

**INTERGRATION AND DIFFERENTIATION WITHIN THE RUSSIAN-SPEAKING  
DIASPORA: ESTONIA AND KYRGYZSTAN**

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The collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent stranded Russian-speaking diaspora in former Soviet republics created a unique environment for testing the effect of political institutions and economic climate on minority integration. Using descriptive quantitative data and over 30 interviews performed in Russian while living in Estonia and Kyrgyzstan, I analyze the levels of integration of these Russian-speaking minorities. Estonia and Kyrgyzstan provide the necessary conditions to test the effect of political institutions and economic climate on minority integration because they differ dramatically in these areas after independence. In comparing the two Russian-speaking minorities, I also assess overall identification, personal relation to the Russian Federation, general relation to the titular population, and reactions to Ukraine and Crimea.

My findings from both Estonia and Kyrgyzstan reveal that both minority groups have integrated into their host countries, but the degree of that integration differs substantially. The more robust Estonian economy and the inherent benefits from European Union membership prevented mass emigration after 1991, but slight discriminatory citizenship and Russian language policies result in a less integrated Russian community that tends towards local identification. The more accommodating Kyrgyz governmental policies, both in terms of citizenship and the Russian language, created a highly integrated minority population, but the poor economic climate of Kyrgyzstan incentivized the majority of the Russian-speaking community to

immigrate back to Russia. The separate levels of integration and different forms of identification achieved by both communities suggest that political institutions largely effect integration, but economic climate dictates emigration and can mitigate detrimental effects from discriminatory political institutions.

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## **PREFACE**

Writing this thesis was an incredible experience that has defined my time as an undergraduate. I would like to thank all my committee members for their input and help in finalizing my research. Specifically, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Jennifer Murtazashvili, for her help and guidance over the nearly three years I have worked on this project.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Minorities that fail to integrate into their countries often pose problems to both those countries' governance and society. It is important, therefore, to understand what affects their integration. The political and economic environments in which minority groups live are potentially the largest factors regarding a minority's position. What effect do political institutions and the economic climate have on the integration of minority groups?

The collapse of the Soviet Union offers a means for testing this question. The collapse of the USSR resulted in a divergence of political institutions and economic climate within each post-Soviet state. While each state traveled on different developmental paths, the existence of a Russian-speaking minority often remained a constant factor. Using the integration of Russian-speaking minorities as the dependent variable, I can test the effect of the independent variables: political institutions and economic climate. I will, therefore, examine the integration of Russian-speaking minority groups within specific post-Soviet states to explore this question.

Within the post-Soviet region specifically, the question of integration is even more important, considering the Russian-speaking minority has been a geopolitical factor in terms of the Russian government's strategies and position towards the "near abroad." Understanding current integration levels of Russian-speakers will explore areas of potential instability in the post-Soviet region. Broadly, better knowing what factors effect integration provides more information for policy making aimed at improving integration and domestic stability.

## 2.0 THEORETICAL APPROACHES

For the purposes of this study, I will use the term Russian-speaking diaspora to refer to groups of Russian-speaking populations in the post-Soviet sphere. This diaspora, within this geographic context, has been a focus for many scholars because of the conditions regarding its creation. When the Soviet Union collapsed many Russians and Russian speakers living in Soviet republics outside of Russia became minorities in the newly created post-Soviet states. In this sense they are stranded minorities because the political system in which they were the majority population receded from them.<sup>1</sup> This then became a focus of interest for notable scholars such as David Laitin and Rogers Brubaker who were interested in how these minority groups identify and the relationship they have to the Russian Federation.

Scholarly work regarding this diaspora has an enormous issue, however, in how to define the “Russian diaspora?” Defining this community as ethnically Russian fails to consider the complexities concerning the diaspora. Scholars have struggled to define the Russian diaspora, finding that many non-ethnic Russians identify with the Russian minority and by extension the diaspora. In each post-Soviet state there are ethnic Ukrainian, Byelorussians, Tartars, and other groups who speak Russian as their primary language. They are distinct from the titular

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<sup>1</sup> Charles King and Neil J. Melvin, “Diaspora Politics,” *International Security* 24, no. 3 (1999): 108.

populations either by appearance and/or by cultural identification. They are a part of the Russian-speaking diaspora, but are not ethnically Russian.

Some scholars preferred to simply use “ethnic Russians”<sup>2</sup> as the focus of their work. Others, in response to this complexity, began to use terms like “Russian-settlers”<sup>3</sup> to refer to Russified communities in the post-Soviet states. I will use the term Russian-speaking (Русский Говорящий) instead, which refers to people in the post-Soviet states who speak Russian as their native language. This term has become increasingly popular in the Baltic States, but poses some issues in Central Asia because there are titular population members who speak Russian as their native language. I will not include these individuals as Russian-speakers, however, as they would identify with the titular population as their primary identity and not as a Russian-speaker. Russian-speakers will refer to people who are consider Russian as their primary native language and are physically or culturally distinct from the titular population.

Scholars have approached the diaspora in different ways. David Laitin was primarily concerned with how these minority groups identified. His hypothesis and findings being that they would eventually create a “new national form” or a diaspora level identification, based of interviews and case studies in four post-Soviet states.<sup>4</sup> Laitin’s research was in part a follow up to Rogers Brubacker’s work regarding diaspora studies in general, but also specifically the relationship between the Russian-speaking diaspora and the Russian Federation. Brubacker created a conceptual triangular configuration between national minorities, the states in which

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<sup>2</sup> Lowell W. Barrington, Erik S. Herron, and Brian D. Silver, “The Motherland Is Calling: Views of Homeland among Russians in the near Abroad,” *World Politics* 55, no. 2 (2003): 290–313.

<sup>3</sup> Charles King and Neil J. Melvin.

<sup>4</sup> David D. Laitin. *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad*. (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1998). (Laitin, 1998)

they live, and the external homeland.<sup>5</sup> The Russian-speaking diaspora plays a geopolitical role in the region broadly, as evidenced by the clause in the Russian constitution granting it the right to protect Russian-speakers abroad.<sup>6</sup> Considering the numerous conflicts and events concerning the Russian-speaking diaspora, including recent events in Crimea and Ukraine, Brubacker's relationship model retains its usefulness in any discussion of the diaspora within the region.

Brubacker develops the idea that Russia acts as an external homeland for its ethnic diaspora, thereby granting the Russian Federation the option to involve itself in other countries if it feels it should act to protect the interests of ethno national kin outside of its borders.<sup>7</sup> The host countries recognize this fact and therefore attempt to integrate the minority groups to prevent influence from the external homeland, or in this case Russia. Finally, the minority group itself is often caught between the two states, their current home and their external homeland. Depending on the pressures and issues facing the minority they can potentially mobilize against their state of residence, seeking autonomy or to join the external homeland.<sup>8</sup> This triangular relationship results in a situation in which all three parties constantly monitor the actions of each other to maintain their positions and maximize their benefits.

Brubacker's model suggests that the Russian-speaking diaspora is potentially destabilizing in the post-Soviet states because depending on a minority group's perceptions or Russian involvement, minority groups can pursue autonomy or be used to rationalize Russian involvement. I argue, therefore, that especially after events in Ukraine and Crimea in which

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<sup>5</sup> Rogers Brubacker, "National Minorities, Nationalizing States, and External National Homelands in the New Europe," *Daedalus* 124, no. 2 (1995): 107-32.

<sup>6</sup> Lowell W. Barrington, Erik S. Herron, and Brian D. Silver.

<sup>7</sup> Rogers Brubacker.

<sup>8</sup> Rogers Brubacker.

arguably both results occurred, understanding what factors effect Russian-speaking minority integration into their host countries is even more important than ever. In testing for the effect of political institutions and economic climate on integration, I will also explore to what degree certain Russian-speaking minorities have integrated. Much like other scholars, I will use specific post-Soviet states and Russian-speaking minorities as cases for examination.

### 3.0 CASES: ESTONIA AND KYRGYZSTAN

My cases are Estonia and Kyrgyzstan. Previous scholars have compared Russian-speaking minorities in the Baltic and Central Asian republics. Laitin analyzed Estonia and Kazakhstan as cases for his study in the years following the dissolution of the USSR.<sup>9</sup> Michele Commercio also used this approach when studying the Russian-speaking minorities in Latvia and Kyrgyzstan.<sup>10</sup> In many ways, this work is a reexamination of Laitin and Commercio's work, which were concerned with the initial identification of the Russian-speaking diaspora and causal factors behind emigration respectively. These works, however, analyzed these countries in the 90's and early 2000s. Also I am primarily concerned with the integration achieved by the Russian-speaking minority as opposed to specifically focusing on either identification or emigration. Regardless, Laitin's and Commercio's works prove the effectiveness of using a comparative case study between a Baltic and Central Asian State. Both Estonia and Kyrgyzstan have been used in comparative pieces because they meet the necessary conditions to be effective cases, but the two, specifically, have yet to be used together in a comparative study.

Bordering Russia, Estonia has had long interactions with its larger and more powerful neighbor. The territory of modern Estonia was incorporated into the Russian empire in 1721 with

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<sup>9</sup> David D. Laitin.

<sup>10</sup> Michele E. Commercio, "The Russian Minorities in Latvia and Kyrgyzstan," *Problems of Post-Communism*, no. 25 (2004).

the Treaty of Nystad that united Northern Estonia and Southern Estonia (Livonia) as one Russian territory.<sup>11</sup> It briefly gained independence in 1918 and was an independent country for 22 years before being seized by the Soviet Union in 1939 after the Molotov-Ribbentrop Non-aggression pact.<sup>12</sup> Under Soviet control, many ethnic Russians and other Russian-speaking minorities moved to Estonia, which occurred in combination with varying degrees of Soviet influence throughout the country.<sup>13</sup> Estonian and Russian were used as languages for instruction in both secondary and higher education, but in 1978 an official Moscow policy sought to increase the role of the Russian language in non-Russian Soviet republics and the Russian language gained a larger role in education.<sup>14</sup>

Soviet influence and fears of Russification were met with resistance and protest within Estonia.<sup>15</sup> Eventually, following protests in the Baltic republics and instability within the Soviet Union broadly, a national referendum in 1991 declared the restoration of the independent Republic of Estonia.<sup>16</sup> The original annexation, Soviet policies, and culture of resistance initially resulted in the Estonian government adopting discriminatory policies towards the now Russian-speaking minority in the post-Soviet period.

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<sup>11</sup> Riina Kionka and Raivo Vetik, "Estonia and the Estonians," in *The Nationalities in the Post-Soviet States*, ed. Graham Smith, 2nd ed. (Essex, England: Longman, 1996).

<sup>12</sup> Riina Kionka and Raivo Vetik.

<sup>13</sup> Hill Kulu, "Residence and Migration in Post-War Soviet Estonia: The Case of Russian-Born Estonians," *Vanemuise* 46 (2003).;

Barbara A. Anderson and Brian D. Silver, "Estimating Russification of Ethnic Identity Among Non-Russians in the USSR," *Demography* 20 (1983).

<sup>14</sup> Riina Kionka and Raivo Vetik.

<sup>15</sup> Fredrik Lars Stocker, *Bridging the Baltic Sea: Networks of Resistance and Opposition during the Cold War Era* (Lexington Books, 2012).

<sup>16</sup> Riina Kionka and Raivo Vetik.

Immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the newly independent Estonian government did not recognize the Russian language as either a governmental or official language in Estonia.<sup>17</sup> Then government officials introduced legislation that called into question whether Russian-speakers could receive citizenship. The government mandated that only Russian-speakers and other non-Estonians who could prove they had lineage in Estonia from before Soviet occupation could gain citizenship.<sup>18</sup> All others had to pass an Estonian citizenship exam with an Estonian language component.<sup>19</sup> This prevented the majority of Russian-speakers living in Estonia from attaining citizenship, which in turn almost resulted in violent conflict when Narva, a Russian-speaking dominated city, nearly voted to become autonomous in 1993 due to citizenship concerns.<sup>20</sup> The Estonian government, however, avoided conflict by scaling back discriminatory policies, allowing non-citizens to vote in municipal elections, and loosening citizenship requirements, a trend that has continued over time.<sup>21</sup>

Due to this change in policy, therefore, tension between Russian-speakers and the Estonian government decreased significantly. Some Russians-speakers in Estonia, however, still lack any citizenship whatsoever, remaining stateless with “Alien” or grey passports.<sup>22</sup> Also,

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<sup>17</sup> Riina Kionka and Raivo Vetik.

<sup>18</sup> Raivo Vetik, “Citizenship, Statelessness and Belonging in Estonia,” in *Political Incorporation of Immigrant-Origin Minorities* (ECPR General Conference, Reykjavik, 2011),. <https://ecpr.eu/filestore/paperproposal/3e77f4ab-9a20-4440-b23c-0746c8bce314.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> Vetik, Raivo, “Citizenship, Statelessness and belonging in Estonia,”

<sup>20</sup> Indrek Elling, “The 1993 Narva Referendum Crisis,” in *Crisis Management in Estonia: Case Studies and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Eric Stern and Daniel Nohrstedt (Stockholm: Försvarshögskolan, 2001), 43–78.

