical members created in autumn 1989 an Erzia-Moksha social movement *Mastorava*. In autumn 1989, the *Obkom* also published its Program of the Development of the Mordvin Socialist Nation and the Perfection of Internationality Relations. Yet, the national movement opposed the *Obkom* Program. As a result, the *Obkom* initially acted against the movement and effectively discredited it as “nationalist” in public opinion in the time when there was a window of opportunity. The *Obkom* even prohibited its constituent conference. Nevertheless, the conference was held and approved its program that, inter alia, envisaged the achievement of two-sided bilingualism based on parity by broadening the functional sphere of the Erzia and Moksha languages through their designation as the state languages along Russian. The program stated that the free choice of language teaching should not be applicable in the case of native language but did not explicitly mention compulsory teaching. The first congress of *Mastorava* in August 1990 presented in its resolution a demand to the Supreme Council of the Mordovian ASSR to rename the republic to an Erzia-Mokshan Republic and to establish the official status of Erzia and Moksha as the state languages along Russian to achieve bilingualism based on parity. In the confrontation with the party conservatives, the titular nationalists moved towards the alliance with democrats, often sharing the common past in Komsomol. One source of relative weakness was the split on the issue whether Erzia and Moksha should developed as separate communities. In some years, those members of the leadership of the national movement prevailed who aspired to build a united Mordvin nation with one language. The main argument was that only one titular language would make it possible to achieve two-sided bilingualism, because then also ethnic Russians can learn it [Obščestvennye dviženija v Mordovii, 1993; Maresyev, 1996, Abramov, 2002; Konichenko & Iurchenkov, 2006; Šilov, 2014; Fomin, 2017].



Commonalities

Politically, the central question was who should rule republic. On the wave of ethnic mobilization in 1990, national organizations started holding their constituent conferences where claimed to politically represent the “titular nations” and put forward political and cultural demands on their behalf to authorities. Many activists were democratically minded, which expressed itself, for example in the inclusive organizational membership when anyone was accepted as member irrespective of one’s ethnic identity. The purpose of grass-root activism was national revival with language revival at its core. It was coupled with the demand of more conservative national nomenklatura for the return to the Leninist principles of nationalities policy, which implied the return to the original logic of the early Soviet national-state construction. Ideologues of national movements represented “titular nations” as “autochthonous peoples” (“korennye narody”) to the republics’ territories. According to this logic, republics were created as the exercise of their right to national self-determination. Thus, the titular elites had the perception of the “ownership” of republics as a form of self-rule. In this understanding, autonomy as a form of territorial self-government of titular nations implied that these should be the titular elites who should rule.

The programmatic documents of national organizations, inspired by national nomenklatura and the *Obkoms*, included, based on the legacy of the early Soviet policy of indigenization, the political demand that the cadre policy had to ensure that the titular representatives would rule republics who then could take care of the survival and development of the titular nations and their languages. The leadership of national organizations also proposed some institutional solutions to address disproportions in ethnic representations and to ensure political participation also of the groups in the numerical minority. The demand for the second chamber was legitimized in the analogy with the Council of Nationalities of the RSFSR Supreme Council established in 1989. National organizations presented also cultural demands that the republics should function as truly “national” providing state support to strengthen “national self-consciousness” with the intended effect of preventing assimilation and the shift from titular languages to Russian. In this context, the demand to designate the titular languages as the state languages of republics could serve both political and cultural goals.

The titular nationalist discourse attributed a decrease in the knowledge of the titular languages among the young people to the ignorance of Soviet authorities to the national question and framed it as a deviation from the Leninist principles and, specifically, of curtailing language teaching at school. Understandably, national nomenklatura avoided speaking about a deliberate policy of Russification. From the standpoint of socialist internationalism such critical statements could already be interpreted as manifestations of nationalism. Instead, they only indicated problems in the state-of-art like that of



national nihilism spread among the groups. They did not cast doubt on the special position of the Russian language as the “language of internationality communication” in its integrative function and preferred to focus on the titular languages. They even welcomed the spread of Russian but criticized the resulting pattern of one-sided national-Russian bilingualism, pointing out that bilingualism should become two-sided. However, they remained inarticulate of the implication that two-sided bilingualism supposed for its achievement compulsory language knowledge and teaching on the side of Russian-speakers. Therefore, the dynamics reproduced the vicious circle of “high” and “low” cultures.

In the mainstream, the Russian-speakers could use Russian everywhere in the USSR and did not experience these language problems. So, their emergence on the surface of public debate came as a surprise and an initial typical reaction often was denial of the problems’ existence. In fact, the Soviet authorities considered the spread of the knowledge of Russian among non-Russians an indicator of the success in the advancement of building the Soviet people as “a new historical entity”. So, the language problems emerged as the policy outcomes. Yet, the argument was made based on “objectives scientific laws” that the spread of Russian as “the language of internationality communication” as well as language shift and ethnic assimilation of non-Russians were “historically determined” as a result of “objective processes”. This line of argumentation found resonance and support of parts of the Russian nomenklatura. In parallel, initially from outside of the nomenklatura, a Russian nationalist discourse emerged around the rhetoric of the protection of the rights and interests of the Russians and Russian-speakers based on the exploitation of the fears of ethnic conflicts in SSRs and potential problems for the Russian language. This discourse still remained marginal at the time and only slowly was gaining publicity.

2.2. Raising the Issue on the Policy Agenda

Background

The first opportunity to present the demands to the authorities and have an impact came at a critical juncture of the “parade of sovereignties” when passing the declarations of state sovereignty in summer-autumn 1990. National organizations typically developed their own draft declarations included higher demands when backed by stronger national movements. Yet, “after the publication of these drafts, the nature of the final draft depended more on the demographic balance between the titular and Russian populations” [Gorenburg, 2003: 205]. The agenda setting was largely a “top-down process”. In many ASSRs with the titular minority and a low level of ethnic mobilization, the masses remained largely indifferent to the issues raised. Accordingly, the drafts of national organizations and most of their demands were rejected by the Supreme Councils.



Yet, the demand of the designation of state languages typically entered the final texts. Moreover, the mere fact of national organization presenting the demand usually sufficed for the provision to be included. The lack to present the demand resulted in no provision also at the latter stages, as in Karelia. This shows that the demand from the public was a necessary input into the political system to raise the issue on the agenda, but at the core of the political process was the elites' interactions and bargaining between the segments of nomenklatura in reaching compromises and formulating possible solutions [Zamyatin, 2013a: 139–141].

Agenda setting involves both a conflict and collaboration. As the ideological crisis deepened, eventually leading to the collapse of the official communist ideology, top-level central and regional elites transformed from an ideologically unified nomenklatura elite into elite segments that were now divided by interests and ideologies first of all, into conservatives and democrats. The segments of nomenklatura in republics realized the need for cooperation for maintaining power, but were competing also for public support in the strife to fix the ideas also on national and language issues into institutions in new constitutions and legislations. The competing national and Russian discourses emerged that, nevertheless, were overlapping in many aspects sharing some common ideas.

