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REGION
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THE CONTEMPORARY POLISH-UKRAINIAN BORDERLAND – ITS POLITICAL AND NATIONAL ASPECT

1. INTRODUCTION

Borderland is the transitory area between two or several nations. Usually it is a zone, socially and culturally diversified, formed as a consequence of multiple historical changes in political affiliation of the given territory, population mixing, intersecting of political and social influences as well as penetration of different cultural elements of the of neighbouring nations. The essential aspect of borderland is its political dimension, because very often creation or transformation of borderland areas was an immediate result of border shifts. However, there are also borderlands, on areas where political borders never existed or appeared very late (Koter, 1995; Sadowski, 1995; Babiński, 1997; Barwiński, 2002, 2004).

Sometimes the extent of a borderland is clearly defined (e.g. between rivers, mountain ranges), however most often it can be delimited only on the basis of the settlement geography. Its actual area and range is marked by migrations, colonization and cultural differentiation of its occupants (Babiński, 1997).

As early as in the Middle Ages the present Polish-Ukrainian borderland had the character of political and national-religious borderland, as it was the

peripheral area, both for Poland and Ruthenia. After the period of fierce rivalry over this region (11th–14th century), which engaged particularly Poland and Ruthenia, but also Lithuania and Hungary, for several years it was annexed to Poland. Only at the turn of the 18th century, as the result of Poland's partitions, the whole Galicia for over 100 years got under Austrian rule. The most turbulent period marked with political transformation of the Polish-Ukrainian borderland was the 20th century, when this area has repeatedly changed hands (Austria, Russia, Poland, Germany, USSR, Poland, Ukraine). Despite of the very turbulent history, this region for centuries has not been divided by state borders. Only in 1939, and then again in 1945, the national Polish-Ukrainian borderland was divided by the political border and annexed to different states.

The Polish-Ukrainian borderland was formed as a result of long-lasting historical processes, which shaped political, territorial, as well as national, religious, cultural, social and economic transformations. Already in the Middle Ages the ethno-religious mosaic was shaped on this area. Apart from the predominant Ruthenian (Ukrainian) and Polish population, also Armenians, Jews, and Germans lived here for centuries. The national diversity was overlapped by religious divisions, mostly between eastern and western Christianity. Moreover, the ethno-religious divisions were overlapped by social and economic ones. On territories east from the San River, Poles were pre-dominantly Catholic, mainly townsmen or nobility, whereas an overwhelming majority of Ruthenians (Ukrainians) were Orthodox (later Greek Catholics) peasants living in the countryside.

In the 19th century national aspirations and ideas of independence increased among Poles and Ukrainians alike, which on the ethnic borderland inevitably led to a conflict. In 1918 the Polish-Ukrainian war started, which ended with the Ukrainian defeat and the annexation of the whole Galicia to Poland. The interwar period saw further growth of the conflict between five-million Ukrainian minority and Polish state. However, the most tragic events in the history of Polish-Ukrainian relations took place during and after the Second World War. In this time the conflict affected the whole borderland, and the bloody Polish-Ukrainian fights in 1943–1947 connected with the activity of Ukrainian Insurgent's Army (UPA), especially in Volhynia, can be considered as a genocide of Polish population. After the war Polish authorities have responded with repressions and mass resettlement of the Ukrainian population. These events seriously affected Polish-Ukrainian relations in the following decades (Torzecki, 1993; Wojakowski, 1999; Chalupczak and Browarek, 2000; Goluba, 2004; Grübner and Spregnel, 2005).

2. THE POLISH-SOVIET BORDER

As a consequence of the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact and the division of the territory of Poland between Nazi Germany and the USSR in September 1939, the area of the Polish-Ukrainian borderland became artificially divided by a state border between these two countries (Fig. 1). At the end of the war the Soviet authorities spared no efforts to make sure the western border of the USSR would be in line with the 1939–1941 Soviet-German border. Finally, it has been decided apply Curzon's proposition submitted at the Versailles conference in 1919. In July 1944, as the result of an agreement between PKWN¹ and the Soviet government, that is de facto under Stalin's dictate, the eastern border of Poland was marked, based on the "Curzon Line"² – according to the so-called "A variant", which was an option most unfavorable for Poland, leaving Lvov (Lwów) on the Soviet side (Fig. 1). This border course was subsequently confirmed by the international conferences (Yalta and Potsdam) and by agreement between Polish and Soviet governments signed in August 1945. As a consequence of these decisions Poland lost the territories which for over 600 years were under Polish rule, and the Polish-Ukrainian borderland was cut by political border, which never ran here before. This entirely artificial border, marked out according to exclusively political criteria, is deprived of any historical and ethnic justification (Eberhardt, 1993). Its artificial character is clearly visible by the lineal course of the border section between the Bug River and the Carpathians (Fig. 1). It is an example of so-called "geometrical borders", that run irrespective of natural, ethnic, cultural and economic features of divided territory. It is a border imposed as a result of treaty arrangements. Borders of this type are also called – quite pertinently the "scars of history" (Barbag, 1987).

