

FACULTY OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY
DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF POPULATION STUDIES
AND HISTORY OF MINORITIES

**ETHNOPOLITICAL CONFLICT IN THE UKRAINE. NATIONAL MINORITIES
PROBLEMS IN THE XX-XXIst CENTURIES. THE UKRAINIAN MINORITY IN
ROMANIA AND THE ROMANIAN MINORITY ON THE UKRAINE**

- PhD Thesis Summary -

PhD Supervisor:

PROF. UNIV. DR. IOAN BOLOVAN

PhD Student:

LAURA MIHAELA BRIE

CLUJ-NAPOCA

2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
I. ELEMENTS OF ETHNOPOLITICS	7
1. Theoretical aspects related to the concepts of ethnopoltics, ethnicity	7
2. Ethnic and cultural diversity	14
3. Democracy in multicultural societies.....	17
4. Ethnopolitical conflicts	20
4.1. Factors triggering conflicts	20
4.2. Preventing and solving ethnopolitical conflicts.....	28
4.3. Ethnopolitical conflicts throughout history	31
5. The conflict in the Ukraine	35
6. Conclusions.....	45
II. INTERNATIONAL LAWS ON THE PROTECTION OF MINORITIES AND THEIR APPLICATION IN THE UKRAINE	47
1. Thoughts around the concept of national minority	47
2. History of national minority rights.....	53
3. International instruments on national minority rights.....	56
3.1. Conference on the human dimension of CSCE (OSCE).....	56
3.2. The Charter of Paris for a New Europe	58
3.3. The Declaration on the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities	59
3.4. The European Charter for regional and minority languages	60
3.5. Recommendation 1201	61
3.6. Vienna declaration.....	62
3.7. The Framework convention for the protection of national minorities	63
3.8. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)	65
4. The Ukrainian law framework regarding national minorities.....	65
4.1. Application and compliance with the international instruments regarding minorities	65
4.2. Ukrainian laws and minority rights	70
4.3. The Romanian minority.....	76
6. Conclusions	102
III. THE UKRAINIAN MINORITY IN ROMANIA.....	106
1. Introduction.....	106
2. Terminology.....	106
3. Historical and statistical references	107
3.1. Ukrainians from Maramureş and Bucovina.....	114
3.2. Ukrainians from Dobrogea	121
3.3. Ukrainians from Banat.....	125

4.	Aspects related to the current condition of the Ukrainian minority.....	126
4.1.	Religion	126
4.2.	Education	127
4.3.	Identity and culture	129
4.4.	Political representation and access to information	131
4.5.	Legislative aspects	134
4.6.	Current issues	137
5.	Conclusions.....	138
IV.	RUTHENIANS AND HUTSULS	140
1.	Terminology.....	141
2.	Territory	145
3.	Language, physical appearance and culture.....	145
4.	Statistical data	147
5.	Identity and self-affirmation	149
6.	Case study: ethnic identification within the Ukrainian community.....	157
7.	Conclusions.....	162
V.	ROMANIAN-UKRAINIAN RELATIONS	163
1.	General presentation of the bilateral relations in the interwar and postwar periods.....	164
2.	Relations between post-communist Romania and independent Ukraine.....	165
3.	The Ukrainian crisis and new challenges.....	168
4.	Problems of minorities	169
5.	Conclusions.....	175
	GENERAL CONCLUSIONS	178
	APPENDIX.....	183
	List of figures.....	187
	List of tables	188
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	189

Key words: conflict, ethnopolitical conflict, ethnicity, minority, ethnic identity, Ruthenian, Rusyn, Hutsul, Ukraine.

The interest towards the study of ethnopolitics appeared in the XXth century, following various crises and tensions that occurred in various areas of the world, involving minority groups, and continues to grow due to the special attention given in the last few decades to diversity, as the globalization phenomenon increased, continuously transforming the world, due to migration and the problems related to the integration of immigrants in European Countries, but also due to the end of the Cold War, the emergence of post-soviet states, their attempts to install democracy and last but not least, due to the conflicts occurred in the Balkans and the Caucasus. These factors turn the global environment into a continuous process of realignment and reconfiguration. We must also mention the great “migrations” flowing into Europe during the last few years, from Asia and Africa, which restore the ethnical issue at the center of historical and political analyses.

