Sonja Schüler (Ed.)

Exchange, Dialogue, New Divisions?

Ethnic Groups and Political Cultures
in Eastern Europe

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The Situation of Ethnic Minorities in Lithuania from the Perspective of Their Self-Perception

Ingrida Gečienė

Introduction

Despite the fact that Lithuania has been a multinational state for centuries and has a long-lasting tradition of peaceful cohabitation between different ethnic minorities, the events of World War II, as well as the Nazi and Soviet occupations of Lithuania, left a dramatic mark on the history of the country and on its ethnic minorities. Lithuanians, Jews, Poles and people of many other nationalities fell victim to chauvinism, xenophobia, political mistakes and crimes against humanity. The turbulent times in Lithuania before and after regaining independence in 1990 again highly affected the situation of ethnic minorities.

Researches on different ethnic groups revealed that non-titular nationalities in Lithuania and countries of similar historical context "have encountered a double adaptation stress: adaptation to market economy and adaptation to new ethno politics and minority status" (Kasatkina 2002: 22). Social adaptation in this context is understood as "a process of the combination of an individual's aspirations and expectations with his/her possibilities and expectations, and the requirements of society" (Kasatkina 2003: 68). In this aspect, social adaptation encompasses both "external" social conditions and "internal" individual skills to participate in the surrounding society. External conditions can involve various aspects from geopolitical environment, political regime, economic situation and level of social security, etc. This paper will rather focus on one aspect – ethnic politics, as all other aspects are similar for all ethnic groups in Lithuania and differences lie more in the reaction of these groups towards changes of these aspects (for example, towards economic crises, etc.). Therefore ethnic politics is one of most distinguishing external conditions, which can either be favourable for ethnic minorities or create obstacles for better adaptation.

The internal possibilities of integration in a society are related to different kinds of resources that form the social position or status of a person and the subjective perception of his/her social status as satisfactory or not. As Kasatkina revealed, "the satisfactory economic situation of individuals does not tell everything about their perception of social life", as it can be influenced by the subjective evaluation of one's own social position and the perception of its change as well as "perception may be greatly influenced by symbolic interaction and lack of recognition" (Kasatkina 2003: 16).

The aim of this paper is to reveal the contemporary situation of ethnic minorities through their own understanding and examine the main factors that in-

fluence this perception. For reaching this goal three main tasks are formulated: 1) to analyse how the ethnic politics helps or hinders the social adaptation of ethnic minorities in Lithuania; 2) to indicate what kind of problems ethnic minorities face during the process of social adaptation; 3) to examine the situation of ethnic groups from the perspective of their self-perception and the main factors that influence this perception. The main hypothesis, based on a social adaptation theoretical approach, is that the different attitudes of ethnic groups towards their social situation in Lithuania is mainly determined by ethnic identity, social status and the coherence of the social adaptation process.

The latest results from the quantitative survey of the Lithuanian population in 2012 will serve as an empirical basis for the analysis. The representative survey was conducted by the Lithuanian-British market research and public opinion company Baltic Surveys Ltd. for the scientific research project "Representations of Democratisation Process in Lithuania in Individual Consciousness", which was funded by a grant (No. SIN-12012) from the Research Council of Lithuania.

According to the 2011 Lithuanian Population Census, in 2011 people of 154 ethnicities lived in Lithuania: 84.2 % Lithuanians, 6.6 % Poles, 5.8 % Russians, 3.4 % – other (1.2 % Belarusians, 0.5 % Ukrainians), approximately 0.1 % Jews, Germans, Romany, and Latvians, significantly fewer Armenians, Azerbaijani, Moldovans, Georgians, Estonians, Karaites (Lithuanian 2011 Population Census in Brief, 2012, 20–21). The distribution of the respondents in the 2012 survey corresponds to the data from the Census. However, it must be admitted that the percentage of ethnic minority respondents in the total number of respondents (N=1008) does not constitute a sufficient number of respondents to draw conclusions about the whole population of ethnic minorities. Therefore the analysis provided in this paper is indicative for tendencies in the opinions of ethnic minorities rather than forming a strict representation of these opinions.

The biggest advantage of this research lies in the possibility to compare Lithuanians and the ethnic minorities regarding their evaluation of their previous, current and future political, economic and social situation, their opinion on ethnic tolerance and the protection of human rights, and also their perception of their social situation and quality of life. The majority of other researches in Lithuania on ethnic minorities usually includes only ethnic minorities respondents and informants into their research methodology.

In the first part of this paper, a brief overview of ethnic politics is provided for examination of the opportunities and obstacles for ethnic minorities for their better adaptation to new societal contexts. In the second part the previous results of ethnic minority studies in Lithuania are presented in order to identify the main problems that ethnic minorities face during the period after the country's regaining of independence. This part partly shows the context, which potentially can have influence on the perceptions of ethnic minorities, expressed in the newest research, and in this way complements the finding of this research. In the third part of the paper, the data from the 2012 survey are analysed in order to investigate the subjective perception of Lithuanians and ethnic minorities of their current social situation.

I Ethnic politics after regaining independence

According to analysts, ethnic policy in Lithuania is quite favourable for ethnic minorities in comparison to that of other Baltic countries (Best 2013: 49, Andrlik 2009: 11, Fearon and Laitin 2006: 16). According to the 1989 Law on Citizenship, almost all permanent residents were guaranteed the right to gain Lithuanian citizenship irrespective of their nationality, duration of residence in the country or knowledge of the state language (Kasatkina and Beresneviciute 2010: 11). The New Law on Citizenship from December 1991 made regulations for naturalization somewhat stricter, similar to the regulations of Latvia and Estonia. However, according to Lottman, in reality the law was interpreted in a much milder manner, which in fact reflected the positive experience with the integration of non-Lithuanian ethnic minorities on the basis of inclusive elements of the previous law (Lottman 2008: 510).