After passing the sovereignty declarations, lawmaking stalled in most ASSRs. Only the Chuvash and Tuvan ASSRs adopted also their language laws without a lag still in 1990. To boost the process and to prevent the language issue falling from the agenda in the context of language legislation and in the light of the development of new republics' constitutions, the national nomenklatura needed to increase their legitimacy. To add legitimation, the demands had to be constructed as presented by the populace in the name of the "titular peoples" and, thus, needed to be passed not just by national organizations but by some bodies having political legitimacy. Both history and the record of popular fronts in SSRs provided the ready models for the task. After the revolution, national congresses or "peoples' congresses" were arranged as a form of ethnic mobilization mostly in 1917 and 1918 to serve as the subjects representing peoples in their negotiation first with the Provisional Government and then the Soviet authorities.

When ethnic mobilization reached momentum, national organizations initiated since 1991 the arrangement of "peoples' congresses" that were quasi-representative bodies of the titular nations that were also to include co-ethnics residing beyond the borders of republics. The peoples' congresses claimed to have a political, representative and legislative status in republic, which made them different from some other events. Another type of pan-nationalist events were pan-ethnic congresses of kindred peoples like the Finno-Ugric or Turkic peoples' congresses, or territorial congresses like the congress of the peoples of Caucasus or individual territories, where leaders and activists of national movements



shared ideas on the ways of ethnic mobilization and presented demands to authorities with backing of inter-national and multi-national communities [Osipov, 2011].

The peoples' congresses were supported by national nomenklatura and the authorities, inter alia, because they offered a potential solution to it the problem of ethnic representation. The national nomenklatura members fully agreed with the demand to ensure their privileged access to power. In the post-war decades, the patterns became regularized with either both titulars or Russians being the first and second secretaries in some SSRs and ASSRs, or either first secretary non-Russian and the second secretary Russian or visa-versa in some other SSRs and ASSRs. Among the ASSRs within the RSFSR Dagestan, Kabardin-Balkaria and North Ossetia, Buryatia as well as most Yakutia, Tataria, Bashkiria and Karelia mostly natives were appointed as *Obkom* first secretary and ethnic Russians as second secretary, while in the Komi, Mari, Mordvin and Udmurt as well as in the Chechen-Ingush ASSRs the order was reversed wit Russian as first secretary and native as second secretary. In the Finno-Ugric ASSRs, it was hypothesized that besides the presence of the majority Russian populations the titular populations were so russified so that “no local pride was hurt to have” the ethnic Russian leadership. The exception of the Karelian ASSR he attributes to its border positions with Finland and foreign policy considerations [Miller, 1977: 13–16].

By 1989, the nomenklatura members of the titular nationality were in the majority in the republican leadership only in the Chuvash and Tatar ASSRs as well as the ASSRs of the North Caucasus (64.1% in the Tatar ASSR that was also higher than the share in the population). In the other ASSRs of the European part and Siberia, the titular national nomenklatura was in the minority, ranging from a somewhat higher representation of 24.1% in Bashkiria than the share of the group in the population, nearly proportional representation of 9% in Karelia, 30.8 % in Udmurtia, 34.9% in Mordovia, to lower of 18.3% in Komi and much lower representation of 23.6% in Mari ([Tatary i Tatarstan, 2007: 62–63]; Table 1 above).

Of course, due to the Soviet quota system on representation of social groups, including ethnic representation, people emerged who considered the Party membership as their career path. They would pragmatically first join the Komsomol and then the Party, or hold first some professional or administrative position and later joined the Party, to advance their career along the “national path” climbing the hierarchical ladder of national nomenklatura. With the introduction of political pluralism, the first competitive elections to the Supreme Councils of spring 1990 de facto abolished the representation quota system. The Supreme Councils were hitherto used to be rather decorative bodies controlled by *Obkoms*. The elections now turned the Supreme Councils into alternative centers of real power. Already after the 1990 elections, with the Soviet practices of balanced representation



abolished, the titular elites became overrepresented in some republics and underrepresented in some others. In a couple of years, the regimes were established could be characterized as the domination of “titular segments” or “Russian segments” [Zamyatin, 2017].

In this situation, the titular segment of nomenklatura saw their benefit in supporting the peoples’ congresses because these could provide a political resource of legitimacy. The Supreme Councils, in which the old establishment continued to dominate, naturally did not recognize the legitimacy of the peoples’ congresses as political representative bodies. Nevertheless, being supported by the republics’ authorities, the first congresses typically marked the peak of ethnic mobilization and had leverage to focus public attention on the national and language issues and to keep them in the political agenda.

Initiated in republics as a “top-down” process stemming from the republican establishments, agenda-setting depended on media both in reflecting and forming public opinion. After the USSR collapse, the ethnic Russians in the former SSRs experienced a profound identity crisis founding themselves in a minority situation. A mass discourse emerged that there was discrimination against Russian-speakers in connection to ethnic tensions, conflicts and wars in some SSRs. In Russia and its republics, the language issue was particularly sensitive and potentially divisive and provoked strong emotions, when reported in media. The USSR disintegration processes framed public discussions about languages. There was a vocal media discussion of the growth of nationalism and separatism in some SSRs and, following suit, in some ASSRs, notably Chechnya, that questioned the very existence of the RSFSR itself and, thus, threatened the position of the regional elites and especially of the Russian elites. In reaction to titular ethnic mobilization, there was a counter-mobilization of ethnic Russian elites also in republics especially after the USSR collapse since the early 1992.

Republics

The first was a “peoples’ congress” was the Congress of the Komi People in January 1991. The congress elected its executive Committee for the Revival of the Komi People and demanded the adoption of a language law together with implementing measures of language spread in the public sphere. The second extraordinary congress in autumn 1992 demanded from the authorities the recognition of a political status of the Congress. In the same year, in one package in the language law, the law on the status of the Congress of the Komi people was passed that recognized its right to legislative initiative, which was not done in other republics. In Karelia, the First Republican Congress of the Representatives of Karelians was held in summer 1991 and now officially demanded the designation of Russian and Karelian as the state languages. In autumn 1992, the joint Congress of the Karelians, Finns and Vepsians of the republic was held to add wait to the demands.



In the Tatar ASSR, Tatar nationalists convened in winter 1992 the Congress (Kurultai) of the Tatar People that elected *Milli Majlis* or the “national parliament” of the Tatar people. *Milli Majlis* was a quasi-representative body that claimed to be a legislative alternative to the Supreme Council and was in the opposition to the authorities. The authorities claimed *Milli Majlis* was just an NGO. On the demand of democrats, the Supreme Council passed a resolution denying the Congress’s decisions any legal force. A few days later a democratic forum with the delegates from other republics had to take place but was prevented from happening. This led to a crisis in the republic’s democratic movement and its split along the ethnic line. To seize the initiative, the government arranged the First World Congress of Tatars in summer 1992. The Congress support sovereignty but did not pretend to be a political body but rather a forum that discussed also the issue of the forthcoming constitution [Kondrashov, 2000: 153, 179; Istorija tatar, 2013: 614–616].