Ethnopolitical analysis covers several fields. In history, it refers to the study of geopolitical, political, cultural, economic and social impacts of the great human migrations, both in their departure areas and their arrival areas. It also covers the study of the respective anthropological and cultural ethnicities. In sociology, it aims at reinserting the ethnical factor in the general study of social relations, for a better understanding of the basis of certain religious or cultural conflicts, especially within contemporary multiethnic societies. In political sciences, the ethnopolitical analysis aims at providing a better understanding of the political crisis in modern societies that have become multiethnic, showing the impact of the ethnic factor on the feelings of political solidarity and belonging, and thus on the states cohesion.

The first author who has attempted to elaborate a conceptual framework of ethnopolitics is **Joseph Rothschild**, through his paper “*Ethnopolitics. A Conceptual Framework*”, published in 1981, in which he tried to establish the role of ethnicity in political analysis. Thus, he starts from the idea that ethnicity exists as an uncontested factor of politics, in today’s world. The political aspect of this phenomenon is exactly what interests him, instead of the cultural or psychological dimension. The concept of ethnicity adopted by him is wider, and can be associated with many criteria that determine the “ethnic” identity of a

group, such as race, language, religion or blood connections, and others. In addition, he does not focus on possible explanations for the occurrence of this phenomenon, but rather tries to propose an analytical framework that allows a better understanding of its impact and political consequences. He also presents analyses of ethnicity and state, as well as the international context of ethnopolitical conflict.

For Rothschild, the issue of ethnicity has become an important subject after the Second World War, as it affected more or less all the multiethnic states, regardless of their official ideology. Rothschild suggests that ethnicity has become an important identification factor in a scientific and technological world that often exceeds the individual.

Concepts like nation, nationalism, identity, ethnical group or minority are strongly connected to ethnopolitics. We have analyzed these concepts in *Chapter I* entitled *Elements of ethnopolitics*, in order to present a theoretical framework for our research, which would ensure the basis for two of our objectives, namely to analyze the conflict in the Ukraine from an ethnic and political point of view, to analyze and present the current condition of minorities in the Ukraine, particularly the Romanian one, for the purpose of emphasizing the connection between conflicts and the status of minorities in a state and the importance of solving minority issues to avoid the occurrence or the escalation of both inter- and intra-state conflicts. We have also pointed out the problems that the Ukrainian society is facing in the process of democratization and consolidation of their national identity, as well as the ethnic and cultural diversity of the Ukrainian territory, this representing the setting where the Romanian minority evolves and where the conflict of 2014 took place.

Thus, we started from the existing theories (or conflict models, as they are also called), proposed by specialists in the field of political sciences, among which we must mention Andreas Wimmer, Barbara Harff or Ted Robert Gurr, who present the factors influencing various types of conflicts, and we analyzed them in order to identify those factors that triggered the conflict in Ukraine in 2014. Although each conflict is unique in its own way, and we shall never see two identical conflicts, we believed necessary to make a short presentation of various ethnopolitical conflicts that took place throughout time, in order to have a larger perspective on this phenomenon, and be able to analyze the case of Ukraine from a comparative point of view.

Based on the analyzed examples, the presented models and using the Ishikawa diagram (Fishbone) we were able to establish the main causes that led to the outbreak of the

conflict and its escalation, concluding at the same time that it can be enclosed in the category of ethno-political conflicts. Based on the diagram, we were able to group the causes in four, more general, categories: those related to the history and status of that minority, economic factors that trigger political action, international factors and other internal factors that cannot be enclosed in the other categories.

