

Old Dominion University

ODU Digital Commons

Graduate Program in International Studies
Theses & Dissertations

Graduate Program in International Studies

Fall 12-2021

Language and Cultural Identity in Post-Soviet Frozen Conflicts

Irina Paquette

Old Dominion University, irina.paquette@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/gpis_etds



Part of the [International Relations Commons](#), and the [Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Paquette, Irina. "Language and Cultural Identity in Post-Soviet Frozen Conflicts" (2021). Master of Arts (MA), Thesis, Political Science & Geography, Old Dominion University, DOI: 10.25777/zcys-xc56
https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/gpis_etds/140

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Program in International Studies at ODU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Program in International Studies Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ODU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@odu.edu.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL IDENTITY IN POST-SOVIET

FROZEN CONFLICTS

by

Irina Paquette

B.A. February 2016, Moldova State University, Moldova

M.A. January 2018, Ion Creanga State Pedagogical University, Moldova

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

December 2021

Approved by:

Regina Karp (Director)

Austin Jersild (Member)

Peter Schulman (Member)

ABSTRACT

LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL IDENTITY IN POST-SOVIET FROZEN CONFLICTS

Irina Paquette
Old Dominion University, 2021
Director: Dr. Regina Karp

How we, as humans, define ourselves and our national and ethnic distinction often centers on visible characteristics—physical features, group traditions, and language. Of those, language is both mutable and plays such a central role in daily life that it is often a hotly contested and manipulated factor in defining national identity. This paper examines the role language has played in the formation of crisis situations in the former Soviet Union. Linguistic identity has been used as a basis to establish the legitimacy of independence for both Soviet republics and separatist groups within those republics. As such, it is a highly manipulated factor in the development and resolution of conflicts in the region.

This thesis examines the role that linguistic identity has played in conflicts in the post-Soviet space. It looks at several case studies and extracts the various factors of linguistic identity and its interplay in daily life to build a profile of how language is manipulated in those societies. Through this lens, the paper seeks to understand how both language affects these conflicts and how the conflicts affect the evolution of linguistic ability in the regions.

By analyzing these factors, the thesis concludes that language and linguistic identity play a large role in the development of conflict in the regions, but only as tools to motivate voter bases for self-interested politicians and as a convenient lever of soft power for external influence. These factors are easily manipulated due to their visibility in all aspects of daily life and the relative mutability of linguistic ability as a factor of ethnic identity. The fact that conflict in the

European post-Soviet states is a direct benefit to Russia, as it disqualifies those states for membership in European political and security institutions, explains the prevalence of conflict in those states and the relative harmony seen in Central Asia. The paper also finds that the presence of frozen conflicts can actually have a stabilizing effect on linguistic-identity based conflict in the region by providing negotiating forums as stable avenues for the legitimate statement of grievances beyond fiery rhetoric.

This thesis is dedicated to my grandmother Nelly, whose experience, wisdom, and love will never be forgotten.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are so many people that have supported me through this process and during my time as a graduate student. To my committee chair and department chair, Dr. Regina Karp, thank you for your confidence in me as a student and for all of your support and guidance through the writing process. To my committee members, Dr. Austin Jersild and Dr. Peter Schulman, thank you for your encouragement and all of the input and suggestions that helped focus my research. To the rest of the advisors, professors, and faculty that guided my journey into international relations, thank you for your instruction in so many aspects of the discipline that will serve me well in my future endeavors.

To my amazing husband Jeff, thank you for being there for me in all of the trials and tribulations and the support you provided in this journey. To my Mom and Dad, thank you for your unending love and for instilling in me the importance of a life of learning. To my friends, both here in Norfolk and in so many places around the world, thank you for being a bedrock of support in all aspects of my life.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. MOLDOVA.....	16
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA	17
LINGUISTIC FACTORS IN CULTURAL IDENTIFICATION.....	18
STATUS AS AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE	19
EDUCATION	23
ECONOMIC FACTORS	26
POLITICAL MESSAGING.....	27
MANIPULATION AND OUTSIDE INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS.....	30
CONCLUSION.....	31
III. GEORGIA	34
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA	35
LINGUISTIC FACTORS IN CULTURAL IDENTIFICATION.....	37
STATUS AS AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE	38
ECONOMIC FACTORS	40
EDUCATION	41
POLITICAL MESSAGING.....	43
MANIPULATION AND OUTSIDE INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS.....	43
CONCLUSION.....	44
IV. ESTONIA.....	45
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA	47
LINGUISTIC FACTORS IN CULTURAL IDENTIFICATION.....	50
STATUS AS AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE	51
ECONOMIC FACTORS	52
EDUCATION	53
POLITICAL MESSAGING.....	54
MANIPULATION AND OUTSIDE INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS.....	55
CONCLUSION.....	56
V. CONCLUSION	58
REFERENCES	62
VITA.....	66