In the Bashkir SSR, the VI Extraordinary All-Bashkir Congress was arranged in the end of 1991 and demanded, among other things, to assign some quota of ethnic representation to Bashkirs as the autochthonous people and in order to prevent assimilation to designate only Bashkir as the state language and Russian as the language of internationality communication. However, the demands faced strong resistance not only of Russian nationalists but also of the democratic forces. In spring 1992, the organization *Rus’* was created to express the interests of the local Russians and maintain territorial integrity. Categorically against these demands was the TPCB who in summer 1991 even suggested arranging a referendum on partition of the Tatar-majority western districts and the capital city into a new Ufa Region. Interestingly, the TPCB and *Rus’* developed a good rapport [Safin, 1994: 171–172]. In summer 1992, both organizations appealed to the deputies of the Supreme Council against a published draft constitution and demanded to pass the constitution only at a referendum. Both organizations supported the designation of three state languages. Also the democratic organizations were vocally against the demands of the Bashkir Congress. In this situation, the Bashkir-controlled government avoided taking divisive steps. The pro-government First World Kurultay of Bashkirs was summoned only in summer 1995 that demanded, inter alia, the adoption of a language law [Etnopolitičeskaja mozaika Baškortostana, 1992; Etnopolitičeskie processy v Baškortostane, 1992; Kuzeev, 1994; Safin, 1994].

Among other ideas, “right-peopling” and “right-sizing” the state was proposed as the way to solve the problems. The First Congress of the Udmurt People in autumn 1991 proposed to encourage the immigration of ethnic Udmurts to Udmurtia, because the Udmurts are an autochthonous people on the territory, and outmigration of ethnic Russians. This provoked a scandal and a reaction of the Russian nationalists, which was politically marginal but quite vocal. The leaders of the Society of the



Russian Culture tried to mobilize support via local newspapers in the municipal districts with the Russian-majority population and threatened that these districts, including the capital city, would leave the republic. Accordingly, the leaders among the national nomenklatura had to assure in the name of the republican establishment that this is not what the government should seek for and, thus, presented their own vision as a moderate line between radical titular and Russian nationalist views. The titular nationalists and the democrats were only marginal groups in the Supreme Council but effectively blocked each other [Ponimat' drug druga, 1990: 50–53]. The Second Congress of the Udmurt People in 1994 demanded the principle of ethnic representation for the second chamber of the future parliament in the new constitution and the adoption of language law.

In Mordovia, the titular nationalists allied with the national nomenklatura after the confrontation with democrats, who came to power after the election of their leader as the republic's president in 1991. The First Congress of the Mordvin People was held in spring 1992. Its resolution demanded to recognize by law of its status as an ethnic representative assembly with the right of legislative initiative, to designate Erzia and Moksha as the state languages along Russian in the new constitution, to establish language requirements to president and ministers of the social bloc, to organize the education process in native language in primary schools and to teach the titular languages as a subject in (all schools) in order to reach the state of two-sided bilingualism. The Russian nationalists and their organization *Rus'* were formed also in Mordovia but remained marginal. Instead, the titular national movement was opposed both by the nomenklatura and the forming democratic movement. The cooperation of the national movement and the authorities started only after the abolition of the presidential office in 1993. The Second Congress of the Mordvin People was held in 1995 a few months before the adoption of the new constitution and repeated the demand about the designation of state languages and the adoption of a language law but in a compromise later dropped the demand of language requirements [Konichenko & Iurchenkov, 2006: 154–156].

The Third Congress of the Mari People in autumn 1992 (after the Congresses held in 1917 and 1918) appealed to the Supreme Council to comprehend the necessity of the knowledge of the Mari language by the officials and proposed to settle the order of approval of language requirements for officials. There was no direct demand on the knowledge of the state languages by the president, because the language requirement had already been established. In its resolutions, the Congress demanded the Supreme Council to adopt the constitution and the language law, where “the Mari language (Hill and Meadow Mari)” would be recognized as a state language of the republic along with Russian. The document, thus, proposed a single Mari language, although there were proponents who wanted to include both main varieties: Hill and Meadow Mari. The language law had to define



language requirements. Among the recommendations was the appeal for the adoption of the education law, which would introduce Mari as a compulsory subject in all educational institutions and prepare a gradual transition for national schools to have a native language used in instruction. The creation of a two-chamber parliament was demanded. Members of a chamber elected from the administrative units were demanded to know the state languages. *Rus'* and some deputies of the Supreme Council representing conservative old establishment criticized the documents of the Third Congress for its position as a political organization and blamed government officials for the participation in the Congress [Nacional'nye Dviženija Marij El, 1995: 266–269].

Commonalities

After the exhaustion of the communist ideology, the elites lost their belief in the communist ideals and were now divided both by diverging interests and ideologically. Still, conservatism remained dominant among the Party functionaries and nomenklatura. Democracy and nationalism became the main alternative ideologies. While liberalism or socialism are usually considered mainstream political ideologies, which comprehensive answers to question about the political world, nationalism is sometimes viewed as a “thin-centered” political ideology, which has its core structure but otherwise typically is attached to its “host-vessel” ideologies [Freeden, 2005: 204–207]. Nationalism as a “thin ideology” can complement conservatism and liberalism or, for that matter, also socialism and even communism, as seen in the example of “socialist nationalism” or “national communism” of the early Soviet years but not that easily attachable to its late Soviet disguise.

Conservative nationalism concentrates on the preservation of cultural traditions and a historical continuity of national identity. It underpins the social order insisting on natural change with social control being grounded on the myth of peaceful coexistence. Liberal democracy and nationalism partly overlap and do not necessarily contradict each other because their heavy-point ideas tend to be in conjoined but different fields: about form of government vs identity politics. Liberal democracy prefers a form of government in which representative democracy operates under the principles of liberalism. Liberal nationalism is the most known combination, when nationalists accept into their platform the concepts of democracy, such as the equal participation, for example, expressed in free individual choice or extended to groups, or liberty, for example, expressed in pluralistic choice of one's identity or via liberation from oppression and the desire of a group to rule itself [Holbraad, 2003: 98–168].

Only few among the nomenklatura in republics became devoted democrats or nationalists, maybe also because its recruiting was fine-tuned to exclude idealists. Now also disillusioned with the Marxist-Leninist variant of the Soviet communism, most remained conservatives and cynical



pragmatists who opposed change and for whom status quo guaranteed their belonging to the elites and remained the locus of their primary social belonging, which later in the 1990s converted into allegiance to any “party of power” that came after the CPSU. However, both conservatives and democrats could also incorporate into their world picture (“titular” or “Russian”) nationalist views and sentiments. Accordingly, (“titular” and “Russian”) national movements typically included both democratically-minded and conservative nomenklatura-past leaders and activists. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this alliance was not stable and typically ended with the end of institutional building in the movement’s split.