In the first category we can include several problems, such as the danger of losing the group's ethnical identity, the degree of the group cohesion, the collective disadvantage and discrimination, repressive control over the group in question. The second category involves, first of all, the state expansion – namely the processes of state and national construction, through which, according to Gurr, states subordinate the interests and the relative autonomy of ethnic groups to their own conception of identity and national interest. Other causes include economic development, state power, the democratization process, but also the level of corruption locally or nationally. The third category includes the international factors that might encourage the occurrence of conflicts, among which a special role is given to the diffusion of conflicts from other states, especially where there can be similar situations, but also international support of a certain ethnic group, that can facilitate its mobilization. In the last category we have identified two factors that can influence the outbreak of an ethno-political conflict, namely contagion from other conflicts in the neighborhood and the state's large territory. The first one, as Gurr observed, happens when actions of one group inspire and encourage other groups in the area to act the same way.¹ This way, certain conflicts/local protests can expand, degenerating in a violent national conflict, as it happened in the Ukraine, leading to secession (Crimea, Luhansk, Donetsk). The large territory of a state may be another important factor, according to Wimmer, who notes that in such cases, the danger of secession is much higher.²

The advantage of the Fishbone diagram is that it shows, in a more organized manner, what can be or should be changed, emphasizing the areas where additional information is needed and also emphasizing the cause-effect relations. In Ukraine's case, the most important factors that must be addressed, are those in the first two categories, related to how minorities

¹ Susan Stewart, *Explaining the Low Intensity of Ethno-political Conflict in Ukraine*, Ed. LIT Verlag, Münster, 2004, p. 47.

² Wimmer, Andreas; Cederman, Lars-Erik; Min, Brian, "Ethnic Politics and Armed Conflict: A Configurational Analysis of a New Global Data Set", in *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 74, 2009, pp. 316-337.

on its territory are treated, through the point of view of the relations with their states of origin. These relations should be reviewed, so that all minorities would be equally and fairly treated, by complying with their rights and not refusing the development of their culture and preservation of their ethnic identity, but also economic and political processes should be considered, by eliminating corruption, ensuring the access to resources and employment to all citizens, regardless of their ethnicity, as well as adopting European democratic values in a real way. We consider that if these issues are addressed and solved, the danger of a situation escalating or the outbreak of a conflict is considerably reduced.

One of the main problems identified in the case of Ukraine is represented by the discriminatory actions against certain ethnic groups, the violation of their rights, their persecution, as well as their desire to gain autonomy. In order to avoid future conflicts and to resolve the current conflict, the solution is therefore to create and implement a legal framework that ensures equality between citizens and promotes tolerance, which also allows them to participate in the governance, or to be politically represented.

From this point of view, Ukraine is of particular interest with regard to the issue of national minorities, considering the lack of sufficiently extensive studies or the relatively low concern for regulating the condition of minorities. Although some sociological or historical and political studies have been carried out, they do not cover the extremely controversial minority issue enough. This is one of the reasons behind the decision to undertake research in this respect and to carry out this doctoral thesis. Particularly in the context of the events taking place in the Ukraine in the last 10 years, where instability and disorder prevail, it has become obviously necessary to know the situation of national minorities on its territory as well as possible, in order to improve relations between the majority and minority, and implicitly to prevent and resolve conflicts between them. In addition, the diversity of situations, in the case of ethno-political conflicts, requires a different approach, since the same method of resolution cannot always and entirely be applied.

Although there are international instruments elaborated with regard to rights of minorities and their protection, each state develops its own laws on minorities, taking into account the provisions of international law and the content of documents prepared by international organizations on this subject, which is why in many cases there are discrepancies between the proclamation of the rights of national minorities and how they are actually implemented. In Ukraine, after 1992, the issue of minorities and the legal framework

have often proved contradictory, in particular due to the Ukrainian authorities' persistent attempts to forcibly assimilate minority ethnic groups in order to build a mono-ethnic state.

One solution identified in the case of Ukraine is to improve relations with neighboring states, whose minorities live on its territory, and this can only be achieved by finding compromises in connection with certain strategic or political interests, the main purpose being to preserve the current territorial integrity, to ensure regional security and the protection of human and minority rights.

Regarding the Romanian minority, especially if the current legislation remains unchanged, a solution would be their recognition as a local (indigenous) people and of the Romanian language as a regional language, thus ensuring the ethno-cultural and linguistic rights of the community. At the same time, the application of the principle of reciprocity would allow the members of the Romanian community to enjoy the same rights and conditions as the Ukrainian community in Romania. Another measure would be the expansion, or at least the preservation of the current network of educational institutions with teaching in Romanian, especially in areas where there are compact communities of Romanians, obviously without neglecting the study of the state language. It is also essential to improve cross-border cooperation, as well as to open new border crossing points, in areas where there are compact Romanian communities.

