



Cheskin, A. and Kachuyevski, A. (2019) The Russian-speaking populations in the post-Soviet space: language, politics and identity. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 71(1), pp. 1-23.

There may be differences between this version and the published version. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it.

<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/173351/>

Deposited on: 30 April 2019

Enlighten – Research publications by members of the University of Glasgow\_  
<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk>

**The Russian Speaking Populations in the Post-Soviet Space: Language, Politics and  
Identity**

Ammon Cheskin  
Lecturer in Central and East European Studies  
University of Glasgow  
8 Lilybank Gardens  
Glasgow  
G12 8AZ  
UK  
(+44) (0)141 3302845  
[Ammon.cheskin@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Ammon.cheskin@glasgow.ac.uk)

Angela Kachuyevski  
Associate Professor of Political Science  
Arcadia University  
450 South Easton Road  
Glenside, PA 19038  
USA  
+1 267-620-4137  
[kachueya@arcadia.edu](mailto:kachueya@arcadia.edu)

In recent years, there has been sustained academic and political scrutiny of externally-located ‘kinsfolk’: that is, groups of individuals located outside of a nominally national ‘kin-state’, and over whom the state in question lays claim to various forms of symbolic and/or legal jurisdiction. Academically, this literature is often nestled within broader, critical discussion of contemporary nations and nationalisms (Agarin and Karolewski 2015), with scholars noting ‘the increasingly transnational character of global migration flows, cultural networks and socio-political practices’ (Smith and Bakker 2008, p. 3). Often premised on the assumption that globalisation has the capacity to erode traditional borders, these transnational developments have spurred significant research interest into kin-state policies across the globe. These policies are typically enacted by states to construct diasporic identities that create strong identificational bonds between co-ethnics and their supposedly external homeland (Stjepanović 2015, p. 144). The kinsfolk question is consequently salient for the foreign policy actions of self-designating external homelands, but can also be heavily securitised by states that house groups of individuals who have the potential to be ‘diasporised’.

Owing to the scale of its *potentially* diasporic kinspeople, the Russian Federation stands out globally as a significant agent of kin-state nationalism. Indeed, in recent years the Russian authorities have directed substantial resources towards kin-state activities, even codifying Russian-speaking ‘compatriots’ as central elements of the country’s assertive foreign policy (Grigas 2016, pp. 57-93). While much has been written on Russia’s politicisation of Russian speakers in its so-called ‘near abroad’ the articles of this volume place greater emphasis on the exploration of trends within the various communities of Russian speakers themselves. In this endeavour, we are influenced by Rogers Brubaker, who admonishes us to think of a diaspora as ‘a category of practice... used to make claims’; diaspora, he goes on to say ‘does not so much describe the world as seek to remake it’ (Brubaker 2005, p. 12). This special issue consequently investigates trends in how ‘Russian speakers’, located outside of Russia, respond to Russia’s kin-state policies and diasporising practices. In other words, we do not assume the existence of Russian-speaking and/or diasporic identities, or even strong group identities of any ilk. Instead, this collection presents a series of empirically-grounded studies into the lived realities of Russophone communities and individuals across a number of former Soviet states.

In this article, and indeed in the wider special issue that we introduce, we argue that there is genuine academic merit in the study of ‘Russian speakers’, despite acknowledging the potential for this group to be reified

as a unit of analysis. Surveying developments in the former Soviet Union (FSU), we propose a framework that can help to study Russian speakers and Russian-speaking identities, whilst simultaneously capturing the complexities of their diverse experiences. In order to do this, we draw upon the theoretical literature on borders and boundaries to explore contemporary identity dynamics among Russian speakers living outside of Russia. Our framework, which articulates several internal and external boundaries that align with major identity cleavages in the region, is intended to help study existing trends and to allow scholars to pay close attention to external and internal factors, while being sensitive to the intersectional, messy and liminal factors that defy such neat binary categorisation. By allowing for diversity of experience, while simultaneously capturing commonalities, our framework facilitates fruitful comparative as well as in-depth single case analysis.

As such, we examine official Russian policy toward these groups of individuals, paying close attention to the articulated vision of a 'Russian World' that is culturally rather than territorially defined. This allows consideration of how the disconnect between geographic borders and potential identity boundaries impacts political and social relations in the region. By offering a variegated, non-linear perspective on Russian speakers, our framework is used to conceptualise and compare different trends within key FSU states. While this framework, and the specific case studies included in this special issue, focus on 'Russian speakers', our insights also have relevance to the study of a wide range of potentially diasporic identities, kin-state nationalisms, and minority politics in areas that experience complex intersections between 'external homelands', 'nationalising states', 'national minorities' and 'international organisations' (Smith 2002).

#### *Russian speakers as a unit of analysis*

Significantly, right from the establishment of the new Russian state in late 1991, there was understandably high interest in the 'new Russian diaspora' (Shlapentokh et al. 1994): the 25 million ethnic Russians who found themselves 'beached' (Laitin 1998, p. 29) by the sudden retraction of the Soviet borders, and who were now resident in fourteen newly-constituted national states outside of Russia. Early research clamoured to answer two fundamental questions, focusing on the external and internal dimensions of these groups' existence. The external question pertained to their relationship with an 'external homeland': Russia. Internally, scholars assessed the likelihood of ethnic violence in states with large 'Russian' populations, while also attempting to anticipate their future prospects for social and political integration within these states.

Two and a half decades on from these seismic developments, despite pockets of militant activism and tension, there has been a quantifiable lack of ethnic violence associated with (or perpetrated against) Russian-speaking populations. This has understandably suppressed academic interest in the second question, notwithstanding renewed attention in the wake of Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. The first question, however, has been fraught by significant political, social, socio-economic and ideational variance across the political realities of the Soviet successor states. Even more problematic, from a conceptual point of view, is the inevitable diversity between groups of people who are referred to variously (often interchangeably) as (ethnic) Russians, Russian speakers and Russophones.

This richness of difference poses serious questions concerning the usefulness and validity of constructing a workable and robust research framework for the study of Russian-speaking identities outside of Russia. Here, and throughout this special issue, we acknowledge the inherent danger of reproducing group labels in an essentialising fashion. 'Russian speakers', we admit, is a potentially constraining, catch-all term that does not do justice to the great heterogeneity within this group (a heterogeneity to which the articles of this volume attest). Nevertheless, despite significant differences within and among diverse groups of Russian speakers (i.e., people who speak Russian as a first language), it is our contention that two major factors provide anchorage for comparative and conceptual research of this diverse group.

The first dynamic was Russian speakers' shared, simultaneous emergence as 'beached diasporas' (Laitin 1998, p.29) within newly-constituted national states after the sudden collapse of the Soviet Union. The presence of 25 million ethnic Russians (as defined by rigid, Soviet practices of recording ethnicity) outside of the Russian Federation naturally spurred much research into the identities of Russians outside of Russia (for example, Melvin 1995; Laitin 1998). Admittedly, despite this common starting point, this earlier body of research highlighted the diverging identity trajectories of diasporic identities in Russia's 'near abroad', both within individual states and across the vastly diverse territories of the former Soviet space. This led most researchers to note observable ruptures in common identities between 'diasporic communities' and citizens of the Russian Federation. Pal Kolstø (1996, p. 611), for example, confidently talked of a Russian diaspora, separate from the 'core group' of Russians in Russia, before preferring to conceptualise 'fourteen different diasporas' in the post-Soviet states outside of Russia 'each with their own peculiar characteristics' (Kolstø 1999, p. 616).

Significantly, fears of mobilisation of Russian minority groups proved largely unfounded, with 'Yugoslav scenarios' failing to emerge in the post-Soviet space. Indeed, ethnicity arguably became less salient as

ethnic heterogeneity *within* Russophone communities presented obstacles to political and social mobilisation (Zevelev 2008, p. 57). As time progressed, research consequently often focused on ‘Russian speakers’ rather than ethnic Russians (Birka 2016), especially in the context of the Baltic states. David Laitin (1998) even argued that a Russian-speaking ‘nationality’ was steadily emerging, with language replacing ethnicity as the most salient marker of group identity. In the Baltic states, where strict language laws have been introduced to restrict the public use of Russian, this linguistic identification has been used to link various Russian-speaking groups together under a shared discourse of language discrimination (Cheskin 2016, pp.71-3). At the same time, as evidenced by Kulyk’s and Bureiko and Moga’s contributions to this volume, Ukraine has latterly seen a clear shift away from group identities that coalesce around language practices. Likewise, survey data collected by Lowell Barrington (2001) in Kazakhstan and Ukraine highlighted only limited support for the claim of the emergence of a Russian-speaking identity let alone ‘nationality’.