The 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania prohibits any discrimination or granting any privileges on the basis of ethnic background, race, sex, language, origin, social status, region, conviction or opinion (article 29). The Constitution guarantees the fundamental rights and political, economic and social freedom (among them a freedom to vote and form political parties and other organizations, articles 34–36) for all citizens independently of their nationality. Besides, there are some articles directly addressed to national minorities: "Citizens who belong to ethnic communities shall have the right to foster their language, culture, and customs" (article 37); "Ethnic communities of citizens shall independently administer the affairs of their ethnic culture, education, organisation, charity, and mutual assistance." Article 45 of the Constitution also binds the state to support ethnic communities, however, it does not indicate to what extent. Thus, this article is rather laconic and other laws elaborate the role of the state more explicitly.

The Law on Equal Treatment was adopted in 2003 in order to ensure the implementation of the provisions of Article 29 of the Constitution enshrining the antidiscrimination of persons. However, the implementation of the law still remains difficult in practice, as "the Equal Treatment Ombudsperson [...] still receives few cases alleging discrimination, as knowledge of and trust in the institution among minority communities reportedly is still limited" (Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities 2014: 6).

The 1989 Lithuanian Law on Ethnic Minorities became the very first law of this type in the whole of the former Eastern Bloc. The Law did not formally define a minority and each individual's nationality was defined by their own subjective choice (Kasatkina et all 2006: 352). The Law contained provision regard-

ing the right to equal protection, to obtain aid from the state to develop their culture and education, to establish own media, to freedom of religion, to establish ethnic cultural organisations and to contact persons with the same ethnical background abroad, to equal political representation and to hold any post in institutions, organisations and enterprises. It is important to mention, that articles 4 and 5 guaranteed the use of the language spoken by a minority in addition to the Lithuanian language in offices and organisations located in areas serving substantial numbers of a minority and the use of bilingual signs in the same areas. In these aspects the Law on Ethnic Minorities of 1989 was in conflict with the Law on the State Language, which states that "in all institutions, offices, undertakings and organisations operating on Lithuanian territory, the language used will be the State language and requires having all public signs written exclusively in Lithuanian with the exception of the use of minority languages only for the names and signs of organisations representing national minorities". As a result the Law on National Minorities was terminated in 2010 manly because of "a need to replace the outdated and inconsistent terminology and to remove the inconsistency of the legal code" (Andrlik 2009: 11).

In 2013 an attempt was made to improve the Law on Ethnic Minorities by providing the right for ethnic minorities to use their ethnic language in public space (for services in municipalities, topical information, names of streets and other public signs in territories where these minorities form more than 25 % of the concrete municipality population). However, such improvements and some other statements of the Law faced harsh criticism from Lithuanian patriotic organisations, as well as from smaller ethnic minorities as being too favourable only for the most numerous ethnic minorities, because only Polish and Russian minorities can match the proposed requirements on the concentration of ethnic minorities in some regions (Vasilevich 2013: 12). For this reason, the project of the improved Law on Ethnic Minorities is still under discussion in the Lithuanian Parliament (Seimas). The lack of a specific Law on Ethnic Minorities, according to Vasilevich, results in the situation that "in recent years the minority issues in Lithuania have become a subject of increasing politicisation" (Vasilevich 2013: 11).

Lithuania has signed and ratified various international agreements directed towards the protection of ethnic minorities, among them: The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights; The United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; The United Nations International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; The Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms; The Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. However, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages has not been ratified yet, again mainly because of the contradiction regarding the provision of the Law on the State Language. Therefore, according to Vasilevich, the Charter provides "no protection for minority languages in Lithuania, leaving the national legislator to determine whether the country's do-

mestic legislation should comply with the provisions of the Charter" (Vasilevich 2013: 8).

Before 2010 the Department of National Minorities and Lithuanians Living Abroad was responsible for the planning and implementation of state policy towards national minorities. However, after the reorganization of this department its functions were transferred to the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The responsibility for the minority policy was transmitted towards the National Minorities Affairs Division of the Ministry of Culture. However, this change worsened the minority rights protection, as there were only 5 persons in the department now, instead of 15 persons in the previous department and as a result the scope of activities was insufficient, particularly at an international level. In 2014 the decision was made to re-establish the Department of Ethnic Minorities under the Government. This new department is expected to start its activities in mid-2015. It is expected that this department will keep efficient relations with the ethnic minority communities, cooperate with international institutions and that it will contribute to the analysis and formation of minority politics, as states government press release (delfi.lt 2014).

Another institution of ethnic minorities – The Council of Ethnic Minorities – represents 18 ethnic communities. Its members participate in the legislative process, various commissions and work groups, they act as consultants in decision making in strategic issues concerning the preservation of ethnic minority identity and the development of minority culture, monitor the implementation of international law and obligations on national minority issues, propose principles and priorities of support for ethnic minority organisations and ethnic minority target programmes.