¹ Polish Committee of National Liberation – established in 1944 in Moscow Polish Communist Government, entirely subordinated to Stalin.

² Conventional name of the line recommended by Ambassador Committee as a temporary eastern border of Poland (08.12.1919). The name comes from the surname of Great Britain Foreign Minister – Lord Curzon of Kadleston. This line ran from Grodno district in the north, to Niemirów, then along the Bug River up to the Sokal district. Between the Bug River and the Carpathian Mountains its route was not marked out interchangeably. There were two options of its route: "A" and "B" (Fig. 1). This project practically did not played any role in demarcation of the Polish borders after the First World War, however it had important consequences for the route of the eastern border of Poland after the Second World War (Eberhardt, 1993).

The most tragic and harmful consequences of marking out these borders (German-Soviet in 1939 and Polish-Soviet in 1944), both for Poles and Ukrainians living on the borderland, were the population displacements. First deportations in 1939–1941 involved mainly Poles displaced to the USSR.



Fig. 1. State borders and border projects on the Polish-Ukrainian borderland in the 20th century
 Source: Author based on Eberhardt (1993) and Goluba (2004)

They were followed by mass displacement of Poles and Ukrainians in 1944–1946 and Ukrainians displacement within the “Vistula” action in 1947³. These activities have entirely destroyed multiethnic and the multi-cultural character of the Polish-Ukrainian borderland, and the newly established border very quickly became not only political border, but also the national border.

The course of the Polish-Soviet border underwent changes in 1951, when Poland was forced to sign the agreement on mutual exchange of territories covering 480 km². As a consequence of this agreement Poland lost the area west from Sokal situated between the Bug and Sołokija Rivers. In exchange Poland received a territory of the same area in Ustrzyki Dolne region (Fig. 1). After this modification the Polish-Soviet border has never undergone any changes again (Eberhardt, 1993; Grübner and Spregnel, 2005).

Through the whole period of the Polish People’s Republic (PRL) and USSR existence this border was first of all a barrier tightly separating Polish and Ukrainian population with similar culture, language and morals. The Polish-Soviet border during a long time hampered effectively the contacts between Polish and Ukrainian nations and also destroyed the original character of the Polish-Ukrainian borderland. As Eberhardt (1993) wrote:

Polish-Soviet border marked out after the Second World War was during next several decades one of cordons dividing districts in the great totalitarian camp which was stretching from Elbe to Kamchatka.

On both sides of the border communist authorities introduced the policy of national minorities’ assimilation. As a consequence of it during 30 years (1959–1989) the number of Polish population in Ukraine decreased, according to official statistics from 363.3 thousand to 219.2 thousand. In the frontier district of Lvov, Polish population decreased more than a half, from 59.1 thousand to 26.9 thousand⁴. In Poland, as a result of the displacement and dispersion of the Ukrainian population in the northern and western territories, the assimilation process proceeded even faster, however the official statistics for this period does not exist. Also the traces of culture and religion of minorities were destroyed, e.g. Greek-Catholic Orthodox churches in Poland and Catholic churches in Ukraine, the Greek-Catholic church was declared illegal, in the USSR and Poland alike (Wojewoda, 1994).

³ This issue is analyzed wider in: Barwiński (2008).

⁴ Based on www.wspolnota-polska.org.pl.

In spite of the fact that the border between Poland and USSR existed only 47 years (1944–1991), its influence on the Polish-Ukrainian borderland was very strong. Its marking out had a direct influence on displacement of hundreds of thousands people, it brought to almost entire isolation of both parts of the divided territory, it caused their differentiation both in national-cultural and political-economic respect. The multicultural and multiethnic character of the borderland shaped through centuries was destroyed.

3. THE POLISH-UKRAINIAN BORDER

The situation changed essentially after the fall of the communism in Poland, the break-up of the USSR and the rise of independent Ukraine. The former border with the totalitarian USSR, became the border between two fully independent, democratic states Republic of Poland and Ukraine. The border crossing became very easy. Next to the already existing border crossing in Medyka, which for several years was the only one, new border posts were opened in Krościenko, Korczowa, Werchrata, Hrebenne, Hrubieszów, Zosin, Dorohusk. Facilitation in Polish-Ukrainian border crossing have enlivened mutual relation and made possible more frequent contacts of the representatives of the Polish and Ukrainian minorities with their native country and families. The new political situation offers favourable conditions for economic, social and cultural development of the Polish-Ukrainian borderland, which in the communist times was stagnant. Eberhardt (1993) affirms, that the Poles' and Ukrainians' duty is to

overcome this border through cultivating all traditions which testify to the cultural and historical community.