There are therefore numerous centrifugal factors that complicate comparative research into ‘Russian speakers’ in the post-Soviet space, with some justified debate as to whether this term is an appropriate unit of analysis at all. However, the similar starting point allows us to view the processes of convergence and divergence through a comparative lens. In other words, the process of divergence itself is a worthy topic of investigation; it is important to examine why different, generalised trends in language use, self-identification and group identification are occurring across the post-Soviet space. If, as the extant research suggests, Russian-speaking identities are stronger in Latvia and Estonia than in Ukraine and Kazakhstan, it is important to understand why this is the case.

A second dynamic provides some potential for the consolidation of Russian/Russian speaking group identities within the region. Despite the diffuse nature of Russian speaking and/or ethnic Russian identities (even within single states), Russia has recently sought to articulate and pursue a coherent policy towards the group of individuals it increasingly refers to as ‘Russian compatriots’ (*rossiiskie sootchestvenniki*). While Russophone groups are noted for their internal ethnic, national, social and economic diversity, recent efforts have been made to broaden the definitional and legal designation of compatriots. This has allowed the Russian state to claim to be the guardian of the rights of Russian speakers, even outside of its legal territorial borders. The most notable and extreme manifestation of this was Russia’s intervention in Crimea, which was directly justified as a measure to protect the rights of Russian speakers (Putin 2014).

The compatriot policies of the Russian state should be treated critically; they are discursive practices aimed at creating and maintaining group boundaries rather than a necessary reflection of actual group boundaries. Nevertheless, these practices cannot be ignored. Not only do they create a discursive basis for people potentially to associate themselves as Russian compatriots, they also have potential to stimulate counter-reactions from within states that house large numbers of Russian speakers (Schulze 2016). Research is therefore necessary in order to determine the ways that various sides react to, and participate in, discursive attempts to articulate Russian-speaking group identities.

While these two dynamics ensure that ‘Russian speakers’ are a potentially fruitful object of study, it is nonetheless already apparent that the complexity of various overlapping trends demands careful consideration. Russian-speaking identities appear to be subject to competing bordering and diasporising practices, whereby various actors vie to define who Russian speakers are, where they rightfully belong, and what characteristics define them. This takes place along a variety of linguistic, spatial, national, social, historical and economic axes. Significantly, these practices emanate from a range of different political, economic, social and cultural arenas, which, in turn, can be conceptualised as internally, externally and liminally enacted. In order to make sense of these intricate realities, we consequently turn to theories of borders and bordering. This approach, we argue, helps to avoid ‘groupism’ (Brubaker 1998) by focusing not on what a given group *is*, but on the processes whereby group identities are operationalised and how they *work* (Brubaker 2009, p.29).

### **Borders and Symbolic Boundaries**

There is a rich multidisciplinary literature on borders and boundaries that, despite disciplinary differences in focus, shares common concepts. Traditional approaches in political geography focus on the demarcation process and the resulting divisions (Newman 2006, p. 3) and see the purpose of the boundary to divide populations and, in so doing, distinguish the insiders from the outsiders (Donnan and Wilson 1999, p. 48). European integration and economic globalization, however, have sparked interest in the process of opening borders with the goal of transforming barriers into bridges and fostering cooperation (Newman 2006, p. 3). The resulting increase in transnationalism, despite persistent even increasing salience of ethnic, national and regional identities, has led to greater scholarly attention to social and other non-territorially defined boundaries (Anderson and O’Dowd, p. 602).

All of these dynamics in border regions, including contested boundaries, have led to significant multidisciplinary research on what might be termed political landscapes, borderlands, or border regions. Focusing

on the relationship between geographic boundaries, culture and identity, this literature examines the interactions, acts of inclusion and exclusion that occur among the populations living in proximity to both sides of physical borders. Historians have been drawn to analyse centrifugal and centripetal forces at play in what they term borderlands, where local populations feel pushed away from their national centre and also pulled towards the borderland inhabitants on the other side of the geographic boundary, who similarly are pushed away from their respective centre (Donnan and Wilson 1999, p. 48). In this sense, peoples on both sides of the geographic border may share common cultural identity traits, which conflicts with traditional views on the convergence of state and nation. Political scientists have in fact explored distinct identities among the inhabitants of what they term border regions, which also challenges the “precise and once presumed fit between nation, state and territory” (Donnan and Wilson, 1999, p. 53).

Social boundaries as a concept augment traditional geographic approaches. They include the social and symbolic factors that are associated with the dividing lines on a map (Migdal 2004, p. 5). Borders and boundaries in this expanded conceptualization therefore carry both material and symbolic meaning. They exist in an objective sense, as lines on a map that physically delineate group belonging, but also are the result of an inter-subjective ‘bordering’ process that constructs symbolic boundaries to distinguish between ‘us’ and ‘them’ and provide the basis for group identity (Newman 2006, p. 5; Zhurzhenko 2010, p. 156). Empirical studies establish that, in some cases, the cultural boundary may have greater salience than the geographic one in terms of separation and exclusion. For example, research conducted in Ireland found that Irish citizens living in the Republic saw themselves as both the same and different from their kin in the North. While they had a shared a sense of being Irish, their sense of self was tied to a culture of civility, tolerance and openness that they could not reconcile with the violence in the North (Todd 2006).

The process of bordering unfolds both in the objective sense as the physical landscape is demarcated, but also in the symbolic sense as the criteria for inclusion and exclusion is determined (Newman 2006, p. 6). Further, in order to have objective meaning, borders must be ‘drawn in the minds of the people’ and are in this sense discursively constructed as part of state and nation building (Zhurzhenko 2010, p. 155). These resulting ‘soft borders’ are narrative constructs that emerge from governmental and civil society efforts to ‘make sense of’ the border (Zhurzhenko 2010, p. 158) which is essential for the legitimization and naturalization of the ‘hard borders’ that are legally delineated and institutionally maintained (Zhurzhenko 2010, p. 156). Bordering processes are relational and thus rely both upon internal definitions of self and external affirmation. That is, not only must group members define the membership criteria for belonging, but this ‘process must be recognized by outsiders for an



objectified collective identity to emerge' (Lamont and Molnar 2002, p. 170). For this reason, scholars view the delineation and maintenance of identity boundaries as one of the processes fundamental to contentious politics (McAdam et al 2001).

As narrative constructs, soft borders and social and symbolic boundaries may also be understood as 'manifestations of socio-spatial consciousness' (Passi 1995, p. 43) such that collective identity associated with territory may outlast the physical border itself. Thus, changes in geographic borders do not necessarily eliminate ethno-linguistic affiliation (Newman 2006, p.5), leading to incongruence between geographic borders and identity boundaries. Indeed, 'symbolic boundaries of identity and culture [which] make nations and states two very different entities' (Lamont and Molnar 2002, p. 183).

The identity boundaries themselves, most importantly, may not be the same for each group (Kachuyevski and Olesker 2014). That is, groups may not see the boundary in the same terms- they may not agree on how groups are separated. In divided societies, where the national identity itself is contested (who is a legitimate part of 'us'?) the majority may see the minority as part of an outside 'other' even if the minority does not share this perception. Or, the minority itself may identify as part of the 'other' (Kachuyevski and Olesker 2014, 308), both of which result in a boundary that resembles the letter 'L'. Yet, perceived boundaries may make room for greater diversity if either the minority or the majority (or both) may identify the minority as distinct from both the majority *and* their ethnic kin in neighbouring states, resulting in a boundary that resembles the letter 'T'. Conflict is more likely in cases where the minority and majority do not agree on which boundary exists, or when both accept the 'L' formation.

INSERT FIGURE ONE HERE

Figure 1: 'L' Boundary and 'T' Boundary in Divided Societies (reprinted with permission from the *International Journal of Conflict Management*).