<sup>21</sup> Anna Gromilova, “Statelessness: Challenging the ‘Europeanness’ in the Baltics,” *Revista de Stiinte Politice*, no. 47 (2015): 268.

<sup>22</sup> David J. Trimbach, “Lost in Conflation: The Estonian City of Narva and Its Russian-Speakers,” *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, 2016, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2016/05/lost-conflation-estonian-city-narva-russian-speakers/>.

some barriers remain, such as higher education being instructed only in Estonian and that Russian-speakers have little to no governmental representation.<sup>23</sup> Largely, however, the situation in Estonia is unique in that the Russian-speaking minority exists mostly separate from the Estonian majority.

An important consideration is that Estonia joined the European Union in 2004, which granted Estonian citizens access to European markets and prompted Estonia's overall economic growth. Another important effect was that the requirements for European Union ascension incentivized the Estonian government to continue to scale back discriminatory practices towards Russian-speakers.<sup>24</sup> European Union membership also allowed easy travel access throughout Europe and many other countries, which by extension benefited Russian-speakers with Estonian passports and Russian-speaking grey passport holders. Ironically, this is even more beneficial to stateless Russian-speakers because grey passports allow the same access to Europe as Estonian passports, but also easy access to the Russian Federation.<sup>25</sup>

The Russian-speaking minority in Estonia, therefore, originally endured discriminatory political practices from its host country that have slowly eased over time. Throughout this period, however, it has also enjoyed a relatively superior economic position. Estonia's historical background and current situation somewhat mirrors Kyrgyzstan's, but rapidly diverges after independence.

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<sup>23</sup> Liia Tüür and Ülla Kulasalu, "Higher Education in Estonia," *Archimedes Foundation, Estonian Academic Recognition Information Centre*, 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Gwendolyn Sasse, "The Politics of EU Conditionality: The Norm of Minority Protection during and beyond EU Accession" 15, no. 6 (2011): 842–60.

<sup>25</sup> Anna Gromilova.

Kyrgyzstan was never an independent country prior to 1991. The land that is now modern Kyrgyzstan became a part of the Russian empire incrementally throughout the nineteenth century with the last portion, southern Kyrgyzstan, being incorporated in 1876.<sup>26</sup> During the Russian imperial period there was Kyrgyz resistance against Russian occupation including a series of uprisings.<sup>27</sup> The suppression of a particularly large revolt in 1916 caused an exodus of Kyrgyz into China, which resulted in numerous deaths and would become a major point of Kyrgyz historical resentment in the modern era.<sup>28</sup> Later, Kyrgyzstan was incorporated into the Soviet Union after the October Revolution, Bolshevik actions within Central Asia, and a civil war within Kyrgyzstan itself.<sup>29</sup>

As a Soviet Republic there was a large degree of Russian cultural influence, most notably on local languages, which were forced to adopt the Cyrillic alphabet.<sup>30</sup> Education in Kyrgyzstan, however, was conducted both in Russian and Kyrgyz, but Russian was more professionally viable throughout Soviet space and it became the language of choice for interethnic cooperation. Kyrgyz as a language, therefore, became somewhat marginalized, having little role in either

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<sup>26</sup> Annette Bohr and Simon Crisp, "Kyrgyzstan and the Kyrgyz," in *The Nationalities in the Post-Soviet States*, ed. Graham Smith, 2nd ed. (Essex, England: Longman, 1996).

<sup>27</sup> Annette Bohr and Simon Crisp.

<sup>28</sup> Брюс Панниер and Алиса Вальсамаки, "Столетие Великого Исхода кыргызского народа," *Радио Азаттык*, 2016, <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/kyrgyzstan-urkun-1916/27709420.html>;

Annette Bohr and Simon Crisp.

<sup>29</sup> Annette Bohr and Simon Crisp.

<sup>30</sup> Laura Katherine Tarbox, "Language and Foreign Policy: The Kyrgyz Experience" (University of South Carolina, 2016), [https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1087&context=senior\\_theses](https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1087&context=senior_theses).

government or business.<sup>31</sup> There is not, however, any evidence of large scale resistance efforts in Kyrgyzstan against Soviet political authority or Russian cultural influence besides growing political support for independence in the late 90s under Gorbachev.<sup>32</sup>

After independence in 1991, the newly independent Kyrgyz government took steps towards granting a position of higher importance to the Kyrgyz language, granting it governmental status.<sup>33</sup> That being said, in the early 90s the Kyrgyz government took steps to prevent Russian-speaking emigration from Kyrgyzstan. The government did not mandate a working knowledge of Kyrgyz to gain citizenship in Kyrgyzstan, so Russian-speakers could receive citizenship without conditions. In 1994 President Akaev labeled Russian as an official language in order to protect its role within Kyrgyz society.<sup>34</sup> These steps have generally resulted in Russian remaining the language of commerce and education throughout the country. It is also still widely used within the government itself with only the President and no other government members legally required to speak Kyrgyz.<sup>35</sup>

An important consideration, however, is that by 1980 Russians-speakers in Kyrgyzstan had lost the preeminent position politically and economically to the faster growing Kyrgyz population.<sup>36</sup> When independence occurred, therefore, while there were not discriminatory practices towards the Russian-speaking minority in terms of citizenship or language, the minority

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<sup>31</sup> Annette Bohr and Simon Crisp.

<sup>32</sup> Annette Bohr and Simon Crisp.

<sup>33</sup> Annette Bohr and Simon Crisp.

<sup>34</sup> Annette Bohr and Simon Crisp.

<sup>35</sup> Laura Katherine Tarbox.

<sup>36</sup> Michele E. Commercio.

itself lacked its own economic niche and despite government efforts, began to emigrate in large numbers from Kyrgyzstan.

The poor economic climate seems to be the major cause of Russian-speakers emigrating from Kyrgyzstan.<sup>37</sup> Other factors may have played a role, however, such as the slight loss of status for the Russian language caused by policies that attempted to increase the use of the Kyrgyz language.<sup>38</sup> Also, the general political instability regarding the two revolutions in 2005 and 2010, as well as high levels of corruption cannot be ignored as possible factors behind emigration.<sup>39</sup> Regardless, the current environment for the small Russian-speaking minority is generally poor economically, but fairly devoid of discriminatory policies either linguistic or political.

Estonia and Kyrgyzstan have remarkable similarities and differences. They have similar although not identical relationships to Russia and the Soviet Union, in that both were unwillingly incorporated into the Russian Empire and later became Soviet republics. In being Soviet Republics they shared similar political structures and economic climates before independence. They also both had significant Russian-speaking minorities. It is important to note that even during the Soviet period, they had significant differences, but for the purposes of testing for integration, the vital factor is that the major differences in terms of political institutions and economic climate began after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. This is especially true in their

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<sup>37</sup> Annette Bohr and Simon Crisp.

<sup>38</sup> Baimatov Bakyt, "The Ethnic Russians- Scattered in Geo-Cultural and Semantic Spaces of Kyrgyzstan," *International Journal on Minority and Group Right* 21 (2014). ;  
Laura Katherine Tarbox.

<sup>39</sup> Mathijs Pelkmans, "On Transition and Revolution in Kyrgyzstan," *Focaal* 46 (2005).;  
Kathleen Collins, "Kyrgyzstan's Latest Revolution," *Journal of Democracy* 22 (2011). ;  
"Kyrgyzstan" (Transparency International, n.d.), <https://www.transparency.org/country/KGZ>.

governmental approaches to the Russian-speaking minority once they became sovereign and independent countries. It is this vital difference and the difference in current economic climate that suggest there are significant variances in the degree to which their Russian-speaking minorities have integrated.

## 4.0 HYPOTHESES

My hypothesis is that both in Estonia and Kyrgyzstan the Russian-speaking minority has integrated, but that the Kyrgyz Russian-speaking minority is more highly integrated. The Russian-speaking minority in Kyrgyzstan enjoys a relatively superior political and societal position to the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia, but that which in turn enjoys a better economic environment. This finding is similar to Commercio's, but in Estonia rather than Latvia. It slightly differs, however, from Laitin's belief that assimilation in the Baltic States would progress over time, but also result in the creation of Russian-speakers with representatives fostering nationalistic ideologies that would be counterproductive to integration.<sup>40</sup> I do not believe that in either case such ideologies have developed, but instead that integration has continued steadily as Laitin suggested it would, but undeterred as he supposed it might be. Additionally, I believe that political institutions have the most influence in terms of integration, but economic climate dictates emigration levels and through providing economic incentives, can offset the effect of discriminatory political institutions, resulting in higher integration levels. Examining the quantitative data regarding these variables, however, provides the first step towards analyzing this divergence.

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<sup>40</sup> David D. Laitin.

## 5.0 METHODOLOGY

This analysis will rely on two sources of data: both qualitative and quantitative. The quantitative data is drawn from public opinion survey(s), census data, and economic indicators. These data are largely descriptive in nature, but they compliment the second part of the analysis that is qualitative. This data will take the form of a comparative case study utilizing passive observations and a series of interviews performed in Estonia and Kyrgyzstan.

I will use a comparative case study using Estonia and Kyrgyzstan to examine integration. Often when dealing with a small  $n$  study, case studies provide the proper analytical approach to test a question<sup>41</sup>, especially when variables are difficult to precisely codify. Although they lack the breadth of large  $n$ , quantitative studies, they can produce valid causal inferences. In the case of this particular study, the question is what explains variation in integration within Russian-speaking minorities in the post-Soviet states? Since integration is difficult to quantify and the number of cases with significant Russia-speaking minorities is small, a case study is an appropriate approach. When data is collected systematically on the same variables across cases that are carefully selected to test for those variables, it creates a framework that can test for causal relationships.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Gary King, Robert O Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

<sup>42</sup> Gary King, Robert O Keohane, and Sidney Verba.

Since Estonia and Kyrgyzstan differ dramatically in terms of their political institutions and economic environments after independence they provide the necessary conditions to test variables concerning the Russian-speaking diaspora, in that they form a most-different systems study. John Stuart Mill first described the most-different systems study as the “method of difference”. This system means that if the phenomenon under investigation occurs in one case but not the other, and if the cases differentiate dramatically on one variable, then that variable is most likely the causal variable.<sup>43</sup> My hypothesis is that integration of the Russian-speaking minorities differs in Estonia and Kyrgyzstan, who differ most significantly in terms of political institutions and economic climate in the post-Soviet period. According to the method of difference, political institutions and economic climate are sufficient in fostering the difference in integration.

Integration, however, is believed to exist in four different forms. This requires an understanding of the theoretical context regarding integration before any analysis can be performed. The four dimension of integration, largely agreed on by scholars, are cultural, social, structural, and identificational.<sup>44</sup> Each dimension deals with certain aspects of how a minority population interacts with the dominant culture, society, legal system, or physical space. Understanding each dimension is necessary to understand overall integration because while they can have high levels of integration within one dimension, they can have low levels within others.

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<sup>43</sup> John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive: Being a Connected View of the Principles of Evidence and the Methods of Scientific Investigation*, vol. 1 (London: Harrison and Co. Printers, 1843).

<sup>44</sup> Friedrich Heckman and Dominique Schapper, *The Integration of Immigrants in European Societies: National Differences and Trends of Convergence* (Stuttgart: Lucius and Lucius, 2003).

Analyzing a minority on each dimension of integration provides a holistic and more precise understanding of its position.

Cultural integration largely concerns how populations, either minority or majority, experience shifts in terms of cognitive, behavioral and attitudinal change as different cultures interact with each other.<sup>45</sup> This could mean that the minority adopts the culture or societal tendencies of the majority or that both the majority and the minority shift towards each other. This can be seen on two dimensions, either in terms of the adoption of ideals, values, and behaviors of the majority society, or in the retention of these aspects of minority society.<sup>46</sup> Within a study, therefore, cultural integration can be measured through religious practices, traditions, customs, or in examining titular language proficiency, which in terms of studying the Russian-speaking minority within this work, will serve as the main indicator.<sup>47</sup>

Social or societal integration involves the degree to which members of distinct communities interact with each other physically. This can be most accurately measured in terms of segregation in community location, housing, or region.<sup>48</sup> Broadly, how often individuals within different groups actually interact with each other represents social integration, whose indicators include friendships, marriages, and social networks.<sup>49</sup> In terms of the Russian-

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<sup>45</sup> M.A. Gibson, "Immigrant Adaptation and Patterns of Acculturation," *Human Development*, no. 44 (2001): 19–23.

<sup>46</sup> John W. Berry, "Acculturation: Living Successfully in Two Cultures," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 29, no. 6 (2005): 697–712.

<sup>47</sup> J. Allen Williams and T. Suzanne Ortega, "Dimensions of Ethnic Assimilation: An Empirical Appraisal of Gordon's Typology," *Social Science Quarterly* 71, no. 4 (1990): 697–710.

<sup>48</sup> Fred J. Jandt, *Intercultural Communication: An Introduction* (Thousand Oaks, California; London: Sage, 1998).

<sup>49</sup> Wolfgang Bosswick and Friedrich Heckman, "Integration of Migrants: Contribution of Local and Regional Authorities" (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2006),

speaking minorities, this would concern where the Russian-speaking population predominantly lives and whether that area is distinct and separate from titular residency areas. Perceptions and personal relations to titular members might also measure Russian-speaking minority social integration.