This aim is contemporarily realized both on the level of the international Polish-Ukrainian relations which in last years are very good particularly in political, economic, social and cultural respect, as well as on the level of private contacts, e.g. tourism and trade.

From the early 1990s Polish border regions, following the example of existing European patterns, have started the transborder co-operation within the Euroregions. On the Polish-Ukrainian borderland two large Euroregions exist: "Carpathian" (from 1993, as the second in Poland), and "Bug" (from 1995). The range of both Euroregions encompasses the whole zone of the Polish-Ukrainian borderland. The main aims of their functioning is to initiate and co-ordinate the activities relating with the transborder co-operation on

economic, scientific, cultural, educational, tourist and ecological level but also to promote the region. Unlike the Euroregions on the western and southern border, these two Euroregions have been created owing to efforts of central and province authorities with only marginal participation of local authorities (Sobczyński, 2001, 2005).

Questionnaire surveys conducted between 1998–1999 in Polish part of Euro-region “Bug”, revealed that the respondents had very little knowledge on the transborder co-operation and hardly perceived any advantages. On the one hand respondents indicated strictly economic advantages, e.g. “economic development of border territories”, “increase in trade exchange”, “leveling developmental differences”. On the other hand they paid attention to very important social matters, like “bring closer together people from both sides of the border”, “effacing the sorrowful past” and “favourable conditions for neighbourly relations”. Among negative elements majority of respondents indicated “increase in crime” (Sobczyński, 2001, 2005).

The activation of the Polish-Ukrainian borderland is clearly visible in the increase in border traffic. From the mid-1990s one could notice its slow growth, with a little breakdown in 1998. However, a rapid increase in border traffic by 46.5%, took place in 2005⁵ (Fig. 2).

Accession of Poland to the EU in May 2004, meant the “transformation” of the Polish-Ukrainian border into external EU border, together with all its consequences, e.g. intensified control, “tightening”, visa obligation. So rapid increase in border traffic in this period is surprising keeping in mind new formal requirements concerning border crossing, mainly so-called “EU visas”⁶. It can be stated that the Polish accession to EU itself had influenced the rapid growth of the border traffic. Poland as a EU member state became an attractive country for many foreigners from the East. It led to growing interest in economy, trade and tourism, both in Poland and in Ukraine. It is interesting to note that such dynamic increase in border traffic after 2004 did

⁵ In 2004 the Polish-Ukrainian border was crossed by 12,163,967 people, whereas in 2005 already 17,824,836 people, in 2006 – 19,497,223 people, and in 2007 – 19,201,528 people (based on www.strazgraniczna.pl).

⁶ Before Polish accession to EU, the citizens of Ukraine also had to possess visas to Poland, however they were free of charge, multiple and easy to get. After Polish accession to EU the “union visas” were introduced which were more difficult to get, however still free of charge. Only together with the accession of Poland to Schengen Agreement visas became chargeable (35 EUR) and applying procedure became more bureaucratized and difficult. Whereas Poles still do not have to possess visas while entering Ukraine.

not occurred on other sections of Polish part of the EU external border (borders with Russia and Belarus) (Fig. 2). This probably results from international Polish-Ukrainian relations, which presently are much better than those with Russia and Belarus on the political, economic and social level. Moreover Ukrainian citizens – unlike Russians and Belarusians – did not have to pay for visas to Poland for over three years after accession of Poland to the EU.

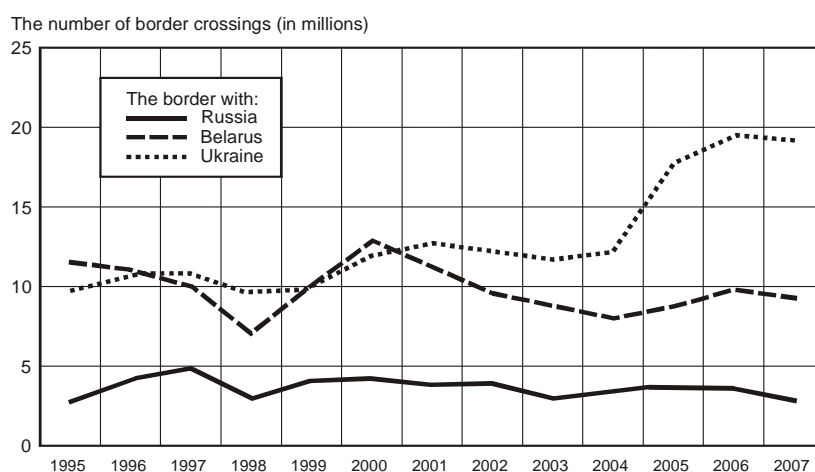


Fig. 2. Border traffic on the Polish section of external EU border (border with Russia, Belarus, Ukraine) between 1995–2007
Source: Author based on www.strazgraniczna.pl

