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University of Vermont
College of Arts and Sciences
Department of German and Russian

HONORS THESIS

Isolated or Integrated:
Exploring the Social Bidirectionality of Ethnic Russians in Estonia and Latvia

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Submitted in November 2020

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Isolated or Integrated:
Exploring the Social Bidirectionality of Ethnic Russians in Estonia and Latvia

Abstract

Historically, ethnic Russians have occupied a complicated place in Estonian and Latvian societies. As remnants of an agonizing Soviet past, ethnic Russians—who make up approximately one quarter of both countries' current populations—have found themselves largely isolated in Estonia and Latvia's post-Soviet era. However, as this thesis examines, that trend is changing. Though still possessing several layers of isolation, the Russian minority community is experiencing more and more integration in contemporary Estonia and Latvia, especially over the past couple years. Exploring this development from a discursive framework, I have conducted a media content analysis of 216 articles from six Latvian and Estonian news outlets over a twelve-month timeframe from February 1, 2019 to January 31, 2020. This content analysis identifies and pinpoints the main areas of tension for the two nations' ethnic environments, which serve as the foundation for the main discussion sections of the paper. These sections critically analyze the study's results and samples. The main identified areas of tension include: ethnic politics, geographic isolation, language use, education reform, and citizenship. This thesis finds that, on balance, ethnic Russians' social positionality in Estonia and Latvia is bidirectional: they are integrated in certain ways and they are isolated in others. The thesis explores the complexity of the co-existence of integration and isolation within one community, while forecasting what the future holds for the Russian minority's further social integration in post-Soviet Estonia and Latvia.

Key Words: Estonia, Latvia, Ethnic Russian Minority, Ethnic Tensions, Language, Media Content Analysis

Introduction

Nearly thirty years have passed since Estonia and Latvia regained their independence from the Soviet Union, ending five decades of brutal occupation characterized by violence, ethnic deportations, and cultural destruction for the two nations' titular populations. Three decades later, however, and these two nations still have sizeable ethnic Russian populations living within their borders. Their lingering presence is the result of USSR policies that resettled ethnic Russians throughout Soviet territory, in order to instate a Slavic dominance and prevent ethnic mobilization among the non-Slavic republics, such as the occupied Baltic nations.

Among many challenges, these ethnic Russians struggle to reach social acceptance and access feelings of national belonging in modern day Estonia and Latvia. This is because, for the titular populations, ethnic Russians are remnants of the nations' brutal Soviet past—a label that results in the community's stigmatization. As a result, there exists an ethnic divide in Estonia and Latvia, which has separated communities and established informal borders inside the nations themselves. This divide exists along linguistic, political, and cultural lines, and its salient impact has initiated different worlds of living in Estonia and Latvia. Although the countries have attempted to integrate the populations in recent years and have succeeded in certain aspects, a considerable layer of isolation still surrounds the ethnic Russian community at large, bringing into question: Is the community isolated or integrated?

Exploring the complex relationship with ethnic Russians in Estonia and Latvia, this thesis will examine—qualitatively and quantitatively—the ways in which the ethnic Russian population is bidirectionally both integrated and isolated. To accomplish this, I have conducted a content analysis of 216 articles from six Latvian and Estonian media outlets over a twelve-month timeframe from February 1, 2019 to January 31, 2020. This content analysis, through the coded samples, identifies and pinpoints a number of themes, which demonstrate the main areas of tension for the two nations' ethnic environments. These areas of tension then provide the foundation on which this thesis will analyze the societal features that render the community isolated, integrated, or a mix of both. The leading features encompass ethnically-charged politics, geographic isolation, language use, education reform, and social belonging. This thesis examines each theme in-depth, as a means to discern the minority community's positionality.

This thesis contains several sections of analysis and contextualization. Firstly, I analyze and discuss the necessary historical context of Latvia and Estonia, in order to describe how the countries' ethnic tensions evolved, highlighting the historical factors that led to the formation of the current relationship between the ethnic communities. This will be done through a review of previous scholarly research and country-specific sources, such as the official websites for Estonia's and Latvia's Ministries of Foreign Affairs. The following section consists of an overview of the selected methodology, explaining in greater depth the framework used to collect the data and conduct the study. The third section presents the results and explains, from a general standpoint, their significance for and relevance to ethnic Russians in Estonia and Latvia. Then, the following six sections discuss and examine the larger meaning behind the results and what

the identified codes and themes signal about the social positionality of ethnic Russians. Each section focuses on a specific theme (i.e. ethnic politics or education reform) and discursively analyzes the samples, creating an image of majority-minority relations in both Estonia and Latvia. This will be accomplished through a comprehensive review of the raw results, and then an incorporation of textual examples from the study's samples to showcase what is being said (and how it is said) about the minority community.

The objective of this thesis is to provide a contemporary understanding of the current positionality of ethnic Russians in Estonia and Latvia, while also looking forward to the future about their place in the Baltic nations' societies. Ethnic Russians have moved from one side of the social spectrum to another, as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union—and in moving from the majority to the minority, the community has had to grapple with a number of social obstacles in independent Estonia and Latvia. As such, it is important to assess their current place in Estonia and Latvia, so that scholars and academics alike can better understand what the minority community's future holds regarding their ongoing challenges associated with social integration and isolation.

1. Historical Context: The Region's Path to Ethnic Divide

Estonia and Latvia have suffered from vacillating levels of independence and autonomy at the hands of authoritarian regimes over the past several centuries. Most recently, both Baltic nations struggled under Soviet occupation for five decades from 1940 to 1990, during which their people, languages, and cultures were oppressed in ways systematically aimed at destroying and erasing their national identities. This was done so that a single unit of Slavic culture could emerge throughout the USSR. The Red Army's 1940 invasion into and its illegal annexation of both countries ended their short period of inter-war independence and kickstarted the beginning of several decades marred by violence, discrimination, and suffering for Estonia's and Latvia's titular populations.[1]

1.1. Soviet Mass Deportations: The Communist Regime's First Act of Brutality

To prevent ethnic mobilization and instate an ethnic Russian majority in both nations, the Soviet Union initiated mass deportations of the two countries' titular populations—many of whom were women and children—throughout the 1940s to intense labor camps and uninhabitable parts of Russia (Key, 2003; Koort, 2014; Mertelsmann & Rahi-Tamm, 2009; Soviet, 2004; Strods & Kott, 2002). Families had their loved ones stolen from them; friends

[1] Estonia and Latvia were occupied by the Russian Empire until 1918. Once they gained their independence, however, both nations experienced significant growth and development in the educational, economic, and infrastructural components of their society. This allowed them to emerge as thriving European nations. For example, Latvia ranked 12th in Europe for Total Factor Productivity, and Estonian society benefited from significant cultural advancement and acceptance, as evidenced by its 1925 decision to grant cultural autonomy to most minority groups—a national decision unique in Western Europe at the time.

found themselves coerced into turning on one another; and progressive, free thinkers were forcefully silenced and removed from society. The Soviet Union paid no regard to the rights or lives of Estonia's and Latvia's populations, viewing them instead as mere barriers to the creation of a Slavic state.

Men were sent to extreme labor camps known as "Gulags," while women and children were often ushered off to "administrative settlements" in areas with harsh climates, such as northern Russia, where they were labeled "enemies of the people" and given essentially no supplies to survive. The deportations that occurred in 1941 and 1949 remain the most salient in Baltic history because of the qualitative and quantitative impact they left. These deportations not only constituted the first mass act of inhumanity perpetrated by the Soviet regime, registering fear and anxiety into the minds of Estonians and Latvians for the oppression that was to come, but they also resulted in a crippling blow to the region's postwar guerrilla resistance, which represented the only option to reclaiming independence and escaping Soviet occupation (Kukk & Raun, 2007; Strods & Kott).

In 1941, approximately 47,000 Estonian people were arrested for political reasons, 35,000 were deported, and 34,000 were forced into the Red Army to spend several months in labor camps, during which one third perished. And then in 1949, under "Operation Priboi," roughly 21,000 Estonians were seized and deported to Siberia with many dying on the journey. Deportees ranged from newborns to the elderly.[2] In Latvia, approximately 35,000 Latvians, some of whom were children under the ages of ten, were deported to, and subsequently died in, labor camps or uninhabitable parts of Russia as part of the 1941 deportations. Latvia's 1949 deportations then saw the removal of 42,000 people from their homeland. Over 11,000 of the 42,000 deported were children. All in all, at least 100,000 ethnic Latvians are documented as having been deported as part of these initiatives (Strods & Kott; Soviet; History, 2014; Stuttaford, 2014; Roeder, 1991). Since thousands of political executions and smaller scale deportations took place throughout this period, there exist only approximate estimates, such as the aforementioned ones, on the number of Estonians and Latvians who were deported (and died) in total from 1940 until the start of the 1956 de-Stalinization period, after which government-sanctioned deportations were discontinued.

1.2. The Entrance of Ethnic Russians into Estonia and Latvia

Table One: Ethnic Breakdown in Estonia and Latvia from mid-1900s to Present Day[3]

Estonia from 1934 - 2019								
Ethnic Group	***1934***	***1959***	***1970***	***1979***	***1989***	***2000***	***2011***	***2019***
Estonian	88%	75%	68%	65%	62%	68%	70%	69%

[2] The youngest individual deported was a one-day-old child, who died a year later, and then the oldest deportee was 95-years-old.

[3] Information was obtained from relevant censuses and national population data for 2018 and 2019.

Russian	8%	20%	25%	28%	30%	26%	25%	25%
Ukrainian	0%	1%	2%	3%	3%	2%	2%	2%
Belarusian	0%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%
Other	4%	3%	4%	2%	5%	3%	2%	3%
Latvia from 1935 - 2018								
Ethnic Group	***1935***	***1959***	***1970***	***1979***	***1989***	***2000***	***2011***	***2018***
Latvian	76%	62%	57%	54%	52%	58%	62%	62%
Russian	11%	27%	30%	33%	34%	30%	27%	25%
Ukrainian	0.10%	1%	2%	3%	4%	3%	2%	2%
Belarusian	1%	3%	4%	5%	5%	4%	3%	3%
Other	11.90%	7%	7%	5%	5%	5%	6%	8%

To mitigate the population loss and ensure a Slavic dominance, Soviet authorities ushered thousands of ethnic Russians into Estonia and Latvia. In Estonia, many settled in the Ida-Viru region, which is located in northeastern Estonia near the Russian border and also home to Narva, currently the country's third-largest city. The Soviets and Germans bombed this region in 1944 during the six-month-long and highly destructive Battle of Narva, while struggling to regain and maintain control of the strategically-located border city. These bombings demolished the infrastructure and old-town baroque architecture of the region. This was especially the case in Narva, which used to be home to a rich, vibrant old-town city center. Instead of rebuilding this cultural infrastructure once back in control, the USSR chose to forbid Estonians from returning to the Ida-Viru area, and then proceeded to demolish even the walls of the bombed-out houses. This was done to make room for Soviet-style apartments to house the region's new Soviet workers, since Ida-Viru—specifically Sillamäe—became home to a uranium factory and other industrial plants that fueled the USSR's nuclear program (Lippmaa & Maremäe, 2003; Faure & Mensing, 2012). Sillamäe became a "closed town" that was run by the Soviet military, inhabited only by ethnic Russians, and did not even exist on maps nor have a postal address; careful monitoring was done to ensure state secrets remained in the region (Sillamäe, n.d.; Kattago, 2008; Maisel & Duval, 2016). The Soviet Union's lack of trust in ethnic Estonians prevented them from living or working in this region at large. Outside of Ida-Viru, other ethnic Russians were also resettled to the capital city of Tallinn to occupy high-ranking government jobs in Estonia.

In Latvia, a similar situation took place. A large number of ethnic Russians entered the country, moving mainly to the metropolitan areas of Riga and Daugavpils, which to this day both house the bulk of the country's ethnic Russian population (History; Lakis, 1995). These Russians were also placed into high-level government and industrial jobs, giving them a social and financial advantage over ethnic Latvians, allowing for the establishment of disparity in living standards between the two ethnicities.

Daugavpils, just as with Narva, also had its original architecture destroyed as a result of Soviet and Nazi bombings during World War Two. In rebuilding the city, the Soviet government shed what was left of its Latvian heritage, virtually constructing and creating a new city that now served the USSR's needs. Historic old town buildings were replaced by Soviet developments, which followed the pragmatic, cheap style of Stalinist architecture. And then several former districts were turned into empty fields with propaganda sculptures. The Soviet Union sent in thousands of settlers from Russia to repopulate Daugavpils, too. By 1959, and for the first time in its urban history, Daugavpils had a single majority ethnicity: 56 percent of residents were ethnically Russian. Latvians, who once had their own culture and lifestyle invested in the city, made up just thirteen percent of the population. The remaining 35 percent of the population was of other various Slavic ethnicities, such as Poles, Ukrainians, and Belarussians (Žemaitis, 2016).

The phenomenon of "Russification" then officially took hold in both nations: the Soviet government sanctioned the removal of the Estonian and Latvian languages, holidays, cultural traditions, and history from a number of social and educational spheres. Russian language, culture, and traditions then replaced it all, consequently becoming the "superior" culture in occupied-Estonia and -Latvia. This facilitated the growth of an anti-Russian and anti-Soviet sentiment among the two nations' titular populations. Ethnic Estonians and Latvians had to be cautious, however, of what they said, when they said it, and to whom they would express their personal beliefs, because the USSR's covert KGB officers monitored public discourse and severely punished those who spoke out against or criticized the Soviet government.

1.3. Independence, Citizenship Policies, and Social Belonging for Ethnic Russians

In 1990, however, the situation began to change. After the success of various peaceful protests, such as the region-wide Baltic Way movement, and the Soviet government's relaxation of its social and political hold on its republics, Estonia and Latvia publicly denounced the past five decades of Soviet occupation and announced the commencement of a transitional period for the nations' full independence.[4] By September 1991, this goal had been achieved: the Soviet Union itself recognized Estonia and Latvia as now being sovereign, independent countries not attached to the USSR (Schmemann, 1991). This was a defining moment of triumph and hope for the two countries, because they now finally had the opportunity to significantly develop their nations, freely speak their languages, and create the societies on which they were working before the illegal 1940 annexation.

The ethnic Russian population in these two countries, however, did not all share in the joy of independence. For example, the ethnic Russians around Narva did not support Estonia's statehood and demanded autonomy for the region at the time, since they viewed themselves not

[4] The Baltic Way was a peaceful protest movement in which Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians linked arms with each other from Tallinn to Riga to Vilnius as a way to express their wish to be free from Soviet occupation. This movement represented an important moment in Baltic history because of the three countries' ability to all come together as one—something that historically did not happen and currently does not happen often, since all three nations like to assert their own uniqueness and identity from one another.

as Estonians, but as Russians residing in the Estonian Soviet Republic (Faure & Mensing). Similarly, in Latvia, many Russians opposed the nation's independence and vocalized this belief on a political level. Several leading political figures, such as the controversial Tatjana Ždanoka, who currently serves as one of the leaders of the Russian Union of Latvia—a pro-Russia, populist political party in Latvia—did not support Latvia's bid for independence. As part of the commuist party, along with many other Russians at the time, she instead believed that Latvia ought to remain as part of Russia and therefore opposed sovereignty (Latvia, 2006; van Elsuwege, 2008; Russian, 2018). Ethnic Russians feared what a world would look like in which their ethnicity (and language) was no longer something that awarded them in society, but rather something that degraded their social position, since they were aware, because of the Soviet oppression, of the negative sentiments many Estonians and Latvians likely felt toward them.

Despite this, many ethnic Russians chose to remain in Estonia and Latvia rather than move to the Russian Federation. These Russians understood that the economic situation in Russia was in ruins, and that though they have cultural and linguistic ties there, life itself in Russia would come with an array of challenges.[5] For others, the decision to remain in the Baltic region was more personal. Since their entire lives existed in Narva, Riga, Daugavpils, or Tallinn—to leave would mean to let go of everything they knew. They viewed these spaces as their home, even though they did not necessarily see themselves as Latvian or Estonian (Rose, 1997). Currently, around a quarter of both Estonia and Latvia's population is considered to be ethnically Russian.

Because of these remaining Russians, the newly-independent nations now found themselves with a population that, for many, resembled the remnants of a dark, troubling past, away from which Baltic society wanted to break. On the other end, Russians in Estonia and Latvia now found themselves unwelcome and unwanted—sentiments that encouraged ethnic consolidation, causing the ethnic Russians to isolate themselves from the rest of Estonia and Latvia in areas such as Ida-Viru, Daugavpils, and concentrated enclaves in Riga and Tallinn.

And on a political level, the Estonian and Latvian governments passed policies that were rooted in their national languages and cultures in the 1990s, thereby rendering both countries as nation-states, which wanted to promote their own identities after years of having them oppressed, targeted, and degraded (Mole, 2012; Cameron & Orenstein, 2012; Cheskin & Kachuyevski, 2019). Paramount of these policies were those surrounding citizenship and the restrictive requirements that encompassed the naturalization process. The path to citizenship in the two Baltic countries was especially challenging for ethnic Russians, since a large component of it required advanced knowledge of Latvian or Estonian—two very complex languages. Other aspects of the process, such as an awareness of Estonian and Latvian history, culture, and sometimes an oath of allegiance, deterred ethnic Russians from becoming citizens (Smith, 1996; Romanov, 2000; Barrington, 1995; Zabrodskaja, 2009).

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[5] And they were very much right. The 1990s were a volatile, turbulent time for Russia, during which the nation's people experienced several economic, political, and social struggles.

Instead of becoming a citizen of either Baltic country or moving back to Russia, many ethnic Russians received alien passports, which signified that they had no state to which they were attached (i.e. stateless citizens).[6] These individuals are referred to as "non-citizens" in current discourse related to citizenship.[7] Though allowed to reside in Latvia or Estonia, non-citizens are excluded from voting and a range of jobs, and the stigma attached to this label of statelessness has initiated a crisis of identity for many ethnic Russians, whose feelings of isolation are only exacerbated by the fact that they know they have no national identity of which they are a part (Paparinskis, 2018; Cheskin, 2013; Birka, 2015).[8] To this day, Estonia, which has a population of 1.3 million, has approximately 71,000 stateless citizens and the vast majority of whom are ethnically Russian (Population of Estonia, 2020; Stateless, 2020). A significant number live in Narva and there is also a large amount living in Tallinn, the nation's capital city (Number, 2019). Latvia, however, has a significantly larger figure—there are roughly 220,000 non-citizens, who mainly reside in Riga and Daugavpils (Distribution, 2020). Latvia also has a higher total population with approximately 1.9 million residents (Population of Latvia, 2020).

This social and national alienation, in turn, created a set of integrational tensions between the titular populations and the ethnic Russians, since the Russian community also began to operate and exist within different linguistic and cultural worlds, even though they lived in the same country. The minority community began to experience isolative challenges, as well, because communal struggles dealing with identity formation and national belonging augmented their feelings of displacement. Similar to those the Baltic population felt during Soviet occupation, sentiments of inferiority emerged within the Russian community's minds in the newly independent countries. This spurred ethnic segregation, and consequently prevented progressive integration from occurring in either nations' societies.

These policies also impacted Estonia's and Latvia's pre-accession phases for EU membership. The two nations received staunch criticism from the EU for their treatment of the Russian minority and failure to uphold a higher standard of minority rights. These challenges, although, did not come as a surprise, since the governments paid little to no attention to their Russian minorities, who were not viewed as important parts of their nations' development in the post-Soviet era (van Elsuwege, 2004). Many Estonians at the time believed that, for example, these EU requirements for minority rights could jeopardize the very national identity they had just begun to reconstruct, and that forfeiting this liberty would regress Estonian society in significant ways (Mole).

In Latvia, the eastern city of Daugavpils—with its majority ethnic Russian population—emerged as the only city in the country to oppose EU membership. This created further tension in the country between the two ethnicities, because Latvians viewed the EU as

[6] The color of this alien passport in Estonia is gray, and then in Latvia it is dark blue. In Estonia, stateless citizens are often referred to as "gray passport holders."

[7] Non-citizen in Latvian is "nepilsoņi;" in Estonian, "mittekodanik;" and in Russian, "не гражданин," which is transliterated as "ne grazhdanin."

[8] In Latvia, stateless citizens were not allowed to vote in any form of elections. In Estonia, however, non-citizens could vote in municipal elections, therefore giving them some level of political participation, even if only at the local level.

their ticket to the West, whereas ethnic Russians, even though the EU advocated for this minority community to receive more rights, viewed any pivot to the West as inherently dangerous for their own culture (Žemaitis).

Nonetheless, even though all necessary legislation had yet to be implemented by the time of accession, both Estonia and Latvia moved forward successfully with their applications and officially joined the EU in 2004. Despite this, however, the EU still observed "important shortcomings" in the area of anti-discrimination legislation for the countries' minority communities (Council, 2002; Mole).

To this day, the ethnic divide in Estonia and Latvia—born from a brutal past with Russian and Soviet occupation—still exists and is visible on social, political, and economic levels. This divide raises questions about the future of integration in the region, especially as nationalistic parties rise in popularity, language policies restructure society, ethnic isolation continues, and as the two nations continue to try to shed their Soviet past.

2. Methodology

This thesis employs a discursive approach to media content analysis as the methodological structure for examining, exploring, and understanding the social positionality of ethnic Russians in Estonia and Latvia. Because the study will analyze national news reports, it uses content analysis, an interpretive approach, to examine how the content of a communication source, such as a media outlet, reflects the political issues and public discourse found in a country, and then what that content signals about society itself. Overall, content analysis employs the "interpretation of text and data through the systematic classification process of coding" to identify recurring social themes or patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Introduced in the early 20th century, media content analysis was initially used as a method to study and investigate propaganda. Over the past several decades, its application and usage has extended into other analytic and academic realms. It is a specialized subset of content analysis, whose results produce a two-fold impact, allowing researchers to comprehensively evaluate communicative messages and also offer strategic insights through the tracking of thematic trends (Macnamara, 2005).

Structurally, the purpose of a content analysis is to describe the characteristics of a designated source's material and to offer a qualitative depiction of society, as created by a set of themes and categories (Cassell & Symon, 1994). These organized ideas or stories then provide meaning and understanding of certain events and experiences, which thereby offer glimpses into deeper facets of society. News media picks up on these trends and uses them to organize its own content; as a result, news media often reflects the pre-existing discursive structure in society (Happer & Philo, 2013; Macnamara). Due to this social reflection, the media is a unique lens to analyze and understand various trends in society. Interrogating the social frameworks of integration and isolation through the media yields an understanding of how Estonia and Latvia operate with their complex majority-minority relations. It also helps to explain how two starkly

opposite phenomena—integration and isolation—can coexist with each other within the ethnic Russian community in both countries.

Estonia and Latvia were chosen as countries to examine for this thesis—aside from the fact that they are both Baltic countries—because of three dominant reasons. Firstly, both nations, having been occupied by the USSR, experience similar post-Soviet struggles within their societies. That is, the countries' economic and social development was halted in the mid-1900s, and therefore they are both playing catch-up with the rest of Europe as they westernize their societies socially and economically, in order to move away from the narrative that they are part of the East.[9]

Secondly, Estonia and Latvia both have sizeable ethnic Russian communities, as a result of Soviet deportations and ethnic mobilization policies during the USSR occupation. Many ethnic Russians chose to remain in the two countries after the fall of the Soviet Union, rather than move to Russia, resulting in approximately 25 percent of both Latvia's and Estonia's current population as being considered ethnically Russian (Population of Estonia; Population of Latvia). However, these figures are slightly higher when the population is recorded based on "language," rather than just "nationality"[10]

This characteristic—the existence of a large ethnic Russian community—distinguishes the two countries from their southern neighbor Lithuania, which is not included in this thesis. Even though this Baltic nation also experienced deportations and the entrance of a Russian community, Lithuania does not currently have a large ethnic Russian population. Not as many were resettled in this republic during Soviet occupation, because they were instead resettled in Kaliningrad—a Russian exclave on the Baltic Sea, which is near Lithuanian territory.[11] Less than five percent of Lithuania's current population is ethnically Russian (Butkus, 2015).

Additionally, Lithuania took a more relaxed approach to the integration of its ethnic Russians after obtaining independence; the nation allowed for Russians to more easily obtain Lithuanian citizenship, and therefore the community itself felt more welcome in, and had more social access to, its post-Soviet society. Lithuania opted for a citizenship policy that allowed for the immediate naturalization of all individuals of non-Lithuanian heritage (i.e. ethnic Russians) who could prove they were born within Lithuanian territory. And, for those to whom this did not apply, such as Russians who were resettled to Lithuania after their birth, there was another option to obtain citizenship: a loyalty oath. If a permanent resident swore loyalty to the Lithuanian state, then they would receive citizenship. Unlike Latvia and Estonia, there was also no language

[9] The tag of an "Eastern" country carries the connotation of "Russian," and therefore the Baltic region prefers to label itself as a region in "Northern" Europe, in order to move away from the idea that it is in any way connected to a "Russian" background. Despite this, many individuals from Western nations in Europe still view the Baltic region as being part of Eastern Europe.

[10] This refers to individuals who claim to speak Russian as their first language, but who do not consider themselves to be ethnically Russian. In Estonia, this is approximately 30 percent of the population; in Latvia, this is 36 percent of the population.

[11] Located between Poland and Lithuania, the Soviet Union annexed this territory from Germany in 1945, and the region was a closed military zone throughout the Soviet period. This territory still belongs to the Russia Federation to this day, despite being located between two EU and NATO members. It serves as a strategically important military base for the nation.

requirement for citizenship in Lithuania, which oftentimes served as the primary barrier for ethnic Russians when working through the naturalization process in the two northern Baltic nations (Petersen, 2002).[12]

Another reason Estonia and Latvia were selected for this analysis is because these nations chose to move in the direction of restrictive citizenship policies once independent, thereby isolating their ethnic Russians from society. And lastly, Estonia and Latvia both have large Russian enclaves (i.e. "Russian" cities) in their borders, such as Narva and Daugavpils, and therefore this geographic isolation offers an appropriate and representative comparative to analyze when looking at ethnic Russian communal belonging in former Soviet republics.

On a structural level, this study followed a qualitative selection process to gather 36 articles from three national outlets per country over a one-year timeline.[13] These outlets, as demonstrated in the table below, publish content representative of social discourse in their respective countries through articles that examine both nations' economic, social, ethnic, political, and linguistic environments. As such, the study's samples—that is, the articles themselves—come from the outlets' politics, society, and cultural sections, so that the reporting contains discussions relevant to the content analysis. This ensures the samples do not contain generic reporting (i.e. weather, unrelated social events, etc.) that is not of use to the study.

The selected outlets for Estonia are Postimees, Eesti Rahvusringhääling (ERR), and Delfi Estonia. And for Latvia, the outlets are Latvijas Sabiedriskie Mediji (LSM), Baltijas Balss, and Delfi Latvia.[14] These six media outlets were selected because, though each set of three come from separate countries, the outlets themselves mirror each other in structure, and therefore bolster the overall analysis in the study—on a regional and national level.

Both ERR and LSM are government-funded outlets offering reporting in English; Postimees and Baltijas Balss are both very popular outlets for the countries' ethnic Russian communities; and, lastly, Delfi Latvia and Delfi Estonia are the country-specific outlets connected to Delfi, which is a regional news source for the Baltic region, and they are also the top media outlets for the two countries' Russian communities. These structural similarities between the outlets allow for the gathered data to bear more symbolic weight, because the information comes not from a set of random, nonspecific group of outlets, but instead from a set of outlets that mirror each others' structure in applicable and related ways, which ensure the content obtained is appropriate for the study.

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[12] Thus, the situation in Lithuania in regards to the Russian minority is not quite as similar as the one between Estonia and Latvia, whose communities and societies parallel each other in several ways, and therefore this southern Baltic nation is not discussed.

[13] All articles used in the study are cited and available at the end of the document.

[14] Baltijas Balss was formerly known as "Vesti," but was purchased in February 2019 by a Lithuanian investor after which it made the transition to Baltijas Balss.

Table Two: Overview and Characterization of Selected Media Outlets

--------------- **Estonian Outlets** ---------------			
	ERR	***POSTIMEES***	***DELFI ESTONIA***
Language of Samples	English	Russian	Russian
Reason for Selection	Funded by the Estonian government, ERR offers a unique perspective on society from a governmental standpoint, also providing Estonian reporting in English for global readers.	Considered the country's oldest newspaper, it is Estonia's second-most popular Russian language news portal, reporting on all things related to the nation's Russian community.	A regional outlet, Delfi Estonia is the most popular news portal for the country's ethnic Russian population, providing daily news relating to society, politics, culture, Narva, and more.
Number of Samples	36	36	36
Ownership	Estonian Government	Eesti Meedia Group	Ekspress Grupp
Website	news.err.ee	rus.postimees.ee	rus.delfi.ee
--------------- **Latvian Outlets** ---------------			
	LSM	***BALTIJAS BALSS***	***DELFI LATVIA***
Language of Samples	English	Russian	Russian
Reason for Selection	Funded by the Latvian government, LSM produces content related to issues most pressing in society, and also provides Latvian reporting in English for global readers.	Formerly known as "Vesti," this outlet predominantly produces Russian-language content, relating to politics and society, for the nation's ethnic Russian communities in Riga and Daugavpils.	A regional outlet, Delfi Latvia is a leading news portal for the country's ethnic Russian population, providing daily reporting relating to society, politics, culture, Daugavpils, and more.
Number of Samples	36	36	36
Ownership	Latvian Government	Privately Owned	Ekspress Grupp
Website	eng.lsm.lv	bb.lv	rus.delfi.lv

Linguistically, ERR and LSM republish content from the titular language (i.e. from Estonian and Latvian) into English, so the samples from these two outlets are in the English language.[15] This offers insight into reporting from the titular language, but in a format that is accessible to non-Estonian and non-Latvian speakers. However, for the other four outlets—Postimees, Baltijas Balss, Delfi Estonia, and Delfi Latvia—the samples are in the Russian language. This provides an avenue to better understand social discourse and the contemporary struggles faced by the Russian community through the samples' text. In total, this equates to 216 articles between all six outlets: 108 samples for Estonia and 108 samples for

[15] ERR and LSM have reporting in three languages: the titular language, Russian, and English. For this study, however, only English samples are taken from these two outlets.

Latvia. Having three outlets from each nation ensures an even divide along country lines, which enables the results of the project to showcase a consistent, representative image of contemporary discourse.

The timeline for article selection was a 12-month period between February 1, 2019 and January 31, 2020. Three articles were gathered per month for each outlet—totaling to the aforementioned 36 articles from each source over the course of 12 months—as a way to create a detailed reflection of society throughout the entire year. This methodological factor establishes an accurate, representative image of the identified themes and codes, since there is an equal divide of selected articles throughout the year. As such, not just one theme was able to dominate the study, but instead many had the chance to appear and evolve throughout the timeline.

This 12-month timeline was selected because it is revealing in two dominant ways: 1) Both Latvia and Estonia had elections during these twelve months, and elections are a reliable catalyst for bringing voter concerns to the forefront of media and stimulating broader discussions about their implications for citizens and society; and 2) The thirty year anniversary of the Baltic Way—a region-wide protest movement that helped initiate the nations' official independence from the USSR—took place in the middle of this timeline, and therefore this is an illustrative period to evaluate how ethnic Russians engage with and participate in society three decades after their transition from the majority to the minority.

Table Three: Questions used for consideration when determining isolative and integrative qualities of the ethnic Russian communities from sample articles

Questions for the Coding Method	
Society	***Language***
1) How are ethnic Russians portrayed?	1) How is the Russian language portrayed?
2) Where do ethnic Russians fit in social discourse?	2) How are the Estonian and Latvian languages portrayed?
3) What is said about ethnic Russians in relation to Estonian and Latvian culture?	3) Does language unite or divide?
4) How is the Russian-Estonian and Russian-Latvian identity described and discussed?	4) Is language used as a tool of social status?
Ethnic Enclaves	***Politics***
1) How are the nation's ethnic enclaves described?	1) Are politics polarized along ethnic lines?
2) What is said about the predominantly ethnic Russian cities?	2) What policies are being passed?
3) What qualities characterize the cities' residents?	3) How do ethnic Russians engage in Latvian and Estonian politics?
4) How are the cities' futures described?	4) Is political participation high or low for the ethnic Russian communities?

Once all the articles were gathered, they were qualitatively coded according to their thematic representations, following a coding method consistent with the research question to create labels for the intersections themselves (Adu, 2013; Saldana, 2013). This coding method aimed to identify—through analyzing the samples' positions on isolative and integrative questions, such as those shown in the above table—how ethnic Russians are described and portrayed in the articles. Overall, the coding process enables an analytic examination of social discourse. Though not limited to just those above, these questions target the core of discussions surrounding the minority community. The way the samples respond to them, therefore, offers a form of measurement and identification for the isolation and integration the community experiences, while also forming a method to pinpoint and label which themes appear the most throughout the 12-month timeline from each outlet.

Furthermore, I attached at least one theme—such as "language" or "citizenship and identity"—per article, and then up to three for those articles whose text covered several issues and could not be collapsed into one code. For the most part, articles contained two themes within the text. The coding process and theme determination was three-fold: First, I read through and became familiar with the 216 collected samples to garner an idea of where social discourse stood for each outlet; second, I coded each article from the outlets according to the dominant themes presented; and finally, I verified the coding itself (i.e. rechecked all labeled codes) to ensure that the attached themes are in fact represented through the text.

Once completed, I moved into the quantitative portion, during which I developed statistics from these codes to demonstrate which themes were present the most. This quantified what struggles and points of contention are at the forefront for Estonia and Latvia's ethnic Russian communities. For each outlet, there are nine dominant themes relating to communal struggles for the two countries' ethnic Russians. These results are structured around their rate of appearance, which are also organized into a comprehensive table with each media outlet containing its own section and set of statistics. These statistical results then serve as the foundation upon which this paper's discussion section is built.

I analyzed the selected articles from a general standpoint, as well, in order to determine, on balance, whether or not each sample's text fell more on the side of integration or isolation. This was accomplished through looking at the position of the article holistically, rather than analyzing the themes and concepts presented within it, and focusing on its overarching message. Each article was then tagged as either having more isolative or integrative qualities, and then this information was quantified and incorporated into the larger table of results that will appear in the following section.

In addition, my methodology consists of a comprehensive review of scholarly research in the field, focusing mainly on information published after the 2004 accession of Estonia and Latvia into the EU.[16] This is chosen because the two countries were required to alter their

[16] This timeline is excluding the historical section, however, since I will draw on scholarly reports from the 1990s that detail the history and challenges faced while Estonia and Latvia were occupied.

minority rights policies to reach the EU's social policy standards, thereby affecting how ethnic Russians operate in the two Baltic societies. I have also collected relevant publicly-available polling data from regional sources and think-tank organizations, as a means to gain deeper quantitative insight into these Baltic nations' societies. Such quantitative information appeared in several of the study's samples, too.

Studies analyzing varying forms of social discourse in Estonia and Latvia do exist to a certain extent (Krēķis, 2015; Golubeva & Gould, 2010; Kalmus, 2003). However, these studies mainly 1) Focused on one or two media outlets with smaller sample sizes over a shorter timeline; 2) Used different sets of data, such as political speeches or essays; or 3) Discussed only one nation in the analysis, rather than drawing in both Latvia and Estonia. Existing research has often also neglected to explore the inherent bidirectionality—that is, the co-existence of integration and isolation—of the minority community's placement. With its media content analysis, my thesis aims to close this research gap, exploring the ways in which integrative and isolative bidirectionality is at the core of ethnic Russians' positionality in Estonian and Latvian societies.

3. Results: Thematic Trends in the Content Analysis

Table Three: Overview of Dominant Themes Presented in Content Analysis

-------------- Estonian Outlets --------------					
ERR		POSTIMEES		DELFI ESTONIA	
Narva's Internal Challenges	20%	Language Use	20%	Russian "Otherness"	17%
Language Use	18%	Development of Narva	18%	Education	17%
Investment and Development in Narva	14%	Education	14%	Ethnic Politics	14%
Lingering Soviet Tensions w/ Russia	14%	Ethnic Politics	12%	Citizenship and Identity	13%
Ethnic Politics	10%	Narva's Internal Challenges	12%	Development of Narva	12%
Education	10%	Citizenship and Identity	9%	Language Use	10%
Citizenship and Identity	8%	Russian "Otherness"	8%	Narva's Internal Challenges	8%
Inter-Ethnic Relations	4%	Inter-Ethnic Relations	5%	Inter-Ethnic Relations	6%
Russophobia	2%	Estonian-Russian Border	2%	Russophobia	3%
Samples Indicating Integration: 42%		*Samples Indicating Integration: 47%*		*Samples Indicating Integration: 33%*	
Samples Indicating Isolation: 58%		*Samples Indicating Isolation: 53%*		*Samples Indicating Isolation: 67%*	
-------------- Latvian Outlets --------------					
LSM		BALTIJAS BALSS		DELFI LATVIA	
Remaining Soviet Tensions	18%	Russian "Otherness"	23%	Citizenship and Identity	16%
Trouble w/ Riga City Council	18%	Language Use	18%	Education	16%
Language Use	15%	Social Divide	14%	Language Use	16%

Citizenship and Identity	12%	Education	14%	Ethnic Politics	14%
Ethnic Politics	12%	Citizenship and Identity	11%	Tensions with Russia	13%
Tensions w/ Russia	10%	Ethnic Politics	7%	Russian "Otherness"	11%
Education	7%	Tensions w/ Russia	5%	Isolation of Daugavpils	7%
Latvian Economy	5%	Latvianization of Society	5%	Economic Hardships	4%
Development in Daugavpils	3%	Russophobia	3%	Russophobia	3%
Samples Indicating Integration: 44%		*Samples Indicating Integration: 29%*		*Samples Indicating Integration: 25%*	
Samples Indicating Isolation: 56%		*Samples Indicating Isolation: 71%*		*Samples Indicating Isolation: 75%*	

Summarized in the table above, the results of this study intend to create an image of the social positionality of ethnic Russians in Estonia and Latvia. Though each outlet possesses its own unique structure and statistical story, there is a clear linkage between all six along many thematic lines, such as citizenship, language, and education. This interconnectedness likely stems from the reality that, in many ways, Estonia and Latvia took similar social and political approaches regarding the handling of their remaining ethnic Russian community after obtaining independence. Therefore, although these ethnic Russian communities live in two separate countries, the situation surrounding their social positionality is very alike.