Structural integration concerns the possession of rights and access to institutions of society. These institutions might include the job market, education, housing, public goods, citizenship, or health care.<sup>50</sup> Whether individuals within a minority group have equal access to these institutions or have the same possession of rights, indicate the degree of structural integration. In a scenario in which rights and access are not equitably distributed, one can argue that the minority has low levels of structural integration.

There is, however, a caveat to this idea. Instead of access to the main institutions of society, if a minority can have access to equivalent institutions within a sub-system<sup>51</sup>, either ethnic or transnational, it can be argued that they can achieve parity in socio-economic life.<sup>52</sup> This is an important distinction to consider, especially in the case of minorities like the Russian-speaking diaspora, as they could potentially lack equal access to rights or institutions within their host country, but still exhibit high levels of structural integration at the community level.

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[https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef\\_files/pubdocs/2006/22/en/1/ef0622en.pdf](https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_files/pubdocs/2006/22/en/1/ef0622en.pdf).

<sup>50</sup> Wolfgang Bosswick and Friedrich Heckman.

<sup>51</sup> Friedrich Heckman and Dominique Schapper.

<sup>52</sup> Roger Waldinger, "From Ellis Island to LAX: Immigrant Prospects in the American City," *International Migration Review* 30, no. 4 (1996): 1078–86.

Exploring perceptions of socio-economic barriers can serve as an indicator of structural integration.

The final dimension, identificational integration, concerns ethnic and national self-identification. Specifically, whether individuals identify with their host country, country of origin, national group, or a combination of groups.<sup>53</sup> In terms of the Russian-speaking diaspora this becomes a measure of to what degree individuals identify with Russia, the Russian-speaking diaspora, or their titular country. Latin was primarily interested with this dynamic of integration, believing that over time Russian-speaking minority members might identify with a diaspora community, either within their titular state or broadly throughout the post-Soviet world, more than their titular government.

There is a similar caveat to this approach, however, as there was to structural integration, in that it is possible to identify strongly within one's community at the local level. High levels of identificational integration can be exhibited by perceptions of feeling at home or of being accepted by society either at the national or local level.<sup>54</sup> This creates an interesting dynamic in which minority groups can identify strongly with their host country because they strongly identify with their minority community within that country. They can then achieve high levels of identificational integration and inadvertently develop positive perceptions of their titular government as a whole. This is especially true when their community's success is dependent on the overall country's success.

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<sup>53</sup> W. John Berry, "Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaption" 46, no. 1 (1997): 5-68.

<sup>54</sup> Gerli Nimmerfeldt, "The Russian Second Generation in Tallinn and Kohtla-Jarva," in *Sense of Belonging to Estonia*, ed. Jelena Helemae and Raivo Vetik (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 201-24.

I approach integration in these terms, but I use a series of interviews to actually examine the levels of integration on each dimension. I performed these interviews while living in Estonia and Kyrgyzstan for 2 and 8 months respectively. Qualitative interviews can describe social and political processes that are difficult to quantify, and integration is a perfect example of such a process.<sup>55</sup> My interviews were semi-structured interviews that formed an elaborated case study aimed at exploring how individuals have integrated into either Estonian or Kyrgyz societies.

I conducted 31 Russian interviews while abroad, 14 in Narva, Estonia and 17 in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. These interview respondents were from a variety of backgrounds, genders, different professions, various ages, and generally from many socioeconomic brackets. Although a small sample size, my interview responses were by and far homogenous and therefore I believe I reached saturation point even with the small scale in consideration. Their accounts and my observations from living in these countries form the backbone of this research.

In Estonia, many of my respondents were the employees at Narva College, the institution where I studied. Many were also host families of other American students. The bulk of my participants, therefore, were middle aged or older. Their professions differed tremendously from doctors to secretaries. I also interviewed friends that I had made while in Estonia and subsequently their friends, so some of my interviews were with young adults who were just beginning higher education or in the process of applying. In general, the majority of my respondents were women. In Kyrgyzstan, the bulk of my interviews were from young adults that studied at the American University of Central Asia. I interviewed middle-aged respondents who were instructors where I studied Russian, people who trained in Jiu-Jitsu at a local dojo, and also

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<sup>55</sup> Herbert J Rubin and Irene S Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data* (Thousand Oaks, California; London: Sage Publications, 2005).

professionals with whom I made connections with through my work at an NGO. In terms of gender, both were represented equally.

1) Can you tell me about yourself? Where were you born? How long has your family lived here? What about your family? Your grandparents?	1. Вы можете рассказать мне о себе? Вы можете рассказать мне о вашей семье? Где вы родились? Как долго ваша семья жила здесь?
2) Can you tell me what language you speak at home? Is this language different from the language you study in school?	2. Вы можете сказать мне, какой язык вы говорите дома? Это язык отличается от того, что вы учились в школу?
3) In your opinion, what languages do you think are most important for a young person to have a successful future?	3. По вашему мнению, какие языки самые важные для молодого человека, чтобы преуспеть в Кыргызстане?
4) Can you tell me whether there are opportunities for people who speak all languages in Kyrgyzstan?	4. Вы можете сказать мне, есть ли возможность для людей, которые говорят на разных языках в Кыргызстане?
5) Do you think these kinds of opportunities have changed since the time your parents grew up?	5. Вы думаете, эти возможности изменились с того времени, вы или ваши родители выросли?
6) Can you tell me whether recent events in the world have affected how people of ethnic minorities view their future here in Kyrgyzstan?	6. Вы можете сказать мне, повлияли ли последние события в мире, как люди меньшинств видят свое будущее в Кыргызстане?
7) Do you think that attitudes towards people who speak different languages have been affected by external politics?	7. Вы думаете, отношение к людям, которые говорят на разных языках, была затронута внешней политики?
8) Is there anything else you'd like to share with me?	8. Есть что-нибудь еще вы хотели бы поделиться со мной?

**Figure 1: Interview Questions**

The interview questions listed above, both in English and Russian, formed the basic guide for how I approached each interview I performed. As semi-structured interviews, these questions served as a guide. I did not always follow the questions exactly, often expanding on certain areas depending on the participant and their reactions to the questions. I paid specific attention to not only their responses, but also their body language to see which question prompted a larger response or which areas the respondent was uncomfortable to speak about.

When I began these interviews in Estonia, however, my Russian ability was less developed as I was still learning Russian at the intermediate level. I recorded every interview and

had to listen to them repeatedly to draw accurate conclusions. Within Bishkek, though my Russian had improved and so my interviewing ability itself became more flexible and accurate, but I continued to record every interview.

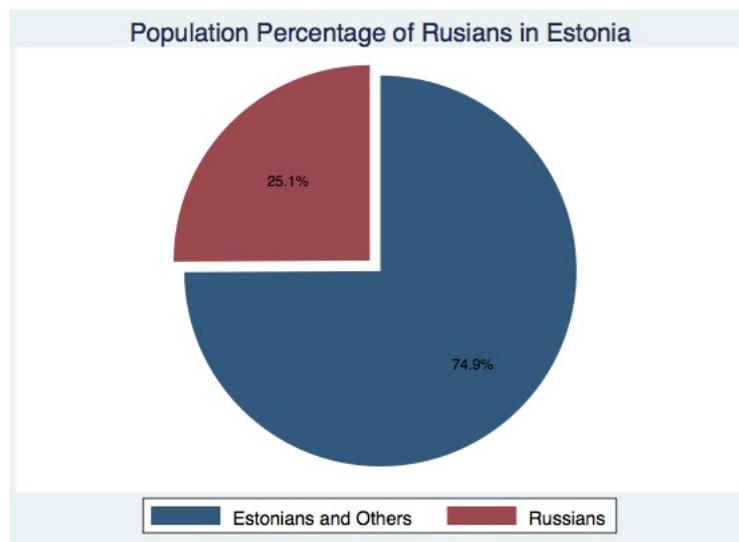
The beginning of each interview was aimed at exploring demographic information about the respondent. Then I explored the languages they speak, to measure cultural integration, before examining whether that language affects their life within their host country. As each respondent spoke Russian as his or her primary language, this was a means of asking whether being a Russian impacted his or her role within society, which would dictate the degree of structural integration. From here I began to explore how being a Russian-speaker impacted their life politically and economically, again exploring structural integration. After this I switched to discuss events in Ukraine and how they and the Russian-speaking community in general perceive these events, in order to test for irredentism and diaspora identification, which would measure identificational integration. To reinforce this question, I would ask how they saw the Russian Federation as a Russian-speaker living outside of Russia itself. Finally, I would explore the ethnic dimension within each country, asking if external events have changed how the majority sees the Russian-speaking minority, quickly specifying how they see the Estonian majority and how generally the two groups interact. These questions regarding ethnic relations test for both cultural and social integration.

While in Estonia I typically just used and followed my interview questions as a template. In Kyrgyzstan I additionally tried to ascertain why the respondent or respondent's family decided to remain in Kyrgyzstan despite large levels emigration after independence. I also explored whether the increase in the Kyrgyz language's popularity and generally the tendency towards Kyrgyz national identity posed a problem to the Russian-speaking minority. Beyond that,

however, my methodological approach to these interviews did not change between Estonia and Kyrgyzstan. I believe this approach allowed me to explore each type of integration apparent within both minority groups.

## 6.0 EVIDENCE AND RESULTS: QUANTITATIVE DATA

In Estonia, Russian-speakers make up a significant portion of the population according to census data.<sup>56</sup> With a quarter of the population identifying as Russian-speakers, it would seem that the Russian-speaking minority has a degree of influence in terms of voting numbers and is large enough to warrant specific attention on the governmental level.



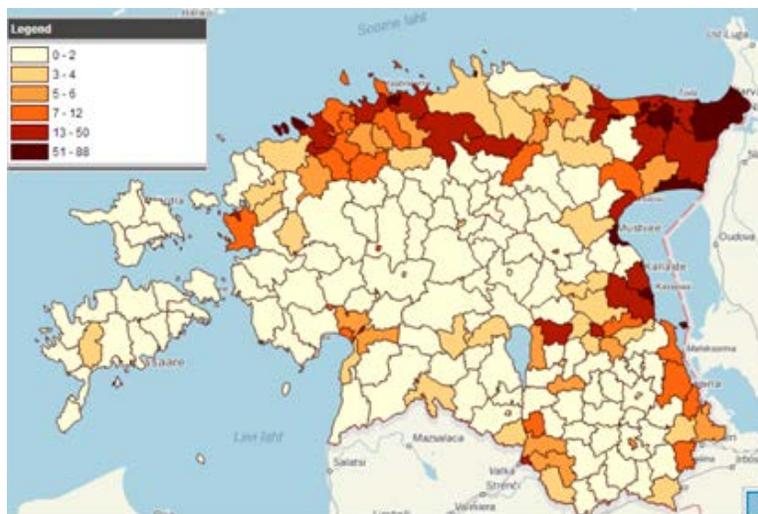
**Figure 2: Population Percentage of Russian-Speakers in Estonia**

Another important indicator is, however, how the Russian-speaking population is dispersed throughout the country. This can be examined by measuring where Russian is spoken

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<sup>56</sup> "Population and Housing Census" (Estonia Statistics, September 17, 2012), [https://www.stat.ee/64310?parent\\_id=39113](https://www.stat.ee/64310?parent_id=39113).

as a primary language.<sup>57</sup> This dispersion can be seen in a map of Estonia that demonstrates where the Russian language is spoken in terms of percentages of population.<sup>58</sup> It is apparent that the Russian-speaking population is concentrated within a few areas. Namely, the most concentrated area is the Ida-Viru valley county in the Northeast whose capital is Narva, the site used for the qualitative research.<sup>59</sup> Broadly, however, the Russian-speaking minority is located primarily along the borders with the Russian Federation and also along the North.



**Figure 3: Russian-Speaking Areas in Estonia**

Census data<sup>60</sup> also demonstrates that the Russian-speaking minority is concentrated within urban centers such as Tallinn and Tartu, which is also apparent within the map. From

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<sup>57</sup> Maarten van der Molen, “Country Report Estonia” (Rabo-Research--Economic Research, April 2, 2014),

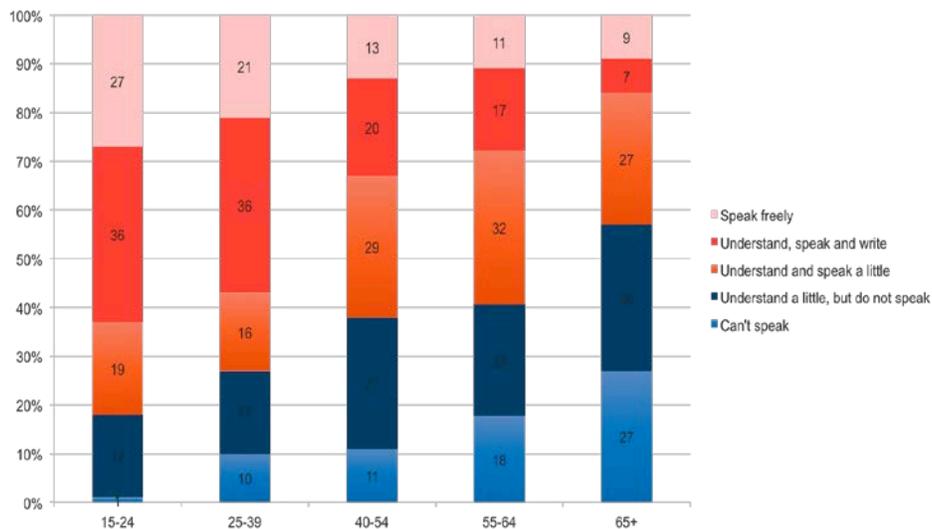
<sup>58</sup> Population and Housing Census.” (Estonia Statistics, September 17, 2012).