The situation changed in December 2007 when Poland implemented provisions of the Schengen Agreement. Introduction of charges for visas (35 EUR) to all states of Schengen area (including Poland) for citizens of Ukraine and large bureaucratization of the visa application procedures, caused a break down of the border traffic. In the first half of the year 2008 the traffic on Polish-Ukrainian border dropped only by 19% in comparison with the same period of 2007, however the number of foreigners crossing the border (mainly Ukrainian citizens) dropped by almost 60%, that is approx. 3 million people. Polish citizens cross the Polish-Ukrainian border more often than before the Polish accession to the Schengen Agreement (24% increase), which proves that visas requirements played a very important role in the total breakdown of border traffic from Ukraine to Poland (Tab. 1, Fig. 3).

Table 1. The changes in border traffic on the Polish-Ukrainian border
after Poland accession to the Schengen Agreement

	Total			From Poland			To Poland		
	Jan – Jun 2007	Jan – Jun 2008	change in %	Jan – Jun 2007	Jan – Jun 2008	change in %	Jan – Jun 2007	Jan – Jun 2008	change in %
All together	9,789,426	7,939,715	-18,9	4,844,136	3,914,043	-19,2	4,945,290	4,025,672	-18,6
Polish citizens	4,741,662	5,877,205	+23,9	2,365,362	2,909,433	+23,0	2,376,300	2,967,772	+24,9
Foreigners	5,047,764	2,062,510	-59,1	2,478,774	1,004,610	-59,5	2,568,990	1,057,900	-58,8

Source: Author based on [www. strazgraniczna.pl](http://www.strazgraniczna.pl).

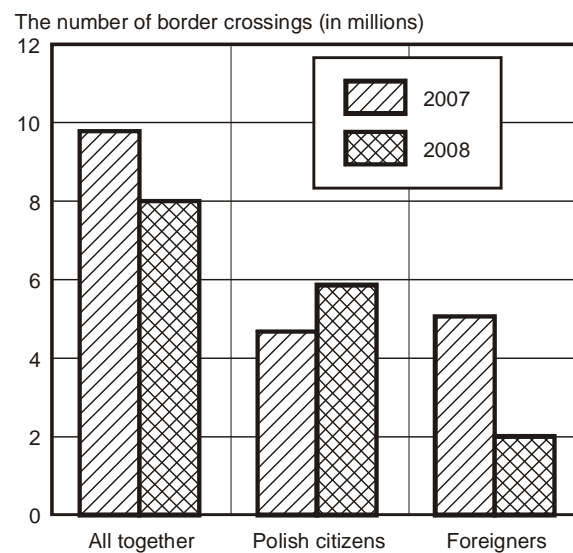


Fig. 3. Changes in border traffic on the Polish-Ukrainian border after Poland accession to the Schengen Agreement
Source: Author based on [www. strazgraniczna.pl](http://www.strazgraniczna.pl)

The radical reduction of the number of arrivals of Ukrainian citizens to Poland in 2008 has essentially influenced the breakdown of the crossborder trade. It has very negative consequences for a large part of the borderland citizens. From the early 1990s the neighbourly relations between Poland and Ukraine have influenced the situation of the borderland, resulting in special economic advantages, so important for this poor region. The heavy border traffic resulted in frequent Polish-Ukrainian social contacts, including cultural exchange (although most contacts were of purely economic nature).

It is difficult to estimate the cultural and social signification of these mutual relations for Polish-Ukrainian borderland. It certainly changed the perception of national minorities living in the borderland, both Polish and Ukrainian (Wojakowski, 1999, 2002). Tightening of the border during the preparation period before Poland's accession to the EU and visa requirements introduced in December 2007, were important obstacles for mutual contacts of the borderland inhabitants.

Hopefully the Polish-Ukrainian agreement on the „local border traffic” signed in March 2008 will improve this situation with time. This agreement is especially important for Ukrainian residents of the border area. However the agreement on the „local border traffic” is not in operation yet, as it was questioned by the European Commission. According to the EU guidelines the border area should be 30 km wide, whereas according to Polish-Ukrainian agreement the border zone would reach up to 50 km. The EU considers extension of the border zone, however, it can be done only in an exceptional situations. The European Commission demanded appropriate corrections to the agreement which would adapt it to regulations of the EU⁷.

Analyzing Polish-Ukrainian border traffic, it should be kept in mind that a bulk of Polish tourist excursions to Ukraine, especially to Western Ukraine, include the borderland area. The popularity of such trips in last years has essentially increased. They have usually sentimental and historical character. The tours to Ukraine are economically important for Ukrainians but also for Poles living in Ukraine. Moreover, they contribute to improvement of Polish-Ukrainian relations. According to the questionnaire survey⁸ conducted in Autumn 2007 Polish minority in Ukraine and Ukrainian minority in Poland hardly perceive any important positive changes in Polish-Ukrainian relations after Poland's accession to the EU. Moreover, the respondents indicated negative changes more often than positive ones (Tab. 2).