All these aspects were discussed in *Chapter II* entitled *International laws on the protection of minorities and their application in the Ukraine*, by analyzing the Ukrainian legal and institutional framework, from the beginning of its existence as an independent state, in terms of minority status.

Another objective was to present the situation of the Ukrainian minority in Romania, comparing its status with that of the Romanian minority in the neighboring state, in the light of the relations between the two states.

Thus, in *Chapter III – The Ukrainian minority in Romania*, we presented a few historical and statistical aspects, and the main areas where Ukrainians live in large numbers: Maramureș, Bucovina, Banat and Dobrogea. In addition, we emphasized their current situation and the rights they enjoy, locally and nationally, due to the laws in force on minorities, which provide a favorable environment for the development and promotion of their culture, in order to maintain their ethnic identity, something which cannot be seen in the

case of Romanians living in the Ukraine. Indeed, the Ukrainian minority living on the Romanian territory faces certain problems itself, among which we mention assimilation and division. However, this assimilation is not enforced by the Romanian authorities, it is one voluntarily accepted, or encouraged by themselves, by the fact that they show a decreasing interest in learning their mother tongue, and a growing desire for their own children to learn Romanian. Nevertheless, the origins of this assimilation still come from the repressive policy of the Romanian communist regime at the end of the '80s. Therefore, it is primarily the responsibility of the Romanian authorities to support the Ukrainian community, in order to preserve, develop and strengthen its ethnic and cultural identity, just as it is desired to preserve and consolidate the Romanian identity for the Romanian community in Ukraine.

While trying to better understand the situation of this community - the third largest nationally - we were introduced to a relatively recent problem they have been facing, namely the *artificial* division, into several distinct ethnic groups - Ukrainians, Ruthenians, Hutsuls - most likely for political and / or financial interests. Ruthenians and Hutsuls have set up their own organizations, through which they campaign for recognition and promote their culture, traditions and values, which, they say, are different from those of Ukrainians and should not be confused. Thus, during the research, a secondary objective was outlined, which is an element of novelty, namely addressing the issue of ethnic identity in the Ukrainian community in Romania, and how to identify their ethnicity, presented in Chapter IV entitled Ruthenians and Hutsuls. Ruthenians and Hutsuls established their own organizations, through which they promote recognition and their culture, traditions and values that – according to them – are different from those of Ukrainians and must be distinguished. Thus, during our research, a secondary objective took shape, which also represents a novelty element, namely to approach the ethnic identity issue in the Ukrainian community in Romania, respectively how their ethnicity is identified, all presented in *Chapter IV* entitled *Ruthenians and Hutsuls*.

Although ethnic identity is generally taken from the group in which we are born and is defined by interaction with other ethnic entities, depending on the meaning they perceive towards certain objects, actions, attitudes, being also correlated with a certain territory, any person can change his/her ethnic identity over time, by exposure to other cultures, by interactions and relationships with other entities and depending on the degree of availability of the person to adapt to external conditions, including changing the borders of that territory. A somewhat similar phenomenon seems to have produced in the case of Ukrainians, from

which Ruthenians and Hutsuls separated. The issue of Ruthenian identity returned to the attention of researchers, especially after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, when a rebirth of this community's national consciousness was observed. In the very few recent and larger studies addressing this issue, it appears that researchers are divided into two categories: those who consider Ruthenians to be Ukrainian, or at most a branch or ethnic subgroup of the Ukrainian nation, and those who promote the idea of a distinct nation that the Ukrainians tried to assimilate, in the process of building their own national identity.

In countries such as Slovakia, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, the United States, Ruthenians are recognized as a national minority distinct from Ukrainians, but in Ukraine, where they are most numerous, they are not included in the list of the 130 recognized minorities, being considered a "pseudominority". In Romania, Ruthenians are mentioned on the list of national minorities, but in censuses they have been included over time either in the category of Ukrainians or, in recent years, in the category of "other ethnicities".