Themes within the education, language use, citizenship, and cities of Narva and Daugavpils sections contain qualitative indications that the ethnic Russian community is socially separated from its Estonian and Latvian neighbors. These isolative qualities will be expanded on throughout the duration of this analysis, but relate to the idea that, in the case of language use, a number of ethnic Russians are unwilling to learn the titular languages, believing it is not their responsibility to do so, or wager that Russian ought to be an official language for the countries. This ideology generates tension in the national societies, further cementing in the minds of Estonians and Latvians that ethnic Russians do not respect their nations' cultures and languages. These notions, though not encompassing all of the samples, were found in a vast majority, indicating that language use, as an example, continues to isolate, rather than integrate the community.

It is important to note, however, that despite this form of linguistic tension, there are many aspects of and examples in the data that also indicate integrative progression. Using language again as an example, there were samples from the study discussing the opening of free language courses for ethnic Russians that revolved around the willingness of Russian parents to learn and speak either Latvian or Estonian with their children. This principle is in conjunction with the belief that if Russians live in Latvia or Estonia, they ought to know the titular language as a sign of respect for the country and as a means to effectively engage in society on social and professional levels. Similarly, with citizenship, a bulk of the samples discussed the potential progression to which the two nations' new naturalization policies could lead, especially under the perspective of how non-citizens could better access a place in their prospective national societies. This sheds light on a possible future in which the label of "non-citizen" no longer exists and, consequently, neither would the struggles and difficulties that come with such a position in

society. Additionally, as part of the study, each article was labeled, on balance, as having either an overarching message leaning toward integration or isolation. Despite the majority of articles from all six outlets favoring isolation, three out of the six outlets (ERR, Postimees, and LSM) had a relatively even split between the two, with isolation winning out by only a few percentage points.[17]

This highlights that, even if isolated, the Russian community is also somewhat integrated, thereby placing them in an ambiguous, bidirectional position in both Baltic societies. To examine and explore this bidirectionality, the following sections will each analyze a specific thematic category, along with its samples, that appeared consistently throughout the study. The stories behind these coded themes bear considerable weight in understanding the context of the minority community's place in Estonian and Latvian societies. The breakdown is as follows: Section four will analyze the trend of ethnic politics. Sections five and six will examine the two countries' Russian enclaves, Narva and Daugavpils, and then the seventh section will explore the complications and developments around language use. Section eight discusses and evaluates education reform, and then section nine investigates the contrast between improving citizenship policies and lingering "otherness."

When addressing the samples, I will list the first letter of the news outlet (for example, "L" for LSM or "E" for ERR), and then the sample's number from the list at the end of this document (i.e. E-23, referencing article 23 from the ERR list). In this list, all articles are organized by news outlets and month in chronological order, starting each list with the articles from February 2019, and ending with the most recent ones from January 2020. Delfi Latvia (DL) and Delfi Estonia (DE) are the only samples containing two letters for their acronym, since the first part of the outlets' names are identical to one another.

4. Ethnic Politics and Ethnic Russians: The Social Impact of EKRE, Harmony, and the Russian Union of Latvia

A nation's political scene is a reflection of the country itself. In Latvia and Estonia, this concept is especially true. Split along ethnic lines, many political parties in the two Baltic countries act as polarizing, divisive forces, separating society through ethnicity and pitting groups against each other. In turn, this creates a challenging situation for the countries' ethnic Russians, as they navigate a divisive political system.

Minority groups, such as the Russian population in Estonia and Latvia, are supposed to have the opportunity to voice concerns and demands through political involvement. However, this is only the case when these groups feel constructively engaged with the belief that they belong in the political environment, and can employ enough political voice to influence the decision-making process to successfully advocate for their values. More often than not, unfortunately, this is not the case. Instead, they feel disengaged from the political scene, owing to

[17] The most even split appeared in the Estonian outlet Postimees, for which 47 percent of the articles indicated integration and 53 percent indicated isolation. The Latvian leg of Delfi, on the other hand, was the most polarized in the study. Only 25 percent of its articles favored integration, whereas 75 percent favored isolation.

the presence of, whether overt or covert, discriminatory biases that alienate them from participating or parties that fail to adequately represent and serve them. So, if these minority groups feel disaffected from politics, they lack significant power to affect tangible, lasting change, because the systemic barriers in their respective societies function as impossible obstacles through which to navigate and maneuver (Galbreath, 2005; Magdalena, 2011; Regelmann, 2014).

Because feelings of belonging and identity are inherently linked to effective political participation, it is no surprise that ethnic Russians in Estonia and Latvia struggle with political engagement. The Russian minority has the lowest level of political participation in the two countries, and many in this group are also restricted from voting as a result of their stateless status.[18] Because of this, there is a lack of effective groups in society who can properly advocate for them. In turn, the two nations are left with populist, polarizing parties—on both ends of the left and right spectrum—that capitalize on the presence of minorities, the struggles they face, and the issues that ensue.

Structured and developed around the study's results, this section will analyze the leading polarizing political parties in Estonia and Latvia, which are augmenting the already existing social struggles the ethnic Russian community faces. In Estonia, EKRE, a far-right, extremist party, has streamlined and normalized extreme nationalism and social intolerance; the political system in Latvia, on the other hand, highlights the exposure of populist pro-Russia parties, which incite tensions in the nation's already entrenched ethno-political environment, while degrading the image of the Russian community through illicit political actions and corruption. In both countries, however, these political parties exploit ethnicity and harbor social division.

Ethnically divisive politics was a theme that consistently appeared throughout the study—in both Estonian and Latvian outlets—and therefore, it was selected as a representative area of analysis and contextualization in order to understand the social positionality of ethnic Russians in both countries. In addition to examining the parties in Estonia and Latvia, this section will conclude with an analysis on the significance of these parties and their actions for ethnic Russian communities, especially as it relates to social isolation.

4.1. Estonian Nationalism: EKRE's Impact on National Politics and Discourse

"United in Diversity," or, in Estonian, "Ühinenud mitmekesisuses," is one of the underlying principles of the EU and its leading motto, under which it encourages member states to take pride in the diversity within their national borders and embrace a plurality of cultures. Despite being a member state, this motto does not find a particularly welcoming home in Estonia, especially in light of its previous parliamentary elections in March 2019, in which the far-right Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE) more than doubled its representation in the national parliament, launching the party from a mere 8.1 percent to a 17.8 percent presence.

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[18] The stateless individuals are those who possess alien passports, indicating that they are allowed to reside in the country legally, but they are not officially a citizen or member of any state, such as Russia, Estonia, or Latvia.

EKRE had the largest gain of all the parties in this particular election cycle, and it increased its number of seats by 12, so that it now has a total of 19 seats and represents the third largest party in parliament (Voting, 2019).

EKRE is a relatively new party in Estonian politics, with its official political birth taking place in 2012. EKRE is the result of a merger between two parties: 1) Conservative People's Union of Estonia and 2) the Eurosceptic and far-right Estonian Patriotic Movement. As an organisation, EKRE is family-controlled: its historical leader, Mart Helme, and his son, Martin Helme, have a strong hold on the party's agenda and actions. There are a few other members of the party's inner circle, as well, who assist in the decision-making process, but the Helmes are at the core of all party decisions. Since it emerged, EKRE has embraced and promoted an extreme form of traditional "Estonian" values and social conservatism (Braghiroli, 2019). At its inception, the party only had around two percent of support. But now, approximately 20 percent of the country supports this party (Veebel, 2019).

Appearing at a significant rate throughout the 12-month timeline, samples discussing EKRE and Estonian nationalism, especially along political lines, fell under the tagline of "ethnic politics" in the results table. Consistent among all outlets, ethnic politics appeared, on average, in 12 percent of all samples from Estonian outlets. Though never ending up as the largest theme from an outlet, the consistency of ethnic politics is telling, and its samples played a key role in forming an understanding, on a discursive level, of the positionality of Estonia's ethnic Russian community from a political perspective. As such, the significance of this theme—along with other smaller ones, such as russophobia or border issues, which have been collapsed into this section—was identified as a leading challenge for the ethnic Russian community. This is due to the manner in which EKRE's discourse and rhetoric isolates the minority population rather than integrating it, while also manipulating Estonian identity and culture to inferiorize ethnic Russians.

Table Four: Breakdown of Leading Estonian Political Parties (Voting, 2019; Estonian, 2019)

Leading Estonian Parties	Political Ideology	Members of Parliament	Members of European Parliament
Estonian Reform Party (RE)	Liberal Conservatism, Low Taxation, Free Market	34	2
Estonian Centre Party (K)	Social Liberalism, Populism, Russian Minority Politics	26	1
Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE)	Far-right, Populism, Party of Nationalistic Estonians	19	1
Isamaa (I)	Christian-Democratic, Conservatism, Pro-Estonian Identity	12	1
Social Democratic Party (SDE)	Socially Democratic, Pro-EU, Center-Left	10	2

Estonia's political system is a parliamentary representative democratic republic, with the Prime Minister (PM) acting as the head of the government. The current PM is Centre politician Jüri Ratas, who has been in office since November 2016. A multi-party system, legislative power is vested in the Estonian parliament, otherwise known as the "Riigikogu." Ethnicity plays a key role in the agendas and goals of Estonia's political parties. Important state-based questions go through the Riigikogu, and it also appoints high officials, including the Prime Minister and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and it elects the president. The current Estonian president is Kersti Kaljulaid. Though largely a symbolic position, the president has limited participation in legislation, such as through issuing decrees, resolutions and directives, but also serves as the highest representative in the country.

EKRE's 2019 parliamentary success kickstarted a wave of nationalism in the country, spurring new sets of political fears and social anxieties that divide the country along ethnic lines. EKRE's political ideology is rooted in right-wing populism that manipulates and perverts Estonian culture and language to serve its political purposes. It aims to construct a strong, salient Estonian identity, often at the expense of criticizing other cultural communities, and places a label of inferiority on non-Estonian people residing in Estonia. It believes in exclusive citizenship and it supports an ethno-national model of Estonia as a state. The party's agenda is four-fold with its: 1) Anti-Russian stance, both for the country and the people themselves, such as those who live in the Baltic region; 2) Euro-skepticism, specifically with immigration policies; 3) Promotion of traditional and religious values, such as its staunch criticism of the LGBT community; and finally, 4) Anti-refugee and anti-immigrant discourse. Overall, EKRE would like to create "an Estonia for Estonians" (Kasekamp et al., 2019; Petsinis, 2019).[19]

As a result, the party's rhetoric alienates Estonia's ethnic Russian community (and even Latvia's, to a certain extent). Party leaders, such as Mart and Martin Helme, have publicly made racist and xenophobic statements, and they have described the ethnic Russian community's presence as socially regressive for Estonia. They have vocally advocated for "assimilation" over "integration," believing that assimilative techniques are in the state's interest for linguistic, cultural, and social reasons.[20] Other party members have referred to the community as "parasites," and these members carry a layer of mistrust for the Russian population, as well, believing they do not have allegiance or loyalty to the Estonian state and therefore pose a security threat. EKRE's father and long-time leader, Mart Helme, who describes EKRE as a

[19] Though prolific in its appearances in the samples, reporting about EKRE from all three Estonian media outlets came with a negative image. This highlights the possible idea that—aside from EKRE's base that responds well to far-right rhetoric—there is a general consensus that EKRE is damaging to the country's democracy and society. But, because of its loyal base, the party still has the impact it desires. Due to EKRE's controversial political ideology, it garners media attention, and therefore establishes itself as a dominant figure in public discourse.

[20] Assimilation insinuates the forced incorporation into society. This means a loss of individual culture and language so that one can better conform to that of the dominant society's language and culture. Assimilation took place during the USSR. Integration, however, implies the cohesive joining of a group in society, while retaining one's own ways of life, so that they can better operate and engage in society on all levels.

"protest party," also hopes that one day his party will be the sole political party ruling in Estonia. He strives for a complete monopoly over Estonian politics (Kerge, 2019; Helme, 2020).[21]

Because of these factors, the party constitutes a significant barrier to the Russian community's integration into the rest of society. They hinder the construction of a cohesive, multi-ethnic state; they breed salient sentiments of far-right, aggressive nationalism; and EKRE's party members stoke anxieties throughout the country through their own manipulation of reality. Furthermore, EKRE and its sponsored nationalism makes it so, for a nation already entrenched in a struggle with majority-minority relations, the tension between ethnicities has the necessary political platform on which to grow an *Us vs. Them* mentality, which then expands to further foster ethnic divisions throughout the country.

Articles in the study highlighted EKRE's ability to divide and insight political and ethnic tension in Estonian society. Promising to protect an "indigenous Estonia," EKRE's leadership believes that the Estonian ethnicity ought to be given the superior status within the country (Bathke, 2019). In sample P-17, titled "Jaak Madison: I support the superiority of Estonians on Estonian soil," an EKRE politician and Member of the European parliament (MEP) described EKRE's ideology as "mainstream" in Estonian society as a result of its growing popularity, and then would not answer as to whether or not this ideology can be described as "far-right." He also noted that he is, in fact, a supporter of Estonian ethnic superiority within Estonian territory, and that the nation's people ought to "work for the Estonian language, culture and future."

Another leading EKRE member, Urmas Reitelmann, has referred to refugees as "cockroaches of convenience" and ethnic Russians as "parasitical tiblas," according to sample E-28. The term "tiblas" is a derogatory, ethnic slur in the Estonian language, which refers to a Russian or Slavic person. Reitelmann is Estonia's representative in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

Madison and Reitelmann, of course, are not the only EKRE members who vocalize such controversial opinions. The father-son duo of EKRE, Mart and Martin Helme, who control the majority of the party, are arguably the most prolific. They have, on many occasions, made publicly contentious statements rooted not only in russophobia, but also in homophobia, xenophobia, and blatant racism. Martin Helme is the current Minister of Finance for Estonia, and he was also elected in July 2020 as the new Chairman of EKRE, following his father's decision to step down from the position. His public position in government has previously allowed him to promote EKRE's ideology and narratives on a large platform, while also influencing policy decisions. This has resulted in the proliferation of the party's ideology throughout the country, since he continually makes comments in public that engender racially-rooted frustration, which continues to garner attention. As the new EKRE leader, Martin intends to increase EKRE's base of supporters, while also maintaining its current base of loyal followers, in an attempt to widen the party's influence and gain more political power. EKRE's goal is to be the party of the PM after the next elections.

[21] Mart Helme has publicly stated before that he leans toward and prefers an "authoritarian" style of politics.

His father, Mart Helme, is the former chairman of EKRE (2012-2020) and the former Estonian ambassador to Russia from 1995-1999 who has cultivated and developed the party to what it is today. His efforts elevated the party to the status of a powerful political force and voice for Europe's far-right community. Mart Helme, who is currently in his early 70s, announced in June 2020, however, that he would not be running for re-election as EKRE's chairman in the July party congress. Urging the party to elect his son, Martin, as the new chairman, Mart believes that the party and its supporters "still have a long way to go" and that after the next parliamentary elections "we need to be the party of the prime minister, and to accomplish this we need to shake ourselves out of the comfort zone and carry things out with fresh energy and a new look. I'll start on this myself—it's time to give the party a boost" (Whyte, 2020). Believing he has created positive changes for the party, Helme has also mentioned he does not want to go through another tiring election cycle where the focus is on him to inspire voters and society (Helme). Though officially retiring from his post as EKRE Chairman, he was elected as one of the three vice-chairmen for EKRE in the party's internal July 2020 elections. Helme has stated that he does not plan to distance himself from Estonin politics, as well as calling "70 the new 50" in today's political environment. He also stated that he will not rule out working in the country's parliament or serving as president in the future. Overall, Helme does not think that his stepping down as EKRE's leader will reduce his chances of influencing the party's policies in future decisions (Kallaste, 2020).

Described before as classic Estonian nationalists, the Helmes have also been viewed in recent times as openly racist and agents of intolerance. Sample P-11 discussed the duo's desire to clear Estonia of other non-Estonian nationalities, in order to establish a "racially clean" state void of any foreign immigrants or non-Estonians who, according to these EKRE members, threaten Estonian culture. The sample mentions:

> [Martin Helme] wants to clear Estonia of other nationalities together with his father, party leader Mart Helme. The publication cites the example that the younger Helme did not step back from his previous statement regarding someone who has the right to live in Estonia, saying: 'If [someone] is black, point him to the door' ('Kui on must, näita ust').

Helme also stated in sample E-5 that whether immigrants are from African countries or Slavic countries, it does not make much of a difference. Instead, he said all that matters is that "they are not Estonians." However, Helme has noted before, according to sample DE-26, that the influx of Ukrainian and other former Soviet immigrants, such as individuals from Georgia and Moldova, present a "demographic and cultural problem," because they are more likely to integrate and associate with the Russian community, rather than the Estonian community. To EKRE supporters, this means that the collective "Slavic" community in Estonia could grow, which, in their minds, poses a serious sociopolitical threat. Mart Helme once even stated that if Estonia continues with its current immigration trends, power will no longer be in the hands of Estonians in as little as twenty years from now, and "all of Estonia will become Ida-Virumaa," which references the predominantly ethnic Russian region in which Narva is located (Solz, 2020).

These sorts of statements are only the tip of the iceberg. The two Helmes have targeted all groups in society who are non-Estonian, and they often make generalized, hyperbolic statements rooted in xenophobia that foster further divisions. They have accused the EU of "replacing indigenous people with Negroes" and have made blanket claims, without evidence or reason, that incidents of rape and crime have increased exponentially in Norway and Sweden as a result of the immigrants who have entered these two Nordic countries (Laugen, 2019). Mart and Martin Helme also manipulate the reality of immigration in Estonia—both legal and illegal—and choose to blame immigrants, as many populist leaders do, for the loss of jobs and the influx of crime.

In sample E-5, the Helmes drew comparisons of the EU to the USSR, believing that European policies—especially social ones dealing with immigrants and minority rights—have stripped Estonia of the very sovereignty it only just regained.[22] According to Martin Helme, "The EU is totalitarian, and people don't like it… for instance they wanted to send Marine Le Pen to a lunatic asylum, because she was saying the wrong things in public; this is precisely what happened in the USSR."

In the fall of 2018, Mart Helme's view of the EU was even described as one that parallels the Kremlin's contemporary goals:

> According to Helme, both the Kremlin and Brussels, while employing slightly different approaches, have the same ultimate goal—to see Estonia become a multicultural and multiethnic state. While the EU wants to achieve this goal by bringing in migrants from Africa and the Middle East, the Kremlin wants to bring in people from Slavic areas. 'The substance remains the same, however: the local indigenous population must become a minority, its language and culture ethnographic relics, and its political rights delegated to geopolitical power centres,' he described (Digest, 2018).

Sample P-13 reinforces this, as well, but from the viewpoint of another EKRE member. Arnold Rüütel, Estonia's former president and the honorary chairman of EKRE, warned of EU federalism and its impact on sovereignty, stating that:

> Is this a crisis of values when we dare to object to the movement towards the federal state system of Europe? We, Estonians, as well as other peoples who once lived in the Soviet Union, have accumulated a long experience living in a federal state. But apparently, the new generation of Estonians did not bother to get acquainted with this experience and formulate their attitude towards defending the union of sovereign states, and not the union state. England's decision to leave the European Union is a clear example of the danger of such a policy. In fact, for the first time since the restoration of Estonia's sovereignty, we have [an EKRE-involved] government that can stand up for sovereign Estonia. Hence this hysterical confrontation. Without choosing the means, they are trying to split the ruling coalition that has arisen.

EKRE and the Helmes are also staunch supporters of the transition of education into an Estonian-only system, believing that ethnic Russians ought not to have the right to have schools in their own language. To them, knowledge of the Estonian language is one of the most

[22] Before Estonia joined the EU in 2004, the country was required to comprehensively review its policies surrounding citizenship and minority rights. The EU identified significant shortcomings in Estonia's treatment of its ethnic Russian community. As a result, to meet EU standards, the Estonian government had to rework some of its post-USSR policies, in order to better accommodate its Slavic population.

important qualities of "being" an Estonian, and minority language schools only hinder one's acquisition of the language. Language use in the education system is a contentious debate in Estonia. There is discussion as to whether or not the country should move to an Estonian-only system of instruction, eliminating the existence of minority language schools, including Russian schools. Currently, for the minority language schools, 60 percent of instruction must be in Estonian, and the other 40 percent can be in their respective mother tongue. However, many schools do not follow these guidelines, especially in Narva, where reports have indicated that a large amount of teachers do not possess proficient levels of the Estonian language.

The Helmes also view social "tolerance" as threats to their legitimacy, as demonstrated by their opposition to a social campaign in early 2020, which aimed at augmenting the nation's tolerance of different groups in various aspects of society. Organized by the Ministry of Social Affairs, the campaign, "We are all different, but we are all people," took place from January to February 2020. Its purpose was to explain life through various channels of history regarding bullying in schools, foreign labor, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and religious beliefs. Mart Helme described this campaign as a "spit in their faces" and a political provocation, stating that because of the campaign, EKRE is not interested in working with the Ministry (Zybina, 2020).

The party's recent actions have also been more tangible—and not just rhetorical—in their pursuit of cementing a far-right ideology in the country's political system. For instance, in late 2018 EKRE "temporarily" restored a previously-deconstructed Nazi SS monument in the lead up to the parliamentary elections (In Estonia, 2018). That is, party officials erected a monument, in the town of Lihula, of a soldier in a German Nazi uniform with an emblem of the 20th Waffen Division of the SS,[23] equipped with an MP-40 machine gun in his hands. This is a copy of a monument dismantled by the government several years ago. Tactics such as this are employed to fabricate history, as a means by which EKRE can reinvent the legacy of Nazi occupation—establishing it as "liberation," as opposed to occupation—using it to the party's advantage to justify and support its intensely nationalistic rhetoric.

Rhetoric and actions such as these, coming from the party's leading politicians, has resonated with many Estonians, as evidenced by the party's surge in popularity in the last parliamentary elections. Because of this, the party has connected with a large base of voters who share anxieties over the EU, ethnic Russians, and possess largely conservative, old-fashioned principles. The success of the party in the recent parliamentary elections will likely normalize this form of far-right thought in Estonia. In doing this, individuals who identify with this political ideology will feel more comfortable coming out in public to showcase what they believe to be the necessary political future for Estonia—a future that closes its doors to immigrants and refugees, capitalizes on nationalism, isolates and ignores the country's Russian community, promotes anti-semiticism, and so forth.

[23] Nazi Germany occupied Estonia from 1941-1944, during which Germans pillaged and murdered thousands and thousands of people, including ethnic Estonians. The erection of this monument and the historical shift in narrative is a blatant, dangerous political tool, by which EKRE hopes to demonize the USSR further.

As a result, the party has developed and sustained a fiercely supportive base of followers, who identify with the party's agenda and want to see Estonia further established as a nation-state. They believe EKRE can strengthen Estonian identity at a time when the country is finding itself further integrating with Western institutions and embracing globalization. On another level, because of the politicians' discourse, these supporters view EKRE as a party that speaks truth to power about the Russian community, rather than diluting the discussion, since EKRE politicians have called for them to "assimilate" (not integrate, that is) or leave the country. These supporters are extremely critical of ethnic Russians living in Estonia, because they believe their presence prevents the nation from becoming truly "Estonian." They also see this community as a barrier to a monolingual society, specifically with language use in schools. They argue that Russian schools should be replaced with Estonian language-only schools for the sake of Estonia's national identity. In doing this, Estonian culture, history, literature, and language can be taught effectively to all residents in the country, according to the party's platform, through what it calls a form of "patriotic education" that will preserve the uniqueness of Estonian nationality (Tiido, 2015; EKRE Party, n.d.).

Estonia's current president, Kersti Kaljulaid, has long been a critic of EKRE's rhetoric and actions, because of what many label its inherent connection to a malicious political ideology that separates rather than unites communities. Likewise, EKRE is not a fan of the current president. The party claimed that she should resign if she does not want to work in an EKRE-involved government. President Kaljulaid has stated before that "I hate [EKRE] for its behavior and I apologize for the impression it may have," and that "decent people do not behave like this. This is not a view we share in Estonia" (Ots, 2019). Kaljulaid is Estonia's first female president, the youngest head of state, and she describes herself as a liberal conservative. She is also working to better integrate the nation's Russian community, trying to find progressive, innovative ways to raise the community's confidence levels and help immigrants feel more welcome in Estonian society (Eylandt, 2016). As such, her agenda is oftentimes at odds with EKRE's.

Paradoxically, however, EKRE has occasionally resonated with ethnic Russian voters, who, despite not being ethnically Estonian, hold very nationalistic viewpoints and traditional values, especially with immigration. That is, although EKRE will not reach out personally to Estonia's ethnic Russian community for support, the party would not necessarily turn away ethnic Russian supporters—albeit, those loyal to the Estonian state—who come at their own volition (Wierenga, 2017). The reason being that the ethnic Russian community often possesses largely socially conservative views, as does EKRE, so they are able to find a form of common ground. For instance, in sample P-17, EKRE politician Jaak Madison explains why EKRE obtains some ethnic Russian supporters, stating that:

> Estonians with Russian roots do not want Muslims to be their neighbors. Estonians with Russian roots have reason to vote for EKRE, because they don't want Muslims to become their neighbors. Estonians do not want immigrants even from the former USSR countries, not to mention the Middle East or Arab cultures. This unites us with the Russians—they are Orthodox, they don't want Muslims to be their neighbors.

Sample DE-19 highlighted this theme, as well, noting that many ethnic Russians hold the same traditional and socially conservative beliefs that EKRE supports: opposition to same-sex marriage, apprehension over immigration, family values, and so forth. Previous research supports this claim, too, and notes that, if EKRE were to drop its stance on ethnic Russians and hone in more on its socially conservative principles, then it could seriously begin to develop a larger ethnic Russian base, who would be coming from EKRE's main political opponent, the Centre Party (Wierenga; Solts, 2018).[24] The Centre Party currently garners most of its support from Estonia's ethnic Russians, but its support base has been dwindling recently, owing to corruption, internal party fighting, failure to affect tangible change, and the lack of socially conservative principles embedded in its political agenda.

With ethnic Russian backers, however, EKRE can tokenize their support and use it as a way to claim the party is not inherently anti-Russian. Because of this, EKRE leadership can more easily attract ethnic Russian voters to join its base, promoting instead the ways in which it politically and socially aligns with their belief systems in a traditional, conservative sense. In an Estonian article from November 2018, a member of the board of EKRE's youth movement, ethnic Russian Fedor Stomakhin, was interviewed about his opinion of EKRE's ideology as an ethnic Russian supporter. The article states:

> [Stomakhin] disagrees with the arbitrary image of EKRE that it is made up of homophobes, racists and Russophobes. 'I do not take these accusations with phobias seriously, because such accusations are an ideological weapon against dissidents,' he said. According to Stomakhin, EKRE has the potential to reach out to Russian voters, for example, from a family values perspective and to solve integration issues. 'Liberals impose upon us a degrading, oppressed minority status that puts local Russians in the same category as Negroes and transgenders,' Stomakhin noted. In his opinion, the depiction of local Russians as a minority must be stopped, but at the same time they must be demanded of loyalty to the Estonian state.

Though surprising on the surface, beliefs, such as Stomakhin's, resonate with a modest portion of ethnic Russians in Estonia. In fact, EKRE ranks as the second most popular party among ethnic Russians in the country. The Centre Party, which traditionally has roughly 75 percent of support among ethnic Russians, has fallen recently to approximately 60 percent, owing to its internal failings and recent encounters with corruption. This corruption was most present in Narva, where a city-wide scandal clouded Centre's campaigning and allegedly impacted its results, according to a leading party member (Sample E-12).[25] In turn, as a result of Centre's slow fall from grace, EKRE's support among ethnic Russians has increased: 11 percent of the community now supports the populist, far-right political party (Mikhailov, 2019). In fact,

[24] EKRE member Jaak Madison has stated that the party intends to approach the minority community not as ethnic Russians, but instead as supporters of traditional, conservative values, who would be receptive to a party that promises to stand against immigration and "protect" Estonia.

[25] The Centre Party, of which Estonia's current PM is a member, has suffered from many corruption scandals recently, and especially in Narva, which has degraded the party's reputation and decreased its support base. In addition to this, similarly to Latvia's "Harmony" party, Centre has had a political cooperation alliance with Putin's United Russia party in the past, and it has also engaged in actions whose roots are believed to be a product of the Kremlin. As a result, many Estonians see Centre as a tool of Russia's foreign policy, and therefore they lack trust and faith in its political intentions and ability to serve Estonians.

EKRE allegedly also mobilized (to the best it could, given its rhetoric) a fair share of ethnic Russian voters from Narva's Ida-Viru region in the previous parliamentary and European elections, according to sample DE-4.

In a public interview in June 2020, Mart Helme, while describing his reasons for retirement, reinforced this. The former party leader, who is now serving as a vice-chairman, made note that EKRE has its eyes set on Estonia's Russian-speaking region as an area in which to grow supporters in the future. Helme stated: "We have a plan for Ida-Virumaa. Centrists are losing ground there [...] Russians are conservatives, Estonians are more liberal. Many of the ideas on our platform are suitable for Russian speakers" (Helme).

Additionally, the Russian-speaking leg of Estonia's Social Democrats Party—according to sample DE-7, in which the party's ethnic Russian members berated both Centre and EKRE for their divisiveness and failure to protect the Russian minority in an open-letter—is trying to position itself as an alternative. The Social Democrats currently have ten seats in the Estonian parliament. The party, however, does not have nearly as much public media attention as the other two, nor does it have as many resources, and therefore it will be difficult for it to effectively campaign and market itself successfully. But, if successful, there is a chance that it could garner more ethnic Russian support in the 2023 parliamentary elections, shaking up the Estonian political scene and asserting itself as not only a leading socially liberal party, but also one that advocates for and gains support from the ethnic Russian community. Up until now, only Centre has maintained the duo political status of being socially liberal and advocating for the Russian minority.

Nevertheless, the current political conundrum for ethnic Russians is between 1) a failing party, Centre, whose own internal tensions are degrading the party's reputation, and 2) EKRE, whose divisiveness and polarization, even if in support of traditional values, is too salient and hateful for the country's ethnic Russian minority to support.

4.2. Russian Parties and Russian Politicians in Latvia: Voices of Support or Agents of Tension?

Positioning themselves as voices of support for the ethnic Russian minority, Latvia's two pro-Russia parties, Harmony and the Russian Union of Latvia, are both vocal and controversial in the nation's political scene. Having gained considerably more attention in recent years, especially as tensions between Russia and the West continue to grow, these two parties and their contentious politicians capitalize, either overtly or covertly, on the struggles ethnic Russians experience, while also exploiting language and citizenship to foment social anger. As a result of this public attention, the parties—on different scales, owing to the difference in parties' sizes—have increased their support and gained political traction, posturing themselves as formidable political forces.

Described as populist, the political ideology and agendas of these parties rest in their advocacy for 1) the recognition of Latvian citizenship for all individuals permanently residing in Latvia before 1991; 2) the preservation and incorporation of the Russian language into all

spheres of society, thereby eliminating many of the nation's post-Soviet language laws; and 3) the establishment of less strict language requirements in public service, and also increased governmental support for Russian culture (Solska, 2011; Nakai, 2014; Main Page, n.d.). The parties believe that Latvia's Russian population is not a dark remnant of the past, but instead an important component of its present. Therefore, the parties claim that Russian language and culture must be given the necessary resources they need to flourish and be part of society.

In 2005, the Social Democratic Party "Harmony," Sociāldemokrātiskā Partija "Saskaņa" in Latvian, was founded with the intention of bringing Latvia's smaller Russian parties together to better represent the country's ethnic Russian population.[26] In the years that followed, the party steadily grew in popularity, and in the 2009 Riga City Council elections, a mayor from the ethnic Russian minority, Nils Ušakovs, was elected for the first time, commencing the party's continual success over the next several years in the capital of Riga. Despite Harmony receiving the highest percentage of seats in the Latvian parliament in October 2018, it continues to struggle with coalition formation, since other parties view it as only a reflection of pro-Russia propaganda. The party has a past political alliance with Vladimir Putin's United Russia party, and the party's poster politician, Nils Ušakovs, has failed to condemn Russia for its annexation of Crimea in 2014 and, additionally, he has continually criticized EU sanctions against Russia (Birka; Stuttaford). Owing to corruption charges, however, Ušakovs was removed from his post as the mayor of Riga in 2019. Representing Harmony, he now serves as a Member of the European Parliament (MEP) for Latvia—to which he was elected in 2019, after his dismissal as mayor. Described as a "charismatic but polarizing leader," Ušakovs owes his political popularity largely to the "unwavering loyalty" he receives from the country's ethnic Russian community, according to sample L-25.

The Russian Union of Latvia was founded in 1998 by aggregating, in a similar fashion, several smaller parties that were supported primarily by ethnic Russian voters. This party, however, is further to the left than Harmony, and it is often described as having socialist policies. It is also more extremist in its actions and statements when dealing with Russian-related issues, such as language, citizenship, and relations with Moscow. One of the party's three leaders, Tatjana Ždanoka, carries a controversial image within Latvian politics.[27] She has stated before that Latvia's ethnic Russians are persecuted "like Jews before World War Two," and she continually cites the nation's language laws as direct attacks on Russian culture and lifestyle (Security Service, 2019).

Ždanoka has openly supported Russia's annexation of Ukraine in recent years, and was also a member of the Communist Party of Latvia before and during the attempted Soviet coup in January 1991. She was a leader in the movement against the country's independence from the USSR, believing that Latvia ought to remain part of Russia, rather than have its former sovereign status reinstated (Wezel, 2016; Main Page; Lieven, 1994). Because of this, Ždanoka is not legally allowed to run in national elections. However, she is allowed to seek election in the European

[26] The party is often referred to simply as "Harmony," rather than its longer name. Before 2014, its name was "Harmony Centre."

[27] Ždanoka's father's family was murdered by Latvian-Nazi collaborators during World War Two.

parliament. As a result, her party focuses its political efforts on continually securing at least one of Latvia's eight seats in the European Parliament—something in which the party has been successful for several years, therefore giving its platform attention on an EU-level (Bergmane, 2019).

As an overarching theme, ethnic politics appeared in 11 percent of the total samples from the three Latvian outlets, representing a steadily appearing theme throughout the study. Harmony and the Russian Union of Latvia, along with its leading politicians Ušakovs and Ždanoka, dominated the discourse surrounding ethnic politics, highlighting their significance in Latvian politics, especially for the ethnic Russian community. Smaller portions of other themes, such as russophobia, differing ethnic worldviews, and trouble with the Riga City Council, appear in this section, as well, because of their connection back to the two parties and, on another level, to Latvia's ethnic political system.

Though the two parties differ in size and strategies, they have both successfully cemented themselves as "Russian" parties in Latvia, stirring political tensions between Latvians and Russians, while also garnering significant public attention in the process.

Table Five: Breakdown of Latvian Political Parties as of June 2020 (Members, n.d.; Latvian, n.d.)

Leading Latvian Parties	**Political Ideology**	**Members of Parliament**	**Members of European Parliament**
Harmony (SDPS)	Center-left, Russian Minority Politics, Populist	22	2
Who Owns the State? (KPV)	Far-right, Populist, Eurosceptic	10	0
New Conservative Party (JKP)	Center-right, Conservatism	15	0
Development/For! (AP!)	Center Politics	12	1
National Alliance (NA)	Far-right, Nationalism	12	2
Union of Greens and Farmers (ZZS)	Center Politics, Green Politics	10	0
Unity (V)	Center-right, Pro-Europeanism	8	2
Russian Union of Latvia (LKS)	Far-left, Russian Minority Politics	0	1

Similar to Estonia's political system, Latvia operates as a parliamentary representative democratic republic, for which the Prime Minister acts as the head of both the government and the multi-party system. The nation has a president; however, this is largely a ceremonial and symbolic role, rather than a political and legislative one. Legislative power comes from the

nation's parliament, in Latvian the "Saeima," in which seven political parties are represented. Harmony currently holds the most seats in the parliament—a position to which it ascended after the nation's October 2018 parliamentary elections. The nation's political system is split along ethnic lines, as well. In Latvia, ethnic Latvians side with ethnic Latvian parties, which often promise to establish a nation more connected to its cultural identity, with statements such as a "Latvia for Latvians." Ethnic Russians then side with ethnic Russian parties—such as Harmony and the Russian Union of Latvia—which strive to create a more ethnically-inclusive society for the Russian community, but also promote Russian propaganda and have dubious political connections and ties to the Russian Federation (Golubeva & Kazoka, 2010; Kazoka, 2010; Auers, 2013; Talal, 2016; Solska).