This 'disconnect' in boundary perception can lead to social and political conflict as geographic boundaries do not match identity boundaries, and as different actors do not agree on where the identity boundaries lie. Because boundaries mark 'the site where different ways of doing things meet, they are likely to be replete with tension and conflict' (Migdal 2004, p. 6) and, further 'borders need to be constantly maintained and socially

reproduced through particular practices and discourses which emphasize “the other”, itself a source of conflict’ (Anderson 1999, p. 598). Thus boundary regions have greater potential for conflict, yet also the possibility for cooperation if contested areas can be transformed (Passi 1995, p. 45). Further, inhabitants of borderlands may have more fluid identities that result not in a weak overall sense of identity, but rather encompass more dynamic and nuanced processes of self identification in which the lines between different categories are blurred and diffuse (Zaharchenko 2016, pp. 41-54). This could contribute to a possible ‘porous’ nature of constructed boundaries since blurred lines of distinction render boundaries more negotiable.

The literature on borders and boundaries offers useful conceptual tools with which we can analyse social and political dynamics among Russia, neighbouring states and the Russian speakers who reside in these states, and helps flesh out the implications of the clash between ‘nationalising’ policies and political realities in the post-Soviet space. Below we explore the factors central to current contentious politics in this region, namely the political and cultural status, or rights, of Russian speakers within their respective states of residence, and the role of Russia as a self-purported cultural ‘homeland’ with distinctive responsibilities.

### **Russia’s bordering practices**

The 2010 amendments to Russia’s Compatriot Law (see Kozin 2015) facilitate a wide range of cultural, historical and ethnic axes for individuals to claim (or Russia to assert) compatriot status. Now, all that was needed was a ‘spiritual connection’ to Russia and ancestral links to one of Russia’s 185 national groups or to one of the numerous nationalities of the Russian empire (Grigas 2016, p. 89). This development should be seen in the context of Russia’s bordering practices, whereby the Russian state has unilaterally sought to redefine the physical and symbolic boundaries of Russianness, and even the Russian nation.

Such bordering practices seek to overcome patterns of cultural, ethnic, territorial and social diversity through the bridging and hybridisation of the ‘two faces of Russianness’ (Kosmarskaya 2005, p. 268), i.e. civic and ethnic understandings (demarcated by politico-territorial and ethno-cultural borders respectively). In the early - mid 1990s, President El’tsin attempted to promote a civic (*rossiiskii*) identity, asserting that the Soviet successor states were best placed to look after their resident Russian-speaking populations. The political border of the Russian Federation was therefore held as a physical, as well as symbolic, border between actual, political Russia and its various historical, ethno-cultural incarnations. El’tsin’s initiative, however, was soon challenged by radical national groups, as well as the electorally-popular Communists and the far-right Liberal Democratic Party of Russia. These groups demanded a more assertive policy towards ethnic Russians and largely rejected El’tsin’s

search for a new, civic Russian idea that they instead linked with the pernicious effects of western liberalism (Laruelle 2015).

Tsygankov (2013, p. 20) has referred to Putin's presidencies in terms of a 'mixed-identity coalition', seeking to pacify the demands of competing groups of 'westernisers' and ethnocentric nationalists within a generally statist programme. This has allowed Putin to take an 'ethno-selective' (Kosmarskaya 2011, p. 54) approach to the imagined diaspora, at once highlighting this group's civic *and* ethnic core features. Cheskin (2016, p. 174) has characterised Putin's deliberate and selective conflation of ethnic and civic 'Russianness' as the 'Rossiisification' (i.e., not simply the ethnic 'Russification') of Russian compatriots. In other words, Russian speakers are not merely presented as co-ethnics. Instead, Russia's compatriot policies and discourses are often bound in civic and institutional parameters, even when compatriots are implicitly conceptualised in ethnic terms (Laruelle 2015, 14). This allows the Russian state to lay institutional and extraterritorial claim to their 'compatriots abroad', even in cases where they are not ethnically Russian.

This speaks to the blurring of previously-established borders of Russian identities. Simultaneously, it expands, from the Russian perspective, the borders of the Russian state beyond their politically-manifested geographies. Putin made this explicit in his Crimea acceptance speech when he drew specific attention to the Russian people as a 'divided nation', heralding reunification with the peninsula as a healing step towards the reunification of the Russian nation itself (Putin 2014). Within this vision of the Russian nation, Russian speakers appear as key boundary markers that are located beyond its political borders.

Putin's adroit political manoeuvring has provided the latitude to start taking a more assertive stance towards Russia's compatriots. This, according to Nozhenko (2006), became especially evident from 2002 onwards, when compatriots were seen as potential resources rather than burdens. It also expanded the institutional, abstract, and territorial space over which the Russian state has been able to claim some form of moral, spiritual and institutional jurisdiction. This affords Russia a wider range of ethno-cultural and institutional mechanisms that can be selectively enforced to interact with, and potentially influence, 'diasporic' groups. For example, while Crimean residents, a majority of whom were ethnic Russians, were portrayed as an integral part of Russia's 'divided nation', this rhetoric was not apparent for Ossetians and Abkhaz. In all three cases, however, Russia employed the tactic of 'passportisation' (Natoli 2010), offering (in the Crimean case, eventually enforcing) full Russian citizenship.

Aside from ‘passportisation’ and ‘repatriation’ of Russian compatriots, official policy has focused heavily on cultural diplomacy. At times this is conducted relatively benignly, as an effort to promote Russian language and literature. In other instances, culture is used to assert Russia’s special status as the only state willing to protect Russian culture and the civilisational values associated with Russianness (Cheskin 2016, p. 174-78). Not dissimilar to other European states, Russia’s cultural diplomacy has consequently been viewed as both an apolitical, cultural project and as a soft power strategy with post-colonial overtones (Gorham 2011, p. 25-6).

The admixture of cultural and political diplomacy offers compatriots a type of ideational citizenship, extending a political identity and a form of membership with the Russian Federation, even if it is often largely symbolic. Scholars of citizenship often distinguish three dimensions of citizenship: political (republican), juridical (liberal) and membership (identity-based) (see Cohen 1999). These approaches to citizenship can be usefully linked to conceptual approaches to borders, whereby Russia’s citizenship policies should be seen simultaneously as bordering practices. Russia’s approach to its compatriots can be placed, to varying degrees, along all three of these citizenship axes. The Russian state, therefore, participates in bordering practices through the expansion of its political, legal and ideational citizenship.

The selective and partial implementation of these dimensions, however, leads to a form of ‘fuzzy’, quasi-citizenship (Fowler 2002). Quasi-citizenship is most commonly offered to compatriots as a form of joint identity with the Russian Federation, accompanied by a limited package of institutionalised channels for political and cultural engagement. For Agarin and Karolewski (2015, p. 5), this is best characterised as a form of extraterritorial citizenship, i.e. a range of institutional and symbolic practices ‘connecting the citizens of host states to their kin-states’. Russia has established a number of institutionalised channels to project its extraterritorial citizenship, such as the International Coordinating Council for Russian Compatriots Living Abroad (established in 2007). However, the Russian state has also attempted to institutionalise its citizenship practices in more ideational and civilisational terms.

### *The ‘Russian World’*

Agarin and Karolewski (2015, p. 9) argue that symbolic forms of extraterritorial citizenship should be viewed as politically-institutionalised forms of citizenship practices. One area wherein this institutionalisation is clearly apparent is Russia’s symbolic appeal to the concept of *Russkii mir* (the Russian World). The concept entered Russia’s mainstream political vocabulary in 2001 with President Putin’s declaration that ‘The notion of the Russian World extends far from Russia’s geographical borders and even far from the borders of the Russian

ethnicity' (as cited in Laruelle 2015, p. 6). It was further enshrined as a key component of Russia's cultural diplomacy in 2007 with the creation of the Russkiy mir foundation.