Still, the interested elite segments, be them “conservatives” or “democrats”, “titular nationalists” or “Russian nationalists” considered the state-of-art of internationality relations to be potentially problematic and, therefore, the inclusion of respective issues necessary in the political agenda but for different reasons. The competing discourses on these issues differed in terms of defining the problem, the intended policy objectives and proposed solutions.

In the titular nationalist discourse, national intelligentsia emphasized that a low prestige of the titular languages and its virtual absence from the public sphere caused a shift from the titular languages to Russian and considered that the language shift was the result of deliberate Soviet assimilationist policies causing the spread of attitudes that the speakers doubted the value of their stigmatized languages and cultures that symbolized a lower societal status. Titular nationalists used the victimization rhetoric and emphasized psychological insecurity of their group identity. In order to compensate for psychological discomfort, the activists shared an ideology of linguistic nationalism with its belief in the key role of language for the nation, although they avoided talking about it out aloud. They also shared an ideology of bilingualism, although not necessarily of linguistic pluralism or societal multilingualism. Both ideologies traced their roots back to the Leninist principles such as “the equality of all peoples and their languages”, to which standards the activists now proposed to return.

To legitimize particular treatment of the titular groups, the titular intellectuals pointed at the discrepancy between the proclaimed equality of all peoples, their actual inequality and the suffering caused as we as the need to fill the gap and established real equality by a positive valorization and privileged treatment of these groups in the republics. The republics, thus, were represented not only as the form of their political-institutional recognition but also the way to establish control over the geographically, linguistically and culturally defined national space with its historical continuity back to the revolution. Finally, the strength of national sentiment is in its emotional appeal in the instances of inequality and injustice. The weakness of their position was that it was anchored in the Lenin’s



works and lost its foundations after the collapse of the communist ideology. Furthermore, titular particularism remained vulnerable to criticism as “nationalism” that, despite the bankruptcy of the communist regime, for the time being still was considered among the predominant conservatives as something absolutely negative.

In Soviet times, people’s lives largely depended on the state, and they were used to rely on state paternalism and protectionism. Due to the prevailing political culture, activists since the Soviet times continued to believe that it was a task for the state to take measures for solving a problem. Thus, the goal of titular activists and politicians was for the revival of titular language, based on the group rights justification, to become a state policy that could though extending their practical knowledge and use change the existing trends and patterns. Further, the Soviet policy in many aspects was a symbolic policy. Symbolism was a way to manifest a multinational character of the state and society, even though in the late Soviet decades instrumental policy was to build the Soviet people by encouraging assimilation. So, the new policy had to include measures directed at the promotion of the languages’ symbolic use to improve language attitudes, what nowadays is referred as language prestige planning. Whereby the symbolic affirmation of the status of state language was about the affirmation of the social status of the titular nations themselves. Their legitimation for this demand was rooted in the rhetoric of the entitlement and the claim of possession of the titular republic, the purpose of which was the maintenance and development of the titular peoples.

A democratic discourse emerged that represented democracy and democratization as a universal alternative to the outdated communist ideology. The national question was not central to their platform, but the democrats totally dismissed the Soviet approach in nationalities policy as undemocratic. They recognized the harm done to the peoples but considered the situation was a result of “objective processes” with no democratic means to undo the harm. A democratic alternative was found under the version of “classical liberalism” where the issue of ethnicity had to be considered as a private matter and addressed by recognizing individual rights. Ethnic Russians were now about 80% of Russia’s population in contrast to slightly more than half as in the USSR. In this new situation, ethnicity had to be depoliticized and politics de-ethnicized. Some radical democrats demanded that ethnic institutions from the Soviet era, including the republics themselves and autonomies, had to be abolished or at least the link to ethnicity was to be removed (that was eventually accomplished under the rule of Vladimir Putin; see [Zamyatin, 2016a]). For democrats, language legislation had, first of all, to become a device to prevent discrimination and ensure the right to freely choose languages one uses and to learn them on the voluntary basis. In this context, the compulsoriness of the titular

languages was viewed as a discriminatory device making the Russian-speakers “second-class citizens”.

In their fears, they became perceptive to the rhetoric of the Russian nationalists who mobilized after the USSR collapse and especially from 1992. The Russian nationalist discourse also used the victimization rhetoric. To legitimize the particular treatment of the group, they pointed the ethnic Russians suffered from the communist rule the most. In the former SSRs, the Russians unexpectedly became minorities. Under the centrifugal tendencies with Chechnya de facto independent and the ongoing negotiations between the Kremlin and the stronger republics, the Russian populations feared the disintegration of Russia itself and their position was also threatened in the former ASSRs. The nationalist discourse played on the fears of ethno-linguistic conflicts and tensions and potential ethnic and linguistic discrimination. Accordingly, their ideology was linguistic nationalism that in the case of majority nationalism amounted in essence to the same ideology of language homogenism in its variation that Russia should coincide with the Russian nation and the Russian language, while republics had to be stripped off their link to the titular groups and possibly abolished. Another implicit ideology was linguistic assimilation, which viewed societal monolingualism as the norm.

The explicit goal of the Russian pressure groups initially was the maintenance the status quo. The strength of their position was that it incorporated the interests of the Russian conservatives and democrats as well as Russian nationalists. This implied the continuation of the Russian language dominance as well as assimilation and language shift that have already been current practice. The arguments included the rhetoric about the need to avoid tensions and conflicts as those in some SSRs, to prevent discrimination and to maintain internationality harmony. Thus, the implicit goal was the encouragement of the shift from non-Russian languages to Russian, but it had to remain hidden because it contradicted the Soviet official discourse of socialist internationalism. The further rationalization of official monolingualism was based on the assumption of efficiency, that the official use of two or more languages is impractical, and also on the assumption of integration, that the Russian language should be promoted, since it provides a unified information and cultural space of the country [Zamyatin, 2014].

2.3. Policy Formulation

Background

Language status planning as the main policy approach to resolve language problems came “from above” and had to be adapted to the realities of republics through the formulation of alternative courses of actions by parliamentarians and partly by government officials. In public discussion, three main questions emerged that embodied policy alternatives: whether republics should designate their



official languages at all and how many, whether officials, including the top official, should know both the titular language(s) and Russian, and whether both (all of them) are obligatory for studying by all students in republic schools. In addition, polls would usually ask the opinion of respondents about a more general question, which can be considered as a supplement to the question of compulsory language learning: should all the inhabitants of a republic know them.