Listed as a "flawed democracy," the Latvian political system, in addition to a polarizing ethno-structure, suffers from internal corruption (Democracy, 2019). Many Latvians lack faith in their political system, as demonstrated by a 2017 study on social integration in the capital city of Latvia. Only 15 percent of respondents claimed that they had confidence in Latvia's political parties, and then 28 percent claimed confidence in the country's parliament (Kantar LNS, 2017).

A large contributor to this corruption is the Harmony party, and specifically the recent controversy in which its poster politician—Nils Ušakovs—was recently involved. Several samples in the study covered a corruption controversy and allegations of political wrongdoing that ultimately led to this politician's suspension and eventual resignation from the post of Riga city's mayor. Along with other Riga City Council Members, the then-mayor of Latvia's capital city found himself in the middle of serious allegations relating to bribery, misallocation of funds, money laundering, and more, according to sample L-16. A year after his dismissal in April 2020, a court found his suspension to be "necessary, reasonable and proportional to the uncovered violations," despite his statements claiming otherwise. Among other pervasive illegal activities he had allowed as mayor, there was a reduction of Riga's assets worth over 18.4 million euros in 2017 because of his mismanagement with city investments (Court, 2020).[28]

Having been elected into the EU parliament in May 2019 amidst the scandal, he could not be charged with such crimes, because MEPs benefit from prosecution immunity (Sample L-16). Though this immunity can be lifted, it is quite a complex process and is unlikely to take place, leading some in Latvia to believe he ran for MEP as a means to escape the possibility of prosecution (Sample L-25).

Calling the charges and his dismissal "politically motivated" and "unlawful," insinuating ethnic bias, Ušakovs continually stated that he had no part in such illegal actions—and that if any wrongdoing took place while he was mayor, he was not aware of it (Samples L-8 & DL-1). Both Ušakovs and Harmony released statements claiming discrimination in the case, stating that the Latvian political system targeted him because of his status as a Russian and because his stances do not align with the nation's ethno-state structure. To no surprise, the Russian Federation's media was quick to capitalize on this case, as well, claiming that his position as an ethnic

[28] Under his oversight as mayor, the Riga city council was raided several times by anti-corruption officials, on which he would constantly turn a blind eye. This brought into question the political integrity of Ušakovs, and also whether or not his involvement in the corruption ran deeper than just that which was discovered.

Russian in Latvia—rather than the charges of corruption—was the real root of his dismissal (Gershkovich, 2019; Alekseev, 2019; Linderman, 2019).

Sample B-11, titled "Ušakovs disappeared due to the hatred of Latvia's residents," echoed these sentiments, as well. Claiming that the ethnic Latvian community detests all things related to Harmony, the sample notes:

> The leader of the Harmony political party, Nils Ušakovs, has disappeared from public space in recent weeks and has not begun to participate in public debates because '[Harmony] has become hated by people' Nils Ušakovs told reporters at the polling station. Answering the question why he was not at a public debate, the politician replied that this was due to the attitude of society towards his party and his associates. 'Now there are quite a lot of people who hate both the Harmony party and the people of Harmony, so we will wait for the relationship with the voters [to improve],' said Ušakovs.

Furthermore, at the start of the allegations, flyers and pamphlets appeared in certain areas around Riga, with an image of Ušakovs—in a striped suit similar to that of a concentration camp prisoner—being carried away by Nazi forces, according to sample DL-1. Written on the prison suit were the words "Tāpēc, kā krievs," which in Latvian means "Because he's Russian." The pamphlet, written in Russian, called for action to support Ušakovs and to defend the city of Riga. The state police opened an investigation to identify the people who disseminated the flyer, because of its "attempt to incite ethnic hatred" in Latvia. Ušakovs and Harmony both claimed that the flyer was not their doing and, in a social media post, Ušakovs stated he "hopes that this is someone's unsuccessful joke." As a result of this controversy, political tensions grew between the nation's two leading ethnicities, and then by extension the dismissal of Ušakovs evolved into more of an ethnic political battle between Latvians and Russians, rather than one more rooted in the reality of the situation: corruption charges.[29]

Though Harmony is largely seen as a "Russian" party, especially among ethnic Latvians, its officials have attempted to distance itself from that label in recent years. Instead, the party is rebranding itself as one that is a modern, European, "socially democratic" party—pushing back on a status quo that it propagates pro-Russian values—in an effort to gain more ethnic Latvian supporters (Conley et al., 2016). In fact, it even renamed itself in 2014, shedding the former name "Harmony Centre" and moving to the "Social Democratic Party Harmony," which better reflected its new platform shift.

However, many experts view this effort to politically recast itself as yet another tool of the Kremlin's foreign policy strategy. That is, the establishment of a more moderate, leveled platform is part of Moscow's larger strategy to ensure that pro-Russian political groups in its former republics are considered legitimate and reputable enough to not only obtain power, but also to stay in it long enough to enact change and cement its influence (Conley; Winnerstig, 2014).

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[29] The roots of Harmony's corruption, however, do not end with Ušakovs. For instance, in March 2019, one of the party's major donors and a member of its board, Aivars Bergers, was found to have received offshore, money-laundering companies known to be involved in fraudulent activities, according to sample L-5.

For instance, sample DL-15 reinforces the party's attempts to minimize its "pro-Russian" status. Boris Tsilevich, a leading Harmony politician and member of the Latvian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, stated that:

> The Harmony Party has never positioned itself as a Russian party or a party for Russians. This is the only party in Latvia that was not created on an ethnic basis, the only party that openly opposes nationalism of any kind. Yes, these ideas find the greatest response among Russian-speaking residents. But with every new election more and more Latvians vote for us, our faction in the [parliament] is the only one with a mixed ethnic composition.

Up until recently, however, the party's support base is almost entirely ethnically Russian. This only adds to the difficulty for the Latvian political society to see it as anything but a "pro-Russia" party: a label that will never allow it to significantly popularize among left-leaning Latvian voters (Cheskin & March, 2016; Cianetti & Nakai, 2017; Braghiroli & Petsinis, 2019).[30] This challenge is only augmented by the fact that, until October 2017, one year before the parliamentary elections, Harmony had a political cooperation agreement with Putin's United Russia party. Harmony has received millions of euros in funding for its pro-Russia ideology from the Russian Federation, as well, according to Latvian officials based on classified evidence, bringing forth even larger concerns about the party's integrity and ability to effectively represent an independent Latvia (Cavegn, 2017; Conley; Winnerstig).[31]

To add to the list, Ušakovs and many other Harmony politicians have socially alienated ethnic Latvians in the past through their vocal support of, and eventual vote for, the establishment of Russian as a second language in Latvia. Though rejected by nearly 75 percent of voters, their support for the change negatively resonated with many Latvians. And in 2014, Ušakovs did not criticize the Russian Federation for its annexation of Ukraine, failing to stand in line with Latvia's official position on Russian aggression in the region and postured himself, quite visibly, as a pro-Russian politician in a pro-Russia party. In fact, he even visited Moscow just after the government's illegal annexation. Additionally, he and his Harmony colleagues have criticized sanctions against Russia, claiming they are unnecessary and unwarranted, despite widespread support for them from the rest of the nation's parties (Bergmane).

Harmony has also been a staunch supporter of the maintenance and preservation of Soviet statues glorifying various USSR leaders and military officials, as demonstrated in samples DL-11, L-7, B-3, B-19, and others. This rests in one of its main strategies used over the years to gain supporters: memory politics. Through the glorification of the days when Russians were considered the "majority" in Latvia, the party successfully creates a layer of Soviet nostalgia in society, which resonates especially with the older Russian population, who, in many cases, miss Soviet life because of its simplicity and financial security. These Soviet monuments, of which

[30] A large reason the party has gained so much support from the Russian community over the years is because of its successful implementation of "memory politics" and its glorifications of the past, bringing nostalgia into society for those days when ethnic Russians were the "majority" in Latvia.
[31] Latvian political scientist Filips Rajevskis stated that Harmony dropping the agreement with United Russia was likely an attempt to increase its non-Russian, socially democratic appeal to ethnic Latvian citizens ahead of the October 2018 parliamentary elections.

Latvia has many, act as a pillar of the old days, but also as strategic political tools for the Russian politicians. The politicians advocate tirelessly for the continual preservation of the statues, and also raise political storms when discussion is brought forth as to whether or not they should be removed, since they are deeply offensive to Latvians, and especially to those Latvians who directly suffered from the Soviet regime's brutality. The monuments also act as locations where Russians organize and take part in community-related protests, such as the recent demonstrations against the transition into a Latvian-only education system.

Often joined by the ambassadors of Russia and Belarus, Harmony officials, and almost always Ušakovs, also take part in the May 9th "Victory Day" celebrations, which honor and praise the USSR's defeat of Nazi Germany and, in the case of the Baltic region, its alleged "liberation" for its occupied republics. Latvia's ethnic Russians flock to the Soviet monuments and statues on May 9th to listen to politicians deliver speeches about the honor of the Soviet regime, its strength and bravery, and to lay flowers on the monuments as tributes to the lives lost in the "liberation" of Latvia. Latvia's 2019 May 9th celebration in Riga included over a hundred thousand participants (Sample DL-11). Other celebrations around the country, especially in Daugavpils, take place, as well.

This rhetoric, however, that May 9th is a day to celebrate, and that it represents the "liberation" of Latvia, is far from the truth in the eyes of ethnic Latvians. To them, instead, the day represents the end of Nazi occupation, but also the commencement of several tumultuous decades under brutal Soviet rule. The date's yearly celebration has only augmented the pain it creates for those of non-Russian ethnicity because it serves as an annual reminder that there are many still in Latvia who glorify the USSR—Latvia's former oppressor.

Latvians have continually voiced their desire to remove the statues, but such desires are often met with a sharp, vocal response from the Russian community and its politicians, who passionately refuse to allow the removal of such monuments. The Russian Federation involves itself, too, when discussion arises regarding the removal of monuments, citing international agreements as reasons for the illegality of removing the statues. For example, sample L-7 discussed the differing opinions about the future of the "Uzvaras" (Victory) Monument in Riga's Pardaugava, noting the social divisions such discussions often create. The sample notes:

> The committee began discussing a public petition, signed by more than 10,000 residents, demanding that Uzvaras Monument be torn down. Members of the committee had different opinions about the initiative [...] Committee member Artuss Kaiminš (KPV LV) said that a decision to blow up the monument would be wrong because it would divide society and compromise security. This is a 'super sensitive' issue, so the Saeima should act very smartly, stressed Kaiminš. Kaiminš proposes renaming the monument, which is also permitted under an existing agreement with Russia. He believes that it could be called a memorial to victims of the Soviet occupation, and part of the monument could be reconstructed.

Harmony, however, voiced support over the preservation of the monument as it is, with Arturs Rubiks, one of its leading politicians, stating that not only is the monument protected by an international treaty, but that the initiative to remove it is socially divisive, according to the same sample. The divisiveness it creates is apparently too great a force for its removal to be warranted, Harmony argues.

To Latvians, events and actions such as these only further reinforce their already strong-held preconceptions about Harmony and its politicians. In their view, the populist party is marred by corruption and, owing to its connection to the Russian Federation and its acceptance and glorification of Latvia's Soviet history, it is not in the interest of the Latvian state. As a result, Latvians are likely to see the Russian community's ongoing choice to support such a party—despite its illegal actions, illicit connections, and attempts to rebrand itself—as a direct reflection on their character and position in society. As such, the Russian community's status then grows further isolated and alienated, since its political interests and those it supports are inherently connected to these politicians and parties that are pro-Russia.

As Harmony attempts to minimize its pro-Russia stance, the Russian Union of Latvia continues to increase its pro-Russia rhetoric, capitalizing on its position as a "radical" party to garner public attention and potentially pick up supporters in the process, albeit those who hold pro-Kremlin political viewpoints. Viewed as an electoral "worst case" scenario for the nation's Russians, according to some Latvian politicians in sample B-23, the party stokes tensions through public statements and appearances that are rooted in socially divisive themes, such as a radicalized form of memory politics, ethnic bias, and a warped view of Latvia's necessary foreign policy, specifically with Russia.

As sample DL-29 demonstrated, the party's politicians often manipulate history in favor of the USSR's legacy, in order to insinuate that the status of an "occupier" is wrong, and that instead the USSR ought to be viewed as "liberators" for Latvia. And, in addition to this, without supporting evidence, the politicians claim that Latvians actually wanted to become part of the Soviet Union in 1940 when the nation was initially annexed. On this, the sample notes:

> Earlier, DELFI portal reported that the board member of the Russian Union of Latvia (RSL) and the organizer of the Total Dictation in Latvia, Alexander Filey, became a suspect because of his publication on Facebook, where he congratulates readers on the anniversary of June 17, 1940—the date when, in his opinion, 'the Soviet army liberated Latvia from the dictatorial regime.' [The politician] indicated that 'Latvia was not at all against becoming Soviet. The labor movement was powerful and developed.'

In denying the nation's occupation, the party sends a clear message: it does not view the USSR as a harmful, negative institution, but rather a beneficial one, whose occupation over Latvia served the country well. This rhetoric rejects the facts; it rejects the reality. This political posturing undermines the aggression, the unfounded arrests, and the thousands of lives lost at the hands of Soviet brutality, while also disregarding all of the families who were forcibly split up and removed from their homes, all in the name of instating a Slavic majority in Latvia.

Even Russian politicians from other Latvian parties, who advocate for the Russian minority in Latvia, are shocked by the Russian Union of Latvia's rhetoric, and also confused as to why Latvian-Russian citizens vote for its politicians. For example, Oleg Burov,[32] who was

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[32] Oleg Burov is a member of the Honor to Serve Riga political party, which formerly had an electoral alliance with Harmony. However, that alliance was disbanded in 2013. Burov, an ethnic Russian, claims to have never voted for Harmony before, to have not supported the creation of Russian as Latvia's second official language, and has also stated that he does not take part in the May 9 "Victory Day" celebrations.

elected the new mayor of Riga after the scandal involving Ušakovs, does not understand how Latvians could vote for such a party, according to sample DL-13: "One can only wonder how, so many years after the restoration of independence, there are young people who are ready to vote for the [Russian Union of Latvia]. They are citizens of Latvia! I don't understand this emotionally and mentally."

Just as Harmony does, the Russian Union of Latvia uses Soviet history, and specifically the remaining monuments and statues, as political tools, weaponizing them to generate nostalgia for the Soviet era, while also attempting to cement the idea that these monuments are inherently connected to Russian heritage, and therefore are important to preserve. This tactic is employed often by party officials, especially Tatjana Ždanoka, who is frequently the leader of petitions and open letters in support of the monuments. Alleging protection against "Nazism," sample L-7 noted that Ždanoka had gathered over 21,000 signatures in support of preserving a prominent Soviet monument in the capital city of Riga, which was then submitted to the nation's parliament for consideration. Sample DL-6 reported on this, as well, with Ždanoka stating "Latvia should be united with the rest of Europe and guarantee the preservation of monuments to fighters against Nazism by law," and that calls to destroy monuments contribute to the split in society and threaten the overall unity of Europe.

While Harmony voices its criticism of sanctions against Russia, the Russian Union of Latvia goes a step further: they actively and openly condemn the sanctions, believing they are not only harmful to the Kremlin, an indication of where their true support rests, but also to the EU and Latvia because of their harm to "bilateral relations." Andrejs Mamikins, a former MEP and a member of the Russian Union of Latvia, has stated before that sanctions against Russian need to be taken away. He does not believe in sanctions as "a mechanism to change anything," citing the USA's sanctions against Cuba and North Korea as examples, while also tooting his own efforts in the EU parliament that resulted in the lifting of sanctions against Belarus, a nation known to collaborate closely with Russia (Asking, 2018).

And the party's politicians vote in favor of policies that benefit Russia, as well, positioning itself as not only a pro-Kremlin voice through its political beliefs, but also through its actions. In doing this, the party grounds its political ideology in pro-Kremlin ideals. For instance, in sample L-26, titled "Ždanoka aligns with Brexit party on Russian disinformation," the party's leading public face, Tatjana Ždanoka, who now serves in the European parliament, voted alongside Nigel Farage and his anti-EU Brexit party in the fall of 2019 against a motion criticizing Russia for its election interference. This vote was particularly difficult for Latvians, because not only does Russia often target their own country for hybrid warfare tactics, but they had to reckon with the fact that it was a politician from their own country who voted in favor of it. Though Ždanoka's vote landed on the losing side, her choice to support Russia left Latvians feeling unsettled and disturbed.

The Russian Union of Latvia is also critical of Latvia's alleged "over-active" participation in NATO, believing that Latvia must significantly lower the money it puts into the organization. Wanting to stop the modern "Cold War" with Russia, the party would like the

country to return to the involvement it had in the alliance before 2014, referencing the period before Ukraine's Crimea was illegally annexed by the Russian Federation. On the subject of the EU, the Russian Union of Latvia believes that in some ways, it assists in Latvia's organizational struggles, but that its vision for the future [of the EU] is a united Europe "from Lisbon to Vladivostok," indicating that the party would like the Russian Federation to join the EU (10 Questions, 2018). Vladivostok is a Russian city on the Pacific coast not far from the country's borders with China and North Korea.

The party is also the primary organizer of all protests related to Russian-related issues, such as those dealing with language, citizenship, and education, as revealed through the content analysis (Samples DL-32, DL-24, L-10, L-15). Using taglines such as "stop linguistic genocide" and "end the Holocaust of Russian education in Latvia," the party-organized demonstrations that often incite ethnic tension, and almost always claim that the Latvian government's decisions are rooted in discrimination against the Russian minority, *especially* its linguistic policies. Tatjana Ždanoka, according to sample L-15, also participated in a protest in mid-2019 in defense of an accused Russian spy, citing the arrest as a "political move," despite the presence of significant evidence showing otherwise.[33]

Additionally, several of the Russian Union of Latvia's protests, along with statements made by its leading politicians, have come under scrutiny and investigations by the state police, as a result of their links to the incitement of ethnic hatred and their complacence in propagating the Kremlin's agenda (Security, 2014; Criminal, 2018; State, 2019).

This party is also the only one in the nation that does not possess a Latvian bank account, therefore preventing it from receiving state funds, to which all political parties are entitled (earning 0.71 euros per vote), once they pass a two percent threshold in acquiring votes in the previous parliamentary elections. The party was set to earn over 19,000 euros in funding; however, KNAB, Latvia's anti-corruption bureau, pointed out that it fails to meet the criteria for receiving such funding. Per the funding's requirements, the party must have an account in a credit institution registered in Latvia. The Russian Union of Latvia only has an account with Paysera, an online bank registered in Lithuania which has previously been fined for failures in its anti-money laundering measures (No State, 2018). This raises concerns over the party's financial integrity and from where (or, from whom) it sources donations.

The party's website is a reflection of its actions, as well.[34] The website re-posts articles from Kremlin-funded media outlets, such as Sputnik News, and its published articles are ethnically-centered and oftentimes hyperbolic. The website also publishes content with photos and articles related to Soviet history, as an attempt to generate nostalgia for the USSR days for the nation's ethnic Russian community.

[33] Oļegs Buraks, an ethnic Russian in Latvia, is only the third individual to be charged with espionage in the country. The former head of the Firearms Tracking Division for Latvia's Ministry of Interior, Buraks, who retired in 2006, does not speak Latvian.

[34] The Russian Union of Latvia's main website is: www.rusojuz.lv. Russian is the primary language for the website, but it also offers a good amount of information in Latvian, and then some in English.

Even when the Latvian government institutes advancements in areas where the party has previously advocated, such as its recent revisions of its naturalization policies, the Russian Union of Latvia criticizes its actions, claiming such actions are not enough, and organizes protests in response. The reasons for such a response is clear: the Russian Union of Latvia, and its support base, thrives in the position of "against." That is, it is in the interests of the party to be in a constant back-and-forth with other political parties and with the Latvian government, because it is in this position where it can capitalize the most on its divisive strategies, which are structured around criticism and accusation, as opposed to tangible suggestions and offerings of policy change.

4.3. The Significance for Estonia's and Latvia's Ethnic Russian Population

All of this information then begs the question: How do EKRE, Harmony, and the Russian Union of Latvia isolate and affect the two nations' ethnic Russian communities?

For the ethnic Russian community in Estonia, the impact of EKRE and its corresponding nationalism has largely symbolic effects, rather than significant policy changes, for example, since EKRE does not hold enough seats to approve a law without help from another party. Most parties, especially Centre, are turned off from forming a coalition with EKRE on any policy-related matter because of its perceived extremism. That being said, EKRE's intangible effects do manifest themselves in society; the glorification of Estonian nationalism and the inferiorization of non-Estonians will certainly affect how the community is viewed throughout the country. In normalizing such ideologies and marketing their "mainstream" status, the feeling of "otherness," which Russians already experience, will increase, because their image in society will be further likened to that of a foreigner, an outsider, or, according to some nationalistic Estonians, an "occupier."[35] On a national level, EKRE's ideology signals that there is a new normal for what is politically acceptable, thereby incorporating a salient far-right discourse into Estonia's political environment.

EKRE's prolific, continuous public hate speech—about immigrants, Russians, and the LGBT community—will have a deep impact, as well. Even if there are some ethnic Russians who associate themselves with the more traditional aspects of its ideology, rather than the anti-Russian rhetoric, the sheer existence of hate speech itself cultivates a society based on intolerance and ethnic prejudice. Social stigmas provide the proper foundation on which to grow, while ethnic identity is used as a polarizing tool to inferiorize and superiorize. Estonian EKRE supporters will further view the need to construct an "Estonia for Estonians," and they will see the ethnic Russian population as a barrier to this goal.

Then, on a political level, EKRE's force could impact the way Estonia's ethnic Russians respond to and participate in its national political system. Ethnic Russians in Estonia already have lower civic and political participation rates than their ethnic Estonian counterparts (Schulze,

[35] Some Estonians and Latvians still view ethnic Russians in their countries as "occupiers," since they are the living remnants of an occupying regime. Occupier is "okupant" in Estonian, and then "okupants" in Latvian.

2014; Tolvaišis, 2011; Kalmus et al., 2018). These low rates likely come as a result of a lack of trust in the Estonian political system to advocate for the minority group, especially since many in the Russian community, who are stateless and hold gray alien passports, are not allowed to participate in elections, except for municipal ones. And in the Ida-Viru region, where the nation's ethnic Russian community resides, there was an extremely low rate of electoral participation in previous EU elections. Only 24 percent of eligible citizens turned out to vote. In the country's March 2019 parliamentary elections, the Ida-Viru region also had the lowest voter turnout rate in the entire country by over ten percent. The national average was 64 percent, but in Ida-Viru only 48 percent of its citizens participated (Voter; Jana, 2019).

The participatory implications of EKRE then place the ethnic Russian community in a difficult position, as they navigate through being stuck between populist political forces that fail to successfully advocate for them or bring change to the community. Possessing no viable voice in the nation's politics, the community then loses its already few chances for enhancing communal advocacy and developing a political world that more inclusively incorporates the population's needs. With EKRE socially legitimizing intolerance and the Centre Party continuing to implode from within, Estonia's ethnic Russians are likely to further turn away from its political scene, losing access to an important medium through which the community can enact change (Makarychev, 2019; Regelmann). This breeds political disaffection, thereby stripping the community of a crucial tool to which national belonging and identity formation are connected.

In Latvia, the implications are slightly different. Whereas Estonia's political situation reinforces isolation because of far-right nationalistic parties, Latvia's political system promotes ethnic isolation, on a political level, largely because of its pro-Russian parties, which, despite advocating for the integration and amelioration of the minority community's status, further alienate the population from its ethnic Latvian counterparts. This alienation comes as a result of their controversial public stances, which, when seen by ethnic Latvians, appear as antagonistic, ethnically-rooted, and counter to Latvian sovereignty, since they often side with Mosocow and fail to condemn its actions.

As such, Latvians likely interpret their support for these parties, and their continual attendance at party-sponsored events and protests, as a political representation of where their allegiance lies—that is, one not in line with Latvia's post-Soviet strategy to reinstate its sovereignty and develop itself as an independent nation proud of its language and culture. This effect impacts the Russian community overall, as well, because, even if not all of Latvia's Russians support Harmony or the Russian Union, ethnic Latvians themselves associate these parties with the country's Russian minority. This association manifests itself deeply. Latvians then see the corruption, divisive actions, and pro-Russia rhetoric from both parties as reasons to not better integrate and find common ground within the community. Instead, the community appears as a threat to their language, their political integrity, and international security. But rather than responding to such anxieties with unity and collective cooperation, in an attempt to decrease the nation's already ethnically tense political system, the Russian parties use these fears as their own evidence to show that Russians are not welcome in Latvian society. Ethnic identities serve

as tools for these politicians, who exploit and benefit their abilities to mobilize voters and shift attention away from corruption scandals.

Interestingly, however, despite being the nation's two Russian minority parties, Harmony and the Russian Union do not work together or collaborate on a political level, instead choosing to pursue separate strategies to achieve their agenda's goals. And, especially now that Ušakovs is serving in the EU's parliament, along with the equally charismatic and divisive Tatjana Ždanoka, the two parties' leading politicians will likely see each other as politically competing forces, since they both claim to advocate for the Russian minority. As a result, Harmony and the Russian Union, with their inability to work together, produce yet another division in the already-divided Latvian political scene.

Divides such as this, in addition to the ethnic grounding of the nation's political scene, are likely to deter individuals from participating in Latvian politics, and also cause a lack of interest in its functions. This is especially the case for younger voters, who feel disenfranchised by the system's failures. As such, it is no surprise that in Latvia, for those aged 18-24, only 18 percent of respondents in a March 2019 poll claimed to "generally" follow the nation's political process, and then only 10 percent claimed that they "regularly" follow it (Poll, 2019).[36]

On a regional level, since they both hold seats in the EU parliament, Harmony and the Russian Union of Latvia also send dangerous signals to other EU member states. That is, as the EU continues to develop its own economy and identity, former Soviet republics are integrated into its union, too. Polarizing politicians from these countries, such as Latvia, that are simultaneously getting elected to its parliament, thereby give controversial rhetoric and agendas a large scale platform. Though such politicians have not gained enough power to affect tangible change in the parliament and enact legislation, their presence represents the reach of the EU's ever-looming eastern neighbor. The Russian Federation, which constantly criticizes and targets EU institutions, claims the EU is inherently anti-Russia and antithetical to security and cohesion on the European continent, of which Russia likes to claim it is a part. As a result, other member states, specifically those in the West, develop political apprehension when a former Soviet republic, such as Latvia, elects pro-Russia parties into the EU parliament, representing 25 percent of the country's seats. Then for ethnic Russians in Latvia, a failure to go against and the continuance of choosing these parties partly shows their complacence in the failed political system. This creates a sour image for ethnic Latvians of their Slavic neighbors, consequently discouraging and hindering the minority population's integration in Latvia.

And so, whether it is far-right nationalism or pro-Kremlin ideology, Estonia's and Latvia's ethno-political systems, and certain corresponding parties, are social forces by which the ethnic Russian minority is more isolated than it is integrated. That is, rather than working to unite and connect the two ethnicities, the nations' political parties choose to instead harness divides and foment fear, preventing the successful implementation of integrative efforts in society. As a result, the ethnic Russian communities will have to reckon with those political parties whose

[36] This poll was conducted by SKDS, a reputable Latvian polling firm, but was commissioned and reported on by LSM, which frequently uses the services of SKDS.

rhetoric, political agendas, and social impacts act as steep barriers in their process of developing a sense of belonging in these two Baltic nations.

5. Between Integration and Isolation: The Social Pendulum of Narva, Estonia

Considered Estonia's most "Eastern" city, both geographically and culturally, Narva is situated in the Ida-Viru region of Northeastern Estonia right along the nation's infamous border with the Russian Federation. A city of roughly 56,000 and the nation's third largest municipality,[37] its residents have, in most recent history, lived on the margins of Estonian society: culturally, linguistically, politically, and socially (Kalikova & Kurbatova, 2002).

Walking through the city, visitors are often struck by the Soviet infrastructure that still dominates the city's layout, with large-scale Soviet apartment complexes right at Narva's entrance to visually welcome those transiting through the municipality. Often viewed as an isolated city, especially by nationalistic Estonians, Narva's residents lack national and social belonging, which has allowed for the augmentation of a geographical divide in the country.

Approximately 90 percent of the city's population speaks Russian as their native language, and a vast majority of the city's population possess inadequate levels of Estonian language. Local media is almost entirely in Russian, and Kremlin-sponsored channels, such as RT and Sputnik, are broadcasted in Narva, with many of its residents serving as loyal viewers of these notoriously biased, propaganda-filled channels. It is a rare occurrence to hear (and use) Estonian on the streets, as well. Narva is a living remnant of the nation's Soviet history; because of this position, it holds an air of unease and solicitude for some ethnic Estonians. As a result, it threatens to act as a possible roadblock to cohesiveness for the nation, as Estonian government officials and citizens must reckon with the fact that their third-largest city operates in a different cultural and linguistic world and shares little to no commonality with Estonian society.

Narva's most recent historical roots date back to the mid-20th century Soviet era, during which it was entirely reconstructed and wiped of its Estonian past after Soviet bombings from WW2 in order to fit needs of a classic Soviet city. Block apartment complexes were developed to house a soon-to-be influx of industrial workers; ethnic Russians were resettled to the region, ridding the city of its once vibrant, lively Estonian past and a uranium factory was revamped to help fuel the Soviet Union's nuclear project. And now, after Estonian independence, which many residents in Narva's region, Ida-Viru, opposed at the time, it is often difficult to discern whether or not much has changed, because, according to many, it shares more similarities with its Soviet past than it does with modern Estonian society (Fein, 2005; Trimbach & O'Lear, 2015; Kirch, 1995).

However, there has been a recent surge in national focus on the development of Narva lately, as Estonian politicians and citizens alike aim for ways to increase its image in society, while also further integrating the population, so that they can feel more engaged and part of the

[37] The largest city is the capital, Tallinn, which has roughly 445,000 residents. The second largest city is Tartu, which is often labeled as a student city, and it has around 93,000 residents.

larger Estonian identity. This component of bidirectionality for Narva—that is, the presence of new initiatives and information indicating an attempt to better incorporate it into Estonian society—was identified from the study's results. Over 40 samples from the Estonian outlets contained Narva-related discussions, with some reporting on positive information and then others whose content leaned more on the negative side, highlighting the inherent bidirectional framework of this Russian city's image in Estonian society.

This section of the thesis will examine Narva's bidirectional positionality in Estonia, analyzing how this ethnic enclave impacts the overall image and lifestyle of Estonia's minority Russian population, and specifically for those who consider Narva their home. Chosen because of Narva's significant presence throughout the Estonian outlets, this section will draw on samples that fell into the study's categories relating to Narva, which entail samples discussing its internal challenges (i.e. aspects covering its geographical and cultural isolation from the rest of Estonia), and also samples reporting on the recent development and investment efforts in Narva (i.e. initiatives indicating the city's further integration and incorporation into Estonian society). For ERR, Narva-related reporting dominated the samples, accounting for 34 percent of the total data collected. 30 percent of the samples from Postimees included discussions surrounding Narva, whether about development or internal struggles, and then 20 percent for Delf Estonia. Other samples from different themes, such as those dealing with Soviet tensions, border issues, and identity, will be incorporated into this section in some capacity, as well, because of their connection and relevance to Narva. As such, it is clear that Narva remains an important area of analysis when examining the social facets of Estonia's Russian minority community.

The purpose of this section is to demonstrate that though the city still continues to struggle with its image and place in Estonian society, especially because of engrained linguistic and cultural traditions owing to its prominent Soviet history, Narva itself is finding a new home to an uptick in development opportunities and investment projects, which aim to deconstruct some of the barriers that push Narva away from Estonia. Split into three subsections, this portion of the thesis will first examine the isolative features of Narva, and it will then explore its integrative features. The section will conclude with a final focus, analyzing Narva's place, from a bidirectional standpoint, in Estonian society.

5.1. Narva's Isolative Features: Municipal Struggles Hindering the City's Integration

Many of Narva's residents, and especially those with gray alien passports and those born into families with parents possessing such passports, suffer from an "alien's syndrome." This syndrome, and its corresponding effects, have continually resulted in integrative regression for the community, because they feel like a generation on the margins of Estonian society, existing in a separate world and lacking a common language and cultural connection with the rest of the nation (Kalikova & Kurbatova, 2002). This has led to passive social engagement for those in Narva, who possess feelings of inferiority from the rest of Estonia, seeing their social

positionality as one that is significantly lower than their Estonian counterparts, since they lack the agency and capability to engage in Estonian society in meaningful, material ways.

Confidence and life satisfaction levels are also much lower within this population in Narva than the rest of the country (Kus-Harbord & Ward, 2015; Koort; Lebedeva & Tatarko, 2013). These feelings of second-class citizenship are often reinforced by Estonia's far-right politicians, such as Mart Helme, who has said before that Estonians only want one thing of the Russians in living in their country—to leave them alone (Digest, 2018).

Table Six: Demographic Breakdown of Narva's Residents as of January 2020[38] (Sample DE-35)

Narva's Demographic Composition					
According to Ethnicity		According to Citizenship		According to Language	
Russian	83.3%	Russian	36%	Russian	89.3%
Estonian	3.6%	Estonian	48.5%	Estonian	1.8%
Ukrainian	2.4%	Ukrainian	0.5%	Ukrainian	1.3%
Belarusian	1.8%	Stateless	13.6%	Belarusian	0.2%
Other	8.9%	Other	1.4%	Other	7.4%

The struggles Narva faces cover a wide array of issues, ranging from a declining population, a corrupt political system, a glorification of Soviet history, and much more. These struggles, also described as its "isolative features," pull Narva away from Estonian society. By extension, these features then pull the nation's Russian community away from Estonian society, because of the inherent connection between Narva and Russian. When one thinks of Narva, then they think of Russians; when one thinks of Russians, then one thinks of Narva.

These issues, moreover, are what create Narva's isolated image, developing a reputation of a true "Russian" city whose society and ideals run parallel to that of Estonia's. The breakdown of its ethnic composition further reinforces this, as well, since the majority of its residents consider themselves Russian, and then a large number do not even possess Estonian citizenship, as demonstrated in the table above. A number of its other residents, who are neither Russian nor Estonian, are from other Slavic nations, such as Belarus or Ukraine, whose languages are very similar to Russian, which further cements its "Eastern" status in the minds of many Estonians. And though almost 49 percent of its residents possess Estonian citizenship, only 3.6 percent consider themselves Estonian, and then less than two percent speak it as their primary language.

Related to this, since nearly all of its residents speak Russian as their primary language, many citizens, including the youth, do not speak Estonian well, which results in Narva's school system suffering significantly from a linguistic standpoint, according to several samples. Currently, Estonian law mandates—for the nation's minority language schools—that 60 percent of instruction must be in Estonian, and then 40 percent may be conducted in Russian. However,

[38] The "Other" categories include, but are not limited to, Latvians, Lithuanians, Finns, Tatars, and Poles.

in Narva, it has been historically difficult to achieve the 60 percent figure. The city's teachers lack the necessary proficiency in Estonian to effectively teach it, thereby subjecting many students, to a poorly delivered educational experience when taught in Estonian. Narva is having difficulty recruiting younger Russian teachers who speak Estonian proficiently enough to efficiently teach students. The majority of its teachers are older, and therefore their Estonian language skills are not as strong due to the prolonged emphasis on and sole exposure to the Russian language. These older teachers have worked with Russian their whole lives, so they have little practical experience with teaching the national language. In fact, a report from Estonia's National Audit Office in August 2019 found that Ida-Viru lacks significantly when it comes to qualified Estonian-language teachers, and therefore this shortage dramatically hinders the community's ability to linguistically integrate with the rest of Estonia (Sample E-21). As such, the onus is often left to the parents or the students themselves to learn Estonian, since the city's school system fails them in this regard. This aspect of Narva and its education system will be discussed further in the section on language and education.

Additionally, owing to the high presence of ethnic Russians and individuals from other Slavic nations, many residents of Narva hold very different views of USSR occupation than their Estonian counterparts (Makarychev & Yatsyk, 2016). As mentioned in previous paragraphs, this is most evident through Narva's view of May 9th, otherwise known as "Victory Day."[39] Celebrations on this date, which honor and pay tribute to the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Gerany, have always been prominent in this city, according to several samples, but its popularity and continual presence in Narva does not help its attempts to integrate with the rest of the country. According to the rest of Estonia, May 9th is a day of national mourning. As such, Narva's staunch celebration of it socially separates the city from much of Estonia.

Prior to the country's ban on Soviet flags in the early 2000s, many residents of Narva would showcase USSR flags outside their windows or houses on Victory Day, in addition to bringing them along for the parades. Now, however, if individuals do this—and occasionally some still do—they face a fine if spotted by police (Sample P-10).[40] Additionally, Narva's own city council members, such as Larissa Olenina, who has been a suspect in past corruption investigations, have organized previous May 9th celebrations (Samples E-10 & DE-10). This is likely done for both personal and political reasons. From a personal standpoint, many of Narva's politicians, as do many of the countries' ethnic Russians, view May 9th as a date of liberation, therefore warranting celebration. Politically, though, if politicians align themselves well with the public on historically nostalgic issues dealing with the Soviet era, of which the Estonian state disapproves, then they are viewed as protectors of Narva's history, traditions, and values.