<sup>59</sup> David J. Smith, “Narva Region within Estonian Republic: From Autonomism to Accommodation?,” *Regional and Federal Studies*, no. 2 (2002): 89.

<sup>60</sup> Population and Housing Census.” (Estonia Statistics, September 17, 2012).

this, it is evident that the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia is significant in proportion to the titular population, but generally concentrated along the periphery of the border.

The Russian language outside of Russian-speaking communities plays a minor role within Estonia because the titular population speaks Estonian. Survey data for an integration report among Russian-speakers explored the degree to which Russian-speakers speak Estonian.<sup>61</sup> The data is split between age groups, which differ in terms of response, but generally speaking the number of Russian-speakers who speak Estonian freely is small. While use and knowledge of Estonian is growing amongst the younger generations, a limited to non-existent knowledge of Estonia is still common amongst the majority of Russian-speakers.



**Figure 4: Levels of Estonian Knowledge amongst Russian-Speakers**

Citizenship status is another important consideration. The lack of Estonian citizenship was a greater issue concerning the Russian-speaking minority immediately after independence,

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<sup>61</sup> Raivo Vetik et al., “Estonian Monitoring 2015” (Ministry of Culture, 2015).

due to Estonian governmental policy that required Russian-speakers to pass a citizenship exam with a stringent Estonian language component. Today, however, even though such requirements have loosened and generally citizenship requirements have become less strict, many Russian-speakers within in Estonia still lack citizenship. As shown in the graph, currently only 85 percent of Russian-speakers in Estonia have Estonian citizenship, which is a substantial increase from 67.8 in 1992.<sup>62</sup>

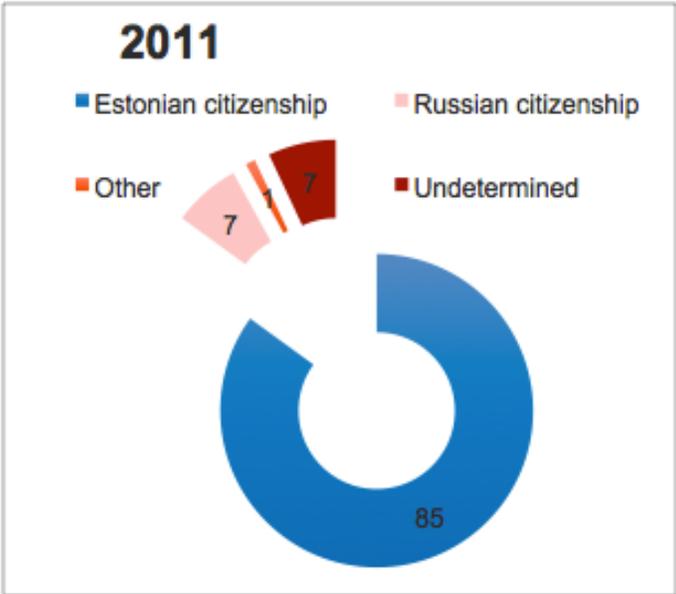


Figure 5: Citizenship within the Russian-Speaking Minority

Beyond citizenship, it is important to consider how the Russian-speaking minority perceives Estonia, Russia, and international organizations. Public opinion surveys performed in 2014 asked whether both Estonians and Russian-speakers within Estonia would defend their

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<sup>62</sup> Raivo Vetik et al., "Estonian Monitoring 2015" (Ministry of Culture, 2015).

country in the case of attack by a foreign power.<sup>63</sup> Their findings were that 43 percent of Estonians would “definitely” put up armed resistance and 43 percent would “probably”. In comparison Russian-speakers responded with 30 percent saying they would “definitely” and 52 percent with “probably”, signifying a majority of the Russian-speaking population would defend their country. An important note is that among older generations of Russian-speakers these numbers were dramatically lower.<sup>64</sup>

Within this same survey, Estonians and Russian-speakers were asked to list the most important relationships that Estonia could have to provide defense. The most common responses among Estonians were NATO (78%), developing Estonia’s own military capability (47%), and the EU (27%). Russians-speakers’ most common responses were cooperation and good relations with Russia (53%), NATO (43%), and developing Estonia’s own military capability (41%). Interestingly, 37 percent of Russian-speakers responded that the EU was an important relationship, 10 percent higher than Estonians.<sup>65</sup>

Another public opinion survey asked Estonians and Russian-speakers to rank their feelings of tolerance to each other.<sup>66</sup> In this survey 55 percent of Russian-speakers reported that they had high tolerance towards Estonians. 40 percent responded that they had average tolerance, and only 5 percent responded that they had low tolerance towards Estonians. Only 28 percent of Estonians in turn reported that they had high tolerance towards Russian-speakers. Russian-

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<sup>63</sup> Juhan Kivirahk, “Integrating Estonia’s Russian-Speaking Population: Findings of National Defense Opinion Surveys” (Estonia: International Centre for Defense and Security, 2014), [https://www.icds.ee/fileadmin/media/icds.ee/failid/Juhan\\_Kivirahk\\_Integrating\\_Estonia\\_s\\_Russian-Speaking\\_Population.pdf](https://www.icds.ee/fileadmin/media/icds.ee/failid/Juhan_Kivirahk_Integrating_Estonia_s_Russian-Speaking_Population.pdf).

<sup>64</sup> Juhan Kivirahk.

<sup>65</sup> Juhan Kivirahk.

<sup>66</sup> Kulliki Korts, “Ethnic Attitudes and Contacts Between Ethnic Groups in Estonia,” *Journal of Baltic Studies* 40, no. 1 (2009).

speakers, therefore, have on average much higher levels of tolerance towards Estonians than Estonians do towards Russian-speakers.<sup>67</sup>

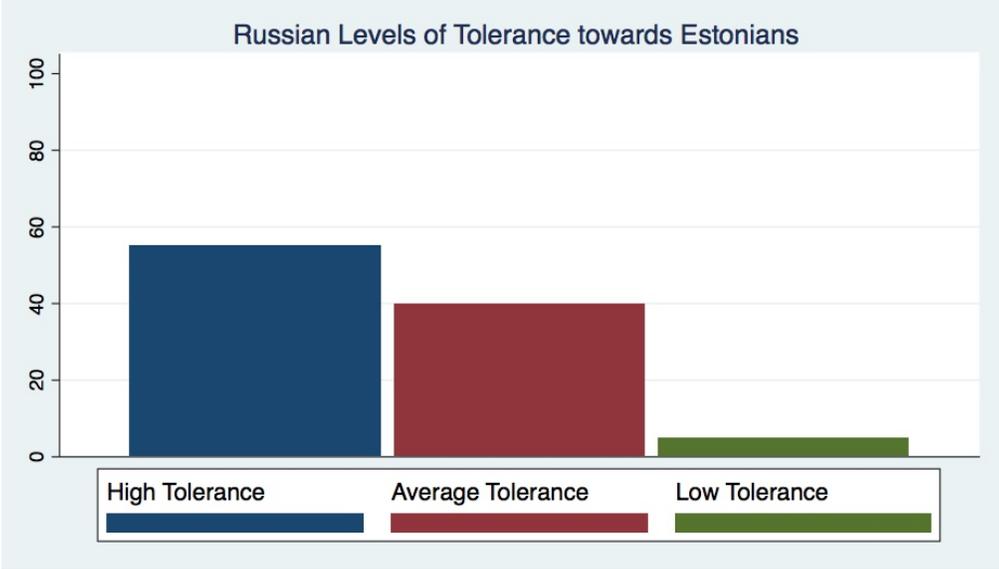


Figure 6: Russian-Speakers' Levels of Tolerance towards Estonians

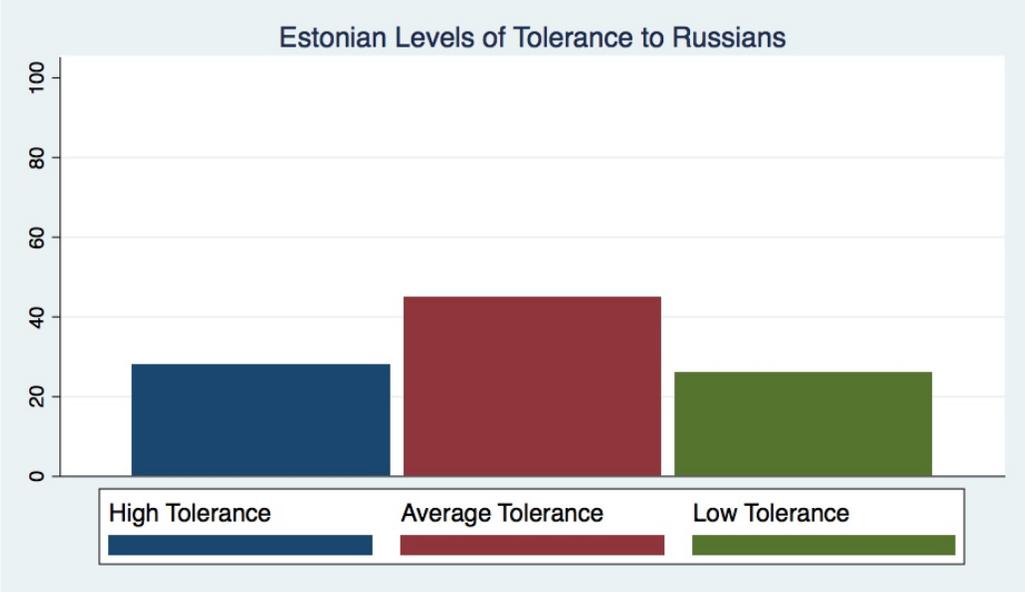


Figure 7: Estonians' Levels of Tolerance towards Russian-Speakers

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<sup>67</sup> Kulliki Korts.

Broadly speaking, an interesting environment has developed for the Russian-speaking minority within Estonia. The population itself is concentrated in a few specific areas and accounts for a quarter of the overall population. Linguistically speaking, the Russian language is still predominant within the minority community. While Estonian language usage is growing, it is evident that the Russian-speaking minority has created certain linguistic communities independent of the Estonian language. In terms of public opinion data, Russian-speakers have high opinions of both the EU and Russia, would defend Estonia in case of invasion, and have a high tolerance towards Estonians. This dynamic is remarkable to compare with the Russian-speaking minority within Kyrgyzstan.



**Figure 8: Population Percentage of Russian-Speakers in Kyrgyzstan**

In Kyrgyzstan the Russian-speaking minority size has fallen dramatically since the dissolution of the Soviet Union and now comprises only a small portion of the overall population. Census data shows that only 6.4 percent of the overall population currently identifies

as Russian-speaking.<sup>68</sup> Russian-speakers are the third largest minority behind Uzbeks, but are not a significant portion of the population. Geographically, the minority is concentrated heavily within the capital, Bishkek, as opposed to a particular region or throughout the country.<sup>69</sup> From this evidence it would seem that Russian-speakers and the Russian language are not particularly notable within Kyrgyzstan. Examining linguistic preference within the country, however, contradicts this conclusion.

Census data demonstrates that within Kyrgyzstan, Kyrgyz is the main language spoken.<sup>70</sup> This is logical considering it is the language of the titular population. The surprising result though, is that Russian is spoken by 67 percent of the population. This is a significant portion of the population in comparison to the six percent that identifies as Russian-speaking. This suggests an entirely different environment from Estonia, with a significantly sized Russian-speaking population, but minor role for the Russian language. The Russian-speaking minority in Kyrgyzstan may be small and concentrated within one city, but the language itself enjoys popular use throughout the country. Already the divergence between these groups can be seen.

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<sup>68</sup> Population and Housing Census of the Kyrgyz Republic of 2009” (National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2009), <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sources/census/wphc/Kyrgyzstan/A5-2PopulationAndHousingCensusOfTheKyrgyzRepublicOf2009.pdf>.

<sup>69</sup> “Population and Housing Census of the Kyrgyz Republic of 2009.”

<sup>70</sup> Population and Housing Census of the Kyrgyz Republic of 2009.”