At first sight, it seems difficult to define the identity of the Ruthenians, but historiography shows that in reality it is only a matter of terminology and how nations have formed and evolved over time. Thus, we cannot talk about Ukrainians and Ukraine earlier than the XIXth century, but we can talk about Ruthenians at that time. Their territory, according to historiographical testimonies, corresponds to the old Ukrainian territory, which after multiple border changes has now been divided into several states: Ukraine, Romania, Poland and Slovakia. The relatively recent works use these terms *Ruthenian* and *Ukrainian* interchangeably, especially when addressing the history of Ukraine, emphasizing the transformation of the nation over time.

As a complement to the various studies that present this terminological and historical point of view, we wanted to analyze the point of view of community members, by conducting interviews and obtaining testimonies from them, regarding how they assume their identity and the factors they take into account when declaring their belonging to one ethnic group or another.

The sample we used for our interviews included 92 respondents, most of them coming from the rural area (over 90%), in the region of Maramureș (the villages of Crăciunești, Poienile de Sub Munte, Ruscova, Repedea, Rona de Sus, Lunca la Tisa, Remeți, Valea

Vișeuului, Vișeu de Sus, Crasna Vișeuului, or the town of Sighetu Marmăției). Based on the answers we collected, we can see that even “in practice” we can identify the two approaches regarding the identity within the Ukrainian community: “pro-Ruthenian” and pro-Ukrainian, however the latter prevails, since the most wide spread opinion was that one cannot speak of a distinct Ruthenian ethnicity, but perhaps only a common origin, or just a political manipulation in order to disunite them.

The last part, *Chapter V* presents a few aspects related to the *Romanian-Ukrainian relations*, in the light of the bilateral Treaty signed between the two countries and how these relations affect the condition of national minorities, especially the Romanian minority, which is far from having a similar condition and enjoying the same rights as the Ukrainians in Romania.

Relations between Romania and Ukraine are based on a past shaped by military and political confrontations, but also events that took place in the interwar period and after the Second World War, when Romania was the target of several diplomatic aggressions and as a result it lost certain territories in favor of the Soviet Republic. Romania is still suffering from this loss, and this is affecting its foreign policy towards its neighboring country, Ukraine. In general, relations between the two states are based on each other's interests and actions driven by those interests, which may include the need for energy resources, minority rights, or territorial issues and interstate border issues. These interests materialize in problems, for which each state seeks or must seek satisfactory solutions, taking into account existing internal circumstances (political, economic, resources) but also other external constraints, and at the same time trying not to damage relations with the other state. It is a real challenge, because states can identify different solutions according to their interests, which may be contrary to the interests of the other state, and resolving these contradictions can be achieved by two means: either through war or through negotiations and compromises.

Although Romania and Ukraine have some things in common, in terms of national development, cultural values, the level and problems of socio-economic development, it is difficult to establish a close cooperation, as long as relations between them are still overshadowed by mistrust and suspicion generated by unresolved issues. Some of these problems come from the historical past, and others are the result of the transition period, from the USSR - relatively stable in terms of peace and security, characterized by a centralized economy, to new independent states - with democratic reforms, instability, insecurity, rise

nationalism, separatism and nationally built aspirations. However, fruitful dialogue and cooperation between Romania and Ukraine remain extremely important in ensuring regional stability and overcoming existing threats.

Among the current problems, the most important, which requires urgent resolution, is the protection of the national minorities rights, today included on the list of security threats and as a possible source of instability and conflict. Obviously, these problems cannot be solved easily and quickly, especially if the two countries must first accept their past and historical heritage. Among the appropriate ways to ensure the development of bilateral relations would be mainly compromising, but also the pursuit of common interests, such as the coalition against Russian aggression, security cooperation (including cybersecurity), economic cooperation (especially in energy), cultural exchanges, cooperation in the field of education and research, etc. However, as long as high-level contacts remain insufficient (government and inter-parliamentary level), not much can be achieved. Thus, a suitable starting point would be to increase the number of these meetings. If, still, bilateral relations do not seem to improve much, or reach a deadlock, it would probably be appropriate to try to resolve the problems at multilateral level, under the auspices of the EU, in partnership and collaboration with other countries facing similar problems (such as Hungary for example, regarding the issue of minorities).

In our research, in order to achieve the proposed objectives, we used several methods, both qualitative, through text analysis and interpretation of primary and secondary sources (legislation, print media and TV shows, interviews and testimonies), and quantitative, especially for the study carried out by conducting interviews in the communities of Ukrainians in the Maramureş area, and last but not least the brainstorming method in order to identify the main problems they are facing.