The status of state language combines two main functions: the symbolic function of the national language and the practical function of the official language [Zamyatin, 2014: 16–18]. In the situation when Russian already was in symbolic and practical use in all domains, its designation was rather affirmation of its new symbolic status. For the titular languages, the issue was (1) whether their designation meant only their new symbolic status of a national language of republics or also their practical use had to be promoted to ensure their “revival”. In the latter case, (2) whether this promotion had to be achieved through the promotion of their voluntary or also compulsory use. The target audience of the revivalist policy was to become the titular groups. The titular cultural activists and their pressure groups aspired to designate the titular languages with an official status, since this would allow introducing their mandatory use as a mechanism for their spreading in the public sphere. Yet, it was difficult to argue for the restriction of practical use of Russian, as this questioned its social status.

Republics

The first policy documents, notably the sovereignty declarations, were mostly drafted in the Supreme Councils and their commissions. Alternative drafts of national organizations or research institutes were typically rejected. Governmental agencies joined the process of drafting language laws after 1993 in those republics that still lacked them.

In the Tatar republic, some deputies, mostly Russian-speakers, spoke out against sovereignization at the parliamentary session on the 1990 declaration of state sovereignty. Yet, they remained in minority, while the majority of the deputies, and also the popular opinion, was in its favor. The core issue of the parliamentary discussion on sovereignty, as for example formulated by the Supreme Council’s chairman Mintimer Shaimiev, was an upgrade in the republic’s political status, but the disagreement persisted whether the goal should be attainment of the status of a SSR or a republic in the RSFSR. The demand to arrange a referendum on the issue was rejected, *inter alia*, on the argument that the RSFSR declaration was also passed by its Supreme Council. On the issue of languages, the agreement was about bilingualism as the “objective reality”. Again, some Russian-speaking deputies were against state languages but the majority supported the designation of Tatar and Russian as two state languages [Respublika Tatarstan, 2000]. In spring 1992, Tatarstan refused to join



the federation treaty, as this step was viewed as a retreat from its declared status of a SSR. Instead, the republic held a popular referendum, where the majority of voters supported sovereignty of the republic despite the counterstand of Moscow. The referendum both strengthened the republic's position in the negotiations with the Kremlin and opened the way for the constitution's adoption by the Supreme Council. The next in the agenda was the parliamentary discussion of the draft language laws. A deputy, who was the leader of the *Ittifak* Party, once more raised the issue about Tatar as a sole state language with a three-year transition period but had not found support. The most contested was the issue of compulsory or voluntary language use. The titular nationalists insisted on compulsoriness, while the democrats alternatively suggested stimulating the voluntary use with bonuses for the knowledge of both languages. The language law was passed in summer 1992. At the parliamentary session discussing the drafts of the constitution the issues were raised of the republic's citizenship and the future relations with Russia. Again, the leader of the *Ittifak* Party sent a suggestion about Tatar as a sole state language that had not found support. Another issue in conjunction with the designation of two state languages was the compulsory knowledge of both by president. The constitution passed the first reading in spring 1992 and was adopted in autumn 1992 [Istorija tatar, 2013: 515–527, 566–593, 646–662].

In the Bashkir republic, the head of the Center *Ural* was given a chance to speak at the parliamentary session on the sovereignty declaration in 1990 but it did not help to overcome the disagreement of the deputies on the status of Tatar as the third state language. However, a speech by a national poet at a session in autumn 1991 had an impact and the law on the republic's president included the requirement of the knowledge of the Bashkir and Russian languages. Several draft language laws were developed in 1992–1993 but had not passed again mainly due to the demand on the status of Tatar as a third state language. Thus, both the 1990 sovereignty declaration and the constitution of 1993 had not designated state languages. Despite a lack of language law, in 1993 the Bashkir language was introduced as a compulsory subject in all schools. However, its implementation faced strong opposition and in practice it was largely ignored, which was an indication of how much the situation changed with the counter-mobilization of Russians. In 1998, Russia's Constitutional Court ruled the language requirement of the president's law was not applicable because the Bashkir language lacked the status of a state language. To solve the problem, another draft language law was developed. The TPCB was against the draft law without Tatar as the third state language and *Rus'* was against the requirement of a language test from the presidency candidates. Yet, this time the political regime was already consolidated. After a speech by a national poet at the session, the language law



was passed in 1999 and designated the Bashkir and Russian as state languages [Istorija bashkirskogo naroda, 2012: 255–268].

In the Finno-Ugric republics, the authorities did not challenge the nature of the relations with the center despite their sovereignization in 1990. In Mordovia, even sovereignization was rejected by the majority of the deputies but also there the designation of the republic's state languages did take place. The first language law draft was developed in February 1991, made public for discussion and passed in the first reading in summer 1992. Then, the process stopped because the drafters intended to institute elements of the compulsory use of the titular languages. Yet, not only bureaucracy but also the public opinion was against the compulsory teaching of the titular languages and the language requirements for some leading posts. As a result, the discussions on language law lasted for years until its adoption in 1998 without the elements of the compulsory use. The disagreement about the compulsoriness of the titular languages was not at stake during the adoption of the constitution in 1995.

In the Mari republic, the language requirements of two state languages for some public servants and their compulsory study passed into the 1995 language law. Further, the requirement of the knowledge of two state languages by the president was instituted in the 1995 constitution of the Mari republic, although later it was annulled. Otherwise, the demands of the national movements were everywhere rejected, although sometimes it proved to be possible to reach a certain compromise. In Komi, the main issue of the parliamentary debate on language law was the requirements of the knowledge of both state languages from some professions and their compulsory study by all students. The cooperation of the national movement and the republic's authorities led to an early adoption of the language law in 1992. In 1993–1994, the core issues of the parliamentary debate about the new constitution included the discussion on the ethnic principle of representation to the second chamber of a future parliament demanded of the national movement. The majority rejected the demand but in a compromise a mixed proportional and administrative territorial principle was fixed. Another issue was the requirement of the knowledge of both state languages. In Udmurtia, the core issue of the parliamentary debate on the new constitution also included the requirement of the knowledge of both state languages by the president and some other professions, the second chamber and ethnic representation quota [Zamyatin, 2013b; 2013c; 2020].

Commonalities

Therefore, the success and outcomes of the sovereignization process was predetermined by the condition that at that moment the nomenklatura continued to be an ideologically unified elite. Early democratic activists shared with national activists in republics their common past in Komsomol to and the adherence to the Leninist ideals and sought cooperation. Democratic Russia was established as a



movement in autumn 1990 and in the next year entered into an alliance with the popular fronts in other SSRs. Elites were unified not only horizontally but also in their deference to the elites up the pyramid and to the Party's solutions envisaged in the 1989 CPSU Platform.