The Russian World plays a significant discursive function, allowing Russian authorities to 'soften' its existing territorial borders. The contours of the Russian world are ill-defined, but are implicitly understood to extend to territories historically constituting the Soviet Union and Russian empire. Feklyunina (2015, p. 11) notes that the Russian World is 'imagined as a *naturally existing* civilisational community' embodying a set of 'Russian' spiritual and moral values, and based on visions of a common history. The Russian Orthodox Church is a keen advocate for the Russian World and consequently plays an active role within the Russkii mir foundation and sets the concept at the heart of its image for a reimagined and transformed Russia (Wawrzonek 2014, p. 762). In many respects the Russian World concept goes hand in hand with compatriot policy. Indeed, as stated by Anatolii Makarov, Director of the Department for Compatriots Abroad (Ministry of Foreign Affairs),

In order to meet its main objectives, the multidimensional Russian World beyond Russia is based firmly on compatriots. The main goals are, first and foremost, strengthening ties with the historical homeland and the preservation of the Russian civilisational space (language, culture, national customs and traditions). (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2013b)

The Russian World therefore encapsulates 'a supra-national or civilisational-level tier of identity' (Hudson 2015, p. 7), offering compatriots ideational citizenship that can link their personal identities with those of the Russian state. Despite its ostensibly transnational character, however, the Russian World paradoxically promotes 'the nationalist aims of the state' (Gorham 2011, p. 29). To this extent, the Russian 'diaspora' holds a prominent place in defining contemporary Russian national identity, and overcoming Russia's widely-accepted difficulty of defining the membership and spatial confines of the Russian nation (Shevel 2012, p. 113).

For a number of nationalist schools in Russia, the collapse of the USSR was responsible for the division of the Russian nation (Laruelle 2015), dispersing Russians among fifteen newly-constituted, independent countries. The strategy of creating an expanded spiritual and civilisational space for Russianness (*russkost'*) therefore somewhat allays the concerns of various nationalist groups. Indeed, as Kozin (2015) notes, President Putin has increasingly conceptualised compatriots as a natural continuation of the Russian nation, attempting to redress previously prevalent feelings that Russians in Russia represented 'the other Russia' (Komarskaya 2005, p. 269).

The developments in Crimea and Donbas have notably propelled the Russian World concept directly into the realm of geopolitics; symbolically and institutionally it provides a platform and pattern for identification that is, in many respects, in direct competition with ‘the West’ and Europe (Wawrzonek 2014). While Russia’s policy proffers a relatively fluid, ‘fuzzy’ definition of Russian compatriots, it simultaneously draws clear dividing lines between this imagined community and the non-Russian ‘other’, demanding that ‘real Russians’ respect their civilisational, cultural, linguistic and historical traditions (Cheskin 2016, p. 174-81). Borders between Russia and non-Russia are therefore drawn along civilisational lines, with Russian ‘compatriots’ supposedly representing bastions of ‘Russianness’.

### **Bordering practices of the ‘nationalising states’**

Surveying the recent evolution of Russia’s compatriot policies, it is possible to see how the boundaries of Russianness have been symbolically expanded beyond the country’s post-Soviet political-territorial borders. Equally important to the status of Russian speakers are the corresponding bordering practices enacted by, and within, the fourteen other successor states of the USSR. There is considerable variance in terms of how language, ethnicity, territory and history are constructed as practical bordering modalities within these states. We argue that grasping the porousness of these practices is key to understanding general trends in Russian-speaking identities; when symbolic borders are constructed non-porously, they can serve to essentialise communities by creating stark divisions between ‘them’ and ‘us’. Alternatively, when borders are porous, individuals are more able to order their symbolic identities according to their own personal preferences, and complex, nuanced and even multiple identities can be accommodated.

For the sake of conceptual clarity, and following Brubaker’s (1998) influential work, we use the blanket-term ‘nationalising states’ to describe these fourteen states. By this we mean that these states have sought to (re)define the core national self through a series of state and nation-building measures. Such efforts are crucial in understanding how external and internal borders between ‘us’ and ‘them’ are enacted in relation to Russian-speaking minority groups in the FSU.

#### *Latvia and Estonia<sup>1</sup>*

---

<sup>1</sup> This special issue focuses on the five states covered in this section. It is with regret that we have not been able to cover Moldova, an under-researched country with a large Russian-speaking population and its own particular internal dynamics.

Within the fourteen states in question, nation-building has been pursued with varying degrees of intensity. For the Baltic states, especially Latvia and Estonia, there was a clear delineation between the ‘core nations’ (i.e. ethnic Latvians and Estonians respectively) and the Russian/Soviet ‘other’ (Smith et al. 1998, p. 99). These states, which have previously been labelled militant democracies (Ijabs 2016) or ethnic democracies (Smith 1996), purposely excluded large sections of Russian speakers from obtaining Latvian and Estonian citizenship. As such, internal borders have been created that have demarcated the eponymous ethnic group from the non-Latvian/Estonian ‘other’.

Paradoxically, this bordering practice has at least some potential to reinforce historico-cultural borders (such as the ‘Russian world’) by depicting Russophone minority groups as symbolically bound with Russians in the Russian Federation. Indeed, in the Baltic contexts, historico-cultural borders are constantly reinforced by political actors who instrumentalise historical interpretations of the past in order to mobilise ethnicised electoral support (Cheskin and March 2016).

Socially transmitted ‘memories’ of the Second World War and its aftermath stand out as crucial bordering practices (Cheskin 2016, pp. 129-48). This is particularly noticeable for Russian speakers who are often depicted as ‘occupiers’, i.e. people whose presence in the Baltic states was facilitated by the Soviet occupation in 1944 and subsequent Sovietisation. Indeed, Estonia’s and Latvia’s stringent citizenship laws were openly premised on the notion of legal continuity: only Latvian and Estonian citizens from before the Soviet occupation and their direct descendants were eligible for post-Soviet citizenship. While latterly mitigated by the formulation of ‘naturalisation’ processes, this policy has aided the symbolic erection of a historical boundary, reinforced with politically-institutionalised citizenship practices that have been securitised (Kachuyevski 2016), rendering this border non-porous as well.

For Kachuyevski and Olesker (2014), these bordering practices on the part of the majority can be conceptualised in terms of an ‘L’ identity boundary (see figure 1). According to this logic, titulars in Latvia and Estonia largely lump Russophone minorities together with Russians in the supposed kin-state of Russia, essentially rejecting their legitimate membership in the collective ‘we’, even as minorities may not accept this boundary. Latvian and Estonian citizenship practices therefore ironically have overlapping functions with the varieties of Russia’s extraterritorial citizenship discussed above. In both cases there is a discursive incongruence between existing politico-territorial and historico-cultural borders; Russian speakers are undeniably physically

located beyond Russia's political borders, and yet a symbolic border is erected that encompasses both the Russian state and Russian speakers.

Despite clear demarcation between ethnic Estonians/Latvians on the one hand and 'Russian speakers' on the other, it is important to note that these relatively non-porous bordering practices are primarily visible in the political realm. For example, ethnographic scholarship in the border regions of Latvia (Lulle 2016) and Estonia (Pfoser 2015) has shown how even the political border with Russia is more securitised in Latvian and Estonian political discourse than in the everyday practices of the people who dwell in these regions. Likewise, numerous authors have reported how lived experiences and interactions in the Baltic states are far less ethnicised and rigidly demarked than the political rhetoric suggests (Cheskin 2016, pp. 118-9; 154; Lulle and Jurkane-Hobein 2017, p. 607). The non-porous, politically-imagined borders therefore do not necessarily map onto socially-practised borders of everyday existence. This means that the top-down boundary making practices of the respective Russian, Estonian and Latvian states are not necessarily accepted by Latvia's and Estonia's Russian speakers themselves.

Another complicating factor is Latvia's and Estonia's membership, since 2004, of the European Union. A body of scholars have suggested that globalisation has the potential to erode Westphalian notions of citizenship (e.g. Smith and Bakker 2008), especially when political entities such as the EU offer a form of transnational governance and citizenship (Balibar 2004). In this context, borders can acquire 'a spatiality beyond territoriality' (Rumford 2006, p. 160). For some Russian speakers, especially those who take advantage of the EU's free movement of trade and people, the openness of Europe's internal borders helps to mitigate their sense of alienation from the Latvian state (Lulle and Jurkane-Hobein 2017). Additionally, research among Latvia's Russian-speaking migrants in London (Lulle and Jurkane-Hobein 2017, p. 606) corroborates Cheskin's assumption that Russian speakers can conceptualise their 'Europeanised' status 'as a factor that differentiates them from Russians [in Russia]' (Cheskin 2015, p. 84). As Aptekar (2009) has documented, Russia's bordering practices and claims of stewardship over Russian speakers are significantly diminished as a result of economic opportunities within the EU.