A very important paper for this study is that of Eugen Patraş, “*Minoritățile naționale în Ucraina și Republica Moldova. Statutul juridic*” (*National Minorities in Ukraine and Republic of Moldova. Legal status*), discussing the problem of compliance with human rights, both individual, and collective rights, and the importance of ensuring chances equality, which must not depend on belonging to one ethnicity or another. The problems of the Romanian minority in the Ukraine, and particularly in the Region of Cernăuți, were also discussed by Natalia Talmacec – *Românii din Ucraina. Asimilați sau protejați ca minoritate și Condiția minorității românești – reversul democrației în Ucraina – rolul mass-media în agregarea*

opinieii minorității (Romanians in the Ukraine. Assimilated or protected as), Vlad Bejan - *Români din Ucraina (Romanians in the Ukraine)*. Special attention must be given to the contributions of Ion Popescu, the president of the Romanian community in Ukraine, in collaboration with Aurica Bojescu, president of the Bukovina independent center for current researches, Constantin Ungureanu, scientific researcher and coordinator of the History institute of the Academy of Science of Moldova, Alexandrina Cernov, literary and history critic, and professor at the University of Cernăuți, some of them being actively involved in the promotion of the Romanian culture and language in Ukraine, including by preparing and sending reports to the authorities in Romania and Ukraine, but also to international organizations involved in the field of national minorities.

In addition, the work of Susan Stewart, “*Explaining the Low Intensity of Ethnopolitical Conflict in Ukraine*”, discussing the main minorities in Ukraine, during a period of 10 years (1989-1999), finalized with a PhD thesis, was very helpful, as it represented a starting point for our analysis, being also the only undertaking in this direction so far, which encloses the analysis of the status of national minorities in Ukraine correlated with the possibility of an outbreak of ethnopolitical conflict in the area. Although our work is far from the quality and value of Stewart’s analysis, we could consider that we bring a (small) addition, considering that our analysis is based on the events of 2014, a few years after the finalization of Stewart’s study.

Other important works for our study are those of researcher Taras Kuzio, who discusses a variety of topics, such as Ukrainian nationalism, history of the Ukraine,, ethnic problems, political reforms or democracy in the Ukraine.

Equally important is the study of Oleh Protsyk, “*Majority-Minority Relations in the Ukraine*”, dealing with the relations between the majority population and the minorities, beginning from a definition of the terms “majority” and “minority”, followed by a discussion of the main issues occurred among the communities and how they are approached, in the view of finding solutions to these problems.

Last but not least, as primary sources that we analyzed, we can mention *Curierul ucrainean*, the paper of the Union of Ukrainians in Romania, where we discovered a wide range of subjects, from cultural topics (including Ukrainian poems) to political, scientific issues and also articles related to their daily problems, *Jurnalul rutenian* – publication of the Cultural Union of Ruthenians in Romania and various publications of the Romanians living

in the Region of Cernăuți that provided us with valuable information about the life of the community in Ukraine – as minority ethnicity – and the challenges they are facing while trying to maintain their identity and avoid assimilation.

The purpose of this work was to complement existing research, analyzing - in the light of events in Ukraine - the relationship between the condition of national minorities and the emergence of ethno-political conflicts, trying to highlight the importance of creating an open and tolerant environment for minorities. ensure peaceful coexistence between them and the majority population and thus the security and territorial integrity of the state.

Although initially we had in mind the analysis of the Russian minority, the second largest in Ukraine, and the Romanian one, during the research we considered that it would be more useful to approach the problems of the Ukrainian minority in Romania, in a comparative perspective, considering that this ethnic group has not received much attention in recent years.

The main objectives we had in mind were to show that the nature of the conflicting situation in Ukraine was actually an ethno-political conflict, and to highlight the fact that currently the Ukrainian legislative framework does not guarantee to minorities the fundamental rights they should have in any democratic society, according to international law. Also, bilateral relations with its neighbors are not satisfactory either, although some efforts are being made in this regard, and this affects the way that minorities in neighboring states are treated. Therefore, we wanted to highlight this aspect, hoping that the interest of the authorities for the well-being of our compatriots across the border will increase.