Republics' elites had a common interest in exercising a higher level of territorial self-governance especially in economically developed republics. In the terms of Dmitry Gorenburg (2003), the titular segments were driven by "political separatism" and "cultural nationalism", which did not necessarily contradict each other as, for example, the terms "civic" and "ethnic nationalism" would imply. The Russian segments were caught in the situation with negative and positive incentives between the fears of titular "cultural nationalism" and the benefits of economic autonomy as an aspect of "political separatism". The status of state languages was here a bargaining chip the Russian segments were ready to give in especially as the languages' designation in the sovereignty declarations remained a symbolic and not a practical step [Zamyatin, 2020].

Thus, the republics' elites had a joint interest in sovereignization as a way to increase its power vis-à-vis the center, although for various reasons. Economic incentives for greater self-governance enhanced the chances of a compromise regarding sovereignization. Most republics upgraded in their sovereignty declarations their political status, although dropping the term "autonomous" from their name did not automatically mean that they had also de facto become SSRs [Regiony Rossii, 2000: 293]. In the Tatar and Bashkir republics, the central issue of a heated debate was exactly their status of SSRs and their place in the USSR and RSFSR but sovereignization itself was said to be supported by the *Obkoms* and the populations at large and was not in question.

In contrast, a lack of economic incentives together with the fear of titular nationalism could produce a split in the elite and their inability to agree on the need of sovereignization, as happened, for example, in Mordovia. In autumn 1990, *Mastorava* prepared its quite demanding draft of the Declaration of State Sovereignty. With small economic incentives of sovereignization, the threat of nationalist mobilization was sufficient for the regionally strong democrats to ally with nomenklatura and to mobilize the Russian-speaking majority, thus, effectively blocking the declaration discussion. Some politicians were threatening even to motion for renaming the republic into a Saransk oblast. Mordovia became one of the two republics (along Dagestan) not to pass the declaration on state sovereignty but only the declaration on the state-legal status, which, nevertheless, declared equal-in-rights functioning of the state languages [Konichenko & Iurchenkov, 2006: 30–39]. The inability to agree on whether to include Tatar also led to a lack of the respective provision on state languages from the sovereignty declaration of Bashkiria. More typical were the conflicts about which varieties should



be counted as titular languages and designated state languages, as in Karelia, Mordovia and the Mari republic (for individual cases of these and other republics; see [Zamyatin, 2013a]).

However, after the USSR collapse the democrats and nationalists lost the common foe of communist conservatives. Now the main points of disagreements between elites were, first, in the vertical dimension, what should be the future of Russia in its relation with republics, whether it should become a “treaty-constitutional” or “constitutional-treaty” federation, and, second, in the horizontal dimension, whether the bearer of republic’s sovereignty would be the “titular nation” or a “multinational people”, in other words, whether one ethnic nation or a “multinational people” uniting “titular and other nationalities” would be taken as a model for republic’s nation-building. The model of an ethnic nation would justify also a special mechanism of ethnic political representation and the designation of a sole titular state language; the model of a multinational people would justify official bilingualism and multilingualism.

Republics upgraded their political status by dropping the attribute “autonomous” from their titles and some, notable, Tatarstan and Bashkortostan also sought for the status of a SSR directly, with the former refusing in spring 1992 to sign the federation treaty and the latter signing it with a reservation that it had to be appended by a bilateral treaty. Yet, after the president Boris Yeltsin’s win over the Supreme Council in autumn 1993, the Russian constitution (12 December 1993) effectively consolidated the federation without inclusion of a federation treaty as its part, as agreed earlier. Within the republics, in a compromise titular nations (titular peoples) were referred as the source of sovereignty and the multinational people of republics as the bearer of state power. Accordingly, the multinational character of republican statehood was reflected designating the status of the state languages to both main peoples in each republic the titular and Russian.

Alternatives regarding the first question, whether to designate state languages and how many, were formulated in discussions of the declarations of state sovereignty. When, an agreement on the need and the number of languages was reached, it usually also remained intact at the latter stages of language legislation and constitutions. The key mechanism was the deference to higher authorities and the cascade effect of policy borrowing and imitation. The proponents of the official designation pointed at the direct recommendation of the CPSU and the precedent of the languages’ official designation in SSRs and other ASSRs. A few opponents argued against, *inter alia*, because the RSFSR in its declaration has not designated state languages and, thus, doing so, ASSRs would be acting in defiance to the RSFSR authorities. However, the declarations themselves were already an act of defiance. The initial failure to designate state languages in Karelia was both the lack of the respective

demand of the national organization but also the fact that the republic was only the second among the ASSRs to pass its sovereignty declaration and the argument based on precedent was not available.

Regarding the number of languages, some titular nationalists demanded to designate titular languages as the sole state languages, pointing out that some SSRs did so, even though the practice in SSRs and ASSRs varied. The initial logic of this argument also in SSRs went that anyway Russian would remain the official language of the USSR and, thus, the other state language in republics. Some among the Russian nationalists envisaged the one-language-only policy, according to which Russian had to become the sole state language of Russia, and in effect also in republics. However, most titular elites and at the time also a significant share of regional Russian elites supported official bilingualism. Again, the key mechanism became was the deference towards higher authorities. The choice of official bilingualism as a model for the status planning of languages predetermined, first of all, because this was the configuration the Union authorities first recommended and then enshrined in the USSR language law. After the RSFSR designated in its language law Russian as its state language in autumn 1991, the inclusion of Russian as another state language of republics became unavoidable [Zamyatin, 2013a].

The second and third questions that implied compulsoriness appeared to be more controversial, also because there was no univocal central policy. The introduction of some elements of the compulsoriness depended on the political situation in every individual republic. Similar core national and language issues were discussed in parliaments when passing sovereignty declarations, language laws and constitutions. The differences were in outcomes. As it typically proved to be difficult to reach an agreement on the issues, it also implied the need of the adoption of language law. The formulation of alternative courses of actions implied either the introduction of provisions only on general principles that presuppose their voluntary nature, or the adoption of norms that impose compulsoriness of languages in two fields: education and language requirements.

Nevertheless, the compulsoriness of titular languages also directly affected the lives of ethnic Russians and Russian speakers in the republics. They did not know and did not use titular languages, and the prevailing attitude among them to titular languages was to consider them as useless languages with low prestige. Therefore, the regional Russian segments of the elite were strongly predisposed against the compulsoriness of the titular languages. Furthermore, they suspected that the rhetoric of revival was just a pretext, and the actual purpose of the titular elites was to use language requirements for first-rank officials to provide preferential access of their representatives to power just like in the (former) SSRs.



The titular and Russian elite segments searched for and referred to different standards and functions of state language. Many in the Russian elite segments agreed in a compromise only with the symbolic recognition of state languages, but opposed their compulsoriness. Many in the titular segment in addition to that insisted both on symbolic but also on practical use and instrumental policies. However, the practical problem was that even in the Baltic republics with their traditions of using these languages as official languages it proved to be difficult to return the titular languages to the corridors of power. Many of the titular languages of most SSRs and ASSRs were never previously used in practice in government institutions in the first place.