### *Ukraine*

Significantly, each of the fourteen 'nationalising states' has differed in its nation-building approach. Ukraine, for example, has been forced to deal with a historically more porous and mixed set of symbolic and 'actual' borders that exist between Ukraine and Russia: von Hagen, writing in 1995, famously referred to the 'fluidity of frontiers, the permeability of cultures' associated with Ukraine (1995, p. 670). The porousness of these



borders can be seen in terms of linguistic (Kulyk 2015; 2016), ethnic (Fournier 2002), historical (Rodgers 2007) and territorial bordering processes. For Ukraine these have often been subject to contestation, heated debate and even armed conflict (for the case of Donbas) and annexation (for the case of Crimea).

Before the upheavals of the ‘Orange Revolution’ in 2004 and the ‘Maidan’ in 2013/4, a number of scholars preferred to delineate social cleavages along the three main ethno-linguistic groups in Ukraine: Ukrainophone Ukrainians, Russophone Ukrainians, and Russophone Russians (Arel and Khmelko 1996). Recent scholarship, however, has preferred to view identity cleavages in terms of regional and socio-economic, rather than ethno-linguistic, differences (e.g. Kulyk 2016; Portnov 2015, p. 730). The complexity of these categories highlights the extent that Ukraine’s cultural, linguistic, ethnic and even territorial boundaries have often spilt over into one another (Fournier 2002, pp. 418-20).

Compared to Latvia and Estonia, Ukraine is striking for the way in which symbolic internal and external borders are not always rigidly constructed. This is evidenced in the way that a number of people who previously identified themselves as ‘Russians’ have more recently opted to self-identify as ‘Ukrainians’ (Romaniuk and Gladun 2015, p. 324). In terms of Ukraine’s internal borders, this renders the term ‘Russian speakers’ somewhat redundant as an identity marker within certain contexts (although we do not fully discount the continued salience of language for many Ukrainians). This is especially evident in post-Maidan Ukraine where, despite the persistence of core cultural and ethnic ‘Ukrainian’ values, national identity is increasingly conceptualised in civic terms (Yekelchuk 2015; Kulyk 2016; see also the contributions by Kulyk and Bureiko and Moga in this volume).

Unlike Latvia and Estonia, Ukraine’s internal borders can therefore be conceptualised in terms of a ‘T’ identity boundary (see figure 1). Here, Russian speakers are not strictly delineated as symbolic members of the Russian nation, and they themselves do not self identify as such. Instead, they are often perceived and self identify as an integral part of the Ukrainian (civic) nation, not least because of the very large number of Russian speaking Ukrainians. This is despite a number of radical Ukrainian voices who still view Russian culture and language in post-colonial terms and who would therefore prefer to adopt a more ‘Baltic’ model of boundary creation (Yekelchuk 2015, p. 99). The relative porousness of Ukraine’s internal bordering practices therefore provides greater latitude for Russian speakers to feel included within the ‘Ukrainian’ national space, even when certain other symbolic and historical boundaries may still overlap.

*Kazakhstan*

Other FSU states have adopted more ambiguous bordering and nation-building practices. Kazakhstan, for example, has introduced a limited programme of nation-building to entrench feelings of pride in ethnic Kazakh identity (Beacháin and Kevlihan 2013). At the same time, the Kazakhstani authorities have been careful not to alienate their large ethnic Russian population. Russian, for example, continues to be designated as an official language ‘used on equal grounds along with the Kazakh language’ (Constitution of Kazakhstan, Article 7.2). This results in a somewhat paradoxical situation whereby ‘officially Kazakhstan is both a multicultural state and a nation-state for the Kazakhs’ (Holm-Hansen 1999, p. 165).

The borders of Russianness in Kazakhstan are therefore not always clear-cut. Language, for example, sometimes delineates socioeconomic borders more than ethnic and national ones: Russian are more likely to have relatively high levels of education and inhabit relatively more prosperous urban spaces even for individuals who self-identify as ethnic Kazakhs. Linguistic borders are therefore relatively porous. However, the country’s asymmetrical bilingualism (Kazakhstan’s ethnic Russians rarely speak Kazakh, while highly-educated ethnic Kazakhs commonly speak Russian and often more fluently than Kazakh) means that there are limits to the porousness of this linguistic border. Indeed, previous research conducted by Lowell Barrington has highlighted unease among many ethnic Russians about the public use of the Kazakh language (Barrington 2001, p. 137). Barrington also reported on the sharpness of the ethnic divide, demonstrated by, for example, the infrequency of interethnic marriages between Russians and Kazakhs (Barrington 2001, p. 132).

Kazakhstan therefore presents an interesting case study of a country that has rather tentatively introduced ‘cautious and astute’ bordering and nation-building practices (Zardykhhan 2004, p. 61) that are designed to introduce ‘Kazakhisation’, but simultaneously avoid aggravating the native Russian-speaking population or (perhaps more importantly) the Russian Federation. As part of Kazakhstan’s ‘multi-vector foreign policy’ (Ambrosio and Lange 2014, p. 543), there is a constant need to maintain a certain level of fluidity in Kazakhstan’s borders (understood in the broad sense). This helps to prevent Kazakhstan becoming the ‘other’ for Russia and for Kazakhstan’s large ethnic Russian population (Ambrosio and Lange 2014, p. 548).

One mechanism through which the Nazarbayev regime has maintained an astute level of porousness in its bordering practices is through the country’s membership of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). Sharing some similarities with the EU’s transnational approach to internal borders, the EEU ‘softens’ Kazakhstan’s land border with Russia (the largest continuous land border on earth), allowing free movement of people, goods and services within a unified economic space. The project also has symbolic value, stressing the importance of the

concept of Eurasia as a meaningful, transnational concept, geopolitically signifying that Kazakhstan is not an enemy to Russia.

As a result of these complexities, it is more difficult to categorise Kazakhstan's internal nation-building and bordering practices in terms of either an 'L' or 'T' identity boundary; on the one hand, boundaries are sometimes explicitly maintained, while in other areas they are purposefully downplayed. This is consequently reflected in the multifaceted ways that Kazakhstan's ethnic Russians relate to both Kazakhstan and Russia in political, symbolic and cultural terms (see contribution by Jasina in this volume).

### *Belarus*

Belarus stands out among the non-Russian FSU states because of the general dominance of Russian, despite equal constitutional status with Belarusian (Lilja and Starzhynskaya 2015); survey data even suggests that everyday use of Russian has generally been increasing, while use of Belarusian has been decreasing (Kittel et al. 2010). This is despite the fact that, as census data attests, the proportion of the country's self-declared ethnic Belarusians has been rising (Woolhiser 2014, p. 83). In this context, both the Russian language and the 'titular' language do not function as bordering modalities in the ways that can be seen in many other FSU states (although there are some similarities with Ukraine). Tellingly, 'trasianka', a mixed variant combining elements of Russian and Belarusian is also widely spoken: more so than Belarusian itself (Kittel et al. 2010).

Internal borders, especially linguistic borders, therefore appear more fluid than any of the other FSU states in terms of demarcating 'Russian' and national (i.e. 'Belarusian') spaces. Ethnic borders between Russians and Belarusians are fairly non-salient with Bekus (2014, p. 50) categorising ethnic Belarusians as a 'cold ethnic group', i.e. a group accepting their ethnic categorisation as Belarusians, but for whom this category lacks emotional significance.

Just as for Ukraine, many people consider Belarus's past in terms of a common history with Russia. Unlike Ukraine, however, there have only been limited attempts to forcibly separate Belarusian and Russian historiographies. In the early 90s there were notable efforts to establish a distinctly Belarusian historiography, anchored in notions of European civilisation. Since President Lukašenka's first term in office, however, this process has been largely reversed, with history textbooks instead highlighting historical links with Russia (Zadora 2015). Politically, Belarus operates as a founding member of the EEU (like Kazakhstan) and operates with a relatively open border with Russia, further reinforcing the fluidity of Belarusian/Russian borders.