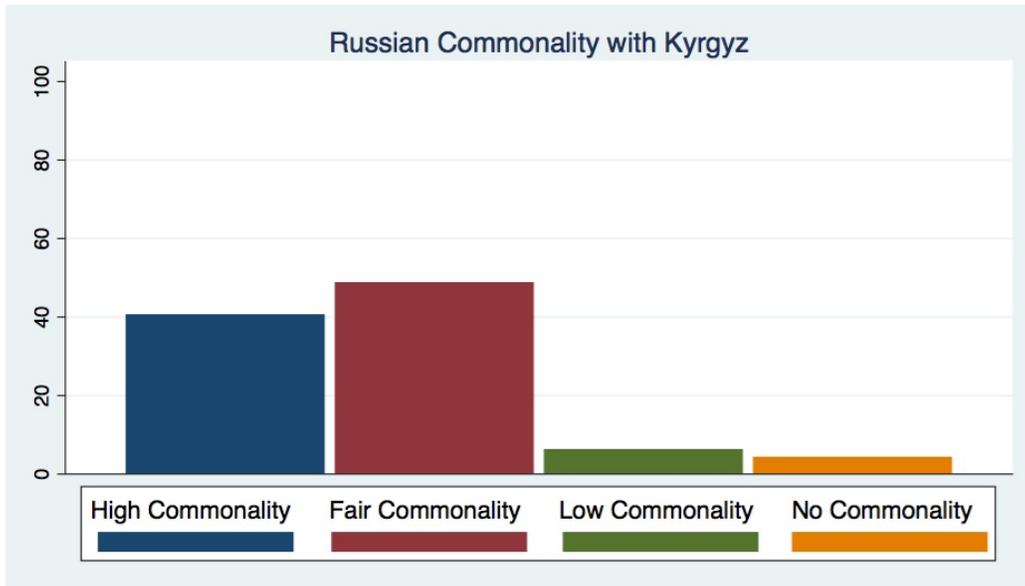
**Figure 9: Languages Used in Kyrgyzstan**

Public opinion data within Kyrgyzstan concerning the Russian-speaking minority is rare, most probably due to the small size of the population. One study, however, was gathered to measure attitudes towards Russia and Russian actions within Crimea.<sup>71</sup> Although this study does not specify the ethnicity of respondents, it is useful for gauging opinions about the Russian Federation broadly and perhaps subsequently, attitudes towards Russians in general. In terms of “What the Crimean crisis is?”, 44 percent of respondents view it as the “joining of Crimea to Russia as a result of the referendum” and 33 percent see it as the “return of Crimea to the motherland”. Only ten percent view it as an annexation. In terms of “how they see Russia’s role in the crisis?”, 41 percent responded that Russia was the “defender of the rights of the Crimean people” and 21 percent as a “rescuer”. Only six percent viewed Russia as the aggressor, which indicates generally high support for Russia.

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<sup>71</sup> Kulpunai Barakanova, “The Kyrgyz Media’s Portrayal of the Crimean Crisis and Its Impact on Kyrgyz Public Opinion,” *MANAS Journal of Social Studies* 4, no. 4 (2015).

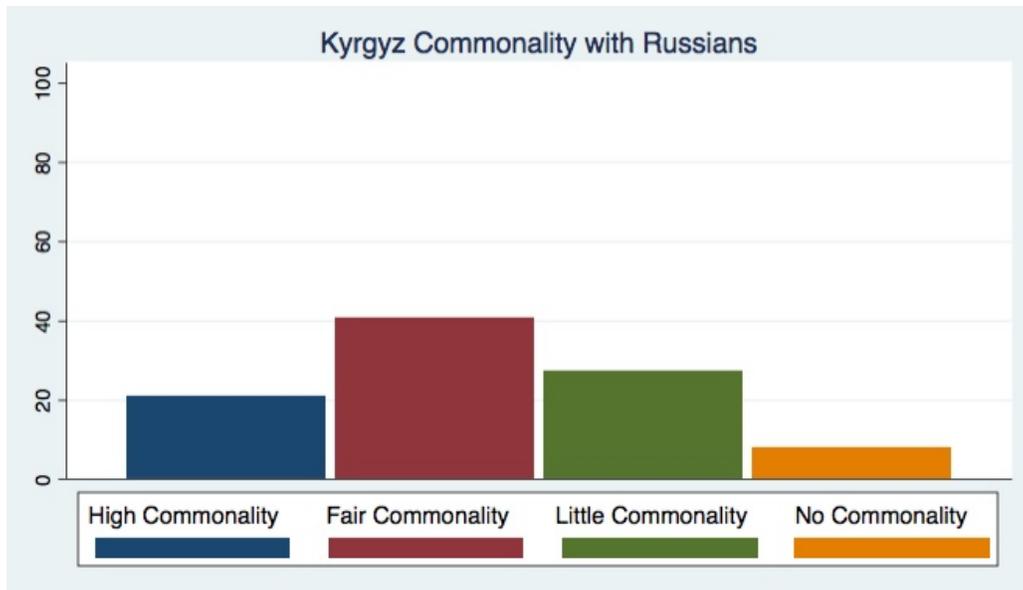
Another public opinion survey examined how different ethnic groups within Kyrgyzstan perceive each other, in terms of how much they found in common with other groups.<sup>72</sup> This survey found that 40 percent of Russian-speakers believe that have a great deal in common with Kyrgyz while 48 percent believe that have a fair amount in common with Kyrgyz. Only six percent believed they had little in common with Kyrgyz. Among Kyrgyz respondents, however, only 24 percent believed they had a great deal in common with Russian-speakers and 40 believed they had a fair amount in common. Finally, 27 percent believed they had little in common with Russian-speakers. This asymmetrical relationship suggests that Russian-speakers have a favorable opinion of Kyrgyz, but Kyrgyz have a less favorable opinion in turn.



**Figure 10: Russian-Speakers Cultural Commonality with Kyrgyz**

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<sup>72</sup> Regina Faranda and B. David Nolle, “Boundaries of Ethnic Identity in Central Asia: Titular and Russian Perceptions of Ethnic Commonalities in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, no. 4 (2011).

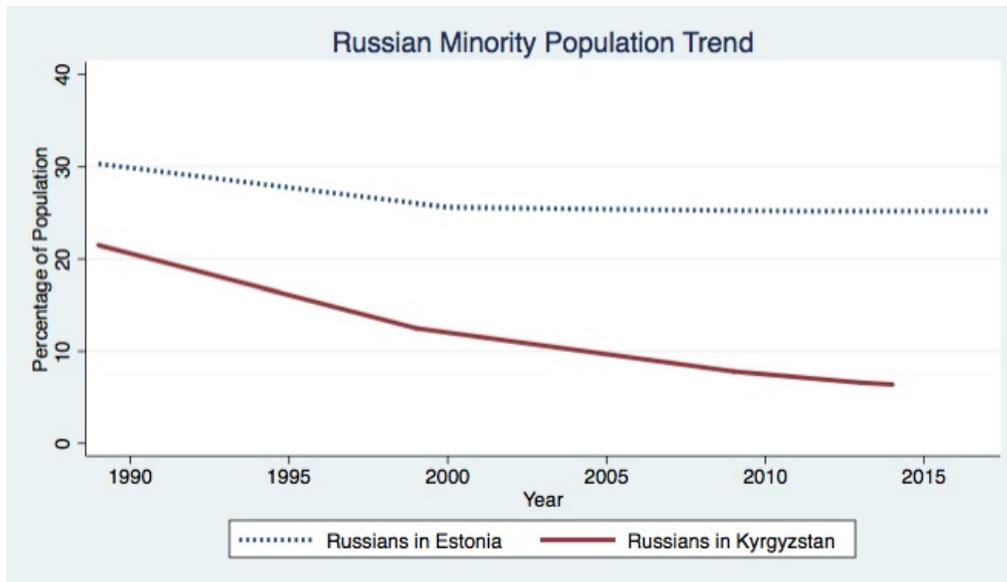


**Figure 11: Kyrgyz Cultural Commonality with Russian-Speakers**

I also examine the population trends for both Russian-speaking minorities in both cases over time because the immigration and emigration levels since independence are important factors. Starting in 1989 and continuing until the most recent censuses, the Russian-speaking minority has declined in both Estonia and Kyrgyzstan, but at dramatically different rates.<sup>73</sup> Originally both populations were larger than they are today. Estonia's Russian-speaking minority began at around 30 percent of the population, but dropped during the 90's to around 25 percent. In Kyrgyzstan, however, the population was originally around 20 percent, similar to modern Estonia, but has dropped to a little over six percent. This differentiates completely from Estonia.

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<sup>73</sup> "Population and Housing Census." (Estonia Statistics).; "Population and Housing Census of the Kyrgyz Republic of 2009."



**Figure 12: Russian-Speaking Population Trend**

In Estonia the Russian-speaking population dropped slightly after the dissolution of the USSR, but then remained stable. Russian remained a primarily community based language in the Russian-speaking community and the minority maintains a sizeable enough presence in comparison to the titular population. In Kyrgyzstan though, the Russian-speaking minority emigrated from Kyrgyzstan dramatically after 1991 and has consistently declined ever since. With a smaller and smaller population, the Russian-speaking minority has become concentrated within a single city and lacks significance in comparison to the overall population of Kyrgyzstan. The Russian language, however, has retained its position within Kyrgyzstan despite the decline of the actual Russian-speaking minority. This trend demonstrates that something occurred to cause mass migration from Kyrgyzstan that did not occur within Estonia to the same degree. Although population decline and emigration do not necessarily correlate to the current minority population’s integration into society, it might be indicative of factors within Kyrgyzstan that are unattractive to the Russian-speaking population.

The economic climates of both Estonia and Kyrgyzstan might offer an explanation for this difference in emigration. I initially use the World Bank's data on GDP to compare economic climates. Estonia's nearly 23 billion dollar GDP is remarkably higher than Kyrgyzstan's, which is slightly above six billion dollars.<sup>74</sup> Of the two countries, Estonia is definitively the wealthier. GDP, however, is not always a good indicator of how an economic environment feels to the citizenry. GDP per capita can often be a more revealing statistic in terms of the effect of a country's wealth on individuals.<sup>75</sup> I also compare the economic environment within the Russian Federation as well because the Russian-speaking minority within Estonia lives along the border and is aware of the economic climate within Russia. Also, the high level of emigration of Russian-speakers from Kyrgyzstan back to Russia suggests that the Russian economy should be considered.<sup>76</sup>

In terms of GDP per Capita PPP, Estonia has a stronger impact in regard to its economy's effect on its citizenry with a rate of around 18 thousand US dollars.<sup>77</sup> The Russian Federation has a significantly lower rate, below 10 thousand, having dropped dramatically around 2013. Finally, Kyrgyzstan has an incredibly low rate, just below two thousand. Just from this data alone it would seem that for the average individual, Estonia offers the best economic environment. Russia follows behind Estonia and is ahead of Kyrgyzstan, whose economy is far behind the others. Whether the distribution of wealth is equitable is another important distinction.

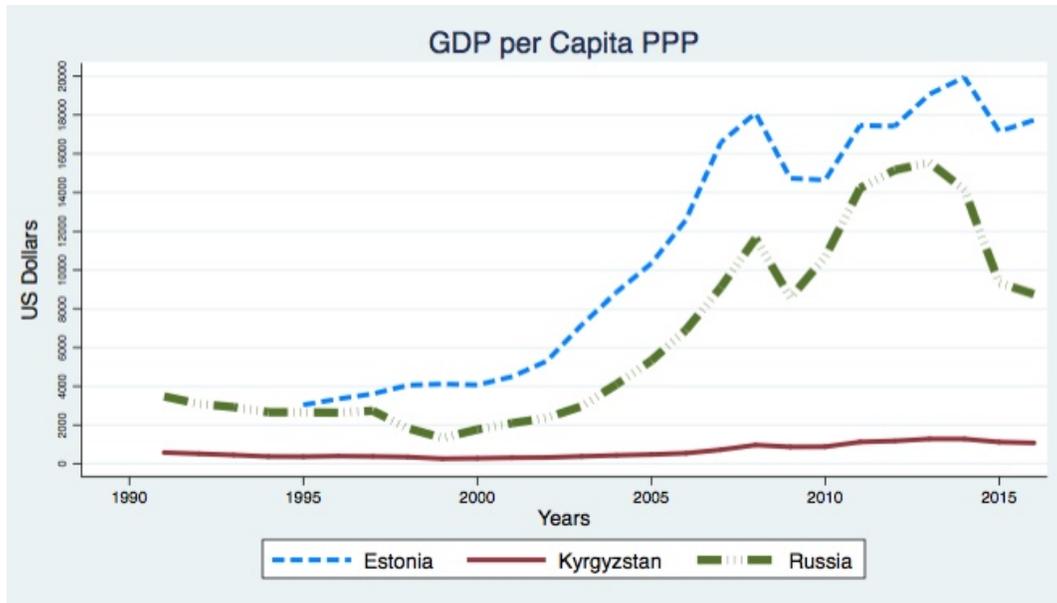
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<sup>74</sup> "Estonia" (World Bank, 2017), <https://data.worldbank.org/country/Estonia>.

<sup>75</sup> Khan Mehreen, "What Does GDP Really Tell Us about Economic Growth?," *The Telegraph*, October 15, 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/economics/11159277/What-does-GDP-really-tell-us-about-economic-growth.html>.

<sup>76</sup> Michele E. Commercio.

<sup>77</sup> "GDP per Capita (Current US\$)" (World Bank, 2017), <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=EE-KG-RU>.