[39] Monuments also represent a key figure in understanding Narva's stark difference with other cities in interpreting Estonian history. To the residents of Narva, Soviet monuments and statues are an important part of their history, and therefore ought to remain unaltered.

[40] Some residents responded to the ban on Soviet flags by displaying a red flag on Victory Day, but without the hammer and sickle. Though clearly a representation of Soviet glorification, the Estonian state cannot fine these individuals, since the flag is not overtly Soviet, even if the flag owners intend for it to appear so.

As demonstrated in several samples, Narva also suffers from a declining population, therefore threatening both its social and economic future (Samples E-35, P-16, P-34, P-36, DE-35). As a city of 83,000 in 1992, Narva had a growing economy and stable workforce, fueling its development under the Soviet regime (Narva, 2009). However, in independent Estonia, Narva has lost over a quarter of its population. According to sample DE-35, the city now has around 56,000 residents, and the population is set only to decrease with each year, signaling trouble for the city's officials in the years to come, who are struggling to bring in new residents and position Narva as a desirable location. However, low wages, weak infrastructure, high rates of crime, and corrupt politicians make this a difficult task for city officials. Its close proximity to Russia, especially in light of the 2014 events with Ukraine, continues to further render it undesirable to many.

Sample P-34, titled "Residents Leave Ida-Virumaa: Over the Past Year, the Population has Declined by 5,000," notes that the population decline rate doubled in the Ida-Viru region, in which Narva is located, during 2019. With housing units in the city prepared to host over 80,000 individuals, many listings and apartment buildings now remain vacant or abandoned, leaving behind a visual image of a slowly declining, aging city, which is not able to sustain itself should current trends continue. Ida-Viru's urban infrastructure, initially built for over 80,000 people now hosts only around 56,000 residents, a quarter of whom are retired, leaving much of the city quietly abandoned and in desperate need of renovation.

This diminishing population has alarmed city officials, who view the loss of workers and residents as barriers to the city's development and maintenance, especially because of its older population, who do not work and rely heavily on pensions. Sample E-35 reported on this decline, noting the city government's concern, and that Narva's population alone decreased by nearly 2,500 residents in 2019, alleging that a major contributor influencing individuals' decisions to leave is "societal attitudes." The reporting highlighted that without a young workforce, Narva will encounter economic hardships, since over a quarter of its population is retired. In this sample, Narva's mayor, Aleksei Jevgrafov, a Centre party member elected in April 2019, offered solutions on how to mitigate the dwindling population, stating that:[41]

> Of course [the population decline] is unfortunate, and sad news, but we will pay attention to it and give people the opportunities [to think] that living in Narva would be cool. There are parks, recreational facilities, concert programs, and we work closely with industrial parks and we meet investors all the time who are willing to come to Narva and set up factories here. Only then will Narva make money and be able to channel the revenue it collects from people into its development. We need to look at how life in Narva is changing, where more people are living today and this depends on where we contribute more financially. We need to pay more attention to keeping the population at 55,000 people.

Among other factors, the birth rate in Narva is considerably fueling its ageing, shrinking population, as well, according to samples P-36 and P-16. Fertility rates in Narva are significantly

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[41] Mayor Jevgrafov was removed from his position in November 2020 as a result of a no-confidence vote that the city council brought against him. The vote of no-confidence was initiated because of two leading reasons: Jevgrafov's work on Narva's proposals submitted for the EU's fair transition plan and his inability as mayor to establish normal relations between Narva and the Estonian state.

lower than mortality rates in the region, causing the city to have an uneven balance between the youth and the elderly.[42] An increase in incentives could mitigate the problem, if marketed and implemented successfully (Sample P-16). That is, increasing the financial benefits associated with having children could potentially encourage individuals to start a family without being turned off by some of the costly factors of raising a child, which, for Estonia's poorest city, poses a large obstacle to those on the fence about starting a family.[43]

Attracting younger individuals was also listed as a tool in several samples, by which to combat the population problem. This was accomplished through advertising desirable professional opportunities and describing Narva as an ideal place to start a career or jump into a new line of work. However, in Narva, this objective is hard to reach, due to the lack of work, especially the specific types of work that are perceived as "worth it" when moving to the city. Instead, younger individuals, rather than remain in Narva, are more likely to leave if they speak at least a bit of Estonian, because of the abundance of opportunities that exist outside of this Russian municipality, such as in Tallinn or Tartu.[44] The quality of life and the pay is higher in other cities. The rates of crime and drug abuse, among other things, are lower, making it attractive and desirable to live elsewhere, if possible, therefore leaving Narva as a last resort.

Economically, Narva possesses the lowest income per capita in the country, being one of the two regions in Estonia with a gross income of less than 1,000 euros per month. In Narva, the average monthly income is approximately 925 euros, according to sample E-14. The average gross monthly income in Estonia is roughly 1,300 euros; this means that the bare national average, which is not a large figure with which to start out, is already about 30 percent higher than Narva's average. In other areas in the country, such as Kloostrimetsa, Lepiku, and Kadriorg, average wages are in the range of 1,900 to 2,100 euros per month (Hankewitz, 2019; Sample E-14). And though unemployment has been decreasing in Estonia in recent years, this has not been the case for Narva, where unemployment continues to increase because of the lack of a growing, secure industry. Struggling to professionally move past its Soviet roots, Narva relies predominantly on blue-collar work from the textile, clothing, transport, metalworking, furniture, and shale oil industries (Trimbach, 2019; Narva). Unemployment in Narva's region is approximately 12 percent, whereas the country's average is five percent (Why Narva, 2019). With the nation's decision to also move toward a more environmentally-friendly energy system away from shale oil mining, which employs a number of the city's residents, the rate of municipal unemployment is likely to remain high (Tambur, 2020).

For instance, a wave of lay-offs in the energy sector in mid-2019 augmented the city's already fragile economy (Samples E-15 & DE-13). Enefit Energy Production, the operator of Estonia's Ida-Viru County power plants and a subsidiary of state-owned Eesti Energia,

[42] The low fertility rate is not due to an imbalance between genders in the city, however. Gender is roughly evenly split in Narva. 45 percent of residents are men, and then 55 percent of residents are female.

[43] It is important to note that, as a country, Estonia suffers from a declining population. While Narva is certainly one of the cities hit the worst by this demographic struggle, Estonia's population overall has been steadily declining since it joined the EU, whose labor mobility policies have made living abroad more accessible for Estonians.

[44] However, for those young Narvites who do not speak Estonian well, their only option is to remain in Narva. Unfortunately, this is the case for many, especially if their parents do not teach them Estonian at a young age.

announced its plans to lay-off roughly 500 employees, causing concern in the community for the future of these employees and their ability to retrain and adapt to a new profession. The company initiated the lay-offs because of the country's transition out of oil shale in its power production, making it so these laid-off employees will also encounter challenges trying to find similar work, since other companies and organizations are making similar cuts, in preparation for the nation's energy pivot. A shock to the workers, the trade union, and the locals, the country's push out of oil shale is another move that, though beneficial for Estonia as a whole, weakens Narva, requiring it to branch out more from its energy-dependent, Soviet past, and adapt to fit in with and thrive under sovereign Estonia.

Comments from Evgeny Dmitriev, a heating engineer and one of the many individuals laid-off, are included in sample DE-13. In addition to claiming the potential for a "social explosion" to occur in Narva as a result of these mass lay-offs, the former power plant employee cited his concern of finding another job, stating that:

> Thoughts and expectations, of course, are only negative. Life plans are crumbling. Many of us at one time were taking loans for cars, apartments. So, what is next? We worked almost all our lives at the station in a particular specialty. Where do we go? Where do we go for our families, children, especially since we can only do what we learned? I have no other specialty. It is impossible to find another job today in Narva and a salary at the level of NE.

And a Narva resident named Ronan, who still had his job (as of the sample's publication date), noted that he nonetheless fears for its security, especially as other power plants are following suit. On this, he stated:

> I really hope that they will not cut me. It's even scary to imagine if this happens. I have two children [...] It seems that all this is done on purpose to permanently kill any production in Narva. They refer to cheap Russian electricity, but it was necessary to anticipate this in advance. Behind each laid-off worker are families, children, taxes in the end.

Examples such as this are what further economically isolate and cloud the image of Narva, rendering its financial state as not sustainable, thereby forcing, in some instances, residents to leave and seek work elsewhere. Other trends, however, affect the city's economic wellbeing and augment its already challenging social struggles. For example, while brain drain occurs in Narva—the departure of young, educated individuals to other locations to seek out opportunities—so does the entrance of older individuals and pensioners, who move to Narva (from Tallinn, Tartu, or other cities) for its lower cost of living and quieter environment (Sample P-36). Though beneficial to the pensioners, this trend does not work in favor of Narva's future, because this regresses its already imbalanced age demographics, creates more financially dependent residents, and hinders Narva's internal development, since, for most pensioners, they live on a tight budget, and are therefore unable to meaningfully spend and engage in the city's market. And, with an influx of older residents, Narva then continues to lose out on developing a more young, lively, and active community—a municipal trait that is oftentimes considered to be very important to those considering a move to a different city.

Additionally, according to the same sample, a growing number of gray passport holders, who have been residing outside of Estonia in recent years, are returning to Narva. And, the vast majority of Estonia's gray passport holders already reside in Narva. From a population standpoint (depending on the age of the returnees, that is), this could be viewed as something positive. More people means more economic engagement, and then more participation in the local market results in a stronger, more robust economy, which can begin to develop and restructure itself so that it is more appealing and enticing to those considering a move to Narva. However, on a social level, the return of these gray passport holders does more harm than it does good, especially in the eyes of ethnic Estonians, because, owing to these individuals' symbolic connections back to the USSR, Narva then emerges further as a safe haven for ethnic Russians who never chose to naturalize. These Russians are not viewed kindly by many Estonians, because their unwillingness to obtain Estonian citizenship is interpreted as a sign of disrespect, especially since they have resided in Estonia for long periods. The stigma that surrounds Narva, that it is a "Russian" city, is then given the necessary resources on which to flourish; and moreover, it appears even more as a "Soviet" city, since these residents are living remnants, as a result of their statelessness, of the USSR.

As a result, the construction of Narva as a desirable, worthwhile location to which to move is very challenging for city officials. In addition to the factors mentioned above, crime also plagues the city, further staining its national image in society. Narva possesses the highest rate of crime per capita in all of Estonia (Estonia Crime, 2019; Gray, 2019). The rates of violence and murder, even attacks against family members, have also increased nearly three-fold in the city since 2017, raising alarms and concerns for the city's officials and its police force (Police, 2019).

Narva's high levels of crime, among other factors, are influenced by the fentanyl outbreak that has gripped the city over the past two decades, launching it as one of the epicenters of the opioid and HIV/AIDS epidemic in all of Europe (Armstrong, 2017; European Drug Report, 2017). The ethnic Russian community in Narva's region, Ida-Viru, is the main user of opioids in Estonia, as well, and this exacerbates their isolation and doubles the problem for Narva (Estonia, 2016; Alijas, 2017). Not only must the city grapple with the struggles of identity formation, belonging, a dwindling workforce—but it must also deal with its high rates of opioid use, and specifically with fentanyl. For Narva's ethnic Russian community, this drug abuse and its subsequent increase in crime rates then also cultivates more layers of stigmatization, further isolating Narva from Estonian society (Allaste & Lagerspetz, 2005).

The presence of such an epidemic helps promote crime within Narva and facilitates its ongoing presence, providing it with the necessary capital and resources to proliferate, especially within the city's younger population. Juvenile delinquency among the city's youth poses a significant and immediate challenge for Narva. There is a lack of social programs and activities to occupy their time, so they turn to alternative engagements outside of the law to fill their days. And for the vast majority of the city's youth, notably for those who only speak Russian, life in Narva is influenced by several risk factors: high rates of unemployment, low incomes, and high rates of violence: all factors that feed into their high rates of drug use and crime (Kalikova &

Kurbatova). Estonia's former Minister of Justice, Urmas Reinsalu, noted in late 2018 that: "[Narva's youth] need to be dealt with even before the prosecutor's office, court or other law enforcement agencies become involved. As preventive work, young people must be given activities and shown the direction of how to grow into a law-abiding citizen" (Reinsalu, 2018).

Incident reports in Narva from the crime section of a local city news outlet, Viru Prospekt, reflect this growing problem. Included in these reports are updates about sons who had senselessly beaten their 80-year-old mothers, husbands who had seriously injured their wives, individuals who had shot or murdered their own family members, and several hit-and-runs, with some perpetrated against young children. Verbal threats were also included in these reports with notes about husbands threatening to kill wives, and adult sons and daughters threatening to kill their parents. Other cases in the incident reports found instances that deal with the appearances of corpses around the city, parents abusing their young children, armed robberies, and various stabbings.[45]

Both the type and rate of crime in Narva is another factor creating a cloud of anxiety for ethnic Estonians, who hear about the reports and see the violence posted online about what takes place in Narva, thereby reinforcing their aversion to and apprehension of the city. On a national level, high crime rates in Narva then also get attached to the Russian community overall, even for those outside of the Ida-Viru region, so that this stereotype of Russian communities equating to crime and violence spreads throughout all regions of Estonia.

The crime rates are not only concentrated within the residents of Narva, but also within its politicians, specifically its city councillors, who were involved in a number of corruption scandals in 2018 and 2019 (Samples E-2, E-6, E-12). These corruption scandals significantly degrade Narva's image, adding yet another municipal issue with which the city must battle. The police and courts have won some corruption battles against Narva's municipal government and political parties, according to sample E-2, but they have yet to achieve success in truly breaking up its corrupt structure.

Arrested in late March 2019 and later convicted in June, Aleksei Voronov's corruption scandal put Narva in the spotlight—and not in a good way. As a member of the city council, Voronov violated several public procurement procedures with the aim of giving an advantage to a bidder. During this time, he accepted bribes, and also repeatedly solicited bribes on a large scale, for which he had received at least 60,000 euros. Additionally, in a separate but similarly disturbing incident, a vote of no-confidence that led to the dismissal of Narva's former mayor, Tarmo Tammiste from the Centre Party, fell under investigation in April 2019 (Sample E-8). The investigation began as a result of allegations and suspicions that the documents used in the process of conducting the vote were counterfeited.[46]

Political corruption is concentrated within the Centre party. Dozens of members of the Centre party in Narva stepped down from their positions in 2019 as a result of corruption allegations that emerged against the party in the summer of 2018. Eight members of Narva's city

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[45] The crime section for this portal is named "112." This is the website's link: https://prospekt.ee.

[46] Aleksei Voronov was the city councillor who started the no-confidence processions against the mayor.

council—who were strongly urged by Estonia's PM, a Centre politician, to resign as a way to mitigate the political damage—stepped down for their positions in early 2019, after Narva's prosecutor's office presented suspicions that they had violated the city's anti-corruption laws (Sample E-2).

Jana Toom, an Estonian MEP and leading Centre politician, cited this corruption as a reason for low voter turnout in Ida-Viru in its national and EU elections, according to sample E-12. "There is a certain disappointment among the people," Toom stated, "and there is this negativity in connection with the corruption scandal in Narva."

Narva's region had only a 24 percent voter turnout for its previous EU elections, which exhibited the country's lowest voter turnout in the parliamentary elections (Voter).[47] Described as "depressingly low," with a weak turnout from young and middle-aged voters, this figure is nearly ten percent lower than previous years, such as 2011 and 2014, indicating that Narvites are losing interest in their political system (Sample DE-4). In Sample DE-4, Narva journalist Roman Vikulov noted Narva's lack of political participation as a force by which the city is separated from the rest of Estonia. The journalist states that:

> Ida-Virumaa is further and further removed from the state, the more the state does to involve the Northeast in the life of the republic, the more opposition it provokes. If the residents of the county demonstrate their indifference to politics, then let them not whine when politics is indifferent to them. Ida-Virumaa is still not Estonia because they do not teach Estonian in schools. Russophobes have deprived the Russians of hope for a better life [...] If we proceed from the fact that Ida-Virumaa voters are still not indifferent, indifferent to politics and the fate of the state, and to admit that the decision not to vote was a difficult, long-suffering, responsible choice for many, we have to admit that there were many reasons for the inhabitants of the Northeast to leave their votes to themselves.

Not only is political participation regressed as a result of this, but it also renders corruption and political misbehavior endemic and likely to continually occur due to Narva's voting population being plagued by disinterest in rooting out the deceit that infects their municipal political system. Since Narva often operates within its own world, corruption can spread and manifest itself quickly and effectively, because the events that take place in the city are oftentimes politically and socially confined to its municipal borders. That is, politicians can more easily take advantage of the city's isolation and its lack of structural connection with the rest of the country.

5.2. Narva's Integrative Features: Development, Investment, and Increased National Attention

Though many view Narva as an isolated city, struggling economically and suffering from an inadequate political system, there are indications that this depiction may not be entirely fair, according to the results of the content analysis. Or, at least, that there ought to be more thought given to the city's status than just that of isolation. Certain figures in Estonia are attempting to

[47] The voter turnout for Estonia's 2019 parliamentary elections was 48.2 percent in Ida-Viru, whereas the national average was 63.7 percent. Harju county, located about 40 kilometers outside of Tallinn, had the highest voter turnout with 69.8 percent.

ameliorate its isolation through recent efforts to develop the city's infrastructure and social programs, in order to better integrate the nation's third-largest city with the rest of the country. In doing this, officials also want to position Narva as a desirable location for tourists, young professionals, and others searching for a new city to call home, ensuring that the city will be set on a path for socioeconomic self-sufficiency in the years to come.

These negative and positive variables represent the bidirectional framing of the city, as identified in the study. Though many samples, as demonstrated in the preceding subsection, indicate that Narva has many internal struggles hindering its incorporation with Estonian society and contributing to its isolated status, there were also a large number of samples indicating otherwise. Among many other things, these samples highlighted efforts to establish language programs in Narva, offering residents cheaper and more accessible avenues to learn Estonian, in addition to developing new infrastructure projects and continuing old ones, as a means to revitalize its archaic Soviet layout. These endeavours also have increased political attention on and engagement with Narva, especially from Estonia's president, through visits and discussions with local officials. These efforts, if implemented properly, can improve the city's confidence levels and provide its residents, whose outlooks on life have been labeled as pessimistic, with levels of hope and optimism for what the future holds for Narva. In turn, the city and its Russian community then have the opportunity to grow more integrated in Estonia, having greater social access to meaningfully engage in the nation's society.

To start, the study revealed efforts to develop Narva, especially in light of its bid to become the EU's Capital of Culture for 2024, and align the city more with Estonian society. Designed to regenerate cities, highlight the richness and diversity of cultures in Europe, and increase a sense of belonging to a common cultural area, the EU—through the Capital of Culture initiative—designates one city (often a lesser-known city) as the EU's Capital of Culture for a period of one calendar year, during which it organises a series of cultural events with a strong pan-European dimension, spurring internal development and generating interest in the city. Moreover, this initiative provides the selected city with long-term positive impact on the spheres of culture, civil society and urban development, in addition to several millions of euros in funding (Sample DE-20).

Though Narva's bid was ultimately unsuccessful, its application process served the city well, since it acted as the foundation for what could (and should) be done for the city, in order to re-energize its infrastructure, its economy, and its residents.[48] Labeled "the thesis on the development of the city" by Narva's mayor, the city's top official stated that, even though its application was unsuccessful, the city ought to continue with some of its plans for development, according to sample P-21, but "rethink" the situation, since they would have to find alternative ways to fund the projects. And with many of Narva's residents hoping for improved

[48] That being said, Ivan Sergeyev, the head of Narva's bid for the 2024 Capital of Culture, alleged that the competition's officials did not truly believe Narva could accomplish everything the city claimed it would do, if selected. According to sample P-21: "The members of the competition committee carefully watched the news from Narva and simply doubted that the city authorities would do what was promised in the Narva application for the 'Cultural Capital.'"

infrastructure, there is hope that, despite its loss for the bid, its application may spur further interest in making additional municipal improvements in the coming years (Sample E-1).

Aside from the Cultural Capital, however, there were a large number of samples reporting that the city and its corresponding region, Ida-Viru, had several internal development and investment projects announced in 2019, which were aimed at revitalizing its infrastructure and improving its tourism industry. For instance, sample P-32 covered the construction of a new tourist attraction in Narva. An old complex of cotton warehouses in Narva will be turned into an exposition, titled "The World of Textiles," detailing the history of the manufacturing of textiles in Ida-Viru. The Estonian developing company Varesesaar LLP is leading the project. Describing the soon-to-be exposition, the sample notes: "In the now empty cotton warehouses, an interesting and exciting world will appear in the future, the interactive external and internal exposition of which will tell about the history of Kreenholm and other topics related to textiles. The whole family, from toddlers to grandparents, are guaranteed vivid and informative impressions of their visit to the complex."

As of early 2020, Narva also commenced a civic initiative support program that funds self-created proposals by residents on ways to develop and improve the city (Sample P-35). Narva's residents, in order to participate, must only fill out a paper or electronic questionnaire to propose their project, after which a filter committee will review each submission to ensure it complies with the program's structure. Once reviewed, the submissions then go out to the city's residents for a final decision, who then vote online for the projects they like most. Proposals with the most citizen support will then be implemented by both the author of the proposal and the board. The developers of the program believe this joint-structure—that is, having the author of the proposal also engaged on the project—is crucial to the success of the program, so that it is not just viewed as a means by which to demand things from the city government.

This program, which already exists in many other cities in Estonia, will provide Narva with 200,000 euros to fund these projects. For comparison, Tartu's budget for this same program is about 150,000 euros; in Viljandi and Rapla, it is 30,000 euros; and in Tapa, it is 20,000 euros. Narva's allotment of funds is significant because it signals the potential and willingness of the state to invest in the city, while also including the input and ideas of the citizens in this investment.

Additionally, in late July 2019, an outdoor development project was announced: the extension of the walkway trail along the Narva River, which is adjacent to Ivangorod, elongating it for another kilometer (Sample P-18). This attraction, which is extremely popular among locals, is in its third stage of construction, with this portion of the walkway's completion expected to take around two to three years. Narva is receiving 1.9 million euros for this stage of the project. The majority of funds come from the EU, but a portion of them also come from the Cross-Border Cooperation Program of Estonia and Russia.

And, in an attempt to preserve some of its only remaining pre-war and pre-USSR infrastructure, Narva officials announced that its town hall building will undergo renovations starting in early 2020, according to samples P-7 and E-33. The building will be rebuilt inside, but

the historical cellars and some of the post-war heritage will be preserved, such as its famous wooden staircase.

The town hall building is, unfortunately, just one of three buildings in the city's Old Town that survived the 1944 Battle of Narva, where aerial bombardment by the Red Air Force, as well as destruction by retreating German forces, destroyed 98 percent of its buildings. This building is now mainly surrounded by Soviet-era Stalinist designs, such as low-cost, concrete apartment complexes

Included in its makeover will be a tourist center, tea rooms, a restaurant, and a souvenir shop. The city's authorities will move to the second and third floors, as well, and "all city council meetings, conferences and seminars will take place on the third floor where the mayor's official receptions, press conferences and all other events will [also] take place [there]," according to Juri Saija, director of Narva city's development and economics. The building's refurbishment is part of a larger goal of revitalizing the Old Town district, which city officials hope will make entrepreneurs and businesses more confident and comfortable about Narva's economy and infrastructure, so that they, too, can contribute to the Old Town's development. This project is expected to cost around seven million euros and will be finished around 2023.

To add to the list, another building will be built in the Ida-Viru central hospital, which will include, among other things, an angiography room, where they will conduct invasive cardiology procedures, a laboratory, and radio diagnostics (Sample P-8).

Tourism has been increasing in Narva's region, too. The region had a six percent increase in tourism in 2019 when compared with 2018, with over 90,000 local and foreign tourists having stayed overnight in accommodation establishments in the region. This is roughly 5,000 more than the same period in 2018 (Sample E-27). The bulk of citizens visiting, however, were citizens of the Russian Federation.

In addition to its development, Narva has also experienced the opening of linguistic opportunities, which make it easier for its residents to comfortably learn Estonian and have an accessible space in which to practice it. This is demonstrated through the city's opening of the "Estonian Language House" in Narva, where residents can practice and learn the language for free (Samples DE-25, E-19, E-23, E-25, P-25, P-26). In sample DE-25, speaking on the opening of the language house, Estonia's Minister of Culture Tõnis Lukas stated:

> A prerequisite for cultural integration is language proficiency. The Narva House of Estonian is a stronghold for teaching Estonian and other important work of the Ministry of Culture [...] A cultural space and language environment is created [here] that are conducive to language practice. The creation of such an environment is especially important in Narva, where the Estonian language [is not spoken] so often. The Integration Fund has done a very valuable job; therefore, the government allocated an additional two million euros to the Ministry of Culture for teaching Estonian to adults in 2020. Thanks to this, next year a large number of people will be able to learn our native language for free in this new house.

The Integration Foundation, which moved its headquarters from Tallinn to Narva in 2019, created this language house. The foundation offers free online language courses for residents all around the country, and it has other language houses in Estonia, specifically in areas where there

is a higher cluster of ethnic Russians, such as in Tallinn. Described as “an important cooperation partner in promoting global Estonianness,” the Integration Foundation has allied organizations across the country, which offer language cafes, tandem studies, culture clubs and other attractions to generate more interest in Estonian culture and the practice of its language. This organization—known as “Integratsiooni Sihtasutus” in Estonian—was founded over 20 years ago, and it merged with the Estonian Migration Foundation in 2010. Falling under the remits of both the Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Education, the foundation’s goal is to establish unity all throughout Estonia, deconstructing the country’s ethnic tensions in an attempt to promote national integration (Samples E-19 & E-25).

Narva’s Language House serves an important purpose in this city, because it acts as a voluntary, accepting medium to learn and practice Estonian. Many in Narva view government-mandated programs to learn Estonian, such as discussions as to whether or not the education system should be entirely in Estonian, as poor ways to integrate the community. These efforts appear antagonistic to the community, who then lack motivation to fully opt into such initiatives, owing to their coercive image. However, in offering the language house and marketing it as a public space, Narva’s residents are more likely to feel comfortable going to it and practicing at their own speed. And, once they gain access to higher levels of Estonian knowledge, they will feel more comfortable branching out and using it in other public spheres of society, such as in stores and restaurants.

In this language house, individuals teaching Estonian are sometimes interested in improving their Russian, with which many in Narva can help. So, this tandem-style of learning also then reinforces the communal aspect of the language house, positioning it as an excellent public space in which all language learners are welcome.

The Language House, while open to everyone, is more designed for those who have finished primary and secondary education. There are some youth-based initiatives starting up in Narva, as well, whose goals are to integrate the community better and provide the younger population with access to Estonian language tools early on. Sample DE-18 highlights the establishment of a free, language-learning summer camp for younger school students, where participants work in small groups on various tasks and activities for two weeks under the guidance of an Estonian-speaking teacher.

The Noored Kooli city camp (in English, “Youth to School”) brings together about 300 Narva students from the first to eighth grades to not only study the Estonian language for two weeks, but also develop communication and self-management skills, while engaging in their own projects. Among other activities, the participants put on sketches, compose Estonian-language newspapers, develop recipe books, create board games, organize art exhibitions, and create homemade films. All activities occur in the morning, and then in the later afternoon the children go home.

Kaye Metsla, the head of the board for SA Noored Kooli, which organizes the camp, cited the ability for both students and camp counselors to benefit from the two weeks. She stated:

> For Narva schoolchildren, two weeks in a city camp is without a doubt a useful pastime: there they will make new friends, develop their projects, and along the way they will also learn Estonian. But for the newly-educated Noored Kooli teachers who are guiding children and young people, this will be a good test before the start of the school year, allowing them to develop their pedagogical and leadership skills.

Along with these developments, Narva has also been receiving an increase in attention from the nation's president, ever since Kersti Kaljulaid assumed office in October 2016. Kaljulaid, who is ethnically Estonian, has long criticized the divide that many Estonian and Russian politicians create along ethnic lines. She has made it a focus of her presidency to not only better integrate the country's Russian minority, but specifically the Russian minority in Narva. The president has previously claimed she knows and understands Estonia's Russian minority well, and also that she is offended when she hears individuals claim this minority group is a "threat" to Estonian security (Sample D-8).

Several samples detailed the president's visits to Narva, along with her discussions around the development of Narva and integration of its Russian community (Samples P-24, E-33, E-26, and E-1). She worked in Narva, temporarily moving her office to the city, for extended periods throughout the fall of 2018. Before working in Narva that fall, the president had previously stated that: "Working here, it's possible to meet plenty of great people, and of course the area will get more attention, which will help to break through some of the stereotypes some people still have about Narva" (Cavegn, 2018).

Sample E-1, which addressed Narva's unique position in Estonia, cited it as "more than Russian or Estonian," included comments from one of Narva College's[49] professors, Dr. Yar Muhammad, who noted that the attention being paid to Narva is increasing by the day. The border city, he stated, is receiving extra support and attention from the state as politicians from various parties and high-profile personalities are visiting and drawing extra attention to it. These public figures are then communicating directly with locals to better understand the city's problems, so that they can all work on solutions together. Speaking about the president's visits to Narva, Dr. Muhammad said:

> She gave special attention to Narva, and visited many times in the last couple of months, even staying a couple of weeks, and she visited many different places, had meetings with many officials, participated in local events, and even met with local people to help understand the reality, concerns and problems as seen on the ground.

She has since been back to Narva several times, meeting with city officials and business leaders to find ways to increase the city's image and promote its economy. For instance, sample P-24, titled "Estonian President will come to Narva to discuss innovation and development of Ida-Virumaa," reported on President Kaljulaid's meetings in Narva with local businesses about the city's "entrepreneur week." This free, week-long program, according to the sample, is for

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[49] Founded in 1999, Narva College is part of the University of Tartu, but it acts as an accessible satellite campus for Narva's ethnic Russian community. Many to all of the classes are conducted in Russian, and the presence of this campus makes it so Narva residents can get a college degree in their own city, rather than having to go to Tartu or Tallinn.

"beginning entrepreneurs and for those who are just thinking of starting their own business," which provided participants with relevant training, excursions, access to market insight, and practical strategies for business success. There were 24 events, in total, for this week, with the majority of them conducted in Russian.

The president also engages with the local community in these visits, as a means to better understand the community and what it needs for success, and also to showcase her desire to integrate the community more with Estonia. For example, sample E-26 highlighted some of these engagements:

> On Thursday, she will meet students from the Kiviõli 1 school and present them with a civic education class. She will also visit the Reinar Hallik Basketball School, based at the Iisaku upper secondary school, followed by the LAD day care center for children with disabilities, and the recently-opened Estonian Language House (Eesti Keele Maja). In the evening, she is set to address the state defense teachers' seminar, according to a press release from the president's office. On Friday, the president attends the opening of the OBJEKT creative incubator in Narva, which opens its doors at the Narva Culture and Business Center. She will share her thoughts on innovation and the development of Ida-Viru County with Narva mayor Aleksei Jevgrafov and Allan Kaldoja, founder of the on Linda 2 cultural and entrepreneurship center.

Among other reasons, President Kaljulaid has, in the past, also ventured to Narva to commemorate Estonian memorial days, visit local power plants, discuss plans for its Capital of Culture application, address troops stationed in the border city, and engage in NATO-related dialogues. And during the coronavirus pandemic, she took part in online discussions with the community, such as providing virtual social studies lessons delivered to high school graduates of Narva schools.

These visits have resonated with the border city's people, who view her interest in the city as genuine, believing she actually wants to progress the city in meaningful, inclusive ways. The visits also function as a tool of connection-building, through which the president can construct political and social bonds with the community, so that they better identify themselves with the Estonian state. As an illustration, in one of the study's samples, Irene Käosaar, the Head of the Integration Fund, cited a case of this connection-building in Narva. While passing two older Russian women on the street, the presidential motorcade drove by during one of Kaljulaid's visits, which she overheard one woman say to the other: "Did you see? That was our president going home." That simple statement, according to Käosaar, represented something significant, because the elderly lady called Kaljulaid "our" president, and also referred to her Narva guest house as "home" (Sample E-1). In Narva, where many lack a strong relationship with the state, and especially its political figures, it spoke volumes to the Integration Foundation's leader to hear an older Russian individual possess that connection.

5.3. Narva as a Social Pendulum: An Isolated Structure with the Possibility of an Integrative Future

While struggling with its internal functionality, which has suffered from features that have rendered the city isolated in many ways, Narva is also seeing an increased effort to revitalize its community, and establish a place in Estonian society for its Russian minority. This raises the question: What does Narva's future hold?

Narva's residents have a very strong sense of place, according to a previous scholarly survey analyzing the relationship between the city's residents and Narva itself. This phenomenon, the sense of place, is the reflection of people-place relationships in society and is demonstrated through how or why people "depend on, attach to, identify with, and attribute meaning to place, including countries, cities, or even neighborhoods." In Narva, 84 percent of the respondents of a survey claimed to be "attached" to the city, and then 85 percent stated that Narva is "unique" (Trimbach, 2016; Trimbach 2019).

Considering this and its recent uptick in development projects, it is likely that Narva's future is optimistic in terms of its integration with the rest of Estonia—both for the city and its people. As projects continue, Narva's infrastructure will develop and modernize, leading the city to be more attractive and desirable by Estonians in other cities considering a switch to a different municipality. Narva's Old Town will be revitalized, outdoor attractions are scheduled for extension , abandoned factories are being restored into cultural hotspots, and its old, archaic Soviet image will eventually fade away. With a more developed infrastructure, the city is likely to gain greater attention from businesses and entrepreneurs in Estonia, who may view the nation's easternmost city as a location with lots of locational potential, since as of now, its industry does not house any major companies and instead relies on blue-collar work.

In turn, this urban development results in more jobs and opportunities for the city's residents, who currently suffer from high rates of unemployment and poverty. As of now, especially as the county's power plants are downsizing, many of Narva's residents are struggling financially. Consequently, this influences many social factors, such as the city's low birth rate and decreasing population. And, the city's wages are already significantly lower than the rest of Estonia to begin with, thereby predisposing the city's residents to greater financial obstacles than in other regions. The increase in professional opportunities would provide Narva with a necessary financial and opportunity boost. Because of these positive infrastructural changes, the residents would not only be more financially secure, but they would also see their city being developed in the process, likely resulting in the augmentation of the spirit of Narva's residents. If more financially secure, then Narvites would not feel quite as isolated from the rest of Estonia, since they now had more means to engage in society.

Though language still represents a significant barrier in Narva, efforts to linguistically integrate its minority community—such as through the Integration Foundation's initiatives—with the rest of the country shine light on greater linguistic cohesion in Estonia as a whole. Once speaking greater levels of Estonian, Narva's minority residents would feel more

comfortable connecting to and participating in Estonian culture and society. This means a greater level of travel to non-Russian speaking regions, where residents (i.e. those who have mainly been confined to Narva their entire lives) could effectively communicate, in Estonian, and better understand the social and cultural aspects of the nation in which they live. Knowing the Estonian language is viewed as a sign of respect in Estonia, and its native speakers value and appreciate when ethnic Russians use the national language with them, rather than approaching them in Russian.

Public attention, specifically from the president, is likely to increase the community's confidence levels, as well. When they see the president making an effort to learn more about the community, it signals that not only does Narva matter, but it also matters to Estonia. And through her municipal efforts, the residents see that the president would like to improve their quality of life and give them more social tools to connect them back to the state, while still respecting and preserving their own culture. This produces conducive integration, rather than perceived coerced assimilation.

However, these efforts—whether improving infrastructure, creating more jobs, or learning more Estonian—result in incremental change. That is, the city's integration will not happen suddenly, nor will it come easily, and as such it will be a process that evolves on a year-by-year basis. Because of this, Narva's current isolative status remains unchanged in many ways, even though its integrative future is looking positive, since the city's internal struggles have been rooted in its municipal identity for decades and cannot be removed quickly. With a continually high rate of ethnic Russians, the burden is also largely on the minority community to collectively act to counter much of their own city's problems. Narva's residents are very socially passive, and therefore this collective action may pose a challenge to the city's population, since the city continues to lose its younger Estonian-speaking residents, who are moving to Tartu or Tallinn for educational and professional purposes.

This is especially the case for the city's inner struggles with political misbehavior, crime, and language. These three facets of the city continue to distance Narva from the rest of Estonia, and furthermore they are difficult to undo. With infrastructure development, for example, people can see the city revitalized and reorganized—the tangible sight of this allows for individuals to actually see progress. Progress, for many of the city's other issues, however, cannot be seen. Their difference will only be visible in later years, once municipal initiatives, civic programs, and communal effort have been successfully implemented and executed. Until then, Narva retains its contemporary image: a city struggling with crime, a weak political system, and a declining population, which lacks Estonian language efficiency and shares more cultural similarities and historical values with the Russian Federation. And since Narvites possess low voting participation rates, their fraught political system will remain in tact for a while, until the residents self-actualize on their responsibilities, understanding that they must reckon with the politicians and parties (mainly, Centre) who have failed them and move onto more impactful, legitimate ones.

So, yes, the Estonian state (and ethnic Estonians, in a different capacity) has a responsibility to counteract the negative stigmatizations surrounding Narva, its minority community, and its historical connections to the USSR. This can be accomplished through the continuation of its recent actions, focusing on ways to bring the country's Eastern city into Estonia's increasingly Western society. However, the onus is very much on Narva's ethnic Russian community, as well, to collectively organize and better acknowledge what their role is in Narva's development, and specifically, in their case, its social and linguistic development.