Despite the seeming cultural, linguistic and even political closeness of Belarus and Russia, Belarusians nevertheless often have complex relationships with Russia (see Fabrykant's contribution to this volume). Belarusian nation-building is commonly studied in relation to the state ideology (Bekus 2014, p. 56) and authoritarianism of the country's long-standing president, Aliaksandr Lukašenka (Burkhardt 2016). Lukašenka's political strategy has been to facilitate political independence without rupturing possibilities for trade and cooperation with partners in the EU and Russia, with the pragmatic emphasis on relations with Russia. In this respect, the political imperative has been to avoid the erection of non-porous borders (Korosteleva 2015, p. 111), thereby preserving the notion of Belarus as an (independent) borderland (Lija and Starzhynskaya 2015, p. 248). In relation to Russia, this leads to policies that create and propagate the 'softest' possible borders that can simultaneously foster state independence. Conceptually, this makes it very difficult to study 'Russian speakers' from either 'L' or 'T' identity perspectives since indeed national identity is not heavily contested. Whereas for Kazakhstan, it is possible to derive generalised trends in both 'L' and 'T' directions along a number of axes, for Belarus, there is a pervasive sense of ambiguity and 'in between-ness' that often defies neat categorisation. Interestingly, despite commonly-held opinions that Belarusians and Russians (alongside Ukrainians) constitute a single nation (Woolhiser 2014, p. 89), the most prevalent models of Belarusian national identity stress independence from Russia. For President Lukašenka's state programme, this is often categorised as a form of 'Creole nationalism' (Woolhiser 2014, p. 89), with emphasis on Belarus's Soviet past and links with Russia, but increasingly a focus on Belarusian sovereignty.

### **Framework for Analysis**

The complex international and domestic factors discussed above present a thorny array of issues to consider when conceptualising Russian-speaking identities and practices. When discussing the role of the Russian Federation it is important to disaggregate conceptually the term 'Russia' along a number of salient axes: linguistic, cultural, economic, historical, ethnic and political. As noted earlier, porousness of group boundaries may be tied to more fluid, nuanced and non-exclusive identities. It is therefore a centrally important issue when examining inter and intra-group relations between Russian-speakers and 'titular groups'. States in the Post-Soviet space can be categorised according to the axes noted above, and according to any contestation of the borders as well as their porous or non-porous nature. This allows us to examine how bordering practices interact with nation-building and with relations with Russia.

Above, we have surveyed bordering practices of five key FSU ‘nationalising states’ in relation to how Russian speakers are positioned vis-à-vis their state of residence and various incarnations of Russia/the ‘Russian World’. We also examined the bordering practices of Russia as a potentially diasporising kin-state. These are all summarised in table 1. The conclusions for our variegated model are that, perhaps unsurprisingly, it is hardly possible to talk of a unified Russian diaspora in the post-Soviet space; the disparate internal conditions of each separate state lead to a wide range of possible reactions to Russia’s diasporising policies. However, by viewing the porousness of various boundaries, it becomes possible to understand various trends identified in the extant literatures.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

Table 1: Internal and External Bordering Practices in Selected Post-Soviet States Contributions to the Issue

The articles of this special issue present a series of empirical case studies across a number of key FSU states. These contributions illustrate how the lived experiences of Russophones in post-Soviet countries both reflect and shape bordering processes in the context of nationalising states and Russian activism. In the Baltic states, concern about maintaining their culture and sovereignty in the context of Russia’s asserted status as an external homeland for their Russophone populations has led to the construction of fairly rigid and non-porous borders. Yet, the three contributing articles demonstrate that Russophones possess complex identities that may not always warrant the concerns of governments in the Baltic states. Kaprans and Mierina’s analysis, for example, reveals that Russophone identity involves a complex socio-cognitive process, wherein there is significant consensus on belonging to Latvia, even as there is noticeable in-group differentiation, primarily related to citizenship status and age. They identify three clusters of Russophone identity in Latvia: Compatriots; Critical Moderates; and, European Russians. Amongst these groups, only the Compatriots fit with the expectations that underscore both Latvian and Russian bordering practices. Vihalemm, Juzefovics and Leppik also posit several identity categories in Latvia and Estonia: ethnocultural; civic; diasporic; and, transnational, with only the diasporic category (which is characterized by Soviet nostalgia and attachment to Russian neoimperial views) being consistent with Baltic and Russian bordering practices. Analyzing media consumption patterns, they argue that, in a time of political conflict and a corresponding media war, part of the Russian-speaking population has demonstrated an ability to maintain

transnational ‘in-between-ness, reflecting their multidimensional and complex identities. Ekmanis, in turn, finds that Russophone youth demonstrate a distinct connection to Latvia and to expressions of Latvian state culture (evidenced by participation in events directly linked to Latvian cultural identity), while at the same time they maintain their identity as Russian speakers and as members of a minority group.

Kazakhstan and Belarus, in contrast, have largely porous borders along the most salient axes. In her analysis of Russian speaking youth in Kazakhstan, Jasina finds that the concept of “rodina” (homeland) does not reflect a clearly bounded entity. Rather, there is no consistent internal or external homeland for these youth. Instead, ‘rodina’ is a flexible concept that is multi-layered and highly context related as patterns of belonging are local, national and transnational in nature. Despite the relatively porous borders, in her contribution Fabrykant argues that Russian bordering practices, particularly the Russian World strategy, has backfired in Belarus, leading to a new Belarusian nationalism that rejects Russian neoconservative and neoimperial policies while maintaining a Russophone identity.

Finally, and not surprisingly, the two contributions on Ukraine illustrate how on-going conflict with Russia (which has rendered a number of borders, material and symbolic contested) has increased attachment to Ukraine amongst Russian speakers. Bureiko and Moga argue that language choice and usage is politicised, but is not correlated to Ukrainian identity or attachment to Ukraine. Instead, Ukrainian identity has taken a civic turn, wherein expressed desire to protect Ukraine from aggression has become more salient in the wake of the annexation of Crimea and war in Donbas. In his contribution, Kulyk notes that Russian speakers have developed a salient Ukrainian identity even as they maintain attachment to the Russian language. Indeed, he finds that Russian speakers identify themselves as Ukrainians more strongly than they do as Russian speakers, although regional identity remains stronger still. He argues that there are no clear boundaries between Russian speaking Ukrainians and the rest of Ukraine’s population, leading to the conclusion that regional differences exist but are not driven by language usage or practice as all groups agree that Russian speakers constitute a legitimate part of the Ukrainian nation.

The overriding conclusion from these studies, and our framework for analysis, is that Russian-speaking identities are complex within each polity where Russian speakers are concentrated. As demonstrated in the empirical sections of this special issue, it is difficult enough trying to pin-point clusters of Russian-speakers’ identities in Latvia and Estonia. Attempts to talk, therefore, of transnational Russian/Russian-speaking identities are even more problematic. Despite the obvious and enduring diversity among people whose first language is Russian, ‘Russian-speakers’ nonetheless continue to be essentialised from many quarters. The politicised ‘reality’

of 'Russians' and/or 'Russian-speakers' is consequently likely to persist, irrespective of the manifest complexity and diversity of the millions of people who continue to speak Russian outside of the Russian Federation in places that were once part of the Soviet Union.