**Figure 13: GDP per Capita PPP**

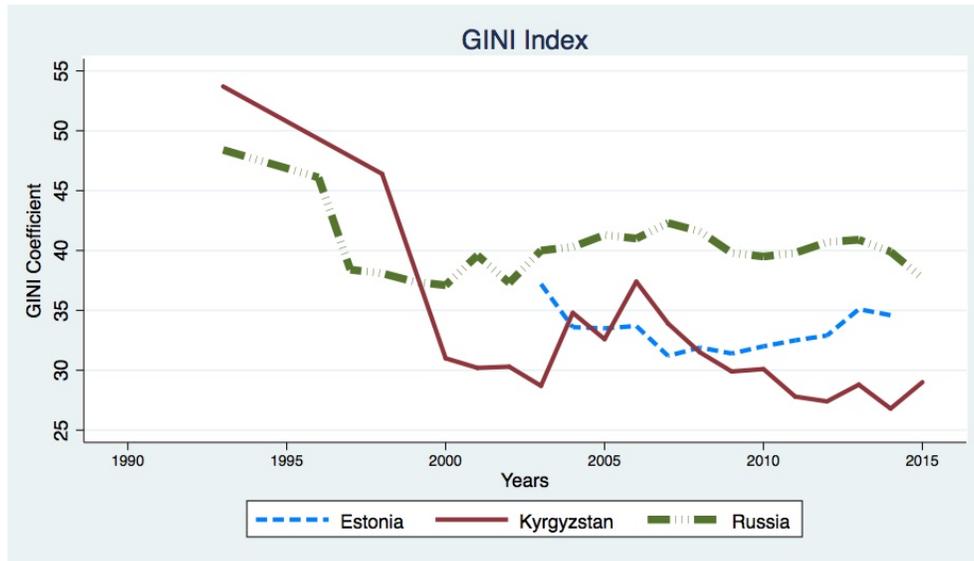
GINI index describes how equitable the distribution of wealth is within a country.<sup>78</sup> Russia has the highest GINI coefficient, meaning that wealth in Russian is less equitably distributed than in Estonia or Kyrgyzstan.<sup>79</sup> Estonia subsequently has a higher coefficient than Kyrgyzstan, which suggests that wealth in Estonia is less equitably distributed than in Kyrgyzstan. This might indicate that Russian-speakers in Kyrgyzstan benefit from their economy more so than Russian-speakers in Kyrgyzstan. This might be corroborated by fact that high paying jobs in Estonia often require a proficient level of Estonian, but the vast majority of Russian-speakers do not speak Estonian. In contrast, the majority of people in Kyrgyzstan speak Russian and high paying jobs typically only require knowledge of Russian. The large downturn in Kyrgyzstan's GINI coefficient in the late 90's, however, indicates another variable might

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<sup>78</sup>Markus Brueckner and Daniel Lederman, "Inequality and GDP per Capita: The Role of Initial Income," *World Bank*, no. 2 (2017).

<sup>79</sup> "GINI Index (World Bank Estimate)" (World Bank, 2017), <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI?locations=EE-KG-RU>.

cause this phenomenon. Regardless, GINI index does not specify whether wealth is equitably distributed to minorities, so a more specific analysis is needed.



**Figure 14: GINI Index**

Considering all the quantitative data, the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia differs on the dimensions of integration from the Russian-speaking minority in Kyrgyzstan. In terms of cultural integration, the low level of Estonian language proficiency indicates low integration. Socially, the segregated communities also suggest low integration, although the high degree of tolerance amongst the minority population towards Estonians does suggest slightly higher levels. In terms of structural integration, the lack of citizenship for some members of the minority community indicates low integration, but a more thorough exploration of access to major societal institutions is needed. As for identificational, the high percentage of minority members who value a cooperative relationship with Russia might suggest identification with Russia, although this may not necessarily correlate to low identification levels within Estonia. The fact that more Russian-speakers than Estonians value European Union membership and that so many would

defend Estonia in case of foreign attack, indicates that a closer analysis of identificational integration is needed, especially considering the lack of emigration after independence. The effect of the relatively superior economic position also requires a closer analysis.

In contrast, the Russian-speaking minority in Kyrgyzstan has significantly different levels of integration in each dimension. Regarding cultural integration, while the Russian-speaking minority has avoided learning the Kyrgyz language, the titular population's use of Russian still suggests high cultural integration. The high perception of commonality with Kyrgyz also increases this effect. It also demonstrates high social integration, which is strengthened by the fact that Russian-speakers live alongside Kyrgyz within Bishkek and not within segregated communities. Regarding structural integration, all Russian-speakers in Kyrgyzstan have citizenship, but further analysis is needed before any conclusion can be reached. In terms of identificational integration, it is difficult to say from the data available, but high levels of emigration suggest a strong preference for other national residencies. This tendency, however, does not describe the remaining minority population. High levels of support for the Russian Federation, support for Russian actions in Crimea, and high levels of Russian language usage outside of the Russian-speaking minority, however, suggests Kyrgyzstan is accommodating of Russian-speakers. The effect of the relatively inferior economic position in comparison to Russia, however, necessitates further examination.

To help explore causal mechanisms and to understand why integration is higher in Kyrgyzstan, I will rely on my original qualitative data. These reinforce the quantitative findings and explore the effect of economic climate on the various dimensions of integration. They also explore the implications suggested by the descriptive statistics and allow for greater exploration into areas that the quantitative data was unable to properly analyze.

## **7.0 EVIDENCE AND RESULTS: QUALITATIVE DATA**

### **7.1 ESTONIA: INTERVIEWS AND RESULTS**

In terms of demographics, the vast majority of all respondents were middle-aged with some young adults. Almost all were the second generation of their family to be in Estonia, with their parents having moved sometime during the Soviet Union, which is consistent with the overall trend of Russian-speaker's migration to Estonia during that period. Some respondents claimed their families had been in Estonia since the start of the century, but they were by far the minority. Every respondent had family in Russia currently, either who had always been there or who had chosen to move back to Russia after 1991. In asking why their family decided to stay in Estonia after 1991, every respondent said they did so because either they or their parents had jobs in Estonia that they wanted to keep.

The majority of my respondents had an Estonian passport. A few had Russian passports and only one had an "Alien's" passport without citizenship. Notably, however, some of the respondents with an Estonian passport also had a Russian passport, which is technically illegal but simplifies the process of crossing over to Ivangorod. Generally, respondents with Estonian passports were pleased to have them because of the access they received to Europe and around the world. Ironically, however, the one person I interviewed with an Alien's passport and the few with illegal dual passports, were happy because they had access to everything from Vladivostok

to Portugal. As one respondent with both an Estonian and Russian passport put it, “It’s nice to travel freely within Europe. For example, my friends and I are going to Germany soon. But whenever I want to visit my grandmother and family in Russia I can do that without problems. Its very convenient”.<sup>80</sup> This demonstrates the practicality of having both passports, a similar practicality to having an Alien’s passport. Respondents with dual passport or an Alien’s passport were by far the minority in comparison to Estonian passport holders, but ironically this minority might actually benefit more than the majority in terms of travel options.

Linguistically, each respondent spoke Russian as his or her primary language both at home and in the community. Since Russian is the primary means of communication, this was not surprising. Whether the individual spoke Estonian, however, differed on a case-by-case basis. Every respondent besides one said they spoke some Estonian, but what “some” meant varied from near fluency to knowing a few words. The main tendency I noticed was that the knowledge of Estonian depended highly on age and professional goals. Older Russian-speakers within Estonia typically spoke little to no Estonian. This was because they had had little interaction with Estonians and their jobs did not require any knowledge of Estonian. Also, the majority of their lives within Estonia were during the Soviet Union and so they were not required to learn Estonian while in school. Younger generations, however, spoke more Estonian because Estonian is more common in the education process within Estonian schools today. That being said, younger generation Russian-speakers are typically more multi-lingual in general. When I asked one respondent what language she and her children spoke she replied, “{I speak} Russian,

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<sup>80</sup> Interview #11-Estonia

although my son speaks another four languages, my daughter five, and my second daughter an additional three.”<sup>81</sup>

Generally speaking, the predominant opinion of my respondents was that Russian, Estonian, and English were the most important languages to be successful in Estonia, but the order of that importance depended on the individual. Russian-speakers who were interested in working in or living in non-Russian speaking areas in Estonia saw Estonian as a necessity, which is true for work within the public sector. This is especially true of Russian-speakers who wanted to pursue higher education within Estonia, which is instructed in Estonian. Interestingly, some younger Russian-speakers were uninterested in learning Estonian because they wanted to go to college within the Russian Federation and therefore saw no advantage to learning Estonian. Some respondents believed that English was the most useful language after Russian because Estonia is mostly bi-lingual between English and Estonian. Also, English opens more doors professionally and academically in other European countries, whereas Estonian has a small speaking population in comparison. As one respondent put it, when asked which languages are important for success in Estonia, “Russian because it is our native language, but also English and either German or French. <...> if you live here though, Estonian is important, but if you don’t live here, it’s not necessary.”<sup>82</sup> Each respondent saw Russian as important for living in Narva, communicating with family, and key to their identity as a Russian-speaker. Whether they saw another language as useful depended on their personal professional and academic goals.

In terms of economic barriers my respondents did not see any overt discrimination against them specifically because they were Russian-speaking, which differentiates from Latin’s

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<sup>81</sup> Interview #4-Estonia

<sup>82</sup> Interview #5- Estonia

results in the early 90s.<sup>83</sup> Much like with regards to linguistic preferences, they were aware that the languages they chose dictated where and to what degree they could find work and be successful. One respondent believed that English and German were the most important languages for success in general, but when I asked if there are opportunities for people who only speak Russian within Estonia specifically, she said, “Not very many. With just Russian you can find simple work in Narva, but for higher positions it would be difficult. Often there’s a necessity for Estonian.”<sup>84</sup> It is important to mention here, however, that Narva is considerably less developed than either Tallinn or Tartu, the other two largest cities in Estonia. Narva is predominantly comprised of old Soviet architecture and the city in general feels completely distinct from the rest of the country, as if it does not receive an equitable portion of Estonia’s economic wealth.<sup>85</sup> Not one respondent, however, saw major economic barriers to their lives specifically because of their minority status. They understand that the Russian language was only a viable professional language within Narva and that on average work was harder to find in Narva than in the rest of Estonia.

This response changes somewhat in regards to political barriers, which were brought up much less. Respondents were aware of anti-Russian policies adopted by the Estonian government, especially citizenship policies in the past, but few were particularly concerned. Some were frustrated at the lack of Russian-speaking members of government, believing it not be proportional to the percentage of Estonia’s population that is Russian-speaking. Generally, few respondents had political grievances within Estonia. An issue that respondents did bring up

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<sup>83</sup> David D. Laitin.

<sup>84</sup> Interview #9-Estonia

<sup>85</sup> This is largely my personal observation from being in Narva and travelling to other Estonian cities.

though, was the use of Estonian for political speeches and addresses within Narva. I witnessed this myself when several Russian-speakers heckled the Mayor of Narva during Ivana Kupala day, a local holiday, for speaking in Estonian to address the crowd.

Mayor: \*addressing the crowd in Estonian.

Russian man: “Мы Русские! Мы Русские! По-русский говорить! (We are Russian! We are Russian! Speak in Russian!)

Mayor: \*switches address into Russian. <sup>86</sup>

Besides this, most of my respondents did not see political barriers as an issue because at the local level they did not perceive political or linguistic discrimination. From these findings I began to notice an interesting concept develop: Narva was separate from Estonia.

I first noticed this trend when I was speaking to some Russian-speaking friends about going to Tallinn. They responded, laughing, that I “was going to Estonia.”<sup>87</sup> The citizenry of Narva overwhelmingly identifies more strongly with Narva and than with Estonia. They are seemingly comfortable with disassociating their local community from Estonia and the Russian Federation both. Their unique position as a Russian-speaking community within Estonia, but separate from Russia, has created a populace who define themselves in similar terms.

This local identification is important for discussing how respondents relate to actions in Ukraine and overall to the Federation. Surprisingly, only one respondent felt passionate about the civil war in Ukraine. He loudly extolled his support for the annexation of Crimea and Putin:

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<sup>86</sup> Ivan Kupala Day recorded occurrence

<sup>87</sup> Conversation I had with friends

I absolutely support what Putin did in Crimea. Absolutely... practically the entire Russian speaking population in Narva is for Putin, who is a hero, simply a hero. Where there is Putin, there is victory. This is a fact. I admire Putin and I believe that if Estonia had a leader like Putin we would already be living as if we were in Switzerland.<sup>88</sup>

Contrary to his opinion, every other respondent either simply recognized the complexity of the situation or was completely apathetic to it. One interesting response I received was “Ukraine is Ukraine but Narva is Narva”.<sup>89</sup> Another, more detailed response was simply, “Has it influenced the minority here? Yes, everyone has an opinion. Some say this is right. Others say something else is right. Or that this is good, no this is good. Creating a balance in viewpoint is difficult and politics are always complicated.”<sup>90</sup> These two quotes seemingly sum up the predominant opinions, which is either that events in Ukraine has little to no impact on Narva or that the issue is simply a complicated political issue on which Narva does not have a homogenous view. The apathetic response was more common among younger respondents who seemed almost entirely apathetic, whereas older respondents would often acknowledge the complexity, but not give an opinion on which side they supported. I see this reaction as a consequence of Narva self-identifying at the local level, as opposed to with the Russian diaspora or Russia broadly.