Ethnic Russians outside of Narva arguably also have a responsibility to advocate for the city, as well, while additionally finding ways to improve it. The reason: since Narva still occupies the status of a Russian city, ethnic Russians all around Estonia, even those not residing in the city, are often interconnectedly associated with the city. So, in improving Narva's status and position in Estonian society, they simultaneously improve the status and image of ethnic Russians all over Estonia. This is because an efficient, successful, attractive, and integrated Narva reflects back on the minority community.

As such, Narva embodies social bidirectionality in many ways. From its present isolated status to the indications of its integrated future, Narva will be moving back and forth in the years and decades to come, like a social pendulum, as this Russian city and its minority community uncover their place in Estonian society.

6. Daugavpils, Latvia: A Silent—But Not Necessarily Isolated—Municipality

With the Daugava River running through it, Daugavpils is Latvia's second-largest municipality. A city of roughly 82,000 residents, Daugavpils is located in the Latgale region of the country, near Latvia's borders with both Lithuania and Belarus.[50] Though it is the nation's second-largest city, Daugavpils is better known as Latvia's Russian enclave, where a large portion of the country's ethnic Russians live. Similar to Narva, this city struggles from a set of integrational challenges, especially with language and unemployment, historically placing it in a difficult position in Latvia. Unlike Narva, however, Daugavpils lacks media attention and is not included in the country's larger discourse, as revealed by the content analysis. As a result, this clouds the city's social positionality in Latvia, making it difficult to discern whether it is quietly hidden or purposefully secluded from the rest of the country.

In the study, articles were selected based on relevance and significance to the two countries' ethnic Russian communities. For Estonia, Narva is an important facet of the minority community, since it not only houses many of the ethnic Russians but also functions as a municipal reflection of their position in society. As such, it was no surprise that a large portion of

[50] One of the four historical and cultural regions of Latvia, Latgale is the nation's easternmost region north of the Daugava River. It is home to a large number of ethnic Russians, mainly in Daugavpils, but it has other minority groups (predominantly Slavic) living in it, too. Other towns in the region, such as Rēzekne, Krāslava, and Ludza, are home to a Belarusian minority. Additionally, this region houses a significant Polish minority. As such, the region is often not only viewed as the easternmost region, but also the most Slavic region.

articles, from all three of the Estonian outlets, dealt with Narva and discussed its struggles and developments, in some capacity.

For Latvian outlets, however, this was not the case. This finding—that there were little to no articles discussing Daugavpils—was the greatest surprise that resulted from the study. On the surface, Daugavpils and Narva parallel and mirror each other in many ways, which begs the question: why was *this* city not discussed as greatly in Latvian media as much as its Estonian counterpart was?

This could have occurred as a result of not having a Daugavpils-based news source as one of the three outlets selected for data collection, such as D-FAKTI, Grani, or Gorod. However, the three Latvian outlets were selected for specific, concentrated reasons, which were rooted in their reflection of public discourse in the country. And, each outlet mirrored its counterpart in some way (See: *Table Two*). ERR and LSM both shared the same structure, being funded in part by the two governments and having their samples in English. Postimees and Baltijas Balss then functioned as counterparts, since they were two of the most popular outlets for ethnic Russians, whose content covered community-specific issues. And lastly, Delfi Estonia and Delfi Latvia, coming from the same regional company but acting as country-specific outlets, both published relevant content for the minority community in Estonia and Latvia. Despite these similarities in structure, however, all of Estonia's outlets produced a significant amount of content related to its ethnic enclave, while the Latvian outlets produced very little content about their own country's ethnic enclave.

This was a puzzling finding at first glance. But after greater reflection, its significance and meaning grew clearer, and therefore gave warrant for the inclusion of an independent Daugavpils section in this thesis, even if the city did not appear in the results at a significant amount. This inclusion was decided for two leading reasons. First, Daugavpils is an important municipality to analyze—historically, culturally, and linguistically—when considering Latvia's majority-minority relations, since it is the home to a large portion of the Slavic community. Second, the lack of reporting dealing with Daugavpils is a structural finding worth exploring in and of itself. The meaning behind this shortage of reporting could swing between one favoring an integrative status for the city or, conversely, one preferring an isolative status. Either way, it ought to be explored.

This section will examine whether the absence of Daugavpils in national news reporting is a result of: 1) Its purposeful isolation from society as a result of the cultural and linguistic differences it shares with the rest of Latvia; or 2) Its indirect and unintentional absence from national discourse, resulting not from isolative qualities, per se, but instead from the lack of events, controversies, or developments that warrant attention, as is the case with Narva.

To answer this, this section will interrogate the historical, cultural, and linguistic facets of the country's largest Russian city. This will be done through an assessment of the Daugavpils-related results that did appear in the study, in addition to a review of previous scholarly research and national and municipal reports. The objective of this section is to unpackage the city's impact in society and construct a social image of Daugavpils that reflects its

place in Latvia, in order to determine whether this city possesses more integrative qualities than it does isolative ones.

6.1. A Look into Daugavpils: Its History, Culture, and Society

Originally named Dinaburg, the history of Daugavpils can be traced back to the late 1200s.[51] During this time, Latvia did not yet exist—and instead the nation was known as "Livonia." Ruled by Livonians, this Baltic tribe controlled the majority of modern day Latvia, along with parts of Estonia and Lithuania. Livonians were a Balto-Finnic indigenous group largely from northern Latvia and southwestern Estonia, who spoke Livonian—a Uralic language closely related to Estonian and Finnish.

Table Seven: Daugavpils Over the Centuries

Ruling Authority	Years	City Name
Livonian Order	1275–1561	Dinaburg
Grand Duchy of Lithuania	1561–1569	Dinaburg
Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth	1569–1772	Dinaburg (1569–1656; 1667–1772) Borisoglebsk (1656–1667)
Russian Empire	1772–1917	Dinaburg (1772–1893) Dvinsk (1893–1920)
Republic of Latvia	1920−1940	Daugavpils
Soviet Union	1940–1941	Daugavpils
Nazi Germany	1941–1944	Daugavpils
Soviet Union	1944–1991	Daugavpils
Republic of Latvia	1991–Present	Daugavpils

The Livonian Order constructed the Dinaburg Castle in 1275. Its location on a trade route along the borders of Russian and Polish lands rendered it an important fortification site. As a result of this, a nearby trading settlement was established, therefore creating what is known today as Daugavpils. The castle and its surrounding settlement were quickly subjected to a number of attacks from Lithuanian, Russian, and Polish forces. These ongoing attacks crippled Livonia, eventually leading to its dissolution in 1561.

Daugavpils, which was still known as Dinaburg, then became a Polish province for over two centuries, serving as the administrative center of the Inflanty Voivodeship. In 1722, after the

[51] In Latvian, Daugavpils loosely means "castle by the Daugava." The Daugava River runs through all of Latvia, including within the city's confines.

First Partition of Poland, the city was incorporated into the Russian Empire, becoming the district city of Polotsk province.[52] Daugavpils remained part of the Russian Empire until 1917. Moving forward two centuries, in early 1920, Latvian, Polish, and Soviet troops then fought in the Battle of Daugavpils for control of the city. Latvians ultimately emerged victorious and the city was given its current name, Daugavpils, officially making it part of an independent Latvia for the first time in centuries (Daugavpils, 2018; Zarāns, 2006; History of Daugavpils, 2003; Žemaitis).

This independence did not last long, however, as the Soviets invaded Latvia in 1940, who were then followed by German Nazi control up to 1944, after which the Soviets regained control. These years were especially tough for Daugavpils, as its demographics and infrastructure were decimated to extreme levels by both German and Russian forces.

The occupation of Nazi Germany from 1941 to 1944 destroyed the city's once large Jewish population. Nazi officials established a concentration camp, Shtalag-340, in which thousands and thousands of Jews and Russian prisoners were massacared.[53] More than 150 thousand people were killed on the city's territory during the war, and over 70 percent of its buildings were destroyed. Once the war was over and the Soviets regained control, little of the city was left (Daugavpils; History of Daugavpils; Žemaitis).

Similarly to what took place in Narva in the aftermath of the war, Soviet officials built over the small bit of architectural history left in Daugavpils, filling it with utilitarian buildings and apartment complexes rooted in Stalinist design. Former districts were even turned into empty fields, now housing propaganda sculptures promoting Soviet communism. In essence, the Soviets constructed a new version of the city after 1944. This infrastructure, now significantly in need of revitalization, still surrounds the city to this day, contributing to the sour image some Latvians have of the city's layout, still viewing it as a Soviet city. Sample B-25 described Daugavpils as "clean, deserted, and everything is in Russian," additionally noting that it is surrounded by half-finished high-rises and apartment buildings, whose lingering visual presence is an indication of the city's declining population and challenging economic situation. Daugavpils has consistently had a declining population over the years; the city lost approximately 700 people in 2019, as a result of declining birthrates and individuals seeking work elsewhere in the country or the EU (Stoyanov, 2020; Population Declines, 2019; Resident Population, 2018).[54]

To repopulate the empty city after World War Two, the USSR sent thousands of ethnic Russians to resettle and work in Daugavpils as a way to revamp the area and instate an ethnic Russian majority in this Latvian city. Once 1959 had arrived, Daugavpils had roughly 65,000 inhabitants and, more notably, it had a single ethnic majority—Russians—for the first time in its

[52] The city was later incorporated into the Vitebsk province.

[53] Daugavpils had a significant Jewish population before World War Two (Zimmerman, 2004). In fact, the Russian census of 1897 indicated that the city had approximately 32,400 (or 44 percent) Jewish residents out of its total population of 69,700 (First, 1897). Once Nazi Germany took control of the city, it wiped out nearly all its Jewish residents prior to losing control of the country to the Soviets in 1944.

[54] In 2019, there were 118 babies born in Daugavpils, but then over 400 deaths, which does not bode well for the city's future population levels.

urban history. Ethnic Russians made up about 56 percent of the city's population, with Latvians accounting for only 13 percent. Prior to this, Daugavpils had been a multicultural city, with equal shares of Poles, Latvians, Lithuanians, Russians, and so forth in its municipal borders (All-Union, 1959). Because of this, the Latvian language had very few roots in the city in this new period of its history, as Russian easily and quickly cemented itself as the lingua franca.

This initiated its label of a "Russian" city in the country, which exists to this day, as it maintained a high proportion of ethnic Russians over the years in occupied Latvia. Once the USSR fell and Latvia re-established its independence, however, the demographics did not change much: ethnic Russians stayed in the city and Russian remained as the dominant language. As of 2017, 50 percent of the city's population is ethnically Russian, and less than 19 percent is ethnically Latvian (Residents, 2018). About 80 percent of the residents now speak Russian as their primary language and less than 10 percent speak Latvian as their mother tongue (Ekmanis, 2020). And, when on the streets of the city, Russian is almost always the language heard, whether in shops, restaurants, bars, libraries, and so forth. Many of the city's residents (especially older individuals) struggle with Latvian, as well, since they have little to no conversational exposure to the language.

This language divide is reflected through its politicians, too. For instance, sample DL-25 reported on the State Language Center's decision to fine the city's former mayor, Rihards Eigims, for insufficient Latvian language knowledge. Government officials, especially those holding political office, are required to speak Latvian at an advanced level, according to the Language Center. Rihards Eigims, in addition to coming under scrutiny for his failure to sufficiently speak Latvian, has also been the subject of several criminal investigations related to bribery and money laundering He was ultimately removed from office in November 2018 by Andrei Eksnins, who, paradoxically, is also under scrutiny for his weak Latvian language skills.

Because of the city's natural disposition to the Russian language, it is no surprise that the city's residents voted overwhelmingly in favor of establishing Russian as a second official language in the controversial 2012 referendum, making Daugavpils the municipality with the largest base of support for the proposal. This referendum, which many ethnic Latvians viewed as antithetical to national development, was supported by 85 percent of the voters in the city. The referendum was eventually voted down: 71 percent of the nation's population participated in it, with only 25 percent voting in favor (much less than the 85 percent in Daugavpils), and then 75 percent voting against. Daugavpils, as a municipality, had the highest rate of support when compared with all other cities in the country (Referendum, 2012). This was not the only referendum, however, on which Daugavpils differed from the rest of the nation. By nearly 15 percentage points, the city had the highest rate of opposition against Latvia's bid for European Union membership in the early 2000s, as well (Mikkel & Pridham, 2004; Mawhood, 2015).

Their opposition to the EU, however, is ironic: Latvia was required to do more for its minority community as a result of its application to get into the EU. If Latvia had never attempted to gain membership, then it likely would not have revisited its citizenship and language laws, which before EU accession, were far more restrictive and inaccessible for the

Russian minority. Nonetheless, after only about a decade since the USSR's dissolution, the Russian community probably saw EU membership as a tool to "westernize" the country, stripping it of its Russian cultural and linguistic connections, without realizing that, through this westernization, Latvia was required to advocate for and pay more attention to minority rights in the country (Mikkel & Pridham).

In addition to its questionable support on the nation's two key referendums, the city is also home to several Soviet-era war memorials, with the notable one being the Military Brotherly Cemetery. The Daugavpils Fortress—a relic of ongoing Russian occupation—still remains and acts as a visual reminder of the city's historical connection to Russia. Daugavpils also hosts annual May 9th celebrations that garner significant participation. In 2019, two individuals were cited for displaying Soviet flags—which is illegal in Latvia—during the city's Victory Day celebrations, according to sample B-24. Actions such as these do not aid in the city's integration with the rest of the country, since it appears as moving socially backwards and not in line with contemporary Latvia. Siding with the Russian language and clinging on to its culture renders Daugavpils disloyal in the eyes of certain Latvians. As a result, some maintain a draconian view of the city, believing it to be more Soviet than Latvian (Mawhood; Žemaitis).

The differences that Daugavpils experience in comparison to the rest of the country can be viewed from a governmental standpoint, too, as evidenced by sample DL-22, in which it was announced that the city will secede from the Latvian Union of Local Governments. This union is a public organization of local government in Latvia, which, according to its website, "contributes to the development of municipal policies, solves common problems and defends interests of local governments." Citing the lack of results this membership has had for the city, the mayor of Daugavpils, Andrejs Elksniņš, stated that this union does not serve Latgale—the region in which Daugavpils is located—in any way, adding that it instead serves "narrow interests" in Latvia. As Latvia's second-largest city, this secession sends an important symbolic message: that Daugavpils can and will look out for itself.

The Latgale region, in addition to challenges with language and national outlook, demonstrates disparities in education, income and employment. In fact, compared with other regions of Latvia, it ranks the worst in nearly every well-being indicator, except for safety (Regions, 2019; Ekmanis). As the poorest region, its unemployment rate is over 15 percent, which is approximately two times the rate in all other regions of the country (State Unemployment, 2019). There is not an abundance of companies or businesses due to the low population, inadequate language skills, and modern real estate, among other factors, and so it is difficult to attract individuals to move to the region, since it lacks significantly in professional opportunities.

6.2. Assessing Daugavpils

Because of these factors, the city is informally known as "Little Russia" in Latvia. This causes Daugavpils to appear unattractive to a large portion of the nation's citizens, who consider

the city more Russian than Latvian, therefore deterring them from visiting the city, and especially discouraging them from living in the city. The loyalty of the city's residents is often questioned, as well, since they share more cultural and linguistic connections with the country's former occupier.

However, though held by many, this is not necessarily a fair analysis. Daugavpils is very much Latvian—and its residents consider themselves Latvian, too. According to surveys among youth in Daugavpils and its surrounding area, both Latvian and Russian respondents noted strong feelings of belonging to Latvia, the Latgale region, and, of course, Daugavpils itself. Though many respondents were ethnically Russian, very few actually claim feelings of belonging to Russia (Ekmanis, 2019). In fact, many younger individuals now associate the terms "ethnically Russian" or "Russian" with possessing a connection to Russia itself, which they do not claim to have. Therefore, many choose to instead label themselves as "Russian-speakers," because it better allows them to specify their language status, without insinuating that their sense of belonging is connected to the Russian Federation (Laizāne et al., 2015).

That being said, this data pertains to the youth in Latvia, but not the older generation, who has had greater struggle integrating in Latvia. The older generation of Daugavpils grew up under the Soviet Union for the majority of their lives, and therefore the lifestyle of Russian language and culture dominated much of their professional, social, academic, and personal development. Once Latvia gained independence, their lives were uprooted, and they were forced to adapt and readjust. While some were successful, others were not. Those who were unable to learn the new state language and become acquainted with Latvian culture have less feelings of attachment to the state, since their levels of national involvement and participation were significantly lower. This is especially the case for non-citizens, who lack defined citizenship and cannot vote in the nation's elections. Daugavpils is home to a large number of these non-citizens, who, since the city's structure operates almost entirely in the Russian language, can live comfortably and without much linguistic difficulty (Population of Latvia).

Nonetheless, in terms of national belonging, the future for Daugavpils appears positive. Though a portion of its older residents likely do not feel very connected to the state, the city's youth does—and this is the portion of the city's population who will shape how it connects and engages with Latvia and its culture in the decades to come. Once the younger population grows older and starts families of their own, they will pass these values and sentiments onto their own kids, as well, who will not only learn from them, but who will also develop a connection to Latvia on their own, from which they will establish their national identity.

Additionally, those ethnic Latvians who do not hold prejudices against Daugavpils and have visited it in recent years, especially those who grew up at least partly under the Soviet Union, note that the city has experienced significant progress since Latvia gained its independence. In the immediate period after Latvian independence, much of the city's population could not speak Latvian. The majority were ethnically Russian and the language of the state was Russian, so there was little to no purpose for them to speak Latvian. As a result, in the 1990s and early 2000s, when Daugavpils was navigating through its integration process, Latvians often had

to use Russian when in the city, since its residents were not yet proficient in Latvian. But now, two decades later, the majority of employees in stores, restaurants, libraries, and other public institutions can speak Latvian if necessary. Their Latvian is not perfect, naturally, since the language is not spoken often in the city, and some will struggle when communicating certain concepts, but they are usually able to effectively conduct business in the language when needed to do so.[55]

And then, when assessing the city's stance on language, it is important to recognize that since its residents predominantly speak Russian, it is no surprise that they would vote in favor of establishing Russian as the second official language for the country, as they did in 2012. If made an official language, then the city's inhabitants could conduct official business in their mother tongue—something that, when putting the nation's historical context aside, makes sense for the convenience of citizens.

Interpreted as an act of disloyalty by Latvians, the stance of the municipality's residents on language is not likely rooted in an anti-Latvia position, as some may posit, since a large portion of them possess a sense of belonging to Latvia. Though there are some in Daugavpils who hold pro-Russia sentiments (often the older generation), the city's connection to the Russian language is not necessarily an indicator of loyalty, but rather just linguistic preference. Therefore, it is important to look at Daugavpils through the lens of progress and from where it has come (i.e. culturally and linguistically), rather than simply drawing conclusions based on its linguistic and ethnic composition.

Considering this, it is necessary to revisit the question from earlier: why was Daugavpils not discussed as greatly in Latvian media as its Estonian counterpart was?

The likely answer for this is that Daugavpils, unlike Narva, is a silent work-in-progress, whereas Narva is a figuratively louder and more visible project, whose developments and struggles have gained more attention owing to their greater social salience. Daugavpils has both fewer challenges and municipal developments, and though it is experiencing its own set of integrative and isolative features, they do not match those of Narva, and therefore it is not highlighted as much in the media.

From a historical perspective, Daugavpils has always had a layer of multiculturalism ingrained in its municipal structure, as well. Since the moment of its inception, it was never a mono-ethnic society. The city had Latvians, Poles, Lithuanians, Russians, Belarusians, and more, all of whom uniquely contributed to the many languages and cultures that defined the city's existence over the past eight centuries. Owing to this historical facet, the presence of the city's Russian majority is not too surprising or out of line with past trends. Daugavpils is a Latvian city—but this does not necessarily mean it has always been an entirely ethnically Latvian city. Narva, on the other hand, experienced greater transformation upon its transition into the Soviet Union. Once a city bustling with a dominant Estonian presence, its ethnic composition was

[55] Employees in Daugavpils still start with Russian in conversations, and then change if the customer speaks Latvian.

completely wiped from the city—along with its baroque architecture—as the Soviets repopulated it with only ethnic Russians, establishing the groundwork for what the city is today.

The lack of reporting around Daugavpils then reflects its socially silent—not isolated—positionality in Latvia. There is an important distinction between appearing isolated versus silent. Isolation is rooted in a clear separation from society, caused by social factors that alienate it and cloud its national image. Silent, on the other hand, suggests that the city works and functions in its own way, without garnering lots of public attention, as its cultural and linguistic frameworks attempt to integrate with the rest of the country. This lack of reporting from the three outlets in the study is therefore likely the result of an unintentional absence, rather than a purposeful one, since its municipal happenings and ongoing integration do not warrant significant media coverage.

This municipal functioning is a reflection of its residents, as evidenced by the ethnic Russian youth's growing association with Latvia as their homeland and national identity. As the youth replaces the city's adult population, the overall connection to Latvia grows, despite the linguistic and cultural structure of Daugavpils remaining the same. This process—of transitional feelings of national belonging within the population—takes significant time to develop. Consequently, Daugavpils and its residents are then experiencing incremental change in their social positionality in Latvia. Once the effects of this incremental change are visible, the city and the country will be able to notice a genuine, deep integration with the rest of Latvia, causing the city to have successfully moved from isolated, to socially silent, to integrated, all over the past several decades following independence. This process, however, will take significant time and dedication, and its effects will not be visible for many years.

Because of this incremental speed and silent positionality, Daugavpils still struggles with corresponding current events. Negative stereotypes around the city will likely remain the same, despite progress taking place behind the scenes. Ethnic Latvians (those with already negative views of the city) will not bear much witness to its internal progress, since they do not frequent the city. As a result, their views will remain unchanged, affecting the way they describe and depict the city. Additionally, for the residents of the city, it will take time for the city's (and the region's) financial position to gain traction and improve to the point that companies are convinced it is an effective place to bring their business. Once Latvian language levels improve, however, and the city becomes better known as Latvia's second-largest city—rather than its Russian city—Daugavpils will experience higher employment levels and its citizens will have greater financial access, too, as businesses grow more comfortable operating in this eastern municipality.

Nonetheless, the future for Daugavpils, similar to Narva, does appear to be bright. As the city undergoes its own natural process of integration, away from the national spotlight, it will open itself and its residents up to greater social opportunities that deepen its connection with the state and further solidify its position as a unique Latvian city.

7. Language Use: Unifying, Dividing, or a Mix of Both?

Language plays a significant role in defining the functioning of Estonia's and Latvia's societies and their majority-minority relations, both for positive and negative reasons. The language individuals use, especially in public spaces, has visibly shaped both nations over the past three decades. In these post-Soviet Baltic countries, language also represents more than just a tool of communication—it is the crux of national identity itself. Language is one of the most inherent qualities of an individual's culture, and the manner in which that language is used—and encouraged—shapes one's outlook on life, ability to engage in society, and sense of belonging (Universal Declaration, 1996).

In Latvia and Estonia, the dominant way to proceed with a unitary state in the early 1990s was with Estonian and Latvian as the sole, official languages in society. And this was exactly what both nations did. Latvia and Estonia, in their pursuit of revitalizing their culture, formulated linguistic policies after 50 years of occupation that established themselves as nation-states, constructing their future and societal integration on the basis of their languages (Muzergues, 2004; Šūpule, 2012; Rannut, 2004).

These linguistic policies included those passed throughout the 1990s right after independence. For Latvia, this included the 1992 language law, which commenced the first potent shift in lessening the official status of Russian, especially within Latvia's education system (Latvian State Language Law, Article 9, 1992). And it was then the 1999 language law that moved further toward a society rooted in only Latvian was passed. Its main objectives focused on the linguistic integration of ethnic minorities, the preservation and development of Latvian, and the establishment of the right to use Latvian in all layers of society through the creation of regulations and checks (conducted by the State Language Center) on state and municipal institutions, the judicial system, various organizations and companies, and also in the education system (Latvian State Language Law 1999).

In Estonia, similar events took place. The State Language Board was founded in 1990 as an organization that facilitated the republic's expectation that individuals and businesses offering services and goods to the public ought to speak Estonian.[56] Though a law was passed in 1989 promoting the Estonian language shortly before its independence, it did little to effectively change language use in the country and was largely symbolic in nature. It was not until the mid-1990s that tangible change was implemented. Estonia's 1995 Language Law provided this linguistic modification, as it set the necessary standards for language use and knowledge in public spheres, such as its educational system, cementing the official shift from Russian to Estonian (Estonia, 1995; Rannut).

These policies, though created for the benefit of the national societies, instituted feelings of linguistic isolation for Estonia and Latvia's ethnic Russian populations, who felt increasingly

[56] This organization—now known as the Language Inspectorate—supervises and reviews the state's use of Estonian to this day in various public spheres. This is to ensure that the nation's linguistic policies are observed. If the Inspectorate finds a failure to adhere to these laws by public institutions or individuals, it may result in warnings, written orders, or fines.

more alienated as the policies grew anti-Russian. Though the aim of the policies' implementation was integrative progression, they were conversely met with resistance, and instead created integrative regression because they encouraged ethnic consolidation and lacked a clear, detailed image on how such laws would lead to the integration of the Russian minority.

Supporting this, the results from the content analysis indicated that language does represent one of the fundamental tensions between ethnic Russians, Estonians, and Latvians. As a topic, language use appeared in the top three themes for all Latvian outlets, and two of the three Estonian outlets, with the exception of Delfi Estonia. Whether about russophobia, politics, or identity, language also appeared in some form in almost every single other theme, because of its inherent connection to the social relations Estonians and Latvians have with their Russian neighbors. This was especially the case for samples dealing with education and educational reform, which is currently a contentious topic in both nations. Latvia is transitioning into a Latvian-only education system, removing all minority schools, and Estonia is finding itself in the middle of a debate on the very same issue, as its governmental officials and politicians argue over the impact and benefit of such a switch. Though very much connected to language, the section after this one will address education in Estonia and Latvia. There were an overwhelming amount of samples discussing education throughout the study, and therefore as a topic it could not have been collapsed into this section, even though it is very much connected with language. Certain facets discussed in this section will also overlap in the one to come.

Though historically an area of tension, language is increasingly experiencing more integrative qualities, as well. With the creation of language learning tools, the establishment of language houses, and a larger population interested in promoting bilingualism, Estonia and Latvia are shedding some of their linguistic tensions, which have previously divided the countries' societies and failed to socially coalesce them in meaningful, lasting ways.

The following subsections will then examine the bidirectional component of language in Estonia and Latvia—as a social tool of both division and unity. In terms of structure, the first half will examine Estonia's linguistic situation, and then the second half will explore Latvia's. Analyzing both together, the final subsection will consider the future of language use in Estonia and Latvia in the years and decades to come.

7.1. Language in Estonia: Eesti Keel and Русский Язык

Enshrined in the nation's constitution, the preservation of the Estonian language is one of the fundamental values that guides Estonian society. Afterall, language intrinsically defines the Estonian identity, and the nation's people take pride in the rich, unique culture that comes with it. As a result, many have the expectation that one must speak Estonian within the nation's borders.

As previous sections have demonstrated, Estonia's ethnic tensions largely arise from linguistic disconnect, especially with the nation's political environment and, for Narva itself, because the core of social strain is the inability for the two communities to come together linguistically. EKRE politicians manipulate the Estonian language to cater to their ideology; and

the socially-imposed segregation of the Ida-Viru region is heavily predicated on language ability. An inability to speak Estonian fluently deeply impacts an individual's professional prospects, and consequently affects one's financial security. Without proficient Estonian, a well-paying job is oftentimes out of the question. Actively speaking and understanding Estonian is therefore seen as a necessary requirement in national society to succeed, and those who do not abide by this are viewed as not truly Estonian. As of 2019, approximately 68 percent of the nation's population speaks Estonian as their native language, leaving one-third of the nation—from Tallinn to Tartu to Narva—as non-native speakers (Mattson, 2019).

Language use in Estonia is monitored in public spaces. If individuals or institutions do not use Estonian in areas in which they are obligated to do so, they could face legal repercussions. Though these repercussions are not large, their existence and continual enforcement reflects the Estonian government's view that language is essential in its society, and as such its linguistic policies must be followed. In line with this, the current Minister of Culture in Estonia, Tõnis Lukas, stated in late 2019 that if Estonians encounter cases where the language laws are not being followed, then it is their obligation to contact the Language Inspectorate and report the situation, so that it may "restore order." He believes all Estonians must remain on guard in this respect, so they can preserve and promote Estonian culture (Sample P-22). According to this public figure: "Without [Estonian] language proficiency, society cannot develop a shared set of values" (Sample E-16).[57]

The Language Inspectorate, however, is not viewed positively by all Estonians. This was evidenced in sample DE-21, which included comments from Mihhail Kõlvart, the current mayor of Tallinn, about linguistic integration in Estonia.

> According to Kõlvart, knowledge of the Estonian language is a social value, it should be a mechanism of the cultural mutual enrichment of communities, and not a tool of intimidation. And if the employees of the Language Inspectorate were engaged in training, motivation, support and counseling, rather than control and punishment, then today there would be much more people who speak Estonian. That would be much more efficient.

Nevertheless, the Isamaa political party, of which Tõnis Lukas is a member, has been involved in recent discussions regarding the expansion of the Language Inspectorate's authority with increased organizational ability to enforce the laws. The organization will still only fine those not adhering to the laws, but there are talks about developing more "stringent standards" for Estonian language use, which would render it easier to label something as a violation of the law, especially when the Russian language is involved. Although, as with the mayor of Tallinn, some factions of Estonian society believe that the Inspectorate's continued targeting against the Russian language is misguided. Instead, there are Estonians who believe it should also focus on English language use, which has been significantly increasing in Estonia over the years as the

[57] Tõnis Lukas is a member of the Isamaa political party in Estonia, which is a national-conservative and Christian-democratic party. In addition to his current position as Minister of Culture, Tõnis has also served as Estonia's Minister of Education and Research (2007-2011) and as the mayor (1996-1997) of Tartu, the nation's second-largest city.

nation further integrates into mainstream European society. According to a politician from the Isamaa party, Mart Luik, Estonia has been solely focused on the "problem" of Russian language since the time of occupation, working against this Slavic language to protect and promote Estonian. Now, however, "the new generation is actively switching to English… both [Russian and English] must be dealt with simultaneously," believes Luik (Sample P-29).

Luik is not the only politician who feels this way. EKRE politician and leading figure of far-right ideology in Estonia, Mart Helme, echoes these sentiments, as well. When the Estonian Language House opened in Narva in the fall of 2019, Helme was in attendance, alongside both Estonians and Russians. During this event, Helme noticed several instances of Russians and Estonians speaking together not in either of their mother tongues, but instead in English. Helme described this phenomenon as "not normal" and a "perversion," claiming that it is another reason why Estonian-only education needs to be supported (Sample P-25).

Therefore, as Estonia furthers its economic and social integration with the West, English is emerging as an important language from which to gain professional and educational opportunities, eventually promoting European mobility. Though augmenting these opportunities, some Estonians interpret this development as another linguistic threat to Estonian identity. The nation has already been struggling with Russian language in its borders for the past three decades, and this language has historically functioned as the main linguistic barrier to a monolingual Estonia. But now, as English language use grows more prevalent in Estonia, the path to a monolingual society becomes more difficult.

The emergence of English presents a potential problem for the increased integration of the Russian community in Estonia, too. The reason being: if this community views English as their ticket to other professional and education opportunities around Europe (since English is the EU's dominant lingua-franca), then they are likely to prioritize their fluency in English, rather than in Estonian. Though Estonian is important in Estonia, that language serves next to no purpose in other EU nations, such as Germany or France, where salaries are higher and professional opportunities are more abundant. In countries such as those, it is far, far more important to have a solid grasp of English, since the majority of business is conducted in it. The community's fluency in the Russian language would likely be viewed as an asset, too, because it adds linguistic versatility to their candidate profile, allowing them to work with clients, organizations, and businesses in the Eurasian region. Therefore, as English begins to develop more and more in Estonia, there exists the possibility that linguistic integration could be moderately hindered and slowed down for Estonia's ethnic Russian community.

Threats such as this insert a layer of linguistic fear into the minds of nationalistic Estonians, who turn to far-right political parties to answer their concerns and anxieties. These concerns, however, are used to the parties' benefit, because they act as divisive social tools on which to bolster the need for a nationalistic interpretation of Estonian identity. Sample P-5 included commentary from Daniele Monticelli, a professor at Tallinn University, who described his experience, as a foreigner, having witnessed the overt politicization and manipulation of the Estonian language over the years:

> In the hands of right-wing conservatives, the Estonian language has turned into a [bludgeon], which can be [used to strike] not only political opponents, but also everyone whose understanding of language and culture differs from the ideological foundations of those who hit. Relying not on generalizing data, but on emotional individual cases, teaching the Estonian language and integration policy are declared failed, and stubbornly burying themselves in the trivial interpretation of the constitution written in the preamble, a tougher language policy, new regulations and prohibitions, quotas for foreign languages and so on are required further. But nobody ever felt love or respect for [bludgeons], rather fear and hidden neglect.

In addition to a politicization of language, Estonia suffers from a fragmented structure of language-learning programs for its adult population, according to sample E-21, which provided an overview of the findings from the National Audit Office's 2019 report. This report detailed that currently, more than 100,000 adults living in the nation need to learn more Estonian in order to speak and write it at levels deemed necessary to function on a daily basis. This was determined to likely be a result of the lack of the qualified language teachers in a number of the nation's regions (notably, Ida-Viru). The Language Inspectorate in early 2019 even found that more than 500 teachers lack a sufficient command of the Estonian language in four major cities in the Ida-Viru region (Sample E-3).

Currently, the country supports the teaching of Estonian as a second language to adults, which is promoted through 32 various activities across five ministries: the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, and the Ministry of Justice. The problem with this structure, however, is that it is not streamlined or centralized, and therefore all ministries and departments are working on their own separate agenda and schedule, rather than pooling their resources together to form a more organized, structured system of learning for adults in Estonia. Because of this, Estonia has no comprehensive overview of the measures, outcomes, or costs associated with language training for adults, adding to the misorganization. The report also stated that "there are omissions and disagreements between the ministries in terms of cooperation, the coordination of activities, management and level of responsibility, which make finding solutions to language training problems difficult" (Mattson).

Owing to this, language learning for adults lacks systematic coordination to ensure that all respective state agencies are contributing in their own way in order to assist these individuals in their pursuit of Estonian language acquisition. This misorganization hinders the country's linguistic integration, as well, because it lowers the amount of opportunities available to non-native Estonian speakers, such as those in the Russian minority community. In fact, a 2018 study conducted by Tallinn University and the Estonian Centre of Applied Research discovered that the number of people prepared to learn Estonian is considerably greater than the resources available to learn the language with state support, as a result of the fragmented structure. The study indicated that of those adults who do not speak Estonian natively, around two-thirds are prepared and willing to learn the language over the course of the next few years. Due to a lack of teachers, resources, and a mismanaged structure, there are unfortunately not enough opportunities to match this demand (Estonian Language, 2018). To alleviate this problem, the

National Audit Office recommends that a clear, central management system be established specifically for the Estonian language training of adults. On this, the Auditor General of Estonia, Janar Holm, stated in the report that:

> If we approach this from the angle of state reform, then a possible solution could be to stop organizing Estonian language training in a manner that is fragmented between several ministries and to establish a function-based single and uniform Estonian language centre or state language centre, which would then guarantee language training to everyone according to their specific needs and proficiency levels, and would take care of methodology, teaching aids, etc. This should be done throughout the state and, if necessary, abroad to support global Estonianness and Estonian people living abroad who want to keep their connection with the Estonian language.

In addition to reassessing the management structure, funds must be allocated in proportion to need, the report claims, so that they reach the regions where they are needed most. This is especially targeted toward the Ida-Viru region. The Estonian state must establish "in-service training" and "methodological help" for new teachers, as well, so that they are able to quickly adapt to the job and ensure their teaching methods effectively resonate with their participants (Mattson). If this structure is improved, then more Estonians will speak Estonian in public spaces and institutions: something with which has not been seen in the nation for many years. Detailed in Sample DE-9, the Language Inspectorate also recorded violations of the language law in nearly all spheres of public space in its 2018 report, including schools, shops, and local governments. The Language Inspectorate reviewed 40 schools throughout Estonia, citing 503 instances of violations of the law. As a result, in 46 cases, the violating employee was terminated; in another 41 cases, the employee not in accordance with the law was only fined.

Table Eight: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL)

A - Basic User		**B - Independent User**		**C - Proficient User**	
A-1: Beginner	The speaker can understand and use familiar everyday expressions with very basic phrases. This includes introducing themselves and others and asking / answering questions about small personal details.	***B-1: Intermediate***	The speaker understands the main points of daily matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, and so forth. The speaker can also deal with most situations likely to arise while traveling in an area where the language is spoken.	***C-1: Advanced***	The speaker understands a wide range of demanding and longer clauses, and can also express ideas fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions.

A-2: Elementary	The speaker understands sentences and general expressions related to basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment.	***B-2: Upper Intermediate***	The speaker understands the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics and can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity.	***C-2: Mastery***	The speaker understands with ease virtually everything heard or read. A C-2 speaker can develop coherent, well-structured arguments.