The answer “no changes” was particularly common among Ukrainian residents of the Polish side of borderland (almost half of respondents). Comparing to Poles living in Ukraine they more rarely indicated negative changes and refused giving answers (Tab. 2).

⁷ Based on www.euractiv.pl/polityka-zagraniczna.

⁸ Based on Lis (2008). Questionnaire investigations took place in September 2007, in the territory of Poland and Ukraine, among 265 citizens of Polish-Ukrainian borderland (including 126 respondents from Poland and 139 from Ukraine). Respondents from Poland are the representatives of Ukrainian minority, whereas from Ukraine – of Polish minority.

Results of investigations clearly show that new visa's requirements introduced in 2004 made life for borderland residents very difficult, both on Ukrainian and Polish side (Tab. 2). Respondents consider them as the main negative change in Polish-Ukrainian relations after the accession of Poland to the EU. It is more noticeable in Ukraine, where for over 35% of respondents it entailed negative changes. Respondents from Ukraine are the representatives of Polish minority. For them Schengen visas mean substantial obstacle in contacts with their native country. In Poland much less people notice the visa problem, what is comprehensible, because Polish citizens (including the representatives of the Ukrainian minority) are not obliged to have visas to enter Ukraine. Nevertheless, for Ukrainians living in Poland, transformation of the Polish-Ukrainian border into external EU border also represents a problem (19.1%). They emphasize that new legislations cause queues at the border and make contacts with family and friends who live in Ukraine difficult as they have to apply for visas to be able to come to Poland⁹.

Table 2. Changes in the Polish-Ukrainian relations after Poland's accession to the EU

Changes		Ukrainian minority in Poland (%)	Polish minority in Ukraine (%)
Negative	No changes	53.2	23.0
	Visas	19.1	35.3
	Other*	10.3	9.4
	Do not know	6.3	11.4
	No answer	11.1	20.9
Positive	No changes	49.2	33.2
	Organization of EURO 2012	7.1	9.4
	Improvement in relation between both countries	3.2	6.5
	Larger interest in Ukraine on the Polish side	4.8	-
	Other*	17.5	16.6

⁹ While analyzing the results one should remember, that questionnaire investigations were held in September 2007, three months before accession of Poland to the Schengen Agreement, which caused even larger difficulties with obtaining visas. Nowadays it is probable that more people would declare problems with visas as a negative change in Polish-Ukrainian relations.

	Do not know	7.1	13.4
	No answer	11.1	20.9

* Very differentiated, single answers, usually not to the point.

Source: Author based on Lis (2008).

Respondents notice also positive changes in Polish-Ukrainian relations after the accession of Poland to the EU. However some of the changes indicated by respondents can be hardly considered as a direct result of Poland's accession to the EU, e.g. granting to Poland and Ukraine the privilege of organizing the European football championships (Tab. 2). Indicated changes are mainly the effect of mediumistic reports which often inform about commitment of Poland into integration of Ukraine with the EU and NATO and about common organization of Euro 2012.

Interestingly many respondents, especially among Poles in Ukraine (over 30%), refused to answer or did not know how to answer the questions (Tab. 2). It can be explained in terms of reluctance of respondents to answer open questions, as well as from little knowledge about the consequences of the EU extension.

Most respondents perceived political changes, resulting from international agreements and treaties. These agreements in general do not have significant influence on relations between Polish and Ukrainian nations, however sometimes they have a huge influence on Polish-Ukrainian borderland and its residents (e.g. visa restrictions). The negative effects of the accession of Poland to the EU are more noticeable, as they concern border traffic which affects a large part of the borderland residents. The positive aspects of the accession of Poland to the EU in Polish-Ukrainian relations are perceived by respondents only in a small degree, as it does not influence their everyday life.

4. POLISH-UKRAINIAN NATIONAL BORDERLAND

Polish-Ukrainian borderland, formerly very diversified as to ethnic composition, at present in the large degree has lost its original character, mainly due to Soviet and German repressions during the Second World War, bloody Polish-Ukrainian fights, political and constitutional changes after 1945, resettlements and migrations and later assimilation of national minorities. Nevertheless, nowadays on the Polish-Ukrainian political borderland, one

can define areas where the Polish-Ukrainian national borderland is still apparent. Such areas are the frontier concentrations of national minorities: Ukrainian in Poland and Poles in Ukraine (Fig. 4).