This becomes even more apparent when I explored the relationship people had to the Russian Federation. Again only one respondent, the same pro-Putin respondent, spoke

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<sup>88</sup> Interview #6- Estonia

<sup>89</sup> Interview #7-Estonia

<sup>90</sup> Interview #10- Estonia

passionately about his love for and identification with the Russian Federation. All others had very nuanced relationships with Russia. As self-identifying Russians, each saw Russia as important to them. It was where their family was from, where their family currently lives, and generally their “родина” or homeland, which does not necessarily denote political identification. Beyond that, however, my respondents preferred being Russian-speakers in Estonia to being Russians in Russia. Often they felt that identifying as Russian culturally was enough, but because the economy in Estonia was much better and the opportunities through the EU more plentiful, it was beneficial to be an Estonian Russian, or Baltic Russians. One respondent was just happy that he could walk to Ivangorod, the Russian city across the bridge, to buy cigarettes, saying humorously, “They {cigarettes} are much cheaper there, so I go over once a week to buy a few cartons. Therefore I like Russia.”<sup>91</sup>

An important point here is that Russian-speakers within Narva are aware of the poorer economic conditions within Ivangorod.<sup>92</sup> Considering the fluidity of the border, they can and often do travel to their neighbor city within the Federation. They see first hand how beneficial living in Estonia is in an economic sense. My interview respondents generally reinforced the fact that Russian-speakers in Narva are content to be just that: Narvan Russians. They have little desire to live in Russia, but also have little desire to identify specifically as Estonian, content to identify with both to separate degrees. As one respondent said:

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<sup>91</sup> Interview #2- Estonia

<sup>92</sup> Andrew Higgins, “Two Border Cities Share Russian History—and a Sharp European Divide,” *New York Times*, November 9, 2017.

Russia is my homeland. It's where I was born and it's a beautiful country. I can say little negative about it. Estonia is my second homeland. I live here now and my children are Estonian (citizens). So this is my home, while Russia is my homeland.<sup>93</sup>

In the final portion of my interview I attempted to learn how my respondents viewed the Estonian majority and generally how they would categorize the relationship between the two groups. This tended to follow the along same lines as previous explorations. No one explicitly had issues with Estonians and some had a few Estonian friends or even Estonian family with whom they interacted regularly. As for the overall characterization, the common response was that the two groups had little in the form of a relationship, but that what relationship exists is positive. One response was "I have many Estonian acquaintances. My relationship to them is very respectful. They are wonderful people. <...> Russians understand Estonians and Estonians understand Russians."<sup>94</sup> While not necessarily very positive, this statement demonstrates that the relationship between the two groups is more positive than negative. This again reinforces my previous findings of local identification. Russian-speakers within Estonia have no issue with Estonians, but simply do not interact with them frequently. The communities, both Estonian and Russian-speaking, are fairly separate, at least from the perspective of the Russian-speaking minority in Narva. This separation allows the Russian-speaking minority to somewhat disregard the Estonian majority, seeing no reason to have strong opinions about those who have little to no impact on their lives or community as a whole.

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<sup>93</sup> Interview #10- Estonia

<sup>94</sup> Interview #6- Estonia

These were the general tendencies that I found throughout my interviews in Estonia. I believe that these tendencies are notable and help describe the integration of the Russian-speaking minority within Estonia. Admittedly because I only performed research within Narva, these findings may differ from those Russian-speakers living in Tallinn or Tartu. Since the majority of the Russian-speaking minority lives within Narva or the surrounding area, however, I believe my findings are an accurate portrayal of the minority as a whole. These findings seem to corroborate the large-scale quantitative findings at least in terms of demographics. Most Russian-speakers came to Narva during the Soviet period, some still do not have Estonian citizenship, and some stateless citizens still exist.

Specifically examining the effect of political institutions and economic climate on Narva reveals interesting trends. Generally, Narvans feel comfortable within the Estonian economy and do not see any overt discrimination in terms of wealth distribution, although it is simply a visible fact that Narva is less developed as a city than other cities. In terms of politics, Narvans are aware of discriminatory tendencies on the national scale, specifically earlier citizenship policies, and critical of some Estonian governmental policies on the local level, but overall are content within their community. Linguistically, the Russian-speaking population has continued to use Russian as their primary language, but choose other languages to learn depending on their personal goals and ambitions, thereby preventing any specific resentment of linguistic policy.

In terms of how they relate to external events in Ukraine and the Federation, they are for the most part indifferent. In fact, this local identification and general indifference to both Estonia as a whole but also Russia, is an important characteristic. They are typically indifferent to Ukraine and Crimea because they do not identify with the larger Russian-speaking diaspora or choose not to take a specific side. They see Russia as important culturally to their identification

and often important because they have family in the Federation, but prefer to be in Estonia due to the better economy or their familial connections. In terms of politics, economics, and international relations the Russian-speaking minority in Narva is content to identify locally, receiving the benefits of their unique position. Any detrimental aspects such as weaker economic situation in comparison to the Estonian majority, they see as solvable through studying English or German.

One cannot classify this minority as a highly integrated community because it sees itself as distinct and separate, which geographically speaking is true. Even in terms of ethnic relations, a slightly positive but largely apathetic relationship to the Estonian majority is the most common perception. The Russian-speaking minority within Estonia, therefore, has not integrated well in terms of cultural or social integration. This does not, however, mean that it is dissatisfied in Estonia. The minority is absolutely content to be distinct from, but still a part of Estonia. I found little political and economic resentment, linguistic frustrations, or any sense of irredentism in my research. This speaks to high levels of structural and identificational integration, although at the community level. The effect this has on attitudes towards Estonia, however, is still positive. This is interesting to Comparing another Russian-speaking minority in a country with different political institutions and a different economic climate better isolates the effect these variables have on integration.

## 7.2 KYRGYZSTAN: INTERVIEWS AND RESULTS

In terms of demographics every one of my respondents was at least a third generation citizen of Kyrgyzstan and split between young adults and middle aged. Some of their families had been in Kyrgyzstan since the beginning of the colonial period while others had moved to Kyrgyzstan during the existence of the Soviet Union, but unlike in Estonia, there was no overwhelming trend of immigration during a specific time. In terms of citizenship, every respondent was a Kyrgyz citizen, which is logical considering the lack of barriers to receiving citizenship for Russian-speakers following independence in 1991. My respondents typically had family within Russia and could visit them easily because of the relaxed passport restrictions for Kyrgyz citizens who want to travel to the Russian Federation

Linguistically, every respondent used Russian as his or her primary language. Few had any command of the Kyrgyz language greater than a basic knowledge. This is despite the fact that every respondent admitted to studying Kyrgyz for a few years while in school. Typically respondents explained this by stating that Kyrgyz is simply not a useful language for them in Kyrgyzstan, which is consistent with other research.<sup>95</sup> When I asked one respondent if she spoke Kyrgyz she laughed out loud and then said, “No. I understand Kyrgyz but do not speak. <...> In Bishkek typically Russian do not speak Kyrgyz because it is unnecessary. All people speak Russian here.”<sup>96</sup> Since Russian-speakers live in Bishkek there are rarely instances where other people, regardless of ethnicity, do not speak Russian fluently. Although the surrounding areas and rural areas of Kyrgyzstan predominantly speak Kyrgyz, for the Russian-speaking minority

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<sup>95</sup> Siarl Ferdinand and Flora Komlosi, “Vitality of the Kyrgyz Language in Bishkek,” *International Journal of Russian Studies*, no. 5 (2016).

<sup>96</sup> Interview #14-Kyrgyzstan

located within Bishkek, Kyrgyz simply has little use. In fact, many respondents replied humorously as to whether they spoke Kyrgyz, joking how despite learning it in school they have forgotten all but simple phrases. Within Bishkek, therefore, it is obvious both from my own experiences and my respondents' that Russian is the most useful language.

When specifically asked which languages are necessary to be successful in Kyrgyzstan, every respondent responded with Russian as his or her first choice. Typically, English was the second language listed, due to the inherent benefits to learning the most popular global language, which has grown in popularity within Bishkek as well, especially among younger generations. Kyrgyz was listed only in the context of government work. When I asked one respondent which language was the most useful to be successful in Kyrgyzstan he said "English and Russian", but after I asked about Kyrgyz he said:

If you want to work in the government, then yes, but because of globalization English is the more useful language. If you speak Kyrgyz you can be successful in Kyrgyzstan, but you can do that with Russian too. If you speak English, the whole world opens to you.<sup>97</sup>

This respondent, much like every respondent, believed that Kyrgyz was beneficial for government work and so they agreed that people interested in that area should learn Kyrgyz. This was especially true and logical among my respondents who worked within the government, as they reportedly repeatedly took tests to prove they had a rudimentary knowledge of Kyrgyz. They too, however, agreed that the language had little practical use outside of this area. Higher education, upper level jobs, and practically any other position within Kyrgyzstan could be

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<sup>97</sup> Interview #10-Kyrgyzstan

obtained with only Russian. Also because Russian remains a main language of communication throughout Central Asia, it has largely retained its position. An interesting dynamic is that Russian is still only spoken in major cities, but this is generally accepted because the Russian-speaking minority has no interest in living within rural Kyrgyzstan or if they do, they visit family within Russian-speaking dominated villages. As one respondent put it though, “in the country people know Russian poorly so Kyrgyz is needed, but not in Bishkek where most Russians are.”<sup>98</sup>

An important difference in my interviews in Kyrgyzstan from my interviews in Estonia was that I did not have a single respondent report that they saw any economic or political discrimination against the Russian-speaking minority. Some were frustrated with the high levels of corruption perceived within the government and generally worried about low levels of economic growth, but this is hardly unique to the minority and is true for any citizen of Kyrgyzstan. One respondent summed up the general opinion in her response to whether speaking Russian was sufficient to live in Kyrgyzstan by saying, “My parents are Russian and only speak Russian. They live normally here and work normally here. There are no problems for them.”<sup>99</sup>

Whether or not opportunities have changed for the Russian-speaking minority over time, there was some difference in responses. This was mostly due to a generational divide, however, as younger respondents seemed more optimistic about the current climate and culture. For example, one younger respondent who stated:

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<sup>98</sup> Interview #15- Kyrgyzstan

<sup>99</sup> Interview #9- Kyrgyzstan

During the Soviet Union, for example, in 1994, things were far less open. Today, everything is more open, so there are more foreign products and interactions with foreign companies. So, in general, more opportunities are available.<sup>100</sup>

Contrary to this, older generations typically spoke about how there are less public goods available now than when they lived in the Soviet Union. This would be consistent with generational tendencies broadly, since older generations would have experienced far more in terms of public goods when Kyrgyzstan was a Soviet Republic and younger generations would have little concept of that period. Interestingly, older respondents typically talked about how pretty Bishkek used to be, such as one elderly respondent who said, “Bishkek used to be the greenest city in the Soviet Union. After the Soviet Union though, all the trees were cut down.”<sup>101</sup> During the Soviet period, Bishkek was considered very beautiful because of the pure air, mountain views, and many green trees throughout the city. After independence, however, many trees were cut down, factories polluted the air, hiding the mountain views, and the city itself became one of the dirtiest and most polluted cities in the world.<sup>102</sup> It is obvious that things have changed since independence, but for those Russian-speakers who have stayed in Kyrgyzstan this change did not convince them to emigrate.

I focused a portion of my interviews in Kyrgyzstan on why each respondent or their family decided to remain within Kyrgyzstan when so many others decided to leave, especially considering the polluted city and poor economic climate. The responses were varied, ranging

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<sup>100</sup> Interview #5- Kyrgyzstan

<sup>101</sup> Interview #6- Kyrgyzstan

<sup>102</sup> “Bishkek among the World’s 30 Most Polluted Cities,” *Times of Central Asia*, July 30, 2013, <https://www.timesca.com/index.php/news/11714-bishkek-among-the-worlds-30-most-polluted-cities>.

from, “we were simply located here after independence, so why should we have left?”<sup>103</sup> to “my mother didn’t want to leave. She hates travelling and loved her Дача (summer home) here.”<sup>104</sup> Generally speaking, the latter response or variations of the latter response were the more common. In terms of identification, Russians-speaking in Kyrgyzstan typically identify as citizens of Kyrgyzstan, ethnically and culturally Russian, but definitively as natives of Kyrgyzstan. They consider Kyrgyzstan, not Russia, their home because their family has typically been within the country for multiple generations. While some responded that they remained in Kyrgyzstan for economic reasons, because either they or a family member had to stay for a job, this was by far less common response in comparison to the typical response that they wanted to stay in their home.