Various hospitals and health facilities were also reviewed. From August 2017 to December 2018, the Language Inspectorate assessed the level of Estonian for employees of the Ida-Viru Central Hospital, which is located roughly 50 kilometers outside of Narva. Over 700 employees were assessed, with doctors possessing the best language abilities. 52 percent of the hospital's doctors spoke Estonian at a C1 level, indicating an advanced understanding of the language. Nurses then followed, with 45 percent speaking Estonian at a B2 level. Care workers came in last, however, with only 35 percent knowing Estonian at an intermediate B1 level.

In addition to schools and hospitals, the report examined the language levels of store employees at shops such as Maxima, Selver, Rimi, and others. These checks were conducted only in the capital city of Tallinn, where 34 percent of the population is ethnically Russian. Approximately 450 workers were reviewed: 72 percent were identified as not speaking Estonian at a sufficient level. For Maxima and Rimi, the use of “rental workers” from other countries, who do not speak Russian or English, only further augmented the challenge with language.

For Estonia’s ethnic Russians, language plays a key role in obtaining and maintaining well-paying jobs. Language is therefore not only connected to the social and cultural facets in Estonian society, but also in its financial environment. If an ethnic Russian speaks poor Estonian, then the opportunities available to them are sparse, and they are confined to areas in the country where Russian is the unofficial spoken language. As Section Five detailed with Narva, a city or region with low-rates of Estonian language skills is subjected to significantly higher unemployment and poverty rates. This is because it lacks sufficient professional opportunities, since companies and businesses alike are not inclined to invest in linguistically-struggling areas. Blue-collar and industrial work often defines the labor market of these areas, which in turn results in a decline of jobs available to the Estonian market.

Compared to monolingual ethnic Estonians, monolingual ethnic Russians possess far fewer opportunities of landing high-quality first jobs after completing their academic studies, due to expectations of quality communication skills. Though on the surface bilingualism appears to be an asset in most national markets for finding high-quality work, this is not necessarily the case in Estonia. Bilingual Russians and bilingual Estonians compete for many of the same jobs for

which monolingual Estonians are applying. However, the bilingual applicants do not perform better in searching for and obtaining a first-time job when compared with the monolingual Estonian applicants. This demonstrates that (aside from areas where Russian is the unofficial spoken language, such as Narva) the value added from being a Russian-speaker is not very significant or advantageous in Estonia. Even in Tallinn, where the size of the ethnic communities is roughly the same, the Russian minority experiences an ethnic disadvantage in the labor market (Lindemann & Kogan, 2013; Lindemann, 2014). This perpetuates a system in which ethnic Estonians, even those who are monolingual, experience a leg up in the economy's job market, and are, by extension, opened up to more opportunities than their ethnic Russian (monolingual or bilingual) counterparts.

Estonian language proficiency (or lack thereof) consequently defines what is and is not available to those searching for jobs in the country. In Estonia, a mastery of the national language is what gives applicants an advantage; and conversely, an inability to fluently speak Estonian is what prohibits ethnic Russian applicants from obtaining well-paying jobs. Therefore, one's linguistic ability is inherently connected to their financial access in Estonia.

Nevertheless, not everything related to language use in Estonia comes with a negative connotation. That is, Estonia is currently experiencing certain layers of deeper linguistic integration in its society. In the same social structure as Narva, language operates as a bidirectional facet of Estonian society: it has both integrative and isolative qualities.

As highlighted in Section Five, much of the linguistic disconnect that exists in Estonia comes from Narva, the nation's third-largest city, which operates almost entirely in Russian. This city has historically been detached from Estonia on a linguistic level; however, recent data exemplifies that there has been an increase in language programs available for its ethnic Russian residents. This is shown through the opening of the Language House, the emergence of linguistically immersive summer camps for the city's youth, and the Integration Foundation's decision to move its headquarters to Narva.

Language programs and resources are being made more available for the minority community across the country, as well, so citizens can access better tools to become acquainted with and proficient in Estonian. This reflects the Estonian state's attempt to prioritize integrative efforts over that of assimilative ones, in order to achieve its linguistic goal of an Estonian-dominant society.

For instance, a new online vocabulary portal, Sõnaveeb, was opened in February 2019 to make it easier for language learners to access information and tips on how to master the complexities of Estonian. The Estonian Language Institute (EKI), in conjunction with TripleDev OÜ, developed this portal, bringing together linguistic information from a growing number of dictionaries and databases on an easy-to-use, convenient mobile platform with textual, visual, and vocal components. Linguistic information for Estonia's 130,000 words and phrases is brought together on this platform through means of: interpretation, grammatical forms of

declension and conjugation, etymology, usage examples, and more. This is the first vocabulary portal of its kind in Estonia (Sample P-1).[58]

Estonian-language schools in Ida-Viru are also seeking additional funding to further support their school systems in the coming years, so that the quality of their education remains high and consequently results in a high retention rate. A large number of the students who attend Estonian-only schools in Ida-Viru do not speak the language at home, and therefore the classroom is their only real exposure to Estonian, in which they can learn, practice, and develop a sophisticated understanding of the state language. For example, the only Estonian language school in Kohtla-Järve, a city of 35,000 in Ida-Viru, has experienced an increase of non-native Estonian speaking students. As of late 2019, 320 students attended this Estonian-only school. Of these 320, 180 students do not speak Estonian at home. This number has been steadily increasing in recent years, too, highlighting that more and more parents are beginning to send their children to Estonian schools, even if their mother tongue is Russian. Reasons for this include a desire for their children to linguistically integrate with the rest of the country, and also obtain what the parents deem a higher-quality education, since the Russian-language schools do not meet the expectations of many parents (Sample E-31).

Residents of the Ida-Viru region can also benefit from free Estonian language courses, courtesy of a cooperation agreement between the Integration Fund and Virumaa College of Tallinn Technical University.[59] As part of this, residents can participate in language training for free, attend events geared toward conversation practice, and also undergo language consultations in Kohtla-Järve, extending the reach of the Integration Foundation's initiatives in Ida-Viru outside of just Narva, where its headquarters are located. Regarding this cooperation agreement, Margarita Källo—the head of the Narva Language House—said that: "The goal of [this agreement] is to diversify language education for adults and offer language learners more suitable opportunities for language practice" (Sample P-26).

And though the Language Inspectorate continues to fine language violators, while also continuing to develop stricter standards, the use of Estonian language has been on the rise in the nation, as demonstrated in sample E-16. This sample reported on the publication of the nation's annual integration report in mid-2019. The Minister of Culture cited the increase of language learning tools—both those that are in-person and online—as reasons for this improvement, while also stating that "integration is a continuous long-term process, but everyone [in Estonia] must be able to speak Estonian."

An example showcasing this is through language proficiency among teachers in Estonia. While a large number of teachers are lacking Estonian proficiency, as previously mentioned, the overall amount has significantly declined over the years, leaving today's figures as but a fraction

[58] The portal was created with support from both the Ministry of Education and Science's "Digital Revolution" (2018–2021) program and the EKI-ASTRA project (2016–2022), whose funding comes from the European Regional Development Fund.

[59] Located in Kohtla-Järve, Virumaa College is a satellite campus of Tallinn Technical University. It is geographically and linguistically more accessible for the residents of the Ida-Viru region. This campus offers six specialities for undergraduate students, and then one specialty for students obtaining a Master's.

of what the situation was a decade and a half ago. That is, currently 500 teachers lack a sufficient command of the Estonian language in the four cities of the Ida-Viru region, and then roughly 100 teachers also lack these language skills in the capital of Tallinn.[60] All across Estonia, around 1,800 educational professionals from Russian schools were determined to not have a strong grasp on the national language.[61] Back in 2006, 2,119 of the 2,315 total Russian teachers (over 90 percent) in Estonia did not meet the necessary language requirements (Samples E-3 & P-4). This showcases a noteworthy increase—over the past fifteen years—of language use and acquisition through the lens of educational professionals in Estonia. There are still problems with language proficiency, but it is nonetheless improving.

Though noted that there is still much to work on, the Estonian government published its 2019 integration report claiming that the command of the Estonian language is improving among non-native speakers. Titled "Integrating Estonia 2020," this report looks forward to the year ahead on how to best implement integration efforts in Estonia society, with a specific focus on how to instate linguistic cohesion throughout the nation. The 2019 report laid out the nation's general objectives and intended outcomes for its integration policy, whose major goals are to increase social cohesion and guarantee the social inclusion of people with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, while still preserving the culture and languages of Estonians and the nation's minorities. In doing so, the Estonian state hopes to develop a nation that ensures security, promotes tolerance between different groups in society, and supports a stronger civic identity (Integrating Estonia, 2019).

The president of Estonia, Kersti Kaljulaid, has done her part to advocate for linguistic harmony in Estonia, too. As many samples from the study demonstrated, President Kaljulaid has long been a champion for the ethnic Russian community, even though she is ethnically Estonian. In a New Year's interview from sample DE-33, the president claimed that it is imperative that bilingualism be encouraged and linguistic tolerance be promoted in Estonia, in order to construct a society not divided by ethnic or cultural boundaries. On the topic of language, the president stated:

> My grandchildren generally go to the Russian kindergarten. It is precisely because in our family a seven-year-old child who knows one language is considered unreasonable waste. Already in childhood, they must learn at least one more, or better, two languages. My younger children speak three languages from kindergarten age. I appreciate language richness.

In addition to this, the president discussed an experience with her son after school, in which he asked why it was "bad" to be a Russian in Estonia: a statement that took her by surprise, because she had believed her son to be a "blank sheet" coming from a multicultural community. But, after a few months into school—a question like this arose. The president iterated these sorts of experiences forced her to realize that in Estonia, there are simply some

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[60] This 600 figure accounts for teachers of primary and secondary education. Therefore, it does not account for kindergarten or nursery teachers, who have higher rates of low Estonian language skills than those teachers at the grades above them. This information will be included in greater detail in the section to follow.
[61] Exact information regarding the specific breakdown of the language levels of these education professionals was not included.

people who have adopted a belief that Russians and the Russian language are inferior, and have correspondingly passed this prejudice on to others. According to President Kaljulaid, the existence and perpetuation of such beliefs "means we should talk about it" (Sample DE-33).

Furthermore, sample P-2 reported on anecdotes from ethnic Russians serving in the Estonian military—in varying ranks—about their experiences with language and ethnicity. Several noted occasional mixups over language with nationalistic Estonians, who criticized their use of Russian in the Estonian army, because of the language's connection to Estonia's neighbor and leading aggressor. However, others noted that language was not necessarily a dividing factor, but instead a unifying one, from which Estonians and Russians alike could share their cultural and linguistic backgrounds with each other. Below is an excerpt from what a corporal said about language use in the Estonian military:

> We are well aware that we are in the same boat, [military] service is not easy, so why create additional difficulties for ourselves? Russian soldiers speak Estonian at different levels: several people have already come who speak absolutely fluently, some at first barely said anything [...] For the most part, everyone somehow knew the language and basically understood [something]. Misunderstanding is usually associated with the peculiarity of some people to speak as if they have hot porridge in their mouths. If someone does not understand something, we translate. If we ourselves do not know some Estonian word, we explain, describe it—and the Estonians promptly [answer]. What is noteworthy, many Estonians are interested in the Russian language, asking us how to say this or that in Russian.

Language is then potentially moving in a direction in Estonia where, for the most part, it functions as more a practical obstacle, rather than a social one, through which individuals are not necessarily bothered to navigate. In fact, as some in this sample discussed, the linguistic barriers sometimes offer the chance for individuals to explore each other's languages and cultures, proving that linguistic barriers can act as a tool that connects and unifies, as opposed to separates and isolates. This linguistically harmonized structure, if successfully implemented throughout Estonian society, provides joint understanding between the different linguistic communities. Language then emerges as a connecting social facet in Estonia, deconstructing the nation's former narratives of linguistic divide and moving to a more collectively integrated structure.

7.2. Language in Latvia: Latviešu Valoda and Русский Язык

"The basis of a strong Latvia is a stable, literary rich Latvian language," believes Egils Levits, the nation's current president (Sample DL-19).[62]

This sentiment exemplifies the belief many ethnic Latvians have, which is that the nation's continued success and growth is inherently interconnected with its language. If the Latvian language is strengthened, then so is the nation. Because of this, however, a number of Latvians view the use of any other language in their country, especially Russian, as a societal

[62] Egils Levits is Latvia's tenth president, who was appointed to the position in July 2019. He served in several governmental positions throughout the 1990s, including Vice-Prime Minister, Minister for Justice of Latvia, and Ambassador of Hungary, Switzerland, and Austria. He also contributed to the 1990 declaration of Latvian independence. Most recently, he served as a Member of the European Court of Justice from 2004 to 2019.

insult. Latvians want a monolingual society, where Latvian is not only the official language of the state, but also the lingua franca in all of its cities and regions. The nation's Russian minority, however, renders this desire unlikely. As long as there are ethnic Russians in the nation, there will always be the Russian language.

In Latvia, around 60 percent of the total population speaks Latvian as their mother tongue. This figure aligns with the nation's demographic composition: roughly 60 percent of the population is ethnically Latvian. Regionally, Latvian is the mother tongue of 89 percent of the population in Vidzeme, 76 percent in Kurzeme, 75 percent in Pierīga, and then 72 percent in Zemgale. In Riga and Latgale (the region of Daugavpils), however, these figures are significantly smaller. In Riga, Latvian is the mother tongue of 43 percent of the residents, and 41 percent in Latgale. The amount of inhabitants in Latvia whose mother tongue is Latvian has not increased significantly over the past two decades. Since 2000, there has only been a two-and-a-half percent increase in the number of Latvian residents whose first language is Latvian. This small increase is likely a result of the remaining ethnic Russian population, especially the older generation who grew up under the Soviet Union. Around 45 percent of the population aged 50 and over claim to speak Russian at home, whereas this figure does not exceed 40 percent for the population aged under 50. Additionally, the small increase of Latvian can be attributed to the ongoing process of out-migration in Latvia (caused by EU mobility), which has resulted in many Latvians moving abroad to seek out professional opportunities. Around 20,000 residents leave Latvia every year (Samples L-19, B-21, DL-8, & DL-27).

Owing to these figures, many Latvians believe their language must be given the necessary resources to strengthen itself and grow more prominent within its borders. An additional effect of strengthening the language follows alongside the expectation that there will be a simultaneous decrease of the amount of Russian spoken. This, however, is not necessarily what has happened. For example, compared with results from 2000, the number of inhabitants having Russian as their mother tongue has dropped in all regions, but not significantly. In fact, the sharpest decline was in Pierīga, which experienced a decline of only 2.9 percent. Riga experienced the second largest decline, with a figure of only 1.6 percent. And then in Latgale, the amount of those who speak Russian as their first language has not changed at all (Sample L-19).

These linguistic statistics create a lot of social frustration in Latvia, which many of its politicians and leading governmental figures publicly vocalize. For instance, President Levits, while discussing how the Latvian language is a symbol of the state, said in a meeting with the board of the Association of Teachers of the Latvian Language and Literature in late 2019 that: "The role of the Latvian language as the only state language should be strengthened not only in the educational process. We should also talk about its use in society. It is absurd that the level of use of the state language in society is 60 percent," (Sample DL-19).

Comparing Latvia to Spain, according to sample DL-27, the Latvian president has also claimed that:

> Based on the status of the state language, every resident of Latvia is obliged to know and use this language. It is interesting that there is one state where it is also written in the constitution, and this is the constitution

of Spain. Spain is a multilingual state and, unlike Latvia, also a multinational state but not politically multinational. The Spanish constitution defines that everyone, despite being a Spaniard, Basque or Galician man, should use Spanish in the public space.

President Levits additionally believes that, as Latvia moves forward in the coming years, it is necessary to slowly and methodically phase out the presence of Russian language in televised media. According to Levits, “In the long run, in my opinion, a bilingual information space is not healthy. Latvian is our common language, and we need to strive for a common information space” (Sample B-13).

Table Nine: Latvia’s Most Popular Russian Language News Channels as of July 2020 (Rumpeter, 2020)

Leading Russian TV Channels in Latvia		
Channel Name	**Viewership Ranking in Latvia: From Top 10**	**Channel Overview**
PBK	3rd Most Popular Channel in Latvia	Broadcasted throughout the Baltic region, this channel is owned by the Baltic Media Alliance, which has connections to the Russian Federation. Though the company is officially registered in the UK, it retransmits modified content produced by Russian television for the Baltic region's Russian community.
RTR Planeta Baltija	4th Most Popular Channel in Latvia	A state-owned broadcaster in Russia. Known to produce content with propaganda and misinformation. Content aligns with Kremlin policy. Its headquarters are in Moscow.
NTV Mir Baltic	5th Most Popular Channel in Latvia	This channel is owned by Gazprom-Media, the largest Russian media holding. This channel's content includes Kremlin propaganda and it actively promotes Russian foreign policy.
REN TV Baltic	6th Most Popular Channel in Latvia	Considered an "infotainment" channel, it has shared ownership: Baltic Media Alliance owns 25%, and then Margus Merima (the director of BMA) owns 75%. This channel is known to be a tool of propaganda. It has also been previously criticized for airing shows that promoted "pseudoscience."
3+	10th Most Popular Channel in Latvia	Owned by the Modern Times Group (MTG), this channel’s broadcasting is targeted at the Russian-speaking community in Latvia. However, it operates in the United Kingdom.

Currently, there are many news and media sources in Latvia that broadcast in the Russian-language. These sources oftentimes have some written components to their structure, such as brief online articles, but the bulk of their services are television programs, from which they attract a significant level of viewership. Many of them follow an “infotainment” style, too. The table above highlights the top five Russian language channels in Latvia, which all are ranked in the overall top ten most popular channels in Latvia, indicating that Russian language media is able to actively compete for viewership with Latvian language channels, even though Russians are still considered minority status. The table also showcases that in some way or another, the aforementioned five channels all have connections back to the Russian Federation. These connections are personified through the propaganda-oriented content they produce. Among many things, their reporting has failed to cover acts of Russian aggression, such as the Skripal poisoning, criticized Ukrainian sovereignty, sparked language fears in former Soviet republics, applauded Putin’s expansionist tactics, and more.

These Russian language channels have faced scrutiny by the Latvian government over the years, which has considered sanctioning and/or banning the channels completely from the Latvian information space, if and when the legal merits to do so appear. In fact, RTR Planeta Baltija was temporarily banned from broadcasting in Latvia for three months in early 2019. This was because its programming was deemed to have attempted to incite hatred against Ukrainians and undermine the nation’s sovereignty. The channel had instances of TV hosts calling Ukrainians nazis, anti-semites, and bandits, and also advocating for Russian intervention in Ukraine. While the channel was off the air in Latvia, however, the ratings of other Russian television channels, such as PBK and NTV, increased. This demonstrates that, rather than moving to a Latvian language channel, the Russian viewers instead chose to frequent a similar channel, whose content and reporting is centered around the Kremlin’s political views (Sample DL-7).

Other Russian channels in the country have these same Kremlin-rooted links, and some have even been banned completely from being aired in the nation. For instance, in early 2020, Latvia’s Administrative Regional Court upheld a decision by the National Electronic Mass Media Council's (NEPLP) to ban nine Russian language channels from airing in Latvia.[63] The NEPLP’s decision to ban these channels was a result of information provided by the nation’s security services, which discovered that one of the beneficial owners of these channels, Yuri Kovalchuk, was on the list of individuals sanctioned by the Council of the European Union for undermining the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine (Lester, 2020).

In August 2019, the NEPLPl—as a result of its monitoring of broadcasted news—also discovered that Rossiya-24, a channel owned by the Russian Federation, had spread misinformation and hate speech about Latvia’s president, who at that time had only been in office for one month. The channel claimed the president was involved in discriminatory efforts

[63] The banned channels are: 1) Vremya: dalekoye i blizkoye; 2) Bobyor; 3) Dom Kino; 4) Dom Kino PREMIUM; 5) Muzika Pervogo; 6) O!; 7) Poyekhali; 8) TELECAFE; and 9) Peterburg - 5 kanal.

against Latvia's Russian minority community, which is a narrative that the Kremlin tirelessly pushes for every head of state in the Baltic region (Sample L-20).

According to a study conducted by Latvia's Center for Security and Strategic Research, over 95 percent of individuals who speak Russian at home also consume media in the Russian language, and then approximately 51 percent consume Latvian language media (Berzina et al. 2016). Almost 38 percent of Latvia's population claims to speak Russian at home (Sample L-19). This media consumption is dangerous for Latvia's future, because it means over a third of its population is, in some form, consuming propaganda and pro-Krelin content, thereby spurring a society whose information sources are at odds with each other. Since a high number of individuals from the minority community consume these media channels, they are therefore exposed, on a recurring basis, to propaganda and Kremlin-positive narratives. This establishes separate spheres of information in Latvia, with one sphere sourcing nearly all of its information from Latvia's former and current aggressor—the Russian Federation.

To counter this Russian language media, some politicians have proposed instituting a language tax, on which sample B-16 reported. Latvia's current Minister of Culture, Nauris Puntulis, proposed in mid-2019 altering the value added tax (VAT) for Russian language media.[64] According to Nauris: "One rate will be for media printed in the state language, the other—the highest rate—maybe for media printed in the language of third countries." A politician from the New Conservative Party, Eva Martuza, who serves in the Riga City Council, also had a similar idea. According to her proposed idea, there will be a translation fee associated with using the Russian language in all official spheres of communication with employees of public services and commercial companies (Sample B-33).

Recently, the Latvian government has financed Russian language news sources (such as LSM), which deliver content to the ethnic Russian community that is not coated in a layer of Kremlin narratives and propaganda. The goal of this is to bring Latvia's ethnic Russian community into Latvia's information sphere, while still allowing them to consume media in their mother tongue. The Minister of Culture, however, does not agree with the merits of these efforts, believing that it is not the state's obligation to provide content in the Russian language, and therefore a possible tax is warranted as a way to slowly phase it out of the country. On this, Nauris also said in sample B-16 that:

> I never supported the idea that we would have to invest so much in the availability of Russian content [...] I do not agree with the idea that we need to maintain the media space in Russian, fearing that the listener or viewer will be educated in someone else's media space, which is not in the interests of our state. If a person is ready to be interested in political processes in the state, then he does it using the state language.

This same sentiment is held by other politicians, as well, such as Edvīns Šnore, a member

[64] Puntulis was appointed to the role of Minister of Culture in July 2019 in the cabinet of Krišjānis Kariņš. Originally a Latvian opera singer, Puntulis officially got into politics in 2013, when he was elected a member of the Riga City Council, representing the National Union political party. He served in this post until his appointment as Minister of Culture. He has previously stated that he would like to develop "modern nationalism" in Latvia, according to sample DL-16.

of the Latvian Parliament, who believes that national minorities must be integrated on the basis of Latvian—not Russian.[65] Sample B-32 included a statement from Šnore, in which he said:

> Since the language referendum of 2012, but especially since 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea, our state has intensified communication in Russian, giving state money with the goal of persuading local Russians. The formal goal is that they listen less to Moscow, but more to us. I objected to such a transition to the Russian language from the first day it began. [It] is fundamentally wrong: it is similar to extinguishing a fire with gasoline. So we do not strengthen our security, but weaken it, because where Russian is used, there is an increased danger by definition. The Kremlin considers such territories 'the Russian world,' which, if necessary, [Russia] can come to protect. This is exactly what happened in the Crimea. The Kremlin does not even hide that it uses the Russian language as a weapon of Russian influence.

Šnore's comments come at a time when Latvia, through its ongoing attempts to distance itself from Eastern society, worries about Russia's ongoing expansionist policies whose objectives are to systematically delegitimize the sovereignty of nations that were once under the USSR. Considered a "far-abroad" nation, rather than "near-abroad," Latvia is not in imminent danger of an annexation or a direct invasion—as was the case with Ukraine and Georgia—but is still vulnerable to hybrid warfare techniques, such as election meddling and misinformation campaigns, which Russia has already done in the Baltic region throughout recent years.[66] The Kremlin, through its "Compatriots Abroad" foreign policy, justifies its actions on the basis that it is protecting and looking out for the interests of ethnic Russians outside of Russia.

Nonetheless, these opinions are not held by every governmental figure in Latvia. In fact, Latvia's former president, Andris Bērziņš, publicly stated in early 2020 that Latvia ought to legitimize all languages spoken by its population, including Russian, rather than forcing the nation into a monolingual structure (Sample B-35).

Politics and fears of Kremlin aggression aside, the Russian language also lacks a solid educational platform from which non-Russian speakers, should they choose to do so, can learn the Slavic language. Sample B-20 reported on feelings among students in Latvia on whether or not it is useful and worthwhile to learn and speak Russian. Many noted that at least for the next 30 years, Russian will be present in Latvia and its surrounding countries. Therefore, the students claimed it is useful to know Russian and be able to comfortably speak the language. The practice of learning Russian in school, however, is quite challenging for non-native speakers, since the quality of teaching for it is especially low, according to individuals quoted in the sample. One student stated that it is nearly impossible to learn Russian at a sufficient level in school, because "Russian teachers are often elderly and do not know the state language, so it's hard to talk to

[65] Šnore, a member of the National Alliance political party, previously created a controversy when he referred to Russians as "lice."

[66] The term "far-abroad" refers to former republics like Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, which have integrated with Western society and joined its institutions, such as the EU and NATO. This alignment makes it unlikely that Russia will be able to openly intervene in the nations, so it must revert to covert, hybrid methods that are not as visible. The term "near-abroad," however, refers to nations like Ukraine, Georgia, or Belarus, which have not integrated with Western society, and instead remain very much a part of the East. As a result, it is easier for Russia to meddle with and influence their societies, since there are little international repercussions for such actions.

them. They use old methods; for example, they ask [us] to rewrite a book. I studied Russian from the 6th grade, but learned almost nothing."

To learn the language, according to this individual, it is imperative that students teach themselves the language and practice it through other means, rather than in school, since they cannot rely on classroom education to learn the language.

There are, however, a few indications that perhaps the linguistic situation in Latvia may grow more cohesively toward integration, as some samples demonstrated in the study. That being said, there were significantly fewers samples in Latvian outlets indicating this possibility than in the Estonian ones.

For instance, in the same timeframe when Estonia developed a new online language portal, so did Latvia. This was done in an effort to increase the availability of free language learning tools for the public. Developed by the Latvian Language Agency, "e-Laipa" is an online platform in which users can learn Latvian at the A1, A2, and B1 levels.[67] The online portal's content allows users to engage in various vocabulary, grammar, reading, and listening assignments. Its target audience is adults aged 15 and older (Sample DL-3).[68]

Around the time this portal was opened, it was also announced that Riga residents can now apply for free, in-person Latvian language courses organized by the municipal government. These courses provide instruction at the A and B levels, helping both beginners and intermediate speakers of the language to increase their proficiency. To enroll in the courses, applicants must have Riga as their declared place of residence, cannot be schoolchildren, and must also be employed.

The offerings of these courses is part of a local initiative titled "Organization and Implementation of Latvian Language Courses for Riga City Citizens." This initiative is organized within the framework of the Society Integration Program. The purpose is to financially support projects, such as the aforementioned free language courses, that provide Riga's adult residents with applicable language skills, which will result in greater communicative cohesion in the linguistically split capital city. The courses are offered with both English and Russian as the intermediary language (Sample DL-2 & L-35).

Additionally, there is a growing (albeit slowly growing) trend in Latvia, where individuals from the Russian population speak Latvian at home with their family, rather than speaking their mother tongue. Within the nation's Russian minority group, around 90 percent claim to speak Russian at home. Approximately nine percent, however, speak Latvian when at home, even though this is not their native language. This figure is partly a result of mixed marriages, involving an ethnic Latvian and an ethnic Russian. Roughly 37 percent of marriages in Latvia are between individuals of differing ethnicities (Samples L-19 & B-21). This trend of prioritizing Latvian in one's home, even if less than one tenth of the community does it, assists

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[67] The Latvian Language Agency was founded in July of 2009, after the reorganization of the State Language Agency and the National Agency for the Latvian Language Training. This agency is supervised by the Minister of Education and Science, whose overall objective is to enhance the status and promote sustainable development of Latvian.

[68] The website's link is: elaipa.lv.

with the nation's linguistic integration efforts, because it ensures that the Russian community has effective avenues in which to practice their conversational skills, which take place outside of the traditional classroom.

7.3. Considering the Future of Language Use in Estonia and Latvia

Language use functions as a social force that contributes to the ethnic Russian minority's isolation in both Estonia and Latvia more so than it does its integration—for now, that is. Even if there is an increase of speakers of the national language, as is the case in Estonia, the existence and continual use of Russian alienates the community from the two titular populations. Because it is connected to other societal facets, the implications of language use affect social cohesion, the media environment, obtaining jobs, and more.

In Estonia, language acts as a social struggle for the Russian community for a few reasons. For instance, the Language Inspectorate, tasked with the responsibility of ensuring the language laws are followed, exists as a force whose work likely does not encourage language learning among the minority population. Through its fining and enforcing, this government institution propagates the idea that Russian is inferior (in some cases, even illegal) in society, even if a quarter of its citizens speak it as their mother tongue. Its continual focus on Russian has resulted in its failure to monitor the growing use of the English language, too, which arguably poses a much larger threat to the Estonian language than Russian does. This is because English is accessible and desirable among the younger population in the nation. English is not only a tool to acquire higher paying jobs with more prestigious (and international) companies, but it is also their ticket to a life outside of Estonia. Therefore, as more and more ethnic Estonians and Russians prioritize English, the Estonian language gets left behind. This is especially problematic for the minority community in Estonia, as mentioned before, because it deeply hinders their acquisition of Estonian. Since English opens up more opportunities, especially when paired with Estonian citizenship, there is little reason for them to further deepen their knowledge of Estonian past what is necessary to get by on a daily basis. Once they reach the working age, they will take their proficient Russian and English language (along with their minimal Estonain) skills and move elsewhere in the EU, where wages are higher and the quality of life is better. The Estonian economy suffers, because it then loses out on a larger group of potential workers, which negatively impacts the nation's demographics crisis, too. As younger Estonian residents move abroad, they create lives and families outside of their home nation, which contributes to Estonia's ongoing population decline.

Additionally, as samples in the content analysis detailed, it is difficult to obtain a high quality job in the Estonian market without a strong foundation of the national language. This issue is then worsened by the fact that adult language learning in Estonia lacks a clear, organized structure, and therefore is not able to provide enough resources for older learners of the language to improve their skills and fully reach a proficient level. As Estonian grows more and more important in the nation's market, older workers—who may have previously gotten by without

knowing much Estonian—are realizing that they need a language other than Russian to survive. This is demonstrated by the amount of adults in Estonia who are now willing and prepared to take on language learning over the next few years. However, the Estonian state, because of the fragmented structure for language learning, is unable to fully provide these individuals with the resources they require in order to be successful. As a result, this throws Estonia into a problematic state, where it demands an increase of national language skills among its non-native population, but at the same time, is unable to provide them with the access to achieve this proficiency.

This issue is, however, desperately attempting to be resolved. More tools, such as the online portal, are being provided to the public, which give them the chance to strengthen their Estonian language skills.[69] Free language courses are being offered in certain regions. Schools in predominantly ethnic Russian areas are requesting for more funding for their Estonian language programs. The government is self-recognizing the issue with its fragmented structure for language learning, and Estonia's president is playing an important part in encouraging tolerance and linguistic cohesion throughout the nation. These developments indicate that though language remains a largely contentious issue in contemporary Estonia, the future for it could contain more layers of integrative components.

Though Latvia has a few aspects that also highlight the possibility for more linguistic integration in the future, such as the emergence of free language courses and the small trend of ethnic Russians speaking Latvian at home, this nation contains more qualities of linguistic isolation than it does integration when compared with Estonia. With a higher amount of ethnic Russians in Latvia, there is also a larger base of speakers than in Estonia, and therefore the language finds itself more ingrained in society.

This ingrainment is demonstrated by the fact that, unlike in Estonia, the amount of speakers of the national language has not increased significantly over the past couple of decades. Likewise, Russian language use has not been significantly decreasing in Latvia among the minority population. Russian language education—that is, for those learning it as a second language—also suffers from a cadre of poor quality teachers, who are not able to effectively convey the complexities of the language in ways that resonate with students. As a result, Latvian students trying to learn this language in the classroom encounter this barrier, and consequently are not given sufficient access to learn the Salvic language fully. This puts the onus on the students to learn Russian on their own, and if they are not able to do so—then they simply will not acquire proficiency in the language. This results in fewer ethnic Latvians speaking Russian as a second language: a trend that is rapidly growing among the nation's younger population born after USSR occupation.

[69] Online tools such as this, although, are not the best for the older generation, who largely relies on an in-person structure to learn the language.

Language also deeply affects Latvia's media system.[70] Because of the large number of Russian speakers, Russian media—and specifically pro-Kremlin media—has a significant linguistic foundation on which to cultivate a loyal base of viewers. The threat this poses runs on many levels and deeply affects the country's social integration efforts. Separate information spaces result in separate outlooks on life, especially when one space actively exploits the fears and anxieties of living in the Baltic region as an ethnic Russian. A majority of the ethnic Russian community claim to consume predominantly Russian media, as well, rendering Latvia a nation whose information spaces are at fundamental odds with each other. The nation's government has funded Russian language news media sources and channels in an attempt to bring them back into the Latvian information space. However, these efforts are now being criticized by a number of politicians, who argue these tactics were ineffective and ought to phased out, so that Latvia can have a monolingual media space.

Comparing Levits to Kaljulaid, Latvia's president is also far less accepting of the Russian language than Estonia's head of state. Whereas Kaljulaid promotes ethnic and linguistic tolerance, Levits, though not in a far-right manner, has made it clear that he would like to see Latvia be a monolingual society, slowly shedding itself of Russian so that the national language has more space and resources to flourish. While this is not an overly nationalistic hope, it does make it clear that Latvia's president sees the Russian language as a hinderence, and something that should not be a component of Latvian society. Though his position as head of state is largely symbolic, these views signal an important message to Latvia's ethnic Russian minority: your language remaining in society is not conducive to the future of Latvia's social development.

Therefore, comparing the two, Latvia's situation with language leans more on the side of isolative impacts for the minority community than does Estonia's. That being said, Estonia (and Latvia, of course) still have a lot of work to do in order to cultivate nations with more cohesive linguistic societies. Steps must be taken that coalesce the two language's co-existence in each country, rather than pit them against each other, because the establishment of a monolingual society is not coming anytime soon. In fact, it is not likely that either nations will ever have a truly monolingual society. Estonia and Latvia could have greater levels of national language knowledge, of course, but the two Baltic countries will forever have a sizable ethnic Russian population in their borders. This consequently means that the Russian language will remain, as well, because language is intrinsically connected to one's culture: if there are ethnic Russians, then there is also the Russian language.

In establishing a society that promotes coexistence, while prioritizing the national language, Estonia and Latvia can forgo much of the linguistic tensions that currently exist in their societies, which political parties use to their advantage to stir social tensions and ethnically divide people. Coexistence comes through a greater understanding of Estonian and Latvian for the minority community, and also through larger levels of tolerance for Russian from the two

[70] Estonia also suffers from Russian language media in its informational space. This is especially a problem in Narva. This topic was only covered for Latvia, however, in this section because there were samples in the study discussing it, and also because Latvia has a larger base of viewers of these channels, since its ethnic Russian minority is larger.

countries' titular populations. This is, however, much easier said than done. Much of the tensions that exist are historically rooted in society, making them difficult to unroot. Moreover, families pass down their beliefs and outlooks from generation to generation, making it so individuals—whether Russian, Estonian, or Latvian—grow up hearing a certain narrative. To move away from these deeply rooted outlooks, the government must find ways to better connect individuals from a young age and instill within them values that align with progressive integration. One effective avenue in which to do this is the education system, where students have the chance to learn about principles and ideals in a bottom-up structure. However, as the next section will explore, education is a contentious topic in Estonia and Latvia.

As a result, the most likely outcome for both Estonia and Latvia's situation with language is that it will progress (at varying speeds between the two countries) in very slow, borderline-stagnant structure. Both nations will continue to battle with language as it socially regresses their societies, while also trying to combat such regressions with progressive tools of linguistic integration, such as those mentioned above. However, it will be at least a few decades until we can fully see and analyze the impact of such tools. This means that, generally-speaking, language use—and the social, symbolic connotations that come with it—will remain roughly the same in Estonia and Latvia for the time being, indicating that the two governments will need to find ways to maneuver through this isolative obstacle as they attempt to better integrate the minority community in the years and decades to come.

8. Education Reform: Minority Language Schools

Education is inherently connected to state legitimacy and sovereignty, especially for nation-states, because of its ability to craft and construct social identities. In reference to a bottom-up structure, education—from a young age—instills certain values, principles, and ideals in students, which then develop in conjunction with their individual identity formation, as well. A nation's education system therefore provides the groundwork for developing its version of a "good" citizen, by which unification can occur to engender sentiments of belonging within the nation's population (Longstreet, 1985; Birka). In Estonia and Latvia, education plays an important role in strengthening their respective national languages and cultures. Because of this, however, a historically salient tension has existed in the two nations' education systems because of the presence of "minority language schools."