There are no granted sets for minorities in the Parliament (Seimas), however both largest minorities – Poles and Russians – established minority parties at an early stage of the development of the party system. In 1992 the Polish minority started in the elections as Movement of Lithuania's Poles. In 1994 it was transformed to a new party, namely Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania (EAPL). The Russians also have got a political party which has started in the elections – Lithuanian Russian Union (LRU) and later Russian Alliance (RA), a more regional party, which has its electorate in the Lithuanian port town Klaipeda. These parties use to make different coalitions in parliamentary, municipal and European Parliamentary elections, "although these parties representing major minorities in Lithuania have always had a different ideological orientation" (Frejute-Rakauskiene 2011: 21). Sometimes, as in the case of municipal elections, they participate by presenting separate lists of candidates as well as by proposing their candidates in the formed coalition. The EAPL party achieved the best results in the last parliamentary elections in 2012 when it got 8 seats and was involved in the ruling coalition.

There are about 300 NGOs founded by ethnic minorities in Lithuania. A wide spectrum of their cultural, educational and social projects receives state

funding every year. Ethnic minorities can get news and information in their native languages: "more than 20 newspapers and magazines are published in Russian; and the Polish, Belorussian, German, Jewish, Tartar and Greek national minorities have their own publications" (Analytical Report PHARE RAXEN_CC Minority education 2004: 20). A number of periodical publications are printed in Russian, Polish and Yiddish. The Lithuanian National radio and television broadcast daily and weekly news and cultural programmes in Russian, Belarussian, Polish, Yiddish and Ukrainian.

It remains true, however, that the biggest problems for ethnic minorities occur in the area of education. In Lithuania, children of ethnic minorities get elementary, basic and secondary education at schools with their mother tongue as the language of instruction. Students originating from national minorities also have the possibility to learn their native language at schools where the language of instruction is Lithuanian. However, Lithuanian schools are not ready to accept pupils not knowing or only knowing poor Lithuanian, since in such cases teachers would need to provide bilingual instruction and would be forced to devote more time to linguistic difficulties during classes. There is a need "to develop and implement a more effective system of bilingual instruction that could satisfy the various needs of language learning which minority pupils have" (Analytical Report PHARE RAXEN_CC Minority education 2004: 7).

Universities and colleges in Lithuania train linguists and teachers of ethnic minority languages, however, students of ethnic minorities receive their training in other professions at tertiary level largely in the state language. Therefore, there is a need to ensure equal opportunity for all pupils to study at the Lithuanian institutions of higher education. In this regard, "it is important to develop the level of teaching of Lithuanian in the minority schools and to organise the final Lithuanian language examination for pupils leaving general education schools according to the same programme" (Analytical Report PHARE RAXEN_CC Minority education 2004: 13). Actually, for this reason, attempts were made in a new amendment of the Law of Education in 2011 to create more favourable conditions for mastering the Lithuanian language by increasing the number of subjects taught in Lithuanian in schools for ethnic minorities. Additionally, graduates from minority language schools have to take the same Lithuanian language exam as students from Lithuanian language schools. Despite the benefits these measures brought in providing better preparation for entry competitions to higher educational institutions and for participation in the public sphere, these amendments "sparked a number of protests from the Polish speaking population" (Freedom House Report 2012). Knut Vollebaek, the National Minorities High Commissioner for the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) noted that "the requirements of the Law did not violate EU norms or standards", but, following his recommendation "the government established an eight-year transition period for the language examination, during which minority students will receive preferential grading" (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour Report 2012: 21).

Therefore, and despite the fact that Lithuanian ethnic policy is quite favourable in comparison to that of other countries in the region, there is still a need for further improvement of the political protection of ethnic minority rights and for more attempts to develop effective educational policies for ethnic minorities to ensure equal opportunity to enter higher educational institutions.

II Main problems and aspects of discrimination faced by ethnic minorities
    during the last two decades

According to the findings of previous research, Lithuanian ethnic minorities have experienced difficult changes in the perception of their status in the Lithuanian society during the last two decades. First of all, according to the results of an investigation in the adaptation context and process of Lithuanian ethnic groups in the year 2000, the majority of Lithuanian nationality respondents believes that they have risen in the social hierarchy, and in the case of Russian nationality respondents, that they have descended, although a comparison of family income does not indicate that these ethnic groups are essentially different in this respect. Researchers assume, that "for this feeling, symbolic aspects of social interaction are more important than an objective material differentiation". The transition of the Russian ethnic group from a majority to a minority status had a major influence on this perception, and "the political dimension is not really important: despite the Russians 'social feeling' being worse than that of others, they do not speak about violations of rights more than others" (Kasatkina 2002: 18).

Tadas Leoncikas reveals a decline in political loyalty between some ethnic groups: while in 1990, according to the European Values Study survey, 67 % of Russian nationality respondents in time of war would go to defend their country, in 1999 this figure dropped to 38.3 %; among Lithuanians this figure also decreased from 60.8 % to 48.4 %, among Polish nationality respondents it increased slightly from 53.8 % to 60 %, and among other nationalities it decreased from 70.5 % to 50 % (Leoncikas 2000: 426). Other studies show that reluctance to fight for one's homeland is characteristic for those who are most unhappy with their life and are pessimistic about the future (Ester et al. 1997: 189).

Growing intolerance for certain ethnic minorities, especially for Jews, Chinese, Chechens and the Roma (Leoncikas 2007: 104, Vildaite and Zibas 2010: 125) can also be noticed. This circumstance is peculiar, because, due to the small number of people comprising these ethnic minorities, it is unlikely that the majority of the Lithuanian population has experienced a real relationship with them, so this intolerance is not mainly related to ethnic minority identity, but to the prevailing ethnic stereotypes (Leoncikas 2000: 422, Leoncikas 2007: 104). According to a media survey, the following stereotypes are supported in the mass media: Roma, for example, are often described as criminals, they are presented as asocial and as a marginal group (Beresneviciute and Nausediene

- Poles: older (40 % are over 60, 36.7 % pensioners), less educated (22 % have no secondary education and the rest have only secondary or lower professional education), more workers (38.3 %) and fewer specialists (6.7 %), a smaller income for each family member (35 % have less than the minimal salary; 33.3 % have more);
- Russians: older (40 % are older than 60, 30.2 % pensioners), well educated (30 % have high professional education, 16.3 % – higher university education), more workers (37.2 %), but also a higher number of specialists (11.6 %) and even managers (heads, directors, etc.) (4.7 %); accordingly, one group (41.9 %) has less than the minimal monthly salary for each family member, and the other group (26.9 %) has more.