## References:

- Agarin, T. and Karolewski, I. (2015) *Extraterritorial Citizenship in Postcommunist Europe* (London, Rowman and Littlefield).
- Ambrosio, T. and Lange, W. (2014) 'Mapping Kazakhstan's Geopolitical code: An analysis of Nazarbayev's Presidential Addresses, 1997-2014' *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 55, 5.
- Anderson, J. and O'Dowd, L. (1999) 'Borders, Border Regions and Territoriality: Contradictory Meanings, Changing Significance', *Regional Studies*, 33, 7.
- Aptekar, S. (2009) 'Contexts of exit in the migration of Russian speakers from the Baltic countries to Ireland' *Ethnicities* 9,4.
- Arel, D. and Khmelko, V. (1996) 'The Russian factor in territorial polarization in Ukraine', *The Harriman Review* 9, 1-2.
- Balibar, E. (2004) *We the People of Europe: Reflections on Transnational Citizenship*. (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press).
- Barrington, L. (2001) 'Russian-Speakers in Ukraine and Kazakhstan: "Nationality," "Population," or Neither?', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 17,2.
- Beacháin D. and Kevlihan, R. (2013) 'Threading a Needle: Kazakhstan between Civic and Ethno-Nationalist State-Building' *Nations and Nationalism* 19, 2.
- Bekus, N. (2014) 'Ethnic Identity in Post-Soviet Belarus: Ethnolinguistic Survival as an Argument in the Political Struggle' *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 35, 1.
- Birka, I. (2016) 'Expressed attachment to Russia and social integration: the case of young Russian speakers in Latvia, 2004–2010', *Journal of Baltic Studies* 47,2.
- Brubaker, R. (1998) Myths and misconceptions in the study of nationalism, in: J.A. Hall (Ed.), *The State of the Nation: Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism* (New York, Cambridge University Press).
- Brubaker, R. (2005) 'The 'diaspora' diaspora', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 28,1.
- Brubaker, R. (2009) 'Ethnicity race and nationalism', *Annual Review of Sociology* 35.
- Burkhardt, F. (2016) 'Concepts of the Nation and Legitimation in Belarus', in Brusis, M., Ahrens, J. and Wessel, M. (eds) *Politics and Legitimacy in Post-Soviet Eurasia* (London, Palgrave Macmillan).
- Cheskin, A. (2015) 'Identity and Integration of Russian Speakers in the Baltic States', *Ethnopolitics*, 14, 1.
- Cheskin, A. (2016) *Russian-Speakers in Post-Soviet Latvia: Discursive Identity Strategies*. (Edinburgh, University of Edinburgh Press).
- Cheskin, A. and March, L. (2016) 'Latvia's 'Russian left': Trapped between ethnic, socialist and social democratic identities', in March, L. and Keith, D. (eds) *Europe's radical left: From marginality to the mainstream?* (London, Rowman and Littlefield).
- Cohen, J. (1999) 'Changing Paradigms of Citizenship and the Exclusiveness of the Demos', *International Sociology* 14, 3.
- Donnan, H. and T.M. Wilson. (1999) *Borders: Frontiers of Identity, Nation and State* (Berg: Oxford).
- Feklyunina V. (2015) 'Soft power and identity: Russia, Ukraine and the 'Russian world(s)', *European Journal of International Relations*, 22,4.



- Fowler, B. (2002) Fuzzing Citizenship, Nationalising Political Space: A Framework for Interpreting the Hungarian 'Status Law' as a New Form of Kin-State Policy in Central and East Europe. Working Paper 40 (Sussex, University of Sussex).
- Fournier, A. (2002) 'Mapping identities: Russian resistance to linguistic Ukrainisation in central and eastern Ukraine', *Europe-Asia Studies* 54, 3.
- Gorham, M. (2011) 'Virtual Rusophonia: Language Policy as 'Soft Power' in the New Media Age', *Digital Icons* 5.
- Grigas, A. (2016) *Beyond Crimea: The New Russian Empire* (New Haven, Yale University Press).
- Holm-Hansen, J. (1999) 'Political integration in Kazakhstan' in Kolstø P. (ed) *Nation-Building and Ethnic Integration in Post-Soviet Societies: An Investigation of Latvia and Kazakhstan* (Boulder, CO, Westview Press).
- Hudson V. (2015) 'Forced to Friendship? Russian (Mis-)Understandings of Soft Power and the Implications for Audience Attraction in Ukraine', *Politics* DOI: 10.1111/1467-9256.12106
- Ijabs, I. (2016) 'After the referendum: militant democracy and nation-building in Latvia', *East European Politics and Societies* 30, 2.
- Kachuyevski, A. (2016) 'The "Russian World" and the Securitization of Identity Boundaries in Latvia', in Andrey Makarychev and Alexandra Yatsyk (eds.) *Suturing the Ruptures: Seams and Stitches in the Baltic Sea Region*. (London: Palgrave).
- Kachuyevski, A. and Olesker R. (2014) 'Divided Societies and Identity Boundaries: A Conflict Analysis Framework', *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 25, 3.
- Kittel, B., Lindner, D., Tesch, S. and Hentschel, G. (2010) 'Mixed Language Usage in Belarus: The Sociostructural Background of Language Choice' *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 206.
- Korosteleva, E. (2015) 'Belarus between the EU and Eurasian Economic Union' in Dutkiewicz, P. and Sakwa, R. (eds) *Eurasian Integration – The View from within* (London, Routledge).
- Kosmarskaya, N. (2005) 'Post-Soviet Russian diaspora', in Ember, E. Ember C. & Skoggards I. (eds.) *Encyclopedia of Diasporas: Immigrant and Refugee Cultures Around the World. Volume 2: Diaspora Communities* (Chester, Springer).
- Kosmarskaya, N. (2011) 'Russia and Post-Soviet "Russian Diaspora": Contrasting Visions, Conflicting Projects' *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 17, 1.
- Kolstø, P. (1996) 'The New Russian Diaspora – an Identity of its Own? Possible Identity Trajectories for Russians in the Former Soviet Republic' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 19, 3.
- Kolstø, P. (1999) 'Territorialising diasporas: The case of Russians in the former Soviet republics', *Millennium* 28, 3.
- Kozin, A. (2015) ' "The Law of Compatriot": Toward a New Russian National Identity', *Russian Joournal of Communication* 7, 3.
- Kulyk, V. (2015) 'The age factor in language practices and attitudes: continuity and change in Ukraine's bilingualism', *Nationalities Papers* 43, 2.
- Kulyk, V. (2016) 'National identity in Ukraine: impact of Euromaidan and the war', *Europe-Asia Studies* 68,4.
- Laitin, D. (1998) *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press).
- Lamont, M. and Molnár V. (2002) 'The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences', *Annual Review of Sociology* 28, 1.

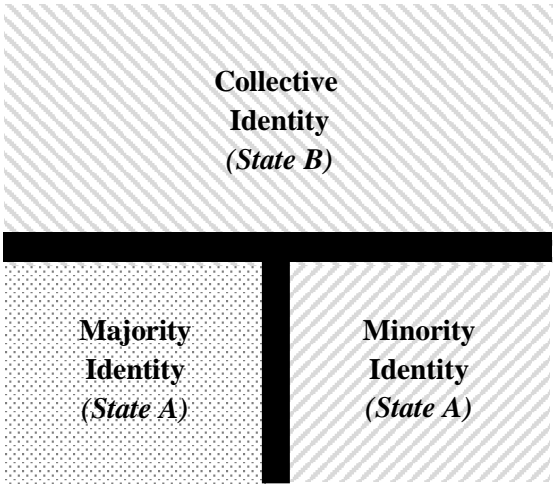
- Laruelle, M. (2015) 'Russia as a "Divided Nation," From Compatriots to Crimea: A Contribution to the Discussion on Nationalism and Foreign Policy', *Problems of Post-Communism* 62, 2.
- Lilja, R. and Starzhynskaya, N. (2015) 'The Russian-Belarusian Bilingualism in the Republic of Belarus Today and the Problems of Pre-School Education' *Russian Journal of Communication* 7, 2.
- Lulle, A. (2016) 'Revitalising Border: Memory, Mobility and Materiality in a Latvian-Russian Border Region', *Culture Unbound* 8.
- Lulle, A. and Jurkane-Hobein, I. (2017) Strangers Within? Russian-Speakers' Migration from Latvia to London: A Study in Power Geometry and Intersectionality', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 43, 4.
- Melvin, N. (1995) *Russians beyond Russia: The Politics of National Identity* (London, The Royal Institute of International Affairs).
- Migdal, J. S. (2004) *Boundaries and Belonging: States and Societies in the Struggle to Shape Identities and Local Practices* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation (2013b), *Интервью директора Департамента по работе с соотечественниками за рубежом МИД России А.А.Макарова информпорталу «Русский век», 26 декабря 2013 года* [Interview with A. A. Makarov, Director of the Compatriot department of the MFA of Russia, for the information portal 'Russian Century', 26 December 2013], available at: <http://mid.ru/bdomp/ns-dgpch.nsf/bab3c4309e31451cc325710e004812c0/2f2bcfd68a007a0844257c5100332955!OpenDocument>
- Natoli, K. (2010) 'Weaponizing Nationality: An Analysis of Russia's Passport Policy in Georgia', *Boston University International Law Journal* 28, 2.
- Newman, D. (2006) 'The Lines that Continue to Separate Us: Borders in Our "Borderless" World', *Progress in Human Geography* 30, 2.
- Nozhenko, M. (2006) 'Motherland is Calling You: Motives Behind and Prospects for the New Russian Policy on Compatriots Abroad' *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review* 18.
- Passi, A. (1995) 'Constructing Territories, Boundaries and Regional Identities' in Forsberg, T. (ed) *Contested Territory: Border Disputes at the Edge of the Former Soviet Empire* (Aldershot, Edward Elgar Publishing).
- Pfoser, A. (2015) 'Between Security and Mobility: Negotiating a Hardening Border Regime in the Russian-Estonian Borderland', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 41, 10.
- Putin, V. (2014) Address by President of the Russian Federation, March 18, 2014, available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>
- Rodgers, P. (2007) '“Compliance or contradiction”? Teaching 'history' in the 'new' Ukraine. A view from Ukraine's eastern borderland', *Europe-Asia Studies* 59, 3.
- Romaniuk, A. and Gladun, O. (2015) 'Demographic trends in Ukraine: past, present and future', *Population and Development Review* 41, 2.
- Rumford, C. (2006) 'Introduction: Theorizing Borders', *European Journal of Social Theory* 9,2.
- Shevel, O. (2012) 'The Politics of Citizenship Policy in Post-Soviet Russia', *Post-Soviet Affairs* 28, 1.
- Shlapentokh, V., Sendich, M. and Payin E. (eds) (1994) *The New Russian Diaspora: Russian Minorities in the Former Soviet Republics* (London, M. E. Sharpe).
- Schulze, J. (2016) 'Does Russia Matter? European Institutions, Strategic Framing, and the Case of Stateless Children in Estonia and Latvia', *Problems of PostCommunism* DOI: 10.1080/10758216.2016.1239541.
- Smith, D. (2002) 'Framing the national question in Central and Eastern Europe: A quadratic nexus?' *Global Review of Ethnopolitics* 2, 1.