The basic source of information about the present distribution and number of Ukrainian and Polish minority on the borderland area are the data from censuses conducted in 2001 in Ukraine and in 2002 in Poland. Surprisingly, these censuses revealed that the minorities are very small. It was caused by many factors, e.g. migrations, intensive assimilation, negative stereotypes, fear from declaring their own „minority” national identity¹⁰. Although the results of the Polish and Ukrainian general census are not fully credible, they are the basic source of information about the present national composition of the Polish-Ukrainian borderland, because they are the most current, comparable data, gathered by official institutions. Moreover, they are based on declaration of the national identity. However, the figures provided by both censuses should be considered as minimum values, and the real number of Polish and Ukrainian minorities in analyzed area is certainly much bigger.

Today's distribution and number of Ukrainians in Poland is mostly influenced by the „Vistula” action and the policy of Polish communist authorities, aiming at assimilation of this community. Compulsory resettlement, the separation from the „ethnic motherland”, very large territorial dispersion, migrations to cities, as well as post-war negative stereotypes, were among the main factors contributing to the very intense assimilation of Ukrainian minority, which brought to the spectacular decrease of the number of this group, from an estimated 150–300 thousand to merely 27.2 thousand declared during the 2002 census. The results of the census also proved that distribution of the Ukrainian minority shaped as a result of the “Vistula” action did not undergo essential changes during last half a century. Contemporarily a large majority of Polish Ukrainians (68%) live in three provinces of northern Poland, whereas in south-eastern Poland, on the area of the former national Polish-Ukrainian borderland, presently there are only 11% of Ukrainians living in Poland, who represent less than 0.5% of all border are residents (Barwiński, 2006).

Although Ukrainians displaced in 1947 gained the possibility to return after 1956, only a small part of them decided to come back to territories of south-eastern Poland. Small number of returns was caused by the discouraging policy of Polish authorities. Those who were decided to return could not get back their own buildings and farms. The return was the easiest for those

¹⁰ This issue is analyzed wider in: Barwiński (2006, p. 345–370).

whose farms were not occupied by Polish settlers. All remaining Ukrainians had to buy their properties back. However, the majority of displaced people decided to stay in western and northern Poland, because there they have reached higher economic and social status. Moreover, they were afraid of difficulties connected with another change of the place of residence. At last, between 1956–1958 only several thousand of Ukrainians have returned, from among approx. 140–150 thousand displaced in 1947. Most of Ukrainian families returned then to territories of the Lublin province and to Przemyśl (Babiński, 1997; Drozd, 1998).

Today on the Polish-Ukrainian borderland, according to data from 2002 census, there is only about 3 thousand of people who declared Ukrainian nationality. The largest concentration of the Ukrainian minority is in Przemyśl (814 people, 1.2% of total number of residents) and also in the districts of Jarosław and Sanok (Fig. 4).