Conclusion

The comparison of policy formation in the period of the disintegration of the Russian Empire and the USSR is instructive for understanding the role of ideologies and institutions for ensuring continuity and change. Both periods were characterized by the rise of new ideologies that eventually led to institutional change. In both cases of “critical juncture”, new actors came to power with their ideas subsequently embedded in the design of institutions of the new states. The Bolsheviks seized power to implement their modernization program with a bunch of core ideas that had to be adjusted ad hoc to different challenges in structuring the political system and institution building. Marxism had no ready formula on how to deal with diversity challenge. Lenin’s slogan of national self-determination became the cornerstone of the Party’s ideological position but practical measures typically fluctuated driven between international and domestic considerations. The shifting balance of forces behind the homogenization and the maintenance of diversity predetermined the duality of the goals of the nationalities policy and language policy throughout the Soviet period and beyond.

The comparison of the Soviet and post-Soviet periods shows that there was some change but also continuity in ideas. Due to Lenin’s authoritative position against compulsory state languages, the idea of state language was rejected and not shaped as an institution in the Soviet period. Accordingly, the discussion on the compulsoriness of languages vs the free choice of language was also relatively absent in the USSR. The “equality of all peoples and their languages” was proclaimed, their maintenance and development said to be guaranteed and state support for this to be provided. In practice, these ideas were difficult to achieve and sustain under the conditions of the complex sociolinguistic situation of the country. Instead, different principles were applied to different degrees depending on context of different groups. A hierarchy of national-state formations emerged together with a corresponding hierarchy of “the languages of SSRs, ASSRs” and other categories.



In effect, language status planning became the main policy approach also in the USSR. The idea about the special position of Russian gained prominence and was reflected in its privileged institutional status as “the language of the Soviet people” and “of internationality communication” and the corresponding policy goal of its spread. In the RSFSR, the nearly universal knowledge of Russian among non-Russians was nearly achieved through one-sided “national-Russian bilingualism” and the following shift to Russian as “second native language”. Two-sided universal bilingualism was never proclaimed as a policy goal, even if the idea was present in the titular discourses. Thus, the initial ideas eroded during the Soviet period, and the institutional setting became more and more complex.

The uniqueness of the situation of the late 1980s was that it was still possible for the titular elites in the SSRs and ASSRs to justify their nationalist ideas and demands appealing to Lenin’s authoritative word and the Leninist principles of nationalities policy to the conservative establishment, which made them initially a strong side in the struggle over policy and power when changes started. Activism of romantic intellectuals and political entrepreneurs reinforced each other and contributed to ethnic mobilization. National intellectuals raised national and language problems, and national nomenklatura supported or sometimes inspired creation of their organizations. Pan-nationalist movements played an important role in the dissemination of the ideas among titular elites from republic to republic about the ways of national and language revival. The demands typically included an upgrade in the political status of republic and the titular group in it, the institutional mechanisms of ethnic political participation and the respective cadres policy, the preferential support for its maintenance and development of the titular culture and language as well as the state language status.

In the *perestroika* times, the declaration of state sovereignty and the designation of state languages in the Baltic republics were the unilateral acts of defiance that marked their growing self-governance and laid down a framework to emphasize their ideational and institutional continuity to their pre-war statehood. From institutional perspective, only national-state formations in the same category of SSRs or ASSRs had formal equality, but this setting contradicted the idea about equality of all peoples and was especially contested in the strong ASSRs like Tatarstan, which aspired for a similar higher status of SSR. Accordingly, the weakened Union authorities equalized in April 1990 the rights of SSRs and ASSRs and extended the right to designate state languages also to other SSRs and ASSRs as the “one-fits-all” solution. Thus, the formulation of the institutional solution to the national question and language question came in the Soviet hierarchical structure to most SSRs and also ASSRs “from above”.

With sovereignization, republics claimed authority to pursue their own nationalities policies and language policies. Similarity of their initial institutional settings, commonalities in ideological



profiles and differences in power constellations allowed comparing policy formation in republics and outlining its common scenario. The data showed how three phases of the formation of national movements roughly correlated with and probably also caused three substages of language policy formation: problem definition, agenda-setting and the formulation of alternative proposals. Each substage could be also identified with mostly one of the streams of problems, policies and politics. In the stream of problems, activists of the titular national movements, namely researchers (linguists, historians), journalists, other cultural activists and often the leaders of national organizations, typically driven by cultural values and norms of defensive nationalism, but also inspired by democratic ideas, identified the processes of language shift, language loss and ethnic assimilation as worrying, framed them as unjust by the Leninist standards and demanded the authorities to address their concerns.

In the stream of ideas and solutions, some “national cadres” among Komsomol members or democratically-minded younger Party functionaries realized with the start of political reform under the situation of uncertainty that their chances to pursue their expected national nomenklatura career path were diminishing. Perceiving their ethnic identity not only as the legitimate way or an available resource but also as an entitlement to advance in their career in their “own” republic, they saw their interest to justify their claim for power in raising the national and language problems. These people became “political entrepreneurs”, when they saw in the idea of state language not only a possible solution to ethnodemographic and sociolinguistic problems but also a tool in power struggle with potential usability of its compulsoriness in the interest of policymakers, including pathing the way for themselves becoming policymakers. Notably, the Russian term for political entrepreneurs in the field is “ethnic entrepreneurs”, a derogatory term among post-Soviet cultural elites, including academics, for whom doing business still was considered an unhonorable activity.

The entrepreneurial streak of policy entrepreneurs linked national and language problems to the deviations in policy, although it is methodologically difficult to establish the causality between sociological and sociolinguistic process being the result of policy impact and broader social change [Zamyatin, 2020]. Nevertheless, the policy initiators succeeded, first, in defining problems by presenting numerical data of trends according to population censuses and some available research and framing the data through emotionally charged metaphors like “language death” and “national awakening” as well as emphasizing the role of language as a cultural symbol, all of which made their case for the policy. Second, they also managed to link their proposal to the interest of policymakers over access to power via language requirements. Third, they came with the proposal at the appropriate time of the critical juncture with mass ethnic mobilization backing their claims.



The central element of the stream of politics is zeitgeist or a set of assumptions widely shared and not open to criticism in a particular historical moment. With the collapse of ideological consensus, policymakers, including conservative older national nomenklatura members, also perceived their chances to remain in power diminishing and saw their interest in supporting “from above” movements based on alternative ideologies, including national organizations. These organizations sometimes had policy entrepreneurs as their leaders, in their activities directed at mobilizing popular support. Policy entrepreneurs use the window of opportunity opened by the political stream to link their favored solutions to problems by redefining the latter. High public expectations of change provided policymakers in most republics with the opportunity and motivation to raise the national and language issues on the political agenda. Thus, the joining of the streams of problems, policy and politics opened a “policy window” in summer and autumn of 1990, when the “green light for sovereignization” was given “from above”.