In order to measure the subjective perception of social status the question "To which social group (class) do you assign yourself – lower, middle, or upper?" was given (see Figure 1).

Lithuanians and Poles are quite similar in their subjective evaluations of their social status, however, no Poles declare that they belong to the upper social group. Russians evaluate their social status as significantly worse, despite the fact that their demographic characteristics are quite similar to those of the Poles; and the Russian minority even includes more educated people than the Polish minority. In addition, Russians evaluate their material situation as similar to that of the Lithuanians (see Table 1). This can be partially explained by a different social adaptation process after the regaining of independence in Lithuania in 1990. Russians drifted from being a nationality with major symbolic status during the Soviet times to becoming an ethnic minority; in addition, the Russian language was gradually disappearing from public space. Such a negative evaluation of the status brings some researchers to the conclusion, that "social status and the issue of recognition rather than formal political rights are a barrier to the successful adaptation of the Russians" (Kasatkina 2003: 20).

The subjective assessment of the level of material well-being in Figure 2 shows that differences of assessment between different ethnic groups are minimal and actually remain within the interval of statistical error. Only Poles, similarly to their subjective evaluation of social status, did not declare their material well-being as good, corresponding to the revenue declared for each family member. This can be partially explained by the persistent problem of their level of education being lower than that of other ethnic groups. The Polish minority significantly underperforms in relation to the national average in terms of educational attainment, partly because of having an insufficient knowledge of the Lithuanian language to enter higher education institutions, and also because of the fact that "a considerable proportion of the Polish population lives in rural areas where educational attainment rates, particularly at the higher education level, are significantly lower than average compared to urban areas" (Kasatkina and Beresneviciute 2010: 12).
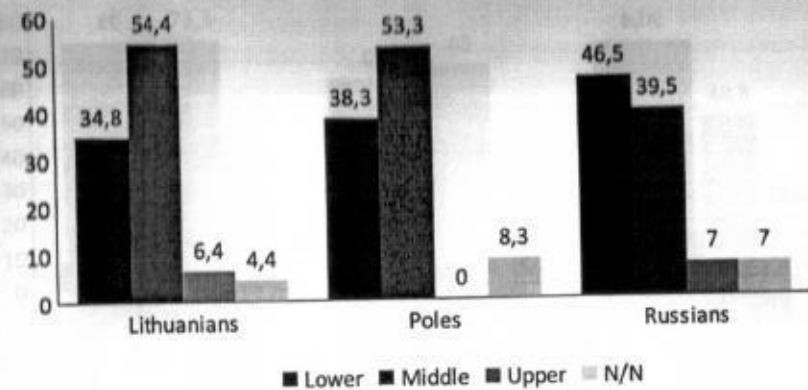

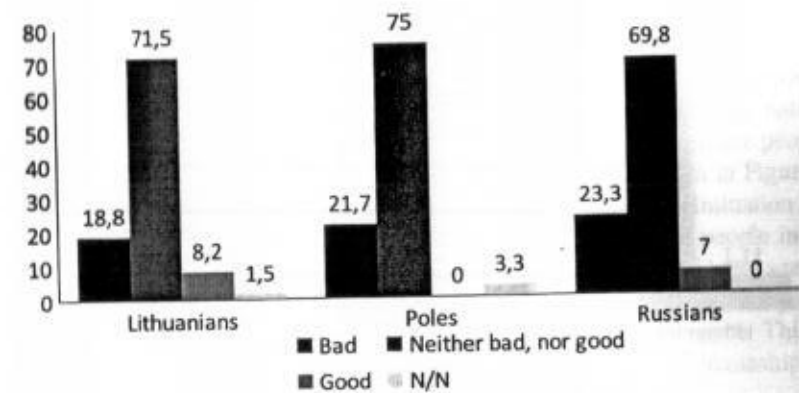Figure 1. Subjective evaluation of social status (per cent)

Figure 2. The subjective assessment of the level of material well-being (per cent)
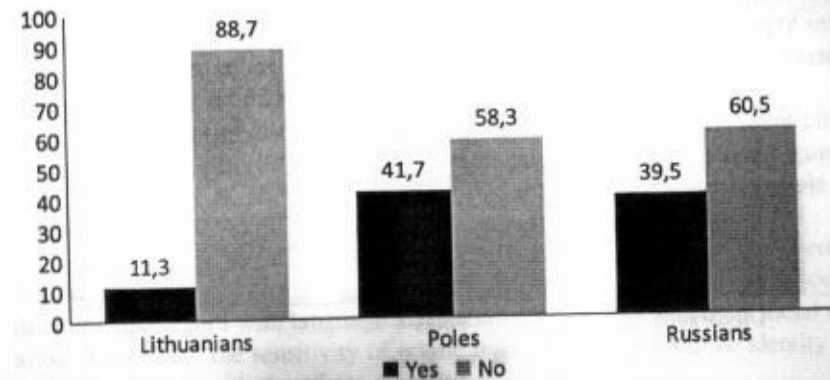