In the early 2000s, Estonia and Latvia adopted a bilingual state education system that allowed for the presence of minority language schools.[71] The purpose of these schools is to offer minorities the chance to study partially in their native language, and partially in the national language. The largest minority language for the two nations is, of course, Russian, but Polish, Ukrainian, and Belarussian are also in this category. In both Estonia and Latvia, 60 percent of instruction is expected to take place in the national language, and then 40 percent may be

[71] There was significant opposition to this policy from Latvia's ethnic Russian community in 2003-2004, which labeled a bilingual education system as coerced assimilation. Ethnic Russians believed they ought to be able to study fully in Russian, and therefore the 60 percent figure of Latvian instruction was negatively received.

conducted in the minority language. Oftentimes, the more difficult subjects, such as literature, which possesses complex vernaculars , are conducted in the native language. This was done to ensure that students have the opportunity to succeed in these challenging subjects, rather than suffer poor grades owing to a lack of language proficiency (Language Education, 2010; Hogan-Brun, 2006; Adrey, 2005).

Now, however, there has been a significant and active debate on the merits of this structure in both Estonia and Latvia. In fact, in early 2018, the Latvian parliament voted to transition into a Latvian-only education system for secondary schools by 2021, phasing out a number of minority language schools. This was done, according to the leaders of the switch, to produce a more linguistically cohesive state whose education system better prepares its students to succeed in the Latvian job market. Supporters of the law also feel that Latvian culture must be supported through its education system. And though Estonia has not yet officially voted for this transition, the debate over an Estonian-only education system is experiencing more and more attention, as various politicians and municipalities bring forth proposals for education reform.

As a coded theme, education and educational reform appeared at a significant and consistent rate throughout the study in the majority of outlets reviewed. In Estonian outlets, it was in the top three for Postimees and Delfi Estonia; in the Latvian outlets, it was in the top three for Delfi Latvia, and then ranked fourth for Baltijas Balss. Among all six outlets, education accounted for 13 percent of the total samples. The implications of education reform are significant for the two countries' ethnic Russian communities. In Estonia, these implications are more theoretical, since the transition to an Estonian-only society has not yet officially taken place. However, in Latvia, where the reform was voted into law in early 2018, the implications are very much real, but—for the time being—are the result of a short-term perspective of the reform, rather than a long-term one, resulting in a generally negative image of the transition by most ethnic Russians in the country.

8.1. Education in Estonia: The Possibility of a Linguistic Transition

"The Russian school is gradually becoming obsolete," believes Katri Raik—Estonia's former Minister of Interior (Sample DE-24).

Though this sentiment is shared by many, the Estonian education system still follows the 60/40 rule, allowing for the existence of minority language schools. In Estonia, the language of instruction in public schools is predominantly the national language. But any minority language, such as Russian or Ukrainian, may be used as an additional language of instruction, as long as Estonian teaching is guaranteed and in line with the legislative conditions concerning language use in the education system. The language of an institution is determined by the local government authority, whereas then in state-schools the decision is made by the Ministry of Education. As such, in locations where there is a large ethnic Russian presence, the schools almost always have a Russian component (Language Education).

Ethnic Russians in Tallinn, Narva, and all across Estonia have a designated space within which to study in both Estonian and Russian, which, according to them, ensures academic success and prevents linguistic barriers from inhibiting a student's chance of excelling. However, according to many Estonians, it is now time that the nation re-evaluates its education system and implements an Estonian-only rule, so that the country's language and culture can be strengthened. This transition, however, has not yet taken hold on a national level, because the country's parliament has not yet voted it into law.

In September 2019, the Estonian parliament voted against a draft bill initiated by the Reform Party, which called for the transition to a "single, united and fully Estonian-language education at all school levels, including kindergarten" in the following academic year, according to samples DE-22 and E-22. The bill was rejected with a 32-44 vote. As part of the transition process, kindergarten classes would have been provided with Estonian language courses and at least one Estonian-speaking teacher would be present for each group. The process also included increased interactions with Estonian-speaking children and a "readiness to enroll in an Estonian-language school following kindergarten." In focusing on kindergarten, supporters of the bill hoped that students would have greater access to success throughout Estonian society later on in their academic and professional lives, since learning a language is most effective when done at a young age.

The bill had a large base of opposition, however, with the majority coming from the Centre party, which viewed such a transition as unnecessary, ineffective, and not in line with the interests of Estonia's Russian community. According to Aadu Must, the Chairman of the Cultural Committee and a Centre politician, the bill was impractical and not in line with student success. Though agreeing that Estonian language education ought to be strengthened, a full transition is not the answer, believes Must, who stated that:

> It is necessary to continue to strengthen Estonian language instruction in kindergartens and schools with the Russian language of instruction. Our task is to ensure that graduates of Russian schools are fluent in Estonian, but we do not consider it acceptable that the quality of their education suffers [...] It is clear that it is impossible to take and translate all Russian schools into Estonian language instruction overnight. For this, there are not enough teachers who are able to teach their subject in Estonian [and] there are no relevant teaching materials. The consequence of such a rapid transition would be complete chaos and a sharp drop in the quality of education in schools with Russian as the language of instruction [...] If, in the educational system, language learning comes first and the acquisition of knowledge recedes into the background, then it is impossible to talk about any development in the long run (Sample DE-22).

The Centre politician instead pointed to a recent program in Estonia's education system as a more cohesive, conducive form to strengthen non-Estonian speaking students' knowledge of the national language. This program mandates that for each kindergarten group in which Russian language is used, there will be a native Estonian speaker who will be the one to conduct instruction in the national language. As of late 2019, there were over 50 kindergarten groups around the country participating in this program. This number is expected to grow, in the years to come, and therefore Must contends that it is a more fair and considerate way to promote linguistic integration throughout Estonia.

Additionally, as Must noted in the excerpt above, Estonia suffers from a significant lack of teachers in its minority language schools who are able to teach Estonian efficiently. This poses a serious barrier to the full transition of education into Estonian, and is also an obstacle constantly referenced by those who oppose the transition. In early 2019, the Estonian Language Inspectorate discovered that over 500 teachers in the Ida-Viru region lack sufficient command of the Estonian language. And then in Harju country, in which Tallinn is located, around 130 teachers were identified as not possessing an adequate grasp of the Estonian language.

The figure among nursery school teachers and teacher assistants is, shockingly, even higher. The language skills of approximately 450 nursery school teachers and 260 assistant teachers in Ida-Viru do not meet the Estonian minimum requirements. In Harju county, 350 nursery school teachers and 80 assistant teachers also failed to reach the required language level. Including these nursery school teachers, there are roughly 1,800 education professionals in total in the Ida-Viru and Harju counties whose language skills are below the required minimum (Sample E-3 & E-29).

This then raises the question: Are figures such as these a valid reason to implement the transition, or do they indicate the need to maintain the current 60/40 system?

According to those who support the transition, the lack of Estonian language skills among education professionals is a testament to the fact that Estonia must enact the transition now, or else it risks having this linguistically fragmented education system extended for years to come. Many supporters believe that the nation's failure to implement an Estonian-only education system at the time of independence is what has hindered the creation of a monolingual society in present times. For instance, Irene Käosaar, the head of the Integration, stated in sample E-29 that: "Clearly we should have [made the transition] from the beginning, possibly at kindergarten and certainly at basic school level, which we have not really carried out as of today." These individuals also posit that the only way to make up for this failure is to create a monolingual education system now, so that hopefully in generations to come Estonian will be the primary language spoken by all residents.

However, those in opposition to such a transition contend that the quality of minority language students' education will suffer considerably if they study only in the national language. This then predisposes them to greater academic challenges, and consequently affects their performance and hinders their chances of obtaining acceptance into strong universities. Described as a "false path to integration," individuals against the switch do not believe it improves Estonian society, because it is interpreted as more of an assimilative technique (Sample P-3). The opposition has also previously pointed out that, in order to have such a transition, the state would need at least a couple of thousand additional teachers with proficient Estonian skills. There currently are not enough teachers to fill this void, and therefore those against the transition claim that Estonia does not have the resources to successfully implement this change.

The Russian-speaking mayor of Tallinn and Vice-Chairman of the Centre Party, Mihhail Kõlvart, has also long been a critic of any discussions related to the transition of education

instruction fully into Estonian.[72] He has even spoken out against Latvia's transition previously, claiming that its goal is to marginalize the ethnic Russian community. Kõlvart has stated that, over time, more and more families will slowly begin to send their children to Estonian language schools, and therefore there is no need to initiate a full transition. However, despite this, he believes that it is important to preserve the "Russian culture and mentality" through Estonia's school system (Sample DE-23). The mayor has also vocalized his beliefs in the past that Estonian can be adequately taught and learned in one's native language, such as Russian. Many Estonian politicians, however, argue against this idea and believe that the only way to truly master the national language is to fully immerse oneself and study in it (Sample DE-21). Kõlvart has also spoken out against the politicization of the education debate in Estonia, even though he has personally politicized the subject in many ways.

The discussion over this transition also exists on a municipal level. Politicians from various city councils have brought forth proposals for the switch to Estonian-only education, in cases where, these politicians argue, their city is best positioned to have a successful and smooth transition. Sample E-30—titled "Isamaa Tallinn Group Wants All-Estonian Schools within Six Years"—reinforces this concept. The Tallinn faction of Isamaa, a national-conservative and Christian-democratic party in Estonia, brought forth a proposal in late 2019 to make such a switch in the education system. The party believes that education ought to be handled by the municipality, and also that since many other cities have been making the linguistic transition on their own, then Tallinn cannot remain a "bystander," especially since it has the resources and workforce to implement this shift. A bilingual education system is "detrimental to" and "not sustainable" for Estonian society, according to this party.

In Keila—a town in northwestern Estonia—the linguistic transition has already begun. In the fall of 2019, it was announced that starting in the following academic year, the first grade will be conducted in only Estonian. Instruction in Russian, however, will continue for the second to ninth grades. The city's goal is to phase in this transition in a "step-by-step" process, so that a few grades at a time will make the move to Estonian-only instruction. Over time, the goal is to have a unified education system, which prepares its students for success in Estonian society. The best way to accomplish linguistic integration is by working with students from a young age, believes the town's mayor, Enno Fels. According to the Keila mayor: "Today we must think about those young people who come to life after completing general education. What opportunities will they have if they do not speak Estonian? Our task is to provide young people with foreign languages that give them the opportunity to choose their future profession, which we can do through teaching Estonian and integration" (Sample P-30).

However, a number of ethnic Russian families in the town did not respond well to these plans. Though the city authorities claimed that the parents of future first-graders reacted "with understanding," many claimed to be "categorically against" the switch. A demonstration at the city hall was held once the news was announced, in which ethnic Russian families protested the

[72] Mikhail Kylvart has also previously stated that he does not like to use the word "integration" in Estonia.

transition and called for the first-grade education to maintain its Russian component (Sample P-30).

The debate around the language of instruction in Estonia allegedly encompasses cultural differences, as well, between ethnic Russians and ethnic Estonians. A study conducted by Tallinn University's Institute of Psychology identified "social rejection" as one of the leading problems for non-Estonian speaking students in Estonian-language schools. That is, ethnic Russian students experienced layers of rejection among their ethnic Estonian counterparts (Sample P-31; Pulver & Toomela, 2014). For instance, Kristina Kallas—the leader of the "Estonia 200" party—has previously stated that, if Russian and Estonian children are brought to the same school, then there will be social problems. But, according to this politician, these challenges are temporary and must be endured. "If these issues are not overcome, then they will manifest themselves in the future: at the university, at work, [and] in society," Kallas stated in sample DE-30. In this same sample, a Russian graduate of an Estonian school went so far as to even suggest that "Estonian children are not as open as Russians," adding that Estonian children occasionally laughed at or mocked him when he would say something wrong. Russians have also been labeled as having a "different temperament," according to sample B-26 and DL-26, which included comments from a University of Latvia professor about minority schools in both Estonia and Latvia. The professor claimed that Russians would "crush" Estonian and Latvian students, if they were required to integrate with them in the education space.

Nevertheless, despite proposals and calls for the transition, as of late 2019, the Ministry of Education does not intend to switch all instruction into Estonian, meaning that for the time being—minority language schools will remain in Estonia. Mailis Reps, the current Minister of Education, has promised that her department will do all it can to improve the teaching of Estonian to children. However, she does not believe this improvement requires a forced transition for the entire education system. Instead, Estonian officials point to developments around the country that will harness linguistic integration and bolster the use of Estonia. These developments include the growing options for parents to choose to enroll their children in Estonian-language schools, or the larger presence of an Estonian native speaker in minority language classrooms, who aids students in their acquisition of the national language (Sample P-20).

The implications of this discussion and debate, even though this transition is only a possibility right now, runs deep for Estonia's ethnic Russians for two leading reasons. Nevertheless, for now—they are largely theoretical, since the reform has not yet been voted into law.

That being said, the sheer discussion of a switch to an Estonian-only system re-emphasizes the state's desire to shed itself of its remaining Russian language roots, or at the very least, move to a more monolingual society, where Estonian dominates public spaces. Many politicians and citizens have advocated for this since gaining independence, but because the nation maintained a large base of Russian speakers—it was never all that feasible. In contemporary times, though, the state has more financial resources, a smaller ethnic Russian

population, and better linguistic integration than three decades ago, so supporters of the transition strongly believe it could be successful.

This possibility signals an impactful shift in Estonian society: that the importance of the national language is growing, and therefore it is necessary to learn it, even for those who have already finished their schooling in Estonia. The reason for this is that if Estonian is more widely taught in schools, future graduates will have a better understanding of the language than their predecessors. As a result, those who previously completed their studies under the minority language system would now have a disadvantage in the Estonian labor market if they had not yet achieved proficiency. Though the education reform would directly affect the students going through the system, it would also have a spillover effect for all ethnic Russians throughout Estonia, because they would also now need to improve their language skills, in order to ensure they do not fall behind.

This possible reality is welcomed by some ethnic Russians in Estonia, such as those who have willingly integrated in Estonian society and made an effort to find a place in the state. This group (i.e. the families) within the minority community will not struggle significantly with such a reform, since they would be open to and understanding of it. Oftentimes, these are the Russian families who already speak Estonian fluently. However, such a transition is also deeply opposed by others in the minority community, who view it as an attack on their culture and counter to integration efforts because, they argue, it falls more under the guise of forced assimilation. Therefore, as the debate ensues in years to come, it will further affect the already-isolated body of the minority population, rather than the subset of the community who has successfully integrated. This poses a dilemma for Estonian officials, who could—if this transition is implemented—then theoretically be left with a further alienated portion of an already-isolated community, which is viewing the Estoian state as an enforcer of assimilation over integration.

8.2. Education in Latvia: The Actuality of a Linguistic Transition

In the fall of 2017, the Latvian Ministry of Education announced that the country would begin a linguistic transition in its secondary education system, moving all instruction into Latvian by 2021. Supporters of the law pointed to the fact that, if one lives in Latvia, then higher levels of education and better salaries in the workplace are generally more accessible if a graduate speaks Latvian fluently. Minority schools, these advocates argue, do not promote fluency—and they instead hinder the nation's integration efforts. Furthermore, Latvian, when compared with Russian, has far less speakers, so many assert that the law is integral to the preservation of the language itself. Speaking about the merits of the transition, Kārlis Šadurskis, the Minister of Education at the time, stated that:

> The goal of integration policy is a society that feels belonging to its country, respects it and is proud of it, knows the history of Latvia, feels belonging to Latvian culture, speaks Latvian as a native language and celebrates holidays together [...] We want to achieve a consistent long-term education policy with a clearly defined goal and successive steps to achieve it. We do not immediately need a result for tomorrow, but

> [instead] confidence that we will complete the education reform in the foreseeable future, which will ensure a uniform standard of education in Latvia (Šadurskis, 2017).

At the time of the proposal, the Ministry of Education proposed a phasing-in plan to ensure the transition goes smoothly and does not completely upend the nation's education system. With each year, a different aspect of the transition would take place. The plan, though focused on secondary education for a full linguistic transition, also included facets that significantly increased the amount of Latvian instruction for preschool and primary education. In doing this, the nation hopes to develop a foundation on which it is the norm to grow up speaking Latvian.

In early 2018, Latvia's Cabinet of Ministers agreed to begin the reform in 2019, therefore shifting to a system in which Latvia was the sole language in secondary schools. In primary schools, it was determined that a minimum of 50 percent of instruction had to take place in Latvian for grades one through six, and 80 percent for grades seven through nine. Subjects related to culture, history, and literature, however, remain in the minority language for primary education. In March 2018, the Latvian parliament then passed the amendments to the Education Law. Finally, in April 2018, Latvia's president at the time, Raimonds Vējonis, officially announced the amendments to Latvia's Education Law and General Education Law. This move cemented the national language into Latvia's education system (Discover, 2018; President, 2018; Sample L-17).

In support of this, the Ministry of Education pointed to a study published in 2017 by the Latvian Language Agency, which analyzed social trends with language use in Latvia from 2010 to 2015. The report identified that 39 percent of minority youth are fluent in Latvian, and 22 percent admitted that they only have basic Latvian language skills or have poor knowledge of Latvian. The study also revealed that the majority of the Latvian population—roughly 70 percent—felt that teaching subjects in the national language ought to begin as early as possible, such as in nursery and primary schools, in order to be the most effective (Druviete et al., 2017).

In late 2019, Latvia's coalition government also discussed the possibility of transitioning all levels of education into Latvian-only, unifying the entire system along the basis of the national language. This discussion emerged as a result of the National Alliance's proposal on the amendments to the Education Law. This party has prepared legislative amendments, which argue that local governments should ensure education programs are conducted in Latvian within all municipal pre-schools, including in minority pre-schools. These amendments then act as a baseline foundation on which the full transition can take place throughout all schools in Latvia. All five parties in the coalition gave the approval to move forward with such a switch. Now, the Ministry of Education will have to work out how this plan could be implemented. Though there is no current deadline as to when the transition will be completed, the National Alliance claims that it will work to make sure it is not postponed too much into the future (Sample L-24).

This new law, however, did not come without opposition. In fact, in Latvia, it came with a significant response from the ethnic Russian population, who labeled this transition a "linguistic genocide," suggesting that Russians ought to have the right to study in their mother

tongue in Latvia (Sample DL-32).[73] Once the news about the transition was announced, several protests took place in Riga, whose participants alleged the Latvian state was actively marginalizing the community with this policy. Thousands of participants took part in these protests in the months after the reform was announced, holding signs calling for the preservation of their language and culture through the school system. Ethnic Russians also gathered signatures in support of maintaining the minority schools, circulating petitions to reverse the government's decision. And the Russian Union of Latvia, specifically Tatjana Ždanoka, became very involved in the organization of several demonstrations, capitalizing on the moment to call out the Latvian government for what it deems perpetual ethnic discrimination (More, 2017; Russian-Speaking, 2017; Protests, 2018; Ždanoka, 2018; Several 2018).

The protests have been ongoing since the transition's initial announcement. This is largely due to the Russian Union of Latvia's involvement, which has been organizing and ensuring a steady rate of demonstrations against the transition, even though it has already been enacted into law.

In May 2019, over 1,500 people attended a protest against the law, organized by the Russian Union of Latvia. Participants held posters containing various slogans, such as: "Russian schools are our choice!" and "the longer we remain in the EU, the fewer rights we have!"—written in both Latvian and Russian. Miroslavs Mitrofanovs, a top politician for the Russian Union of Latvia, stated during the protest that he hopes events such as these "unite" the Latvian people (Sample L-9). In October 2019, the Russian Union of Latvia organized another protest against education reform, but this time, focusing on the coalition government's move to transfer all instruction—at all levels of the education system—into Latvian only. According to Tatjana Ždanoka, "[the protestors] are going to defend the dignity and future of our people" in this demonstration (Sample DL-24). In December 2019, the Russian Union of Latvia held a demonstration march in Riga, starting at the Ministry of Education and ending at the Freedom Monument. Protestors held lanterns with them during the demonstration, in order to "disperse the darkness with light." Protestors also held posters, with some even written in English, such as one that stated: "our people are our soul, our rights." In Latvian, some posters stated: "Learn Latvian - yes! Learn in Latvian - no!" In addition to calling for the preservation of Russian language education, the protestors also called for the dissolution of the Latvian parliament (Sample DL-32).

In light of this transition, Harmony involved itself, too, as the party's officials claimed this move was ethnically polarizing and countering integration. Nils Ušakovs, who was still the mayor of Riga at the time, announced that if the law took hold, Riga would finance additional Russian language courses from its municipal budget to provide Russian students with access to learning in their mother tongue (Ušakovs, 2017). The pro-Russia party also filed a lawsuit, claiming that the new amendments were unconstitutional, and therefore the transition must not be implemented. However, in April 2019, the Constitutional Court declared the new education

[73] Ethnic Russians in Latvia also had a significant response to the 2003-2004 education reform, which established minority language schools and set forth the 60/40 rule. At the time, ethnic Russians believed this reform was stripping them of their rights to study completely in their mother tongue.

reform policy to be constitutional. This decision is final and cannot be challenged (Sample DL-9). The Russian Union of Latvia denounced this decision, as well, calling it "unjust" and stating that "political conflicts can't be solved in a court of law," according to sample L-9.

The efficacy of this reform has been contested, too. In the same manner that Estonians questioned their nation's ability for Russian teachers to move instruction to the national language, the same question has appeared in Latvia, as well. Iveta Ratinīka—a well-known Latvian teacher, researcher, poet, and politician—has previously voiced her concerns that this reform "is not integration, but assimilation" (Sample B-30). On the practicality of the reform, she has stated that:

> We can report, we can report, but we cannot do it qualitatively. Nationalists from one region to the other do not understand that mastering the Latvian language in order to get the highest category is elementary. But teaching in this language is something else. And no one ever taught Russian teachers this; namely, the methodology of teaching in another language. I did not come across courses where they would learn how to teach biology in Latvian to children whose mother tongue is not Latvian. Or how to teach history. Because there are a lot of new words lexically, and to explain the topic, you need to simultaneously give a dictionary of these words. These words must be learned from scratch.

Unsurprisingly, opinions about the reform are also split between ethnicities. Sample B-17 and L-17 reported on an SKDS poll, which found that, on balance, there are substantial differences in opinion about the education reform between ethnic Russians and ethnic Latvians. The survey was conducted in the first half of April 2019, with thousands of people of different age, social status, and geographic location. Among all respondents, a little over 41 percent said they support the reform, whether fully or in general. In opposition, approximately 35 percent claimed to not support this reform. When divided along ethnic lines, however, the results were more polarized. For Latvians, nearly 60 percent claimed to support the reform, and then for Russians—64 percent said they did not support it.

The enactment of this law also drew criticism from the Kremlin, whose officials labeled this move as yet another example of the ethnic Russian population having its human rights abused by the Latvian government. The Kremlin is known to criticize and respond, oftentimes harshly, to former republics when Russian language rights are removed from societal institutions and laws, such as when Moscow used the Ukrainian government's 2014 decision to repeal a 2012 law recognizing Russian as an official regional language as a pretext for the annexation of Crimea (Podolian, 2015).

Moscow actively inserts its views and opinions in the affairs of nations that have sizable ethnic Russian populations. This is not only because of the former connection these nations had to the USSR, but also because of the Kremlin's "Compatriot Abroad" policy, which aims to establish theoretical citizenship for Russians living outside of Russia, offering them a political identity and a form of membership with the Russian Federation, even if only symbolic. Moscow has initiated a variety of outlets to promote this extraterritorial citizenship, such as the 2007 creation of the International Coordinating Council for Russian Compatriots Living Abroad. These cultural diplomatic policies, at times, can appear as merely efforts to promote Russian

language and literature. Other attempts at this identity formation, however, are less benign, such as when Moscow publicly asserts that it is the only nation willing to protect Russian culture and the inherent values that come with it. In Estonia and Latvia, the Kremlin has used education reform as a force by which to engender social and cultural anxiety for the minority community; to do this, it promotes exaggerated and embellished narratives through its state-funded media, which claims that if minority education is removed, then Russian culture and lifestyle will be next.

Unlike in Estonia, where the implications of education reform are only theoretical, the implications of this for Latvia's ethnic Russians are very much tangible, since the transition has already commenced and the nation is en route to a Latvian-only education system. Nevertheless, though the reform has received a significant response from the ethnic Russian community, the question of this law's efficacy still remains: will a Latvian-only education system help to integrate the ethnic Russian minority?

The answer to this question has many layers. Until the law fully sets in, its presence has largely symbolic implications. And those implications do not carry positive connotations for the minority community, because these effects largely showcase the nation's desire to move to a more monolingual society. To accomplish this, the widespread use of Russian must be decreased, which will be accomplished through phasing out minority language education. Because of this, however, a significant portion of the ethnic Russian population interprets the law as a discriminatory attack on the Russian language and culture, as demonstrated in the protests and resulting responses from the country's ethnic Russian party. According to the opposition, this reform is an indication that nationalistic ideology is taking control of the Latvian government's policies.[74] The policy, they believe, does not promote integration, but instead assimilation. Many ethnic Russians (and, the Kremlin) believe firmly that it is their right to study in their mother tongue, even though the majority of other nations around the world predominantly conduct their education system in the official state language. As such, ethnic Russians view this policy as an overt violation of their rights. Or, in other words, a "linguistic genocide."

This community-held view, however, does not take into account the long-term plans of the transition. Instead, ethnic Russians largely only see the immediate effects of the law, which, as stated before, mostly carry symbolic effects. Though many nationalistic Latvians support this transition, consequently clouding its social image, the law in many ways *does* have the interests of its minority community in mind. As previous sections have noted, ethnic Russians occupy lower socioeconomic levels than their ethnic Latvian counterparts. One large reason for this phenomenon is the challenge the community faces with language. If they are not entirely fluent, speaking Latvian at a C2 level, then advanced professional and academic opportunities are difficult to obtain. The Latvian government has identified that minority schools directly hinder a

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[74] Though a majority of ethnic Russians oppose the law and the reform, it is important to note that there are some who support it. Those who support it have integrated into Latvian society, oftentimes speak Latvian very well, and agree with the law's supporters that a Latvian-only system increases professional and academic success in the nation. Nevertheless, ethnic Russians in Latvia predominantly oppose the law, consequently causing its enactment to have negative connotations on a symbolic level.

student's ability to gain proficiency and fluency in the Russian language. Should a student speak Russian at home, then go to a school with Russians, where a large amount of instruction is also in Russian, then that student is only exposed to Russian, and does not have the necessary resources to develop their proficiency in Latvian, without which they are predisposed to challenges in the nation's economy and labor market.

On the other hand, if a student who speaks Russian at home then goes to a school with Russians, where the language of instruction is Latvian, then they have a greater chance of developing a sophisticated, advanced understanding of the national language. As a result of that, they have more opportunities available to them in Latvia: professionally, socially, and academically. Therefore, the claim that an absence of minority language schools will wipe away Russian culture is rather hyperbolic and not grounded in reality. These Russian students, who transition to Latvian-only education, still have their families and friends with whom they communicate in their mother tongue. Their language is in no ways being eliminated. The establishment of Latvian-only instruction is instead rooted in the government's desire to create more Latvian speakers among the minority population, who have historically struggled with their Latvian language skills. The government's goal then is not to eliminate the amount of Russian speakers, as some in opposition to the law claim, but rather develop a larger base of Latvian speakers within Latvia itself. This produces a more cohesive, connected society in the long-term, which is not separated by linguistic barriers.

So, for now, the symbolic message of this reform may cause feelings of isolation for some in the Russian community, who are still holding on to the idea of preserving minority language education and view this transition as a tool of ethnic marginalization. However, though carrying an isolative impact in the short-term, the long-term effects of this reform will likely improve integration efforts in Latvia. Once the social emotions regarding the reform have settled down and the Latvian-only system has had time to develop, then its positive impact will be felt.[75] Ethnic Russians will have greater access to learning and improving their Latvian language skills, which will then offer them more opportunities all around Latvia. And, in having a greater understanding of Latvian, then the national language will be used in more public spaces, thereby eliminating some of the linguistic tensions that have previously separated the nation's two leading ethnic communities.

9. Growing Citizenship and Lingering Otherness: Competing Forces in Estonia and Latvia

Historically, citizenship has been a dividing factor in Estonia and Latvia. The two governments opted for policies after the USSR's collapse that made it challenging for ethnic Russians, who had been resettled to the Baltic nations, to successfully complete the naturalization process. This process contained exams assessing knowledge of history, culture, and, most importantly,

[75] As previously noted, ethnic Russians were very frustrated about the education reform that took place in the early 2000s. However, after some time, the emotions around the reform settled down and the new system found its place. Thus, the community will be upset in the immediate aftermath of this reform, but after some years—such frustrations will slowly diminish.

language. Though the citizenship policies made sense for the titular populations, they did not for the ethnic Russian community, because these policies appeared selective and restrictive, since prior to the 1990s—there was no concrete reason for ethnic Russians to use and learn the Estonian or Latvian languages, history, and cultures. Thus, there was no way around these requirements. And if ethnic Russians chose not to pursue this option or obtain Russian Federation citizenship, then they were left with stateless passports, signaling their status as a non-citizen and possessing no national citizenship.

The Estonian and Latvian citizenship laws paralleled each other significantly. In Estonia, the first Citizenship Act in 1992 established the initial layer of social divisions in the nation, because all ethnic Estonians became citizens. But then approximately 85 percent of the ethnic Russian community became non-citizens (Makarychev & Yatsyk). In 1991, Latvia laid out the fundamental features of its naturalization policy, from which it excluded ethnic Russians. Then the government adopted the Citizenship Act in 1994 and slightly amended it in 1995. This adoption mandated that the nation follow the "jus sanguinis" principle, which granted citizenship to individuals (and their descendants) who had citizenship prior to the June 1940 annexation (Supreme Council Resolution, 1991; Citizenship Law, 1994; Krūma, 2015). This rendered citizenship acquisition difficult for ethnic Russians, since they did not fit into that category, which consequently left around 700,000 individuals—a third of the nation's population at the time—without defined citizenship (Klūga, 2016).

Estonia and Latvia have revised their naturalization policies over the past couple decades, reworking them so that they are more accessible and achievable for the Russian minority. This was especially the case at the time of EU accession, during which both countries had to re-evaluate the treatment of their ethnic Russian communities and the rights they have in the independent Baltic nations. As many samples in the study discussed, the governments have provided additional revisions in very recent years, which have added more accessibility to the naturalization process and improved citizenship acquisition. This is demonstrated by the decrease of the overall size of the stateless population in the two countries: Estonia has roughly 71,000 non-citizens and Latvia has 220,000 (Stateless; Distribution).

Therefore, though citizenship has often been a contentious topic for the ethnic Russian minority, this narrative is beginning to shift: citizenship is growing more accessible. However, even though more ethnic Russians are receiving citizenship, they are still suffering from a layer of "otherness:" the quality of being different in a defined "out-group" of society (Staszak, 2008). This component of otherness is felt through many social dimensions for the Russian minority, but was especially demonstrated through the samples in regards to opinions and outlooks on national and international affairs. These perspectives often contrast with the ones the titular populations hold, and so as a result the Russian community's overall acceptance into Estonian and Latvian society suffers because they lack a shared, common outlook with Estonians and Latvians. That is, though more and more Russians are receiving citizenship, their beliefs—in the eyes of the titular populations—do not fully represent those of "true" citizens. And consequently, their national belonging and identity suffers in both countries' societies.

This section will first examine the phenomenon of developing citizenship in Estonia and Latvia, analyzing how it has recently grown more accessible and what the implications of this accessibility are for the minority population. Though the new laws are not flawless, their implementation is reflective of the incremental change that is necessary for further minority integration in both nations. Then, the section will continue by contrasting this developing phenomenon with the reality of the community's beliefs, specifically those that deal with Russia, which contribute to the continuance of otherness and lacking a true place in both societies. These two contrasting yet interconnected themes appeared significantly throughout the study in both Estonian and Latvian outlets, and have therefore been selected as important social facets to analyze together when exploring the ethnic Russian community's positionality. Within the theme of otherness, the contrasting outlooks on life appeared the most and had the greatest indicator of being a lingering issue for the ethnic Russian community. As such, that is the area of focus for this section, since previous portions of this thesis have already covered separate areas of otherness (i.e. Soviet holidays, monument preservation, language use, etc.).

On different levels, both of these thematic categories—citizenship and otherness—influence the community's formation of identity, affecting their sentiments of belonging, attachment to the state, and their social positionality. And, though citizenship trends are bringing the community up in Baltic society, ongoing trends of otherness, such as the fragmented worldviews, continue to bring them down, reinforcing the back-and-forth, bidirectional struggle the Russian minority experiences, as it shifts between isolated and integrated.

9.1. Citizenship Policy in Estonia and Latvia: Perfect? No. More Accessible? Yes.

In October 2019, the Latvian parliament passed legislation ending the born-into stateless status, meaning that starting the following year—no child can be born with a non-citizen status, even if their parent is stateless. The vote passed with 60 in favor and 25 opposed, with National Alliance and New Conservative Party deputies voting against, plus one KPV LV deputy, and independent deputy Inguna Rībena, who is formerly of the National Alliance. Prior to this legislation, a child was assigned stateless at the time of their birth if its parents were non-citizens themselves, perpetuating the status from generation to generation. Now, however, the default is Latvian citizenship for all individuals born to parents residing in Latvia. The law's goal is to encourage the construction of an integrated, connected society that shares joint Latvian values, while also working to cease social division that has historically separated individuals from each other in Latvia (Sample L-11 & L-27).

"Every child is important to Latvia," stated the country's former president, Raimonds Vējonis, once this law had been announced. Vējonis had originally proposed this change in mid-2017 and advocated for it during the end of his term. The law officially passed through the parliament under the presidency of Egils Levits, the successor of Vējonis, who believed the

revision was necessary in order to prevent children born on Latvian soil from being deemed non-citizens, according to sample L-27.

A few months later, in January 2020, the Estonian parliament also passed amendments to its Citizenship Act, increasing the opportunities for non-citizen children and minors (i.e. those under the age of 18) to obtain Estonian citizenship.[76] Unlike the Latvian revision, which only eliminates the born-into status of non-citizens, the Estonian amendment has a greater reach of whom it will affect, because it allows minors whose parents are non-citizens to claim citizenship, except for a few restrictive circumstances. That is, a minor can acquire Estonian citizenship at the request of a legal representative if their parent or grandparent was a resident of Estonia as of August 21, 1991: the day Estonia officially restored its independence (Sample E-36).[77]

These developments, though enacted to integrate the minority community, were nonetheless met with varying degrees of backlash and opposition. Certain people and institutions in Estonia and Latvia claimed the laws offer little to no tangible impact, because they do not solve the problem of statelessness for all children. And, since they do not provide solvency for the entire minor population, some political parties levy that they cannot be supported.

For instance, in Latvia, Aldis Gobzems, an independent, has labeled the law "insufficient," and has also asked that the state grant citizenship to all those born in Latvia after 1990 who have also graduated from a Latvian school. According to Gobzems, the non-citizen status divides Latvian society and discourages national loyalty, and so all non-citizens ought to be granted Latvian passports. Evija Papule, a Harmony politician, pointed to the law as another example of how Latvia is unable to make substantial decisions, since it does not account for those children already born. Approximately 300 children have been born into the status of non-citizen since 2015 in Latvia (Sample L-11).[78]

Such claims do have some warrant, however, because a deeper look into the impact of this law highlights that it will only affect a small number of individuals, since the amount of children born into the non-citizen status has been decreasing significantly over the years. In 1992, when a third of Latvia's population was stateless, there were over 750 children born with stateless passports, which they inherited from their parents. At that time, the vast majority of Latvia's ethnic Russian community was stateless, too, since the nation was struggling with how to handle its remaining Slavic population. Fifteen years later in 2007, there were less than 400 children born into statelessness. And then in 2018, there were only 33 children born as non-citizens. As a result, this law will only directly affect a few dozen children each year.

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[76] The bill was approved with 63 votes for and 26 against.

[77] It is necessary to note that in 2016, the Estonian government adopted the "jus soli" principle, making it so children born on Estonian soil are automatically granted Estonian citizenship, unless the parents choose otherwise. There are many cases, however, where the parents choose to maintain the non-citizen status, rather than have the child become an Estonian citizen. This is often the case with parents who possess Russian citizenship, but reside in Estonia (European Commission, 2019).

[78] Others are opposed to the law for more nationalistic reasons, such as those who believe Latvian citizenship ought to be highly selective and largely dependent on culture and language, rather than just being born in the nation. Ritvars Jansons, an MP for National Alliance, claimed that: "Non-citizens in Latvia have all they need to become citizens. Forcing citizenship on people with artificial means won't create loyalty to the state, and neither will it solve other matters," as demonstrated in sample L-9.

In Estonia, a similar response ensued. Though Estonia's amendment does more than Latvia's, many claimed it failed to provide true change, because many children would not actually be eligible to pursue citizenship with the way the law is formatted. Supporters of the law claim up to 1,500 Estonian children are now eligible to obtain citizenship through this amendment; those in opposition, however, have pointed out that the actual number is much smaller, owing to restrictions that those who drafted the law did not fully consider. That is, because of the structure of the naturalization process in the 1990s, many ethnic Russians chose to obtain Russian Federation citizenship, but then they resided in Estonia. This is especially the case in Narva, where 36 percent of the city's population possess Russian citizenship. The children of these parents, however, were then granted either Russian passports or, in many cases, alien passports, whose gray color design has led them to be referred to informally as "gray passports," since neither of the parents were Estonian citizens. Rather than have their children become Russian citizens, the parents opted for statelessness, instead.