Historically, one can see a “path dependence of ideas”, but at the times of the “critical junctures” shifts in “popular mood” take place, when ideas create a diverging path. The demise of communist ideology led to discontinuity in ideas with liberal democracy and nationalism becoming the two alternatives that introduced new ideas also in regard of the national question and language question. The democratic movement proposed the classical liberal approach to diversity management via individual human rights that appealed for its universalism. Nationalists proposed a new idea of state languages, and its meaning triggered the most heated debates especially on the issue of compulsory use. Initially a weaker side, the Russian elites succeeded by spring 1992 in a wider counter-mobilization framing the issue in a way that represented the intention of the titular elites to extend the introduction of the compulsory use of the titular languages also to the public in general. At the same time, strength of their position was that a nearly universal, even if often imperfect, knowledge of Russian allowed them presenting the designation of a single particular language as a universalist claim. The discourse analysis also shows that the debates about the compulsoriness and voluntariness of languages’ knowledge and use made up only part of the discourses, while a much broader range of issues was raised regarding the nationalities policy.

Differences in outcomes of policy formation were also significant. Policy entrepreneurs were unsuccessful in raising the issues on the political agenda of the republics where they failed to persuade national nomenklatura of its interest in the program. With the closure of the window of opportunity in the early 1990s after the decline of national movements and the construction of the new institutional configurations, it became much more difficult to shape the policy. Another “policy window” opened at the time of regime consolidation under the republics’ presidents typically in the late 1990s, but



under a conflictual regime consolidation the national cadres segment typically lost. Nevertheless, the central role of the republics' leadership often provided an alternative channel in reaching the decision on policy formation and, thus, became another manifestation of agency.

Therefore, self-interest was present in discourses as one motive of policy entrepreneurs for demanding compulsion and the instrumentalist use of languages as a mechanism to ensure the exclusive access to power. However, political interest is tied to ideology, especially in the case of a social movement that challenges the existing social and political order. There is no evidence to claim that nationalists acted in bad faith when they insisted on compulsion as the language revival mechanism. This study demonstrated that policy was formed as the outcome of the institutionally restrained activities of self-interested policy entrepreneurs and of idealistically driven nationalists who together composed national movements. The conflict and compromise between proponents of nationalist and democratic ideologies in republics resulted in the institutional change expressed also in language policy formation.

The republics were the major ethnic institution originally established to accomplish the goal of maintaining diversity through its functioning as a form of territorial self-governance of their "titular nations". Yet, the core of this function – their competence to pursue their own nationalities policies and language policies in order to maintain and construct identities – was significantly restricted not only in the vertical dimension of the relations of republics with the center but in the horizontal dimension at the level of republics. The major vertical institutional restriction for the republics' policy formulation was the formulation "from above" of official bilingualism as the default solution. In regional politics, the policy formulation was a compromise between two competing goals: the promotion of the titular languages and the maintenance of the status quo with the dominance of Russian. Thus, the co-official status of state languages was intended to address the problems of both the titular groups and the local Russians as a potential "minority in minority".

Yet, regarding the Russian language, the justification of its special status as a common language not only had a continuity with the Soviet times rooted in the idea of its functioning as "the language of internationality communication", but also implicitly legitimized the idea of its functioning as the national language of ethnic Russians. The latter trend culminated in the 2020 Russian constitutional amendments with the justification for the state language status for Russian as the "language of a state-founding people, which is a member of the multinational union of equal-in-rights peoples of the Russian Federation" (Article 68 para. 1). Thus, while in the Soviet times Russian was represented as a "neutral" common language of the "Soviet people", nowadays Russian is represented as the language of the Russian nation both in civic and ethnic terms.

This framework has a potential to add legitimacy to the claims for a special status also for the titular languages based on linguistic group rights.

The historical-structural analysis demonstrates that, despite the change in ideologies and certain discontinuity in ideas laid in the foundation of the institutions, initially there was a significant continuity in ethnic institutions, first of all, of republics themselves. The political and institutional change was not as extensive as after the 1917 revolution, and the continuity of elites was high especially in republics. This sustained the system to a certain point in time. In a weak state of the early 1990s, the Russian authorities needed the support of the regional leaders in their confrontation with the Union authorities. After the USSR collapsed the new power constellations emerged. If in the Soviet system, the presence of SSRs sustained the institutional settings also of ASSRs, then now the republics were alone vis-à-vis the Kremlin.

After the “winner-takes-all” outcome of the 1993 crisis, the Kremlin fixed a new institutional design and started with support of parts of regional elites the process of recentralization and resubordination of republics. In the early 2000s, the declarations of state sovereignty were annulled, removing the claim to state sovereignty of their titular nations in those republics that still had them and in effect annulling the claim that the republics are states. The latter would mean also that their “state languages” are something else than the languages that are in principle compulsory for use. Since then, the Kremlin proceeded from the recentralization to the unification in state building and from the demobilization of identity issues and the “depoliticization of ethnicity” to explicit nation-building and homogenization. After the demise of federalism by mid-2000s and the removal of last heavy-weight republics’ leaders in 2010, language policies in most republics were also de facto terminated with no separate policy actors to pursue them. Thus, the pendulum in the duality of goals shifted to the extreme of the unification at the expense of diversity [Zamyatin, 2016a].

1. In recent years, Russia with its power projection abroad is often labelled in categories of an imperialist power: with the labels from “liberal empire” of the early 2000s to a “civilization” of the 2010s. Yet, nationalism and identity politics continue to shape the global political agenda also in the XXI century. If the democratization theory stands, then at some point in the future Russia will enter another circle of political transformation and face again the diversity challenge. Without ethnic violence and war, genocide, Xinjiang-like internment camps or other open forms of oppression, no nationalist ideology exists that would justify a program similar in scale anywhere near to the Leninist principles that would embrace the ideas of decolonization, national liberation and self-determination and the demands for a postcolonial national statehood with identity building similar in amplitude to the efforts of the early Soviet period or even of the 1990s.

At the same time, liberalism is also in crisis in its approach to diversity challenge and so far could not offer a standing solution. Accordingly, the ideological debate between conservatism, liberalism and nationalism continues to inform state building and identity building around the world. That is why at the next critical juncture the issues of language policy formation might again become highly topical not only on the political agenda but also in scholarly debates.

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Примечание

Research for this article was made possible by a scholarship from the Finnish Cultural Foundation.



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Для цитирования: *Замятин К.Ю.* Формирование языковой политики в российских республиках в начале 1990-х годов: идеологии, интересы, институты [Электронный ресурс] // Социоллингвистика. 2021. № 2(6). С. 61–127. DOI: 10.37892/2713-2951-2021-2-6-61-127

For citation: *Zamyatin K.Yu.* The formation of language policy in Russia's republics in the early 1990s: ideologies, interests, institutions // Sociolinguistics. 2021. No. 2(6) [online]. Pp. 61–127 (In Eng.). DOI: 10.37892/2713-2951-2021-2-6-61-127