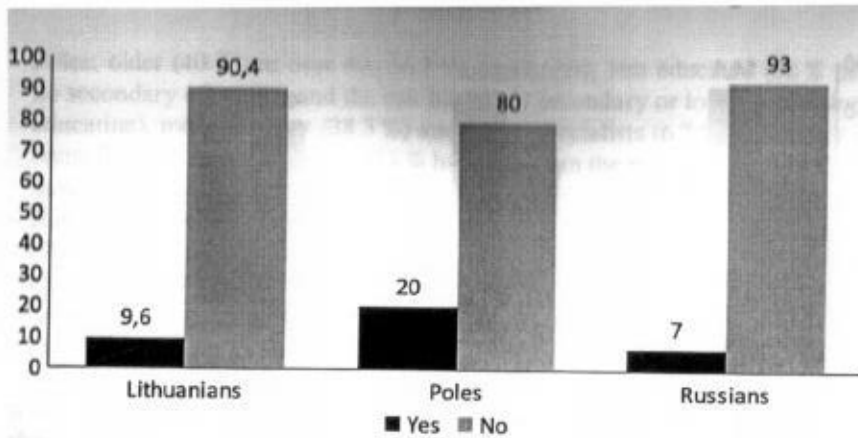Figure 3. Perception of discrimination based on language (per cent)

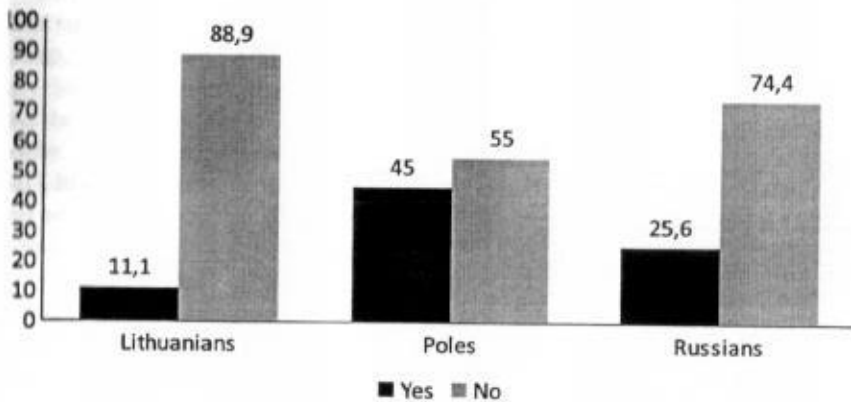Figure 4. Perception of discrimination based on citizenship (per cent)

Figure 5. Perception of discrimination based on nationality (per cent)
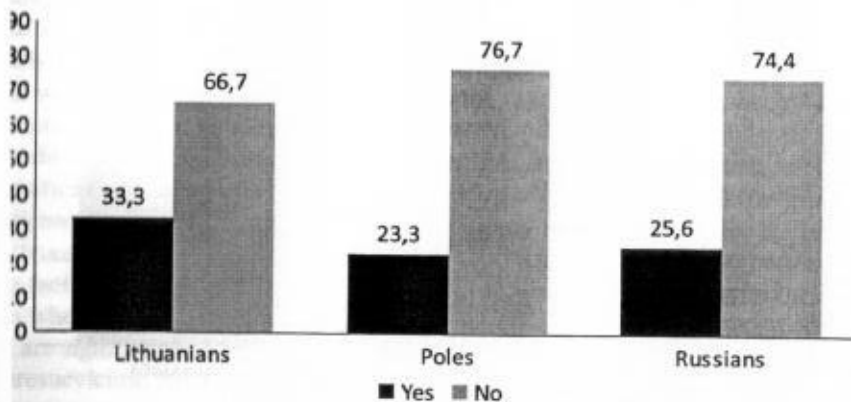

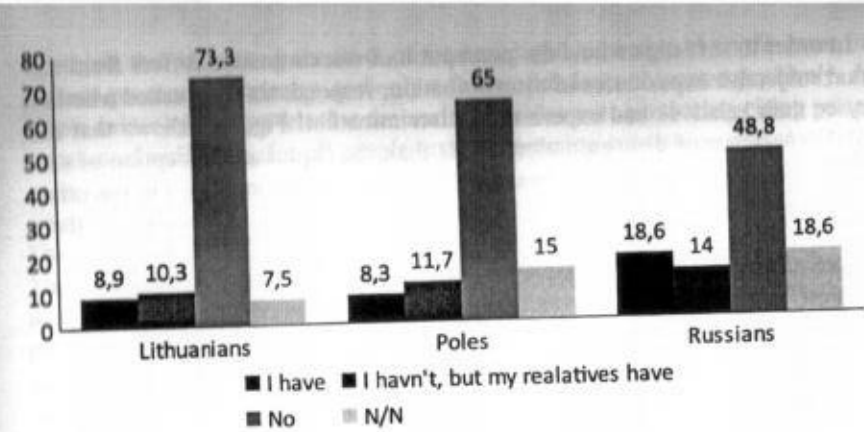Figure 6. Perception of discrimination based on social status (per cent)

Figure 7. Experience of discrimination (per cent)

Perception of discrimination of ethnic minorities

The study also gives insights into the perception of discrimination against different ethnic groups in the following sections: language, citizenship, nationality and social status. The results of the question "In your opinion, are people in Lithuania discriminated against because of language?" are shown in Figure 3.