Therefore, the law does not apply to these children, because even if they (non-citizens or Estonian-born Russian citizens) wanted to naturalize, they would not be able to—because, in the case of Russian citizens, Estonian law requires them to renounce their previous citizenship.[79] Furthermore, the Russian Federation does not allow its citizens to renounce citizenship until the age of 18. Then for non-citizen children of parents with Russian passports, the August 20, 1991 rule does not apply to them, so they are also ineligible. Due to this, a large base of Russian children in Estonia are excluded from the new law, according to those opposed. The opposition has stated that only around 130 children are actually eligible through this law's structure, considering the restrictions (Sample P-23, DE-27, & E-36).

The Centre party has previously voiced its disappointment with the framework of this law.[80] Andrei Korobeinik, the party's spokesman, called for a vote on the amendment that would grant citizenship to all children born in Estonia. According to Korobeinik:

> We have over 70,000 gray passport holders today. That's more than the population of Narva or Pärnu, for example. These people believe that Estonia is their homeland. Despite the fact that the word 'alien' was written by the Estonian state in their passport in English. They have no other homeland. Here and now, we can all decide together that children born in Estonia, who have lived their entire lives here, are not aliens to us. They are Estonian children.

Additionally, Yevgeny Ossinovski, a member of the Social Democrats, claimed that this was a "false law," and that it would not in fact result in the change its supporters claim it will do. The Social Democrats offered a counter-proposal, instead, which would grant citizenship to around 8,000 children in Estonia, but the nation's parliament rejected it. Recognizing that

[79] Estonia does not allow dual citizenship with the Russian Federation for national security concerns.
[80] As with Latvia, there are some in Estonia who believe the state should not adopt such a law for more cultural and nationalistic reasons. For example, Hanno Pevkur, a spokesman for the Reform Party, said in a statement that the amendment would change the principles of citizenship policy. According to him: "This will bring in a group of people who will acquire Estonian citizenship without knowing the language and the constitution" (Sample E-36).

anything is better than nothing, Ossinovski stated that his party now supports the law, but made it clear that more needs to be done (Samples E-36 & DE-27).[81]

Although these revisions to citizenship policies are not perfect, they are a move in the right direction. Their enactment reflects the necessary incremental change that will help to establish a more united, cohesive society in Estonia and Latvia. And these laws are also emblematic of the recurring change that Estonia and Latvia's citizenship policies are experiencing. Throughout the 1990s and well into the 2000s, both of the two nations' citizenship laws have undergone revisions that have rendered naturalization more accessible to the Russian minority. This change has not come necessarily quickly nor has it always been ideal, but it is happening—and at a moderately consistent rate that indicates it will continue to evolve in the years to come.

Language initiatives play a key role in improving the rate of citizenship, too. Through these programs, the stateless population grows more comfortable and proficient in the state language, which is arguably the largest barrier on the citizenship test. So though the language programs are not directly connected to the citizenship acts, these initiatives do increase the amount of people who can successfully naturalize. These initiatives are especially growing in Narva, which will likely aid the city's stateless population with naturalization in the future, should they choose to pursue that path.

Indirect contributors to citizenship acquisition, such as language programs, are what increase the older generation's ability to naturalize, as well. And though the stereotype is that older ethnic Russians in Latvia and Estonia oftentimes maintain the non-citizen status, if they have yet to naturalize, this is not always the case. Some from the older generation are making efforts to naturalize, but are simply having more challenges, since language acquisition is more difficult with age. For instance, sample DL-12 covered the story of Nina Samonova, an ethnic Russian who passed the citizenship exam at 97 years old.[82] Though the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs admitted that Nina was a unique case, she is still seen as an example—among citizens, politicians, and institutions in Latvia—of how naturalization is possible for everyone, as long they make a concentrated effort to accomplish it.

If more ethnic Russians have citizenship, they will likely feel more connected to the two nations. As of late 2019, approximately 61 percent of ethnic Russian residents in Latvia claim that they are proud to live in Latvia. And then 51 percent stated that, on balance, they consider themselves Latvian patriots. In previous years, these figures were significantly lower (Sample L-31).[83] And then, on a different level, there is a growing trend in Estonia where ethnic Russian

[81] The Social Democrats agreed to support the law only after having done considerable work to offer a counter-structure, which would provide more access to citizenship for Estonian youth. Though the party does not like the way the law is framed, its members do believe that anything is better than nothing, which is why they eventually supported it.

[82] Nina Samonova has lived in Latvia for 75 years. She worked as a French and Russian teacher until her retirement.

[83] For ethnic Latvians, the figures were unsurprisingly higher: 80 percent claimed to be proud to live in Latvia, and then 81 percent classify themselves as patriots of Latvia

youth classify their nationality as Estonian, even if their parents are not Estonian themselves (Sample P-36).[84]

These cases, along with citizenship trends, indicate that ethnic Russians are developing a growing connection to the state, which in years to come will improve the nation's overall social integration and allow the community to find a more defined place in society. Should the minority community feel more connected to the state, have citizenship, and also speak the national languages—then the result will be a much less ethnically-tense Estonia and Latvia, where both ethnic communities possess feelings of belonging to the state.

9.2. Russian Otherness: The Case of Contrasting Worldviews

Though growing citizenship rates and improving naturalization policies are helping to bring the minority community into Estonian and Latvian society, ethnic Russians still struggle. With certain layers of lingering "otherness" in both nations, especially with differing worldviews and perspectives, the ability for ethnic Russians to fully integrate on social levels is clearly hindered. This lingering form of otherness directly clashes with the integrative results of growing citizenship, because it lowers the minority community's overall reputation in society, therefore diluting the integrative features with isolative ones.

Otherness is defined as a process by which a dominant in-group (i.e. the titular population) constructs a dominant out-group (i.e. ethnic Russians) through the stigmatization of a difference, which then provides the basis for a negation of identity. The creation of otherness results in the social classification of two hierarchical groups: them and us (Staszak). In the case of Estonia and Latvia, the stigmatization resulting in the "them" categorization for ethnic Russians has several layers, including language, historical understandings, Soviet glorification and so forth. Some of these influencers have been previously discussed, but others have not, such as differing worldviews. This subsection will highlight the areas in which ethnic Russians have different outlooks on the world than the two titular populations, which then result in a lingering image of otherness for the minority community.[85] These differences in perspective, however, are very much the result of the beliefs of the minority community itself, on which this subsection will focus. This situation makes it so ethnic Estonians and Latvians are not the only ones "othering" ethnic Russians. In fact, in many ways, the beliefs held by ethnic Russians conversely hinder their own integration, because they appear counter to Baltic security and culture.

For example, sample P-9 reported on a recent study published by Estonia's International Centre Defence and Security (ICDS), which found that Russian-speaking youth in Estonia are not well informed about key positions of security policy. The study's authors Dmitry Teperik and

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[84] According to Estonian law, an indication of nationality is mandatory, but the individual chooses on their own as which nationality they identify.

[85] The samples used in this section come from the "Otherness" category found in the results. In Delfi Estonia and Baltijas Balss, this was the theme that appeared the most among all samples. It appeared moderately in Postimees and Delfi Latvia, but then did not appear in the government-funded news outlets of ERR and LSM. Considering all outlets together, the theme of "Otherness" appeared in approximately ten percent of all samples.

Grigory Senkiv wrote that: “Analysts at the Center for Information on Security and Defense could not ignore the views of Russian-speaking youth in Estonia on contemporary conflicts, the opinion of which is formed under the influence of information flows, where disinformation and propaganda campaigns have a significant impact.”

One example demonstrating this was through the youth’s interpretation of the war in Ukraine. According to the study, over half of respondents—51 percent to be exact—believe that Ukraine itself is more responsible for the war, rather than Russia, even though Russia was not only the actor that initiated the war, but also the one that illegally annexed a portion of Ukrainian territory. In addition to this, almost 33 percent of young ethnic Russians in Estonia (both male and female) believe that the USA is also to blame for the war. Again, this blame is in lieu of Russia, which actually started the conflict and continues to perpetuate it. Furthermore, 84 percent of those polled believe that Russia does not pose a real threat to Estonian security, even though it is listed as the nation’s number one aggressor and has previously implemented hybrid warfare techniques in the country to stir tensions in Estonian society.

Researchers at the ICDS concluded that “hostile propaganda succeeded in influencing the opinions of Russian-speaking youth in Estonia regarding the war in Ukraine.” This would explain why, in addition to the aforementioned beliefs, 61 percent of respondents also support the easing of sanctions against Russia.

Moreover, in November 2019, the Russian language leg of Delfi Estonia conducted a survey, in which it asked readers: “Do you want to go back to the USSR?”

Of the over 2,000 respondents, 45 percent claimed they would like to return to Estonia’s days as a Soviet republic (Sample DE-28).[86] For a significant portion of the older ethnic Russian population, Estonia’s days under the USSR were preferable to its current ones. Much was provided to them, including work, meaning that they did not have to compete significantly to provide for their family, even if that which they earned and the quality of life were much lower. The mentality of older Russians living in modern day Estonia has also been described as “Soviet,” because they possess a largely nostalgic opinion of life under the USSR (Sample DE-19). And, as ethnic Russians then, they enjoyed a superior status, as well, in which their ethnicity and language gave them social advantages. Now, however, their status as ethnic Russians does not aid them, and since they are older—it is more difficult to find work and use the national language.

As such, for many, the era of the USSR was preferable. However, to ethnic Estonians, occupation under the USSR came with many challenges, and therefore they view ethnic Russians’ glorification and idealization of the Soviet Union as counter to Estonian culture and language. Thus, this pro-Soviet viewpoint isolates them.

[86] Sample DE-15 also included a RusDelfi poll for Estonian readers. The poll posed the question: What would readers like to ask Vladimir Putin, if given the opportunity? The majority of respondents—40 percent—claimed they would like to ask him what the “fate” of Russians in Estonia will be. 21 percent then wanted to ask their own question, which was not included in the presented options. 11 percent wanted to ask about Donbass-Ukraine, and then nine percent about the USA. Seven percent wanted to ask about Navalny and the opposition to Putin; six percent about Kabaeva, a Russian gymnast; and then another six percent wanted to ask to which country Crimea belongs.

And then, for ethnic Russians residing in Estonia who have Russian citizenship, their political opinions and support for the Russian Federation appear in direct contrast to Estonian interests, according to sample DE-19. In Estonia, the vast majority of Russian citizens residing in Estonia support Putin, and have even been described as "loving" him. This viewpoint is sharply against that which all ethnic Estonians have, because they see Putin as expansionist, aggressive, and a modern day extension of a Soviet leader.

Their adoration of Putin is reflected through the referendum in the summer of 2020 on constitutional reforms in Russia. Among many things, the largest component of this referendum was whether or not "President" Vladimir Putin will stay in power until 2036. Russian citizens in Estonia participated in this referendum, with the majority of them supporting this autocratic, authoritative constitutional reform. There were over 7,500 who voted in this referendum in Estonia, with nearly 90 percent of citizens voting in favor to extend Putin's term and augment his power in the country (Most, 2020).[87] As a result of these opinions and beliefs, the Russian minority community in Estonia has previously been described as a "security threat" (Sample DE-8).

In Latvia, a similar situation takes place. The ethnic Russian population, often sourcing much of their information from pro-Kremlin outlets, possesses views that many Latvians view as direct clashes with their national society, consequently causing Latvians to see Russians as an "other" category and feeling that their beliefs do not align with those that are in the interests of the Latvian state.

In early 2020, the Center for Security and Strategic Research published a poll in which it asked whether or not residents are prepared to defend the country in case of a war. Ethnic Latvian respondents were generally prepared to do so, if the situation called for action, but for ethnic Russian respondents—the rate was noticeably lower. In terms of defending the country in a non-military way, 61 percent of Latvian respondents expressed their readiness to do so, but then 42 percent of ethnic Russians said they would be willing to provide that form of defense: an indication to some Latvians that they are not truly loyal to the state (Samples B-34 & DL-36).

Ethnic Russians in Latvia are also less likely to label Russia as the nation's main threat, according to a poll from early 2019, which found that only four percent of ethnic Russians classified Russia as Latvia's main aggressor, whereas 40 percent of ethnic Latvians labeled Russia as its main enemy. And then, less than nine percent of Latvians believe the USA is a potential adversary, but nearly 22 percent of ethnic Russians believe it is (Samples B-2 & B-7).

In the case of war, views are split along ethnic lines, as well. Russians believe the Latvian army could protect them in such a case, whereas Latvians believe that NATO would be the main protector. 61 percent of Latvians have faith in NATO, whereas only 31 percent of Russians do, which is likely an indicator of the successes of Russian propaganda and misinformation through news outlets. The programming found on these outlets constantly attacks and berates NATO for being a tool of Western expansionism. For the Latvian army, roughly 55 percent of Latvians have

[87] There were 7,526 Russian citizens living in Estonia who voted in this referendum. 6,747 supported it, which totaled to 89.65 percent of all voters. There were only 733—or, 9.74 percent—who opposed this referendum. 46 ballots were deemed invalid.

faith in it—six percentage points lower than NATO—but 37 percent of Russians believe it could protect them. Though this figure is still lower than the Latvian average, it is nonetheless about six percentage points higher than their faith in NATO. Then, to the frustration of ethnic Latvians, approximately 14 percent of ethnic Russians in the nation unfortunately believe that Putin and the Russian Federation could defend Latvia in case of a conflict (Sample B-7).[88] Furthermore, on a state level, only 26 percent of ethnic Russians in Latvia believe its state institutions are interested in the minority community's opinions (Sample DL-30).

9.3. Considering Both Together

Assessing both citizenship progression and lingering facets of otherness, it is difficult to envision exactly what the future holds—in this specific regard—for ethnic Russians in Estonia and Latvia regarding belonging and finding a place in society. Though the rates of citizenship are improving and on paper they are "becoming" more Estonian and Latvia, their continued difference in worldviews with the titular population contributes to their social isolation, consequently resulting in a lingering layer of otherness.

To improve their senses of belonging, it is necessary to continue to pursue citizenship, which a number of ethnic Russians are already doing. And because of the new citizenship laws, the status of a non-citizen will continue to decrease in both countries, until eventually only a small fraction of the population holds alien passports. Though the new citizenship amendments are not perfect, as several political parties pointed out, they do carry an important symbolic significance; they demonstrate that the countries are continuing to find ways to revisit their policies and slowly adjust them so that they are more accessible and beneficial to the ethnic Russian community. While some nationalists in Estonia and Latvia may oppose such changes, the vast majority of the titular populations support them, because they, too, want to see their countries grow more integrated and cohesive. Furthermore, if individuals receive citizenship, then they are going to have greater internal attachments to the nations' languages and cultures. These new citizens may not speak perfect Latvian or Estonian, as some want them to, but if they obtain citizenship—it is likely they will have greater draws to the languages than beforehand, when they were stateless, because now their identity is more grounded.

However, this aspect is not the challenging part. As noted earlier, many more individuals are making the move to acquire citizenship each year: it is a trend within both Estonia and Latvia's minority community. To further cement themselves as "belonging" in both countries, ethnic Russians need to reckon with their worldviews, which largely clash with those of Estonians and Latvians. Unfortunately, these worldviews are the result of misinformation and propaganda campaigns initiated by the Kremlin that aim to distort reality and stoke anxieties. Because ethnic Russians largely consume Russian language media, and since those channels are very prolific in both countries, they are easily exposed to such narratives. These narratives then

[88] Only 1.4 percent of ethnic Latvians share the view that Russia would protect them.

influence their worldviews and increase layers of otherness for the community, keeping them in the position of the "out-group" in the two Baltic nations.

The solution to such a problem is largely in the hands of the Latvian and Estonian governments. They must fully bring ethnic Russians into their information spaces, so that they source news free from several layers of misinformation and pro-Kremlin ideology. This, however, is much easier said than done. The legal merits do not exist to fully ban all Russian channels in the countries, and the response from the Russian minority that would ensue even if they made such a move would likely be extreme. The community would interpret that decision as linguistic discrimination and it would not encourage them to trust or frequent Latvian language channels. Therefore, there really is not a whole lot the two nations can do for the time being. Unfortunately, the most feasible plan of action is to wait—and to hope that over time, as they grow more involved and integrated in society, ethnic Russians begin to self-actualize on the falsities of these previously held beliefs. Additionally, as the older population phases out of society, so will those nostalgic, pro-Soviet perspectives, paving the way for the generation that never lived under the USSR to construct a new outlook for its ethnic community. Nevertheless, until such possibilities take hold and occur in Latvian and Estonian societies, there will continue to be a clash between the growing rates of citizens on an official level and the continuing struggle with "being" a citizen and finding a place in society on a value-based level, since so many ethnic Russians hold starkly different views than those of Estonians or Latvians.

Conclusion

In Estonia and Latvia, ethnic Russians occupy a complicated social space. With features suggesting integration and isolation, the minority community's positionality continues to shift as they navigate the complexities of living as an out-group in the two Baltic nations' post-Soviet societies. From ethnic politics to language, there are many areas of social tension that have not aided in the integration of ethnic Russians. These points of tension, however, are not entirely representative of the full picture. In both Estonia and Latvia, as the study and the previous sections demonstrated, there have been ongoing trends indicating deeper levels of integrative progression for the Russian minority. These trends shed light on what the future could hold not only for the minority community, but also for Estonian and Latvian societies as whole, while they learn to better manage and oversee their majority-minority relations. Returning then to the original question: Is the community isolated or integrated?

Each section of this thesis focused on a specific area of tension, which had been identified in the study as having a significant role in the formation of the minority community's social positionality. Analyzing the impacts such tensions leave on Estonia and Latvia's majority-minority relations, these sections focused on one specific theme each and then discursively and comprehensively investigated it, considering its own bidirectional qualities.[89]

[89] Or, in the case of ethnic politics, the purely isolative qualities were considered and assessed. This was the one section whose samples almost entirely favored isolative features and did not possess those indicating integration. Since politics is often a divisive force in society, this finding was not entirely surprising.

Through these sections, this thesis showed that the ethnic Russian community's social position in Estonia and Latvia is bidirectional. This was demonstrated through the sections' micro analyses and macro assessments of impact, which explored how each issue affects the minority community and their relationship with their home nations.

To definitively state that ethnic Russians are integrated in Estonia or Latvia is to fail to recognize the ongoing struggles they encounter with language, identity, and their portrayal in society, especially through a political lens. The community is not fully integrated. To definitively state that they are isolated, although, is to fail to acknowledge the exceptional amount of social progress they have made in the last few years. While this progress has largely taken place in a behind-the-scenes fashion, it certainly points to the possibility of an increasingly interconnected society in Estonia and Latvia that could be more free of ethnically-charged stereotypes and prejudices, and instead be bound together by a common national identity not determined by one's mother tongue or ethnicity.[90]

Considering this analysis from a macro perspective, both Latvia and Estonia's ethnic Russian communities are bidirectionally positioned in the respective national societies. However, when comparing the two countries with each other, the results indicate that—on the whole—the situation in Latvia possesses more indicators of isolation than that which Estonia experiences. Even though Latvia had several components of integration, which ultimately influence the minority community's overall bidirectional state, this Baltic nation did not possess the same amount of integrative features as Estonia. From language to city integration to citizenship, Estonia's minority community appears to be ahead of Latvia's, though not by a significant amount, in their effort to integrate and find a more harmonized position in their nation's society. This finding is demonstrated not only by the study's quantitative findings, but also through the qualitative analysis of the samples.

A reason to explain this could be simply because of population size. Latvia is a larger nation by over half a million people; consequently, it also has a larger ethnic Russian community. With a larger overall population and minority community, the government is spread thinner in its efforts to improve integration. In its application for the Capital of Culture, Narva also had the opportunity to critically reassess itself, whereas Daugavpils—Narva's Latvian equivalent—did not. The chance to re-evaluate the city's future was then provided to the Estonian government, which took this opportunity to encourage investments and municipal development within the border city, so that it can improve the quality of life for its ethnic Russian residents. There were a number of samples in the study regarding this municipal evolution, whereas very few samples even discussed Daugavpils and what its future may hold.

Another possible explanation could be the political system. Though Estonia does possess an ethnically-polarizing political scene, it is mainly spread out more along far-right, nationalistic ideology, which is very much guided by EKRE. There is a party for the ethnic Russian

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[90] I use the term "more free" rather than "completely free" because neither Estonia nor Latvia will ever have a population who fully accepts the Russian minority without any prejudices or stigmas. This is simply a reality. But, because of these integrative developments, it is possible that the current social climate will grow more accepting in the years to come, if both ethnicities can better come together to form a more cohesive state.

community in Estonia—the Centre party, which, as section four discussed, has its own set of issues surrounding corruption and efficacy—but this party is not nearly as polarizing as Latvia's two Russian parties, Harmony and the Russian Union of Latvia. These two pro-Russia parties claim to be advocates for the minority community, but their symbolic impact very much alienates ethnic Latvians from ethnic Russians and vice versa. Through the parties' actions and ethnic Russians' support for them, neither Harmony nor the Russian Union improve the universal image of the minority population in Latvia. Not all ethnic Russians support these two parties, of course. But a large portion do, and therefore that support is translated negatively by the titular population.

Furthermore, in both Estonia and Latvia, the role of the president is largely symbolic. Regardless of that, the president's selected actions and support can speak volumes to the social trajectory of the country. In Estonia, Kersti Kaljulaid has made an effort to ensure she learns more about the nation's minority community. This is evidenced by her decision to work in Narva at various points throughout the years, which showed Narva's residents that their head of state is interested in both their home city and in elevating the quality of life for the city's historically alienated Russian population. President Kaljulaid also continues her genuine advocacy for the minority population with the public statements she makes, which have called for social unity and harmony between ethnic Estonians and Russians, ending the decades of social stigmas that she believes pull Estonian society down. In Latvia, though the head of states (Raimonds Vējonis and Egils Levits) have in recent years expressed their desire for a more integrated society, they have not done nearly as much—in their symbolic role—to enact such change or to promote social cohesion. This reality is another possible reason as to why the ethnic Russian community's position in Latvia is not as integrated as Estonia's.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that Estonia experiences more integrative qualities than Latvia, both countries' minority communities do possess bidirectionality—just at varying degrees. The implications of this bidirectionality run deep on both communal and regional levels in a two-layered structure. From a communal standpoint, this positionality is mostly beneficial to the minority community. The reason being: it pushes back on previous narratives that claim ethnic Russians are entirely detached from Estonian and Latvian societies. More often than not, "isolated" has been the overarching label attached to the Russian population. Although many aspects of the community do favor isolation, such as the aforementioned ethnically-charged political systems, a one-label tag for the minority population is not emblematic of the full situation, nor is it a fair statement to make. It generalizes their place in society, disregarding the incremental progression that has manifested and continues to manifest in Estonia and Latvia.

For instance, while citizenship policies in these two Baltic nations still contain flaws, as the previous section detailed, they have grown to be more inclusive recently. The updated policies offer the chance for more non-citizens to naturalize, which presents the countries with another avenue that will slowly end the dilemma of statelessness. And though large-scale social change is preferable to incremental change, this is not what often takes place, especially with a phenomenon such as integration. On another level, Daugavpils and Narva also represent this.

The Russian enclaves of Estonia and Latvia have historically been looked down upon because of their demographics, causing some ethnic Estonians or Latvians to form nationalistic prejudices against the municipalities. However, both cities—and especially Narva, which has arguably had even more struggles in the past than Daugavpils—have experienced noticeable social development and integration over the years, thereby deconstructing former stigmas dominating national discourse, which would describe these cities as lacking a true connection to either nations. Instead, the two cities are accessing tools of integration (through different means), while also cementing their status as unique, as opposed to disconnected, and cultivating a distinctive municipal identity. Also, even with language, which has been one of the fundamental barriers to integration in the two countries, there are aspects that indicate the possibility of further integration in the future, such as though the opening of language houses and the launching of online language learning portals.

These factors, though still evolving, therefore prove that the community is not entirely isolated. This rejects previous one-label narratives, and it offers evidence to suggest that integration and isolation will continue to co-exist in this bidirectional structure in the years and decades to come. This is why, on balance, bidirectionality comes with an optimistic social outlook, rather than a pessimistic one, even if such a positionality is far from ideal.

Integration is fundamentally a two-way process in society, which requires efforts on the part of both the majority and minority communities. That is, both the titular populations and ethnic Russians of Estonia and Latvia must work in conjunction with each other to foster mutual acceptance and respect of various groups. In doing this, a deeper understanding of their cultures is produced. Estonians and Latvians must look to ways that they, as individuals from the majority population, can assist in the further integration of their ethnic Russian neighbors—rather than merely focusing on those areas in which the minority community is lacking or not up to their standards. In essence, they must temper any possible frustrations and realize that, as a social phenomenon, integration comes only with incremental change: it is a long-term process. Because of their bidirectional positionality, there will be areas of isolative qualities within the Russian community that the titular populations will dislike. But it is important to focus on building up and supporting those means in which they are integrated, so that they can further develop and grow more cemented, rather than targeting areas of isolation for which social criticism will only result in tension.

Likewise, while preserving their own culture and traditions, ethnic Russians must further embrace the traditions and cultures of Latvia and Estonia, so that they—and future generations—can construct stronger attachments to their home nations. Fervently holding onto Slavic traditions and lifestyles to the point that it alienates the titular population (i.e. glorifying Soviet monuments, celebrating May 9th, rejecting even the idea of a mono-lingual education system, etc.) will only regress the community's social growth. The minority community must embrace that which is crucial to their identity, while also letting go of former traditions whose roots or principles are inherently connected to Soviet occupation. Additionally, ethnic Russians must look deeper within their community, in order to identify and better understand those areas

of social tension that separate them from the titular populations. This bidirectionality does better describe their position in society and offer the optimistic possibility of more integration to come in Estonia and Latvia, but it certainly does not remove the reality that there is still a significant amount of work to be done for the minority community to access a deeper, more tangible level of integration.

On a regional level, the implications of this bidirectionality largely relate to the relations that Estonia and Latvia share with their neighbor to the east—the Russian Federation—and how the Kremlin views the treatment of its "compatriots abroad." Since the dissolution of the USSR, Moscow has employed false advocacy campaigns for ethnic Russians living outside of the Russian Federation through its compatriots abroad policy. This advocacy is not rooted in the authoritarian government's desire to actually help ethnic Russians, but it is instead rooted in Putin's desire to engender instability and social anxiety in the minds of ethnic Russians, with the hope that such fear will trickle down and manifest in the national societies, as well. Moscow has always used ethnicity and language as a tool to incite divisions in its former republics, whether it be Estonia, Latvia, Ukraine, and so forth. The overall objective of this false advocacy is to instill symbolic or conceptual citizenship within the ethnic Russian communities, in an attempt to communicate that Russia is the only country in the world that actively looks out for Russian culture, language, way of life, and traditions.

Because ethnic Russians are moving away from a traditionally isolated image and are transitioning into one more characterized by bidirectionality, the Kremlin has less material with which to work. This is in regards to creating anxiety and fostering tension within Estonia and Latvia's Russian minority. Russians in both countries do still consume a worrisome amount of Russian language media and possess different worldviews in regards to several topics, such Russia itself, as this thesis detailed. However, as the minority population's bidirectional position has grown, so has their connection to the nations themselves, even though some may forever consider themselves Russians over Latvians or Estonians. As a result, Russian disinformation campaigns aimed at inciting anxiety—which are a tool used to support Moscow's compatriot policy—will likely not resonate as well as they have for previous generations of ethnic Russians in these two Baltic nations, since former generations experienced more isolative features with their community back then, rather than today's contemporary community, which possesses a bidirectional mix.

With integration taking hold in more aspects of life and society in these Baltic nations, the overall impact of Russia's efforts will lessen. However, this is not to say that Russia's efforts will disappear. Wherever there are ethnic Russians, even those who feel relatively connected to the country or the state, Russia will insert itself in some capacity. That being said, the impact of these efforts will not be as large nor will their overall threat be as salient. Estonia and Latvia, even though they remain part of NATO and the EU, are also still very cautious and aware of the unlikely possibility that one day Moscow will act in a more aggressive and tangible way, as it did

in Ukraine in 2014, to "defend" its compatriots abroad.[91] The likelihood of that sort of intervention remains and will remain very, very low in both Baltic nations. But, nonetheless, that possibility does still exist. As such, being aware of that is important, so the governments can continually work on incremental ways to deter and defend against such aggression.

One tool of deterrence is through socially integrating the Russian minority, because a community that wants to live in independent Estonia and Latvia is one that would not welcome nor support Russian aggression. If such an event were to take place in the early to late 1990s, then the response would probably be different. But now, as ethnic Russians in Estonia and Latvia both profit from the positives of living in an independent EU nation, such an action would not receive a majority of support. Ethnic Russians, even if they experience social struggles in the Baltic region, do understand that life is better there than life in the Russian Federation. Therefore, this bidirectional component of ethnic Russians in Estonian and Latvian societies aids in the nations' regional security, too, because if the minority community is more connected with the two nations—then acts or efforts of aggression will not be quite as impactful.

All in all, the implications of a bidirectional positionality do meaningfully benefit the minority community and the nations of Estonia and Latvia. This communal transition, though not perfect by any means and still in need of substantial work, changes the social narrative in a notable way. The narrative goes from one singularly claiming that the community is isolated to one showing that, even if the community is isolated in certain ways, it is integrated in others. Moving forward, government officials and citizens alike should focus on cohesive and inclusive tools of integration, as Estonia and Latvia work through how to access deeper, more significant rates of integration for their ethnic Russian minority—with language, identity, education, national belonging, and more.

[91] Russia annexed Crimea shortly after the removal of a regional official language law in Ukraine, which was designed to bolster the official use of Russian in various parts of the country. Moscow claimed that the law's repealment was one of the reasons the annexation was justified. The Kremlin cited its need to defend the human rights and cultural lifestyles of its compatriots abroad. Russia views language use as an essential right. This annexation kickstarted a violent and ongoing war in the country.

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Appendices: Articles Used as Samples in the Content Analysis

Appendix A: ERR Samples

1) "More than Russian or Estonian: Narva through the eyes of its own people." *ERR*, February 4, 2019. https://news.err.ee/907196/more-than-russian-or-estonian-narva-through-the-eyes-of-its-own-people
2) "Erik Gamzejev: The Ida-Viru hostages of 21st century municipal politics." *ERR*, February 14, 2019. https://news.err.ee/910613/erik-gamzejev-the-ida-viru-hostages-of-21st-century-municipal-politics
3) "Inspectorate: Some 500 teachers lacking required language skills." *ERR*, February 19, 2019. https://news.err.ee/912048/inspectorate-some-500-teachers-lacking-required-language-skills
4) "Yana Toom: I was campaigned against in Narva." *ERR*, March 4, 2019. https://news.err.ee/916542/yana-toom-i-was-campaigned-against-in-narva
5) "'We are the mainstream,' says EKRE MP Martin Helme." *ERR*, March 14, 2019. https://news.err.ee/920318/we-are-the-mainstream-says-ekre-mp-martin-helme
6) "Court orders arrest of Narva city official suspected of corruption." *ERR*, March 28, 2019. https://news.err.ee/924303/court-orders-arrest-of-narva-city-official-suspected-of-corruption
7) "Economy should be a smart one, not based on slave labour, says EKRE leader." *ERR*, April 9, 2019. https://news.err.ee/928453/economy-should-be-a-smart-one-not-based-on-slave-labour-says-ekre-leader
8) "Investigation launched into no-confidence vote in Narva." *ERR*, April 17, 2019. https://news.err.ee/931006/investigation-launched-into-no-confidence-vote-in-narva
9) "Mihkelson: Incoming government lacking common concept on border." *ERR*, April 20, 2019. https://news.err.ee/932055/mihkelson-incoming-government-lacking-common-concept-on-border
10) "May 9 parade forbidden on Narva streets, moved to sidewalks." *ERR*, May 9, 2019. https://news.err.ee/938159/may-9-parade-forbidden-on-narva-streets-moved-to-sidewalks
11) "Russian foreign ministry, embassy, attack border treaty comments." *ERR*, May 16, 2019. https://news.err.ee/939966/russian-foreign-ministry-embassy-attack-border-treaty-comments

12) "Ida-Viru County turnout low, affected by disappointment in Centre politics." *ERR*, May 27, 2019. https://news.err.ee/946156/ida-viru-county-turnout-low-affected-by-disappointment-in-centre-politics
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Appendix B: Postimees Samples

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Appendix C: Delfi Estonia Samples

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Appendix D: LSM Samples

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Appendix E: Baltijas Balss Samples

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22) “Is it easy to be Russian? No, not in Latvia, but it is in Russia.” *Baltijas Balss,* September 8, 2019. https://bb.lv/statja/lifenews/2019/09/08/legko-li-byt-russkim-net-ne-v-latvii-a-v-rossii
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25) “Travel to Daugavpils: clean, deserted and everything is in Russian.” *Baltijas Balss,* October 10, 2019. https://bb.lv/statja/nasha-latvija/2019/10/10/puteshestvie-v-daugavpils-chisto-bezlyudno-i-vse-po-russki
26) “Professor: Russian children cannot be taught with Latvians. They will crush them with temperament.” *Baltijas Balss,* October 12, 2019. https://bb.lv/statja/politika/2019/10/12/professor-russkim-detyam-nelzya-uchitsya-s-latyshami-oni-zadavyat-ih-temperamentom
27) “If you give citizenship to everyone, then Riga can no longer be made Latvian!” *Baltijas Balss,* October 26, 2019.

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29) "Yuri Polyakov: 'I am ashamed of the Russians of Latvia.'" *Baltijas Balss,* November 13, 2019. https://bb.lv/statja/lifenews/2019/11/13/yuriy-polyakov-mne-stydno-pered-russkimi-latvii
30) "Latvian teacher: I'm afraid [the country] wants Russian children to assimilate. [Because] it's cheaper." *Baltijas Balss,* November 25, 2019. https://bb.lv/statja/nasha-latvija/2019/11/25/uchitelnica-latyshskogo-boyus-russkih-detey-hotyat-assimilirovat-eto-deshevle
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33) "In Latvia, people have to pay for speaking in Russian!" *Baltijas Balss,* December 30, 2019. https://bb.lv/statja/politika/2019/12/30/v-latvii-lyudi-dolzhny-platit-za-razgovory-na-russkom
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Appendix F: Delfi Latvia Samples

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2) “Starting today, applications for free Latvian courses in Riga have begun.” *Delfi Latvia,* February 11, 2019. https://rus.delfi.lv/news/daily/latvia/s-segodnyashnego-dnya-nachat-priem-zayavok-na-besplatnye-kursy-latyshskogo-v-rige.d?id=50818327&all=true
3) “A portal has been developed where you can learn Latvian for free.” *Delfi Latvia,* February 28, 2019. https://rus.delfi.lv/news/daily/latvia/razrabotan-portal-gde-mozhno-besplatno-uchit-latyshskij.d?id=50870863
4) “The Russian Union of Latvia nominated candidates for the European Parliament.” *Delfi Latvia,* March 2, 2019. https://rus.delfi.lv/news/daily/latvia/russkij-soyuz-latvii-vydvinul-kandidatov-v-evroparlament.d?id=50875351
5) “He is six-fingered and eats children. What nationalities do we not want to see in the ‘inner circle?’” *Delfi Latvia,* March 4, 2019. https://rus.delfi.lv/news/daily/story/on-shestipalyj-i-est-detej-kakie-nacionalnosti-my-ne-hotim-videt-v-blizhnem-kruge.d?id=50875573
6) “Over 17,000 signatures collected in defense of the Victory Monument in Riga.” *Delfi Latvia,* March 29, 2019. https://rus.delfi.lv/news/daily/latvia/v-zaschitu-pamyatnika-pobedy-v-rige-sobrano-svyshe-17-000-podpisej.d?id=50951067&all=true
7) “After the ban on ‘Russia RTR’ in Latvia, the popularity of other television channels in Russian has grown.” *Delfi Latvia,* April 12, 2019. https://rus.delfi.lv/news/daily/latvia/posle-zapreta-rossiya-rtr-v-latvii-vyrosla-populyarnost-drugih-telekanalov-na-russkom.d?id=50990217&all=true
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10) “Teachers will be checked once a year for professional suitability, including language skills.” *Delfi Latvia,* May 2, 2019.

https://rus.delfi.lv/news/daily/latvia/uchitelej-raz-v-god-budut-proveryat-na-profprigodnost-v-tom-chisle-na-znaniya-yazyka.d?id=51047739&all=true

11) "May 9 in Riga, more than one hundred thousand people came to the Liberators Monument." *Delfi Latvia,* May 9, 2019. https://rus.delfi.lv/news/daily/latvia/9-maya-v-rige-k-pamyatniku-osvoboditelyam-prishlo-bolee-sta-tysyach-chelovek.d?id=51066769&all=true
12) "A resident of Latvia passed citizenship at the age of 97 years." *Delfi Latvia,* May 29, 2019. https://rus.delfi.lv/news/daily/latvia/zhitelnica-latvii-sdala-na-grazhdanstvo-v-vozraste-97-let.d?id=51140363&all=true
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14) "MFA: Monument to Liberators defends international treaty, Latvia does not plan to violate it." *Delfi Latvia,* June 17, 2019. https://rus.delfi.lv/news/daily/story/mid-pamyatnik-osvoboditelyam-zaschischaet-mezhdunarodnyj-dogovor-latviya-ne-planiruet-ego-narushat.d?id=51199087&all=true
15) "Tsilevich about the return of Russia to PACE: you should not think in terms of 'who gave whom to whom.'" *Delfi Latvia,* June 27, 2019. https://rus.delfi.lv/news/daily/latvia/cilevich-o-vozvraschenii-rossii-v-pase-ne-stoit-myslit-kategoriyami-kto-komu-nadaval.d?id=51225407&all=true
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