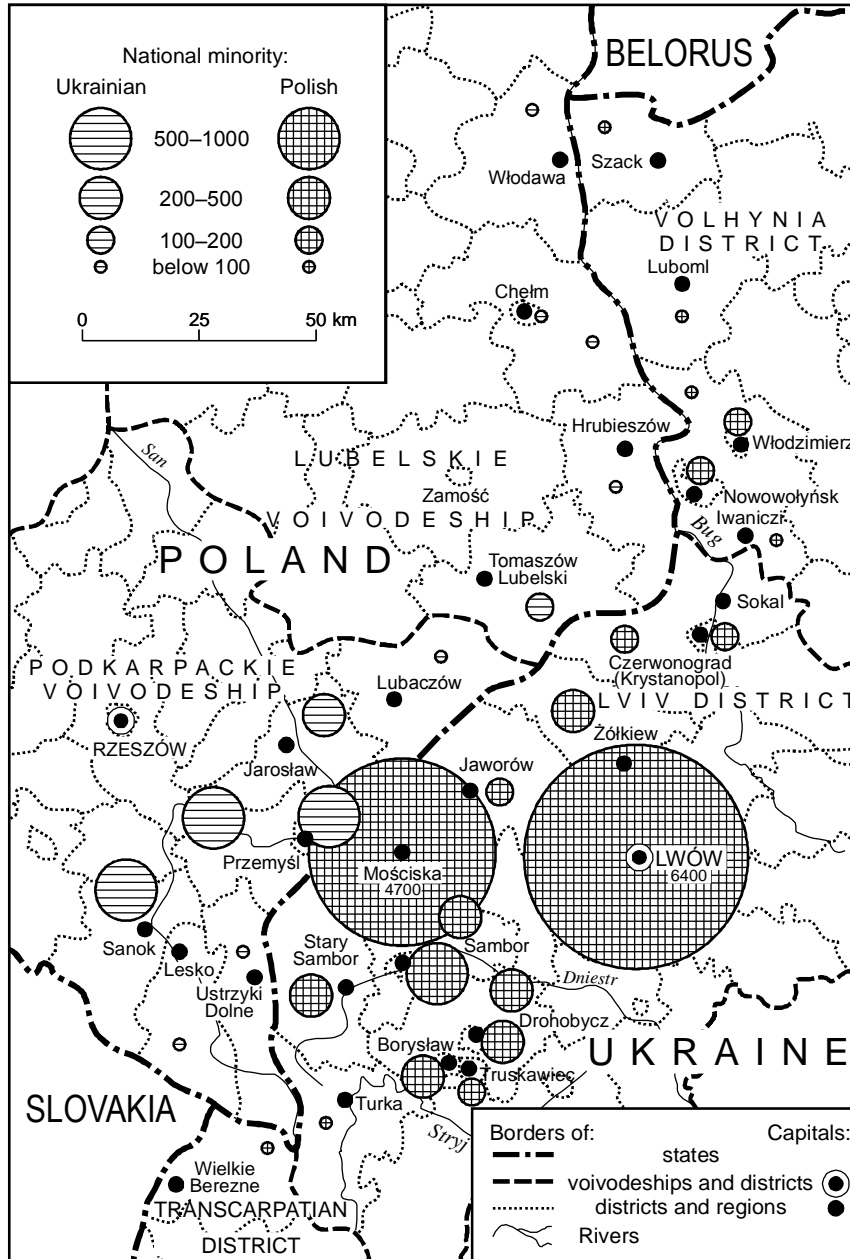


Fig. 4. Contemporary distribution of Polish and Ukrainian minority on the Polish-Ukrainian borderland
 Source: Author based on results of the censuses in Ukraine (2001) and in Poland (2002)

However in none of these administrative districts the number of Ukrainians in total number of population exceeds 1%. The largest number of the Ukrainian population is in Komańcza (10%) and Stubno communes (8.5%). Although on the borderland as a whole, the Ukrainian community is clearly outnumbered by Poles, nevertheless there are still some places where Ukrainians constitute the majority of residents e.g. the villages of Kalników in the Stubno commune, Chotyńiec in the Radymno commune and Mokre in the Komańcza commune (Lis, 2008).

On the Ukrainian side of the borderland Polish minority is much more numerous, although its number in total number of inhabitants is also insignificant. According to the data from 2001 census, in the borderland area there are 14.6 thousand Poles, which is approx. 10% of total number of Polish minority in Ukraine. The largest concentrations of Polish minority are in Lvov (6.4 thousand Poles or 0.9% of residents), the Mościska district (4.7 thousand Poles or 7.6% of the total), Sambor, Borysław and Drohobycz (Fig. 4).

Polish community on this area is represented mostly by Poles, who after the Second World War decided to stay despite the shift of borders and the possibility of moving to Poland. Many of them lost their Polish national identity during the Soviet period. Maintaining of Polish identity was greatly supported by Roman Catholic Church. Therefore nowadays most of people declare Polish nationality in places where Roman Catholics parishes operated during the whole period of the USSR e.g. in Mościska and Lvov (Lis, 2008).

The very small number and insignificant share of national minorities on both sides of borderland, is obviously a consequence of the division of this area by political border. It also results from migrations (both voluntary and compulsory) and assimilation policy pursued by both Polish and Soviet authorities. It was based mainly on hindering national, political, cultural and educational activity of minority groups but also on discrimination of the minority population. It included restrictions against the Catholic Church in Ukraine and Greek-Catholic Church in Poland, which was so important for Polish and Ukrainian national identity.

After the constitutional changes in the early 1990s and democratization of the socio-political life in Poland and in Ukraine, the situation of national minorities in both states changed fundamentally. National minorities experienced a revival, many new organizations were established, local communities became more active. The political-legal regulations were introduced leading to social, cultural and political development of national minorities. Suitable regulations were contained in the Constitutions of both states,

however the most detailed regulations were introduced into the Ukrainian legislation on national minorities in Ukraine and in Polish legislation on ethnic minorities and regional language. They guarantee full protection of rights for both Ukrainian minority in Poland and Polish in Ukraine. However the practical realization of these regulations in the large degree depends on financial and organizational possibilities of state and on attitude of local authorities, which not always is in line with official guidelines. It should be stated though, that political-legal regulations are likely to stop assimilation of minorities. To the contrary, after political transformations in the early 1990s, both in Poland and in Ukraine one can observe farther decrease in the number of national minorities. In Poland we can only compare estimates concerning the number of Ukrainians from the first half of the 1990s with the results of the 2002 census, which turned out to be significantly smaller (Barwiński, 2006). In Ukraine one can compare the censuses from 1989 (the Soviet period) and 2001 (independent Ukraine). Although in 1990s the discriminatory policy of Ukraine authorities towards minorities ended, the census from 2001 revealed only 144.1 thousand people declaring Polish nationality down from 219.2 thousand in 1989. This means, that according to the official data, the number of Polish minority during 12 years has decreased by 34.2%. This is the sharpest decrease in the number of Poles in Ukraine during an inter-census period after the Second World War. In the Lvov district the number of Poles has decreased from 26.9 thousand to 18.9 thousand, that is 29.7%¹¹ between 1989–2001.