- Smith, G. (1996) 'The ethnic democracy thesis and the citizenship question in Estonia and Latvia', *Nationalities Papers* 24,2.
- Smith, M. and Bakker, M. (2008) *Citizenship across Borders: The Political Transnationalism of El Migrante* (New York, Cornell University Press).
- Smith, G., Law, V., Wilson, A., Bohr, A. & Allworth, E. (1998) *Nation-building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands: The Politics of National Identities* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).
- Stjepanović, D. (2015) 'Claimed Co-Ethnics and Kin-State citizenship in Southeastern Europe', *Ethnopolitics* 14, 2.
- Todd, J., et al. (2006) 'The Moral Boundaries of the Nation: The Constitution of National Identity in the Southeastern Border Counties of Ireland', *Ethnopolitics* 5, 4.
- von Hagen, M. (1995) 'Does Ukraine have a history?' *Slavic Review* 54, 3.
- Wawrzonek, M. (2014) 'Ukraine in the "Gray Zone": Between the "Russkiy Mir" and Europe' *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* 28, 4.
- Woolhiser, C. (2014) 'The Russian Language in Belarus: Language Use, Speaker Identities and Metalinguistic Discourse', in Ryazanova-clarke, L. (ed) *The Russian Language Outside the Nation* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press).
- Yekelchik, S. (2015) 'National heroes for a new Ukraine: merging the vocabularies of the diaspora, revolution, and mass culture', *Ab Imperio* 3.
- Zadora, A. (2015) 'The Politics of History Textbooks in Belarus: Between Globalization and Authoritarian Confinement', in Zajda, J. (ed.) *Nation-Building and history Education in a Global culture* (London, Springer).
- Zaharchenko, T. (2016) *Where Currents Meet: Frontiers in Post-Soviet Fiction of Kharkiv, Ukraine* (Budapest: Central European University Press).
- Zardykhan, Z. (2004) 'Russians in Kazakhstan and demographic change: imperial legacy and the Kazakh way of nation building', *Asian Ethnicity*, 5, 1.
- Zevelev, I. (2008) 'Russia's Policy Towards Compatriots in the Former Soviet Union', *Russia in Global Affairs* 6, 1.
- Zhurzhenko, T. (2010) *Borderlands Into Borderedlands: Geopolitics of Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine* (Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag).

Table 1: Summary of Internal and External Bordering Practices

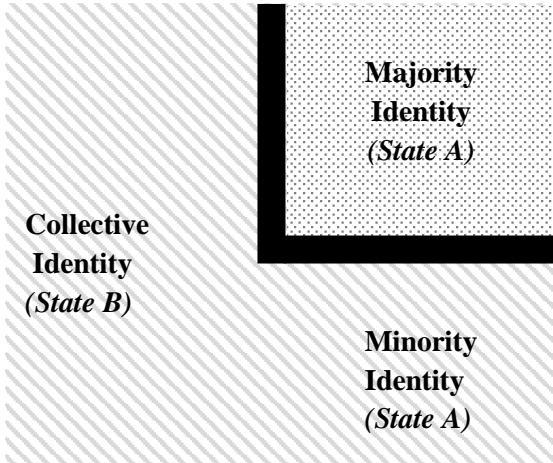
	Internal Dynamics				External Dynamics
	Kazakhstan	Latvia and Estonia	Ukraine	Belarus	Russia
Political borders	<p><b>Relatively porous</b> Member of CIS and EEU; open border with Russia and many Kazakhstanis seeking work in Russia.</p>	<p><b>Relatively non-porous</b> EU member; relatively closed physical border and strict visa controls towards Russia; greater ease of access to Russia for individuals with non-citizen passports.</p>	<p><b>Contested</b> Non-porous for areas under Ukrainian governmental control; contested for areas no longer under Ukrainian governmental control (Crimea and large parts of the Donbas).</p>	<p><b>Relatively porous</b> Member of CIS and EEU; open border with Russia; political emphasis on Belarusian state sovereignty.</p>	<p><b>Relatively porous/expansionist</b> Member of CIS and EEU; political and military interference in neighbouring areas such as Donbas, Crimea, Transnistria, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, often accompanied by 'passportisation'.</p>
Language borders	<p><b>Largely porous</b> Russian language not explicitly linked to ethnicity; Russian constitutionally recognised as language of interethnic communication. Some limited efforts to reduce the influence of Russian.</p>	<p><b>Largely non-porous</b> Language legislation to prevent public dominance of Russian; moniker 'Russian-speaker' used as designation for group identity and highly politicised; everyday, social use of Russian more fluid and less politicised.</p>	<p><b>Largely porous</b> Russian seen as a non-issue for many Ukrainians and speaking Russian not explicitly linked to political/territorial ties with Russia; widespread bilingualism; some moves for further Ukrainianisation.</p>	<p><b>Porous</b> Fluid but with general predominance of Russian language alongside limited use of Belarusian and widespread use of mixed language (trasianka).</p>	<p><b>Porous and expansionist</b> Russian language symbolising extended border beyond political territory of Russian Federation; Russian speakers at times conceptualised as extension of Russian nation.</p>
Ethnic borders	<p><b>Non-porous</b> Ethnicity conceptualised in largely dichotomous terms.</p>	<p><b>Non-porous</b> Rigid and institutionalised ideas concerning ethnicity.</p>	<p><b>Porous</b> Ethnic self-designation increasingly seen as matter of personal choice irrespective of parents' ethnicity or language.</p>	<p><b>Relatively non-porous but non-salient</b> Prevalent Soviet understandings of ethnicity, but ethnicity largely non-politicised and 'cold'.</p>	<p><b>Contradictory</b> Increased conflation of civic and ethnic ideas of Russianness, but with implicit focus on Russian ethnic core.</p>
Historical borders	<p><b>Porous</b> Weak sense of pre-Soviet stateness and historical concentration of ethnic Russians in north of country.</p>	<p><b>Non-porous</b> Clear emphasis in Latvian and Estonian historiographies on the injustices of Soviet occupation.</p>	<p><b>Contested</b> Ongoing territorial disputes tied to historical claims; difficulty of separating Ukrainian and Russian historiography.</p>	<p><b>Largely porous</b> Generally overlapping historical memories with periodic and limited efforts to create a distinct Belarusian historiography.</p>	<p><b>Expansionist</b> Historical claims to greater influence in Eurasian region based on Soviet and imperial experiences.</p>

**Figure 1: ‘T’ and ‘L’ Configuration Models for Divisions in Perceived Identities within Divided Societies**



**T Configuration**

*Internal division between perceived majority and minority identities*



**L Configuration**

*Majority projection of minority as an external other*