As predicted, Russian and Polish minorities feel greater discrimination based on the language: Poles (41.7 %) and Russians (39.5 %) state that people in Lithuania are most frequently discriminated against on the basis of language. The survey results did not reflect the increased tension in the media at that particular time connected with the use of the Polish language in public space. This can, however, be seen in the perception of discrimination based on citizenship (Figure 4) and nationality (Figure 5).

The analysis of perceptions of discrimination based on nationality (Figure 5) reveals that the Polish minority more often declares that people in Lithuania are discriminated against on grounds of nationality (45 %) than does the Russian ethnic minority (25.6 %). It can be assumed that this perception is strongly influenced by the discussions in Lithuania and Poland on the recent tense situation regarding the status of the Polish language.

Another aspect of the issue is related to the perception of different ethnic groups regarding discrimination based on social status. As shown in Figure 6, Lithuanians more than Poles and Russians claim that in Lithuania people are more often discriminated against on the grounds of social status.

It can be assumed that, compared to the ethnic majority (Lithuanians), ethnic minorities feel less discrimination based on social status because they associate discrimination more with language and nationality, but not with their social situation. This shows the sensitivity of ethnic minorities to their ethnic identity and their relationship with the ethnic majority.

In order to investigate how the perception of discrimination differs from the actual subjective experiences of discrimination, respondents were asked whether they or their relatives had experienced discrimination. Figure 7 shows that the actual experience of discrimination is less than the expressed perception of discrimination, especially the one based on language and nationality. On the other hand, Russians more often than Lithuanians and Poles claim that they or their relatives had already experienced discrimination.

Perception of tolerance/intolerance

The level of tolerance/intolerance among different ethnic groups is the other important aspect of the subjective perceptions of ethnic minority situations. The majority of all the ethnic groups studied (from 80 % of Poles to 91 % of Russians) agrees with the statement that people of all nationalities are be tolerated in Lithuania. Only the Polish ethnic minority expresses greater disagreement with this statement.

The analysis of the answers to the classical question about intolerance "which group of people would you not like to have as your neighbours?" shows that almost all ethnic groups respond similarly regarding drug users, alcoholics, criminals, homosexuals and HIV-infected persons. Large differences can be seen, however, in the answers about people of other nationalities, Muslims and immigrants (Table 1). It can be noted that Russian ethnic minority respondents are more tolerant towards these groups than Lithuanian and Polish ethnic respondents. Possibly such a more tolerant attitude reflects the migration experience of Russian ethnic groups, as 22 % of Russians immigrated to Lithuania during the last decade of Soviet regime (Taljunaite and Sviklas 2013: 101).

Nationality	Muslims	Immigrants	Jews	Roma people	Other nationalities
Lithuanians	19	4	3.3	37.9	4.1
Poles	18.4	6.7	3.4	43.6	1.7
Russians	9.4	2.4	2.3	28.4	0

Table 1. The level of intolerance for different social groups (per cent) (multiple answers)

Other studies have provided similar results. Tadas Leoncikas notes that different ethnic groups in Lithuania have the same hierarchy of undesirable groups (Leoncikas 2007: 105). Most of the ethnic groups – both the so-called majority and minorities – are united by a similar level of intolerance towards Roma, Jews and Chechens (Kasatkina and Leoncikas 2003: 259).

In order to investigate the importance of education for tolerance, the respondents were asked whether increasing the level of tolerance and trust should be the most important government priority. The findings show that, despite the relatively high level of intolerance, most of respondents from different ethnic groups do

not think that increasing the level of tolerance and trust should be the most important government priority. and only a few respondents answered positively. All ethnic minority groups felt that the main priorities are: combating rising prices, creation of well-being for all people and encouraging entrepreneurial skills.

The comparison of the Soviet and the current systems

The comparison of the Soviet and the current systems reveals how different ethnic groups have different approaches to the current social situation. The comparison is presented in three sections: political, economic and social system assessments.

Ethnic group	The evaluation of the Soviet political system				The evaluation of the current political system			
	Bad	Neither good, nor bad	Good	N/N	Bad	Neither good, nor bad	Good	N/N
Lithuanians	24.8	57.2	12.5	5.5	29.2	38	12.9	19.9
Poles	23.4	68.4	0	8.2	15	36.6	30	18.4
Russians	34.9	48.8	4.6	11.7	11.7	51.3	16.3	20.7

Table 2. Evaluation of the Soviet and the current political systems

As shown in Table 2, the evaluations are rather paradoxical, because Lithuanians, more than Russians and Poles, are favourable to the former Soviet political system and dislike the current democratic political system. Furthermore, despite the Polish ethnic group having a more critical approach to discrimination than the other groups, this group favours the current political system: 30 % of Polish respondents said that the current political system is good, and only 16.3 % of Russian and 12.9 % of Lithuanian respondents answered the same. This distribution of opinions may be associated with the fact that the current political situation does not comply with the expectations of some members of these ethnic groups.

Ethnic group	The evaluation of the Soviet economic system				The evaluation of the current economic system			
	Bad	Neither good, nor bad	Good	N/N	Bad	Neither good, nor bad	Good	N/N
Lithuanians	7.6	51.7	22.8	17.9	17.6	70.2	5.2	7
Poles	6.7	36.7	40	16.6	31.6	58.3	6.7	3.4
Russians	7	28	48.9	16.1	28	58.1	11.7	2.2

Table 3. Evaluation of the Soviet and the current economic systems

These results clearly show the differences between the Lithuanian ethnic group and the Russian and Polish ethnic minorities. Russians and Poles evaluate the Soviet economic system much better than the current system. As income level differences are not statistically significant among the ethnic groups, this assessment may not be much related to income, but to other aspects of the economic system – the threat of unemployment, social security etc.