This tendency is caused by many factors that occur on both sides of the border. First the minorities are much dispersed (in most districts they represent less than 1% of inhabitants). Second: intermarriages and migration to cities favour assimilation. Moreover, the full political recognition of the minority, the existence of many, often competitive „minority” organizations, their involvement in political battle may prevent some people from declaring unambiguously their nationality, particularly on the area of the ethnically diversified borderland. In Ukraine the essential factor that accelerates the assimilation of the Polish population is introduction of the Ukrainian language in place of Polish language into Roman Catholic liturgy.

Next censuses will surely reveal further decrease in the number of both Polish and Ukrainian minority because the above-mentioned „assimilative factors” are unlikely to diminish in the future.

¹¹ Based on www.wspolnota-polska.org.pl.

5. CONCLUSION

Summing up, the situation of the Polish-Ukrainian borderland and its inhabitants largely depends on the function and role of the Polish-Ukrainian border. Functions of the state border influence and shape the borderland in very essential way, both in terms of socio-economic as well as national and cultural transformations, because the border can be either a barrier or an integrating factor for borderland area (Heffner, 1998). When the border is a barrier, then the borderland on both sides diverge. If, however, the border is penetrable and open, the borderland areas become similar and they undergo cultural and social mixing (Sadowski, 1995).

During several years the Polish-Ukrainian border was the barrier which strictly separated Polish and Ukrainian nation, as well as the area of the borderland. The situation changed for better after the fall of the communism. The Polish-Ukrainian borderland has visibly livened up, not only in economically but also culturally. The border started to unite both sides of borderland. The numerous transborder contacts between Poles and Ukrainians, both on regional and local level led to establishment of the community which has the permanent contact with Polish and Ukrainian population, culture and language. After the accession of Poland to the Schengen area these contacts were inhibited by new regulations. In 2008 the authorities of both states signed the agreement on the local border traffic. Hopefully this agreement will soon come into force and allow to recover the former level of transborder contacts but also will soften the negative effects the external EU border exerts on the borderland.

The political, economic and social situation of the Polish-Ukrainian borderland largely depends on political relations between Warsaw and Kiev. From 1991 these relations has markedly improved, and after the so-called "orange revolution" in Ukraine in 2004, Poland became one of the closest political partners of Ukraine, that many times has played the role of its "barrister" on the EU and NATO forum. Mutual political relations are noticeable in both, symbolic acts (e.g. in Lvov or in Volhynia) as well as in common activities on international arena and also common economic and sport projects. Granting to Poland and Ukraine the privilege of organization of the European football championships in 2012, can become a very positive factor of the further activation in Polish-Ukrainian co-operation but also can become an element which would contribute to diminish the mutual negative prejudices and stereotypes. The consistent policy of Polish authorities

towards Ukraine is very rational, because stable, democratic Ukraine co-operating with European structures, is very important from Polish geopolitical point of view. However, very difficult internal political situation of Ukraine makes this co-operation increasingly difficult.

Despite very good official Polish-Ukrainian relations it should be kept in mind that this borderland was an area where bloody ethnic conflicts took place in the past. These events are still alive among part of citizens of the borderland. The difficult past and national resentments are still apparent in disputes about organization of various cultural or national events by minorities on both sides of the border, e.g. erecting monuments for UPA soldiers or their victims, war cemeteries. The history still separates rather than unites the inhabitants of the borderland, especially the members of national minorities¹².

In national respect the Polish-Ukrainian borderland underwent a substantial change during last several years. For hundreds of years it was a typical borderland, that is borderland between communities related in terms of linguistic and ethnic aspects, with very large territorial extent where cultural elements of both nations interpenetrated (Chlebowczyk, 1983). However as a consequence of armed conflicts, political transformations, resettlements of population and the division of the borderland by the interstate border, the traditional character of this borderland was destroyed. Nevertheless, it is still an area inhabited by national minorities living here for ages, linguistically and culturally related. Small in number, territorially dispersed, they constitute a marginal part of the borderland population dominated by the "state nation". It has implications for the character of the borderland which nowadays is political rather than national borderland.

In all respects – ethnic, religious, cultural, political, economic – the present borderland is divided in two clearly separated parts: Polish and Ukrainian, remaining under the predominant influence of two political, economic and cultural centres.

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¹² It is confirmed by the results of different kinds of social researches, among the others by Babiński (1997) and Lis (2008).

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