I saw this in their responses to my questions regarding Russia and Ukraine as well. Unsurprisingly, Russia played an important role for most respondents, but only in terms of cultural identity. As Russian-speakers they supported and liked the Russian Federation in the abstract. Few, however, stressed anything more and, unlike in Estonia, I did not interview anyone particularly passionate about Putin or Russia. One respondent simply said, “Russians are all different. We all came from Russia, but today we are everywhere and not alike at all.”<sup>105</sup> Regarding Crimea and Ukraine, the response was far more disparate than in Estonia, but I noticed some tendencies in Kyrgyzstan that I had also seen in Estonia. Again, a popular attitude was general indifference towards Ukraine and Crimea, as many saw themselves as entirely unconnected to the events. I received one response in particular that was incredibly similar to a response I had received in Estonia, “Ukraine is there, but Kyrgyzstan is here”. She continued by

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<sup>103</sup> Interview #13- Kyrgyzstan

<sup>104</sup> Interview #8- Kyrgyzstan

<sup>105</sup> Interview #12- Kyrgyzstan

saying, “When I was abroad in Turkey this subject was discussed more. You see, Ukraine is far way from here so there is little relationship to Ukraine.”<sup>106</sup>

Indifference, however, only accounted for around a third of the responses. After apathy, the responses typically trended in one of three directions: either pro-Ukraine, pro-Russia, or saw merit in both sides. An important note here is that while my respondents identify as Russian-speakers, few are entirely ethnically Russian. Many Russian-speakers in Kyrgyzstan are Ukrainian descendants or descendants from other former Soviet Republics as well. In fact, many of my respondents had Ukrainian family and Russian family members living in each respective country. Some respondents, therefore, were critical of Russia’s annexation of Crimea, seeing it as an overreach and illegal move into sovereign Ukrainian territory. Others believed that Russia had the right to interfere in Crimea, although were typically hesitant to say whether they supported separatists in the Ukrainian civil war. Many, however, were simply personally split on the issue because of their family ties to both countries. One respondent summarized the situation particularly aptly in saying:

The Russian minority is obviously aware of the events in Ukraine and Crimea. Everyone talks about it and finds it interesting, but different people have family either in Russia, in Ukraine, or in both. There isn’t one opinion or a common opinion within our community. That depends completely on the person. Did it affect us? No I do not think it affected us at all or our relationships.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Interview #8- Kyrgyzstan

<sup>107</sup> Interview #2- Kyrgyzstan

I think this accurately describes the Russian-speaking minority's relationship to Ukraine and Crimea in Kyrgyzstan. The community of Russian-speakers is simply too disparate to have any homogenous attitude towards these events.

The final portion of my interview process was to see how my respondents saw the Kyrgyz titular population personally and how they generally characterized relations between the two groups. Not one respondent had issues with Kyrgyz personally and many stated that they had Kyrgyz friends and colleagues. While I lived in Bishkek, I had noticed that it was rare to see Russians-speakers and Kyrgyz socializing together public. When I brought this up in interviews most respondents agreed that relationships between Russian-speakers and Kyrgyz are usually within the workplace, but some assured me they socialized with Kyrgyz friends outside of work. As one person responded, "There is no conflict between Russian-speaking and Kyrgyz. It is very common for them to be friends and work together. Just in my life, I personally work with and have formed friendships with many Kyrgyz."<sup>108</sup> No respondents characterized the relationship as anything other than positive.

There were, however, two stipulations I noticed in this response. One, while every respondent saw the overall relationship as positive, there was a tendency among a majority of my respondents to somewhat look down on the Kyrgyz. Often I was told that Russian-speakers and Kyrgyz are simply "different" and this was because of "менталитет", which translates to mentality in English, but in the context of my interviews has a slightly more nuanced meaning. In one interview I was told that, "there is a huge difference in mentality between Russians and

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<sup>108</sup> Interview #8- Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyz. I have Kyrgyz friend who had a great job abroad, but returned because her mom said she should. This is common for Kyrgyz and I do not understand this mentality.”<sup>109</sup>

When I inquired how the “mentalities” are different, my respondents typically pointed to the tribal structure or traditional practices of the Kyrgyz, such as bride kidnapping, as evidence of the differences of Kyrgyz society to Russian society. I saw this as slightly disparaging, a reaction reinforced by a conversation with my teacher who I had previously interviewed. She blatantly stated that Kyrgyz have a “низкий менталитет”, or lower mentality than Russian-speakers. When I explored what she meant by this, she said, “the Kyrgyz have many traditions that make little sense to Russians. Tribes, {bride} kidnappings, different customs, which are odd in the modern world. They think these are important, but in my opinion, they are... well how to say... silly.”<sup>110</sup> I noticed this tendency to see Kyrgyz as slightly beneath Russian-speakers in the majority of my interviews, although it was often slight. It did not, however, result in any specific individual classifying the relationship between Russian-speakers and Kyrgyz relationship as poor.<sup>111</sup>

It might, however, affect the second stipulation I noticed, which was a general concern with the growth of the Kyrgyz language. Kyrgyz as a language is generally considered less useful among the Russian-speaking minority, and considering the slight sense of superiority among some of my respondents, it is easy to see the Kyrgyz language held with a degree of scorn amongst Russian-speakers. As mentioned earlier, my respondents often told me that Kyrgyz as a

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<sup>109</sup> Interview #8- Kyrgyzstan

<sup>110</sup> Conversation with my teacher. I asked permission write down her comments after this conversation and she agreed as I had already interviewed her before.

<sup>111</sup> While I did not interview Kyrgyz during my project, in speaking with Kyrgyz, I found a tendency to dislike ethnic Russians, typically because of historical actions during the colonial period. Within Kyrgyzstan it seems perceptions of ethnic groups is asymmetrical.

language has become far more common since five or ten years ago. My respondents told me that there is a growth of a Kyrgyz ethnic identity and subsequently a new wave of ethnic nationalism, which they see as responsible for the increase in the Kyrgyz language's popularity in Bishkek.

My respondents were generally worried that this trend might marginalize the Russian language's role in Kyrgyzstan in the future. One respondent in particular said, "I think many more Russians will leave in the future, especially if Kyrgyz continues to become more popular and Russian harder to live with."<sup>112</sup> Her speculation was, however, unique to her. Other respondents were unconcerned with the growth of Kyrgyz, interestingly often because Kyrgyz has become so Russified that it is, supposedly, not difficult to learn for Russian-speakers. One respondent said explicitly, "Kyrgyz has accepted so many Russian words that today, even if you do not know any Kyrgyz and only speak Russian, when listening to someone speak you could understand them. Every 2 or three words can be Russian."<sup>113</sup> Despite this particular opinion, however, the main trend I noticed in my interviews was that the Russian-speaking minority is aware of the Kyrgyz language's growth and moderately concerned that the Russian language will lose its position within the country.

I believe that the tendencies I have noted in my interviews describe the Russian-speaking minority within Kyrgyzstan and the environment in which they live. I only interviewed within Bishkek, which is where the vast majority of Russian-speakers live, but there are Russian-speaking villages throughout the country and a large population in Osh, the major southern city. My interviews, therefore, account for the majority of the population, but might not accurately

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<sup>112</sup> Interview #1- Kyrgyzstan

<sup>113</sup> Interview# 15 -Kyrgyzstan

describe Russian-speakers living in other locations. Despite this, I believe my research accurately accounts for the predominant opinion of the Russian-speaking minority.

I agree with previous scholars who see the emigration from Kyrgyzstan as primarily economically motivated, with a small degree of influence from the slight marginalization of the Russian language since independence. Considering the current minority, it is evident that Russian-speakers in Kyrgyzstan enjoy a relatively unthreatened position. There are no particular economic or political barriers facing Russian-speakers in Kyrgyzstan. Any economic issues are due to the poor economic climate in general, as opposed to anything specifically aimed at them. Linguistically, Russian has retained its role and importance within Kyrgyzstan and even today it is possible to be successful in Kyrgyzstan only speaking Russian. There might be some limitations, however, in terms of government work. Finally, in terms of personal relationships to Russia or events in Ukraine, the Russian-speaking minority considers itself as Kyrgyz citizens not Russian and so has not developed a predominant opinion on the issue, often due to the existence of both Ukrainian and Russian family ties. This all demonstrates that this particular portion of the Russian-speaking diaspora has highly integrated into its host country.

In terms of identificational integration, the Russian-speaking minority in Kyrgyzstan is relatively well integrated, as they typically see themselves as Kyrgyz citizens and subsequently Kyrgyzstan as their home. The lack of political or economic barriers demonstrates high structural integration. The fact that the Russian-speaking minority's perception of the Kyrgyz majority is positive and that the two coexist within the same space suggests high social integration as well. Even in terms of cultural integration, while the Russian-speaking minority has failed to adopt Kyrgyz culture or the Kyrgyz language, because the Kyrgyz government and majority population

have been accommodating of the Russian language and culture, there is still a high degree of cultural integration.

These factors in combination describe an overall well-integrated minority, but this might be because the vast majority of the population already left the country, which has left only the most integrated or amenable to integration. The trend towards a Kyrgyz ethnic nationalism, however, has already begun to worry certain individuals and could threaten the cultural, structural, and identificational integration of the minority population. The integration achieved by the Russian-speaking minority in Kyrgyzstan is generally a consequence of the favorable position that Russian-speakers enjoy in Kyrgyzstan, a country that has tried to retain Russian culture and the Russian language because of its geopolitical reliance on the Russian Federation. If this favorable position were to change, however, the degree of integration could also change. Considering that the precedent for mass emigration is already in place, this could prove an incentive for further departure from Kyrgyzstan.

## 8.0 CONCLUSIONS

There are several conclusions from this research. The originally harsher approach that the Estonian government took towards the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia resulted in local identification, but almost paradoxically high levels of structural and identificational integration. Russian-speakers in Estonia are overwhelmingly willing to identify as “Baltic Russians” or Narvans. While there are incredibly low levels of cultural and societal integration, any potential large-scale emigration or pro-Russian tendencies have been limited due to an overall superior economic climate, which has also incentivized higher levels of integration. Meanwhile, the more accommodating policies taken by the Kyrgyz government have resulted in a highly integrated Russian-speaking minority, in every dimension of integration, but the economic climate resulted in the vast majority of the minority to emigrate from Kyrgyzstan. The remaining population, however, is highly integrated, even more so than the Estonian Russian-speaking minority.

I believe that it is highly unlikely, therefore, that Russian Federation could use either Russian-speaking minority as geopolitical tools. Similarly, I do not believe that Russian-speakers in Estonia or Kyrgyzstan will be a “fifth column,” because of the level of integration achieved by both minority groups. Although this integration differs, in both cases it is sufficiently high that both groups identify strongly with their host countries and not either with a “Russian-speaking diaspora” or with the Russian Federation itself. Considering Brubacker’s model of the relationship that Russian-speaking populations have to the Russian Federation and their host

countries, within my cases both minority populations identify strongly with their host countries. This mitigates the influence that Russia as an external homeland has on the two minority groups as they fail to strongly identify with Russia. It is interesting to note that the Russian Federation has rarely actively involved itself with the Russian-speaking populations in either Estonia or Kyrgyzstan. This may be because it recognizes that it lacks a strong relationship to either minority group or, because it failed to see a strategic advantage in maintaining the relationship, it decided to not involve itself.

My study also has implications concerning the theory behind integration broadly. It is evident that the Russian-speaking minorities of Estonia and Kyrgyzstan have achieved different levels of integration. Considering the “method of difference”, this suggests that the main difference between the two cases, the political institutions and economic climate after independence, has caused this variance in integration. I found, therefore, that political institutions dictate the level of integration, but economic climate is the deciding factor behind emigration and can also influence integration to a degree. A superior economic climate can mitigate the effect of discriminatory political practices and incentivize identification with a host country.

Looking to integration within my two cases in the future, therefore, it is not impossible that the levels of integration will shift. In Kyrgyzstan, an interesting point is that the non-integrating portions of the Russian-speaking minority might have already emigrated, leaving only those willing to integrate. Considering that an overall poor economic climate already caused an exodus within the minority and that many Russian-speakers are wary of growing Kyrgyz nationalism, it is not impossible that integration will fall in the future. This is especially true if the Kyrgyz government were to take steps to limit the Russian language’s role in society, thereby lowering both cultural and structural integration.

Within Estonia while the Russian-speaking minority is less integrated in general, the trend of Russian-speakers learning Estonian suggests that the community is moving towards greater integration. In addition, the Estonian government has taken steps to better accommodate the Russian-speaking minority, creating a governmental news source that reports in Russian not Estonian, which will improve both structural and cultural integration.<sup>114</sup> Considering the already strong and growing Estonian, it could be that the Estonian Russian-speaking minority will continue to integrate while the Russian-speaking minority in Kyrgyzstan may face issues that slow or prevent further integration.

These results have certain implications for studying the Russian-speaking minority in Ukraine. The irredentist portions of Ukraine's Russian-speaking population may be a result of political institutions that failed to foster integration. They could also be a result of a poor economic environment in comparison to the Russian Federation or other post-Soviet neighbors. Ukraine is an interesting case in comparison with Estonia especially, as in many ways the Estonian government adopted more discriminatory policies towards the Russian-speaking minority than the Ukrainian government. Even though Narva came close to pursuing autonomy from Estonia, it stopped short of the actions that are now evident in the Donbas. An important difference and factor, therefore, might be Russian intervention. This calls into question, however, why was it that Russia became involved in Ukraine but has not in Estonia? An in depth study of the political institutions of Ukraine and relative economic position might reveal some causal explanations for the current civil war.

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<sup>114</sup> Olena Makarenko, "How Estonian Public Broadcasting Creates an Alternative to Russian Propaganda," *Euromaidan Press*, September 25, 2017, <http://euromaidanpress.com/2017/09/25/how-estonian-public-broadcasting-creates-an-alternative-to-russian-propaganda/>.

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