Ethnic group	The evaluation of the Soviet social system				The evaluation of the current social system			
	Bad	Neither good, nor bad	Good	N/N	Bad	Neither good, nor bad	Good	N/N
Lithuanians	32	54.9	9.8	3.3	9.1	44.9	27.5	18.5
Poles	35	53.3	6.7	5	3.3	46.7	38.3	11.7
Russians	48.8	41.8	7.1	2.3	0	48.9	34.9	16.2

Table 4. The evaluation of the Soviet and current social systems as regards social equality

The evaluations of the Soviet and current social systems regarding social equality are even more paradoxical (Table 4). All three major ethnic groups evaluate the Soviet social system equally poorly and have a good opinion of the current social system with regard to social equality. This casts doubts on whether the idea of social equality is considered an asset by all ethnic groups.

General evaluation of the current situation

In order to determine the overall evaluation of the democratisation process, the respondents were asked if they liked to return to live in the Soviet system (Figure 8).

As shown in Figure 8, 45 % of Poles and 55.8 % of Russians would like to return to live in the Soviet system, if it was possible. Only 26.4 % of Lithuanians think the same. This may be due to a better assessment of the Soviet economic system and due to the respondents' age, as both Russian and Polish respondents are older than Lithuanians and were thus more adapted to life in the Soviet system. Still, the strong egalitarian attitudes of ethnic groups can also be a partial explanation: only about one fifth of the Lithuanians and Russians (only 10 % Poles) believe that the state must ensure that everyone is provided with housing, jobs, pensions etc.

Another explanation may be related to satisfaction or dissatisfaction with life today. As shown in Figure 9, about a quarter of Lithuanians, one-fifth of Russians and only one-tenth of Poles are satisfied with their lives. On the other hand, about one-sixth of Lithuanians and Poles, and one-fourth of Russians are dissatisfied with their lives. It can be assumed that ethnic identity perception has little influence on the evaluation of the quality of life in the current situation.
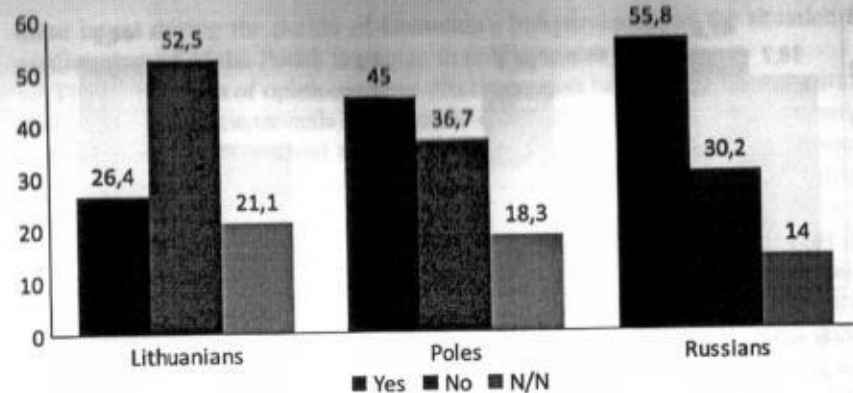

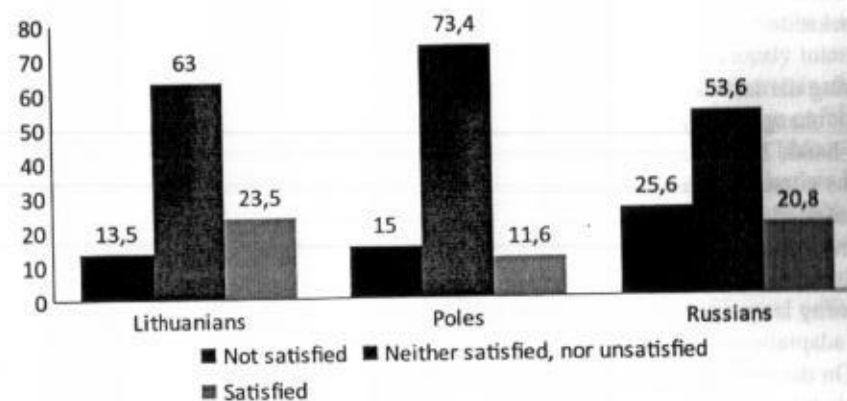Figure 8. The desire to return to live in the Soviet system, if the choice was possible (per cent)

Figure 9. Life satisfaction (per cent)

Finally, the general evaluation of today's situation can be measured by the desire to emigrate from Lithuania. The answers to the question "If the situation deteriorates in Lithuania and you had a choice, what would you choose?" provided us with interesting results. 43.6 % of Lithuanians, compared to 23.3 % of Poles and 27.9 % of Russians would choose to live an easier life abroad (Figure 10).

This choice is possibly affected not only by a certain dissatisfaction with one's life, but also by the age of the respondents because in terms of age the Lithuanian ethnic group is significantly younger, and the older Russian and Poles can see fewer possibilities and are less willing to change their situation.
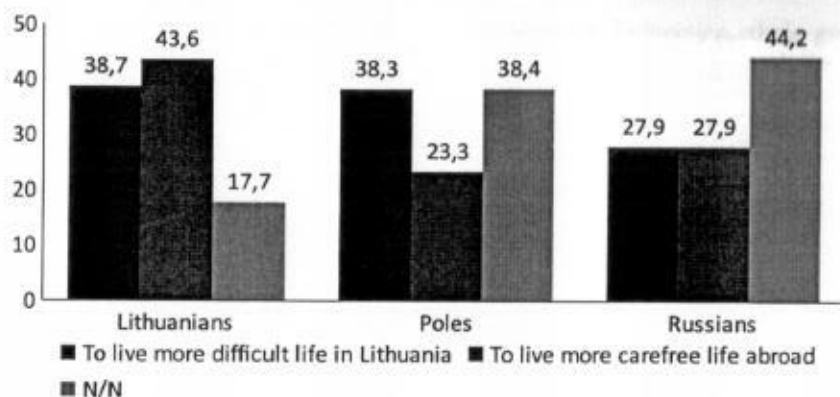
Figure 10. Choice to emigrate (per cent)

Conclusion

During the last two decades, Lithuanian ethnic minorities have experienced difficult changes in the perception of their status in the Lithuanian society. On the one hand, Lithuanian ethnic policy after the restoration of independence was, in the context of the Baltic region, uniquely liberal, inclusive and tolerant as is manifested by the issues of citizenship, culture and minority education supported by the state. However, recent ethnic politics complications with a delay of agreement on the new law on ethnic minorities and unresolved issues on the use of minority languages in public space show slightly worsened conditions for the social adaptation of ethnic minorities.

On the other hand, according to the results of previous research, Lithuanian ethnic minorities during the last two decades have experienced difficult changes in the perception of their status in the Lithuanian society: a deterioration in the assessment of their social status; the decline in political loyalty among some ethnic groups; the growing intolerance for certain ethnic minorities; an increased sense of social inequality; and weaker integration of ethnic minorities into the public sector.

The latest research results show that the self-perception of the ethnic minority social status, the evaluation of material well-being, the current economic situation, and even the wish to return to the Soviet system can be explained not so much by the level of income and the material situation, but by the social or symbolic sensitivity of ethnic minorities to their ethnic identity and their relationship with the ethnic majority.

However, it can also be assumed that the evaluation of the situation of ethnic minorities in their own understanding is affected not only by the change of the ethnic minority status in society, but also by the reflection of the external public discourse on discrimination of some ethnic minority rights and politicisation of

these issues during the period of Lithuania's independence, as the situation regarding the use of the Polish language in public spaces shows.

The comparison of opinions about discrimination based on language, nationality and social status reveals differences: ethnic minorities link discrimination to language, citizenship and nationality, whereas Lithuanians link it to social status. The comparison of opinions about ethnic tolerance reveals an ambiguous picture: on the one hand, ethnic tolerance in Lithuania is important for all nationalities, but on the other hand, a large percentage of all ethnic groups (especially Poles) would not want to live in the same neighbourhood with Roma, Chechens, Muslims and immigrants. However, the reduction of discrimination or increase of tolerance and trust are not considered as one of the most important government priorities, the main priorities being: combating rising prices, the creation of well-being for all people and encouraging entrepreneurial skills.

Therefore, the analysis of ethic policy, problems of social adaptation and the analysis of research data confirm the main hypothesis that different attitudes of ethnic groups towards their social situation in Lithuania are mainly determined by ethnic identity, perceived social status and the coherence of their social adaptation. According to Leoncikas "in order for a society to be consciously tolerant and able to resist a variety of impulses promoting intolerance, discrimination, fear and violence, it has to reinforce knowledge of human rights, law enforcement expertise and social integration mechanisms" (Leoncikas 2007: 106).

Thus the current situation shows that there is still a need for further improvement in the political protection of ethnic minority rights. The main areas for improvement would be: developing effective educational policies for ethnic minorities to ensure equal opportunity for higher education, decreasing discrimination in the employment sphere and empowering their public and political participation.

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Ethnic Minorities in the History of Georgia: the Post-Soviet History Textbooks

Nino Chikovani

Introduction

This article deals with the problem of perception of the role of ethnic minorities in the Georgia's history. The main research questions are: how did the importance of forming the feeling of national belonging regardless of ethnic, cultural or religious identity come to the forefront? How was this complex and contradictory process reflected in the post-Soviet history textbooks? The study is based on the method of content analysis. In particular, the transformation of the Georgian master narrative and school history textbooks is explored. Several projects aiming at overcoming the ethnocentric vision of history are analysed as well. The study demonstrates that the process of overcoming the ethnocentric vision of history started on the level of the secondary educational institutions; positive dynamics could be observed in the representation of ethnic and religious minorities in the history textbooks of the post-Soviet period.

Georgia is a country with a multi-ethnic, multicultural and multi-religious population. According to the census of 2002, non-Georgian ethnic groups form 16 % of the population of the country. The Azerbaijani minority is the largest one – 6,5 %, followed by Armenians – 5,7 %, Russians – 1,5 %, Kurds – 0,5 %, Greeks – 0,3 % and other ethnic groups. As for the religions, Orthodox Christians represent 65 % of the whole population, Muslims – 11 %, Russian Orthodox Christians – 10 %, Monophyzit Armenians – 8 %, others – 6 %.

Why history textbooks?

It is a generally accepted idea that our perception of *self* and of *others* is mainly formed during childhood and is highly determined by the mode and style of how history is taught. Conceptions of history teaching and textbooks created on this basis are one of the most important tools for shaping national identity and collective historical consciousness. As Hanna Schlissler puts it, there is an inevitable political dimension to what knowledge is being imparted in school books. It can be extracted from textbooks what a society believes should be handed on to the young as a part of their historical consciousness (Schlissler 1987: 26). "History textbooks communicate a contemporary past, one which matches the prevailing social and political needs. ... Textbooks manifest the mass historical transmis-