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

How we, as humans, define ourselves and our national and ethnic distinction often centers on visible characteristics—physical features, group traditions, and language. Of those, language is both mutable and plays such a central role in daily life that it is often a hotly contested and manipulated factor in defining national identity. Identity and self-identification are the bedrocks of individual choice. People strongly associate their native language with their concept of self, and therefore identify strongly with people who share a common language. In addition, linguistic diversity and ethnocultural self-identity play a strong role in individual preferences for a particular population towards domestic and foreign policy objectives. In many cases, differences in perceived kinship can cause sharp divisions between people. This can lead to hotbeds of animosity between the various people within a state and makes governing multilingual societies difficult. For this reason, many scholars believe in the theory that linguistic diversity contributes to a population that is more difficult to govern and to reduced governmental efficiency.

Occasionally, linguistic diversity intensifies interethnic strife and calls for independence or armed conflict. Anderson and Paskeviciute write, “Consistent with received wisdom about the negative effects of heterogeneity, we find that ethnic and linguistic diversity decrease levels of interpersonal trust.”¹ Where linguistic diversity draws a line of division, language is used as a common divider playing a strong role in regional conflicts. Politicians can easily prey on

¹ Anderson and Paskeviciute, “How Ethnic and Linguistic Heterogeneity Influence the Prospects for Civil Society,” 798.

vulnerable populations and turn them into a solid voting base simply by speaking and promoting their preferred language. Details such as the script used for writing a language and even by what name a language is referred to can be instant sources for division. As language plays a large role in how people view themselves and their connection to their state, this can quickly devolve into a cleavage that can lead to conflict and separatist ambitions.

Across the landscape of the post-Soviet space, a large number of conflicts arose that have yet to be resolved. These conflicts, as Smetana and Ludvík write, became known as “frozen conflicts.” They write: “the label ‘frozen’ was supposed to highlight the fact that although the full-scale fighting had already stopped in the particular case, the conflict was not fully resolved, and the situation could easily slip back into violence.”² These “frozen conflicts” are a source of instability for the countries where they exist. The post-Soviet space is home to many of the world’s frozen conflicts, and linguistic identity is a key divisive issue in most of these conflicts. Kanavillil Rajagopalan describes linguistic identity as “largely a political matter” and describes how languages can be used as “flags of allegiance.”³

In this context, the use of the term ‘linguistic identity’ describes the language to which one ascribes his or her belonging with a particular group, rather than the language or languages that the person is able to communicate in. When contrasted to other regions of world with similar ethnolinguistic diversity, the post-Soviet space has a larger number of frozen conflicts that show no sign of resolving. Understanding why language has become a particularly divisive issue in the post-Soviet space can provide insights into how language identity can be manipulated and exploited.

² Smetana and Ludvík, “Between War and Peace,” 1.

³ Rajagopalan, “The Politics of Language and the Concept of Linguistic Identity,” 17.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 left a collection of satellite states that were not prepared for self-governance. Within the turmoil that ensued, a number of both nonviolent and violent conflicts erupted for the self-independence of minority ethnicities that were marginalized in the Soviet state. Most of those conflicts remained unresolved, with the power of the incumbent state counterbalanced by the Russian Federation as a benefactor state supporting the separatist aspirations. The basis of the original grievances focused on national identity and the ability of an ethnic minority to thrive under the new borders of the 15-state former empire. In this context, it is impossible to ignore the role language plays in defining national identities and how national identities have played a role in state-building in the post-Soviet Westphalian world.

The Soviet Union's official collapse was precipitated by a summit of several of its member republics in Belovezha and the signing of accords establishing the context for independence from Moscow. The establishment of post-Soviet Westphalian nation-states in the Belovezha Accords surfaced a great deal of previously suppressed ethnic turmoil. Leaders in the former primary Soviet Socialist Republics believed the natural order in a post-Soviet system would result in their republics becoming independent states with their borders intact. National and ethnic minorities saw collapse as an opportunity to declare independence for themselves. Leaders in these countries seized upon cultural identity and uniqueness as a means of justifying their need for an independent state, and used language policy as a tool for manipulating their bases.

In the years since the Soviet collapse, many of these successor states fell into civil wars that resulted in a series of frozen conflicts along the post-Soviet space. These frozen conflicts bear a number of similarities, but the primary among them is the existence of a separatist region that makes claims of international sovereignty from their parent state. The reasons put forward

for separation were, first and foremost, a claim that a large ethnic minority in the region did not identify with the rest of the state's population due to ethnocultural, religious, and linguistic differences. In order to establish the legitimacy of their claims for independence, these de-facto states point to the Westphalian notion of the nation-state and their individual claims of nationalistic distinction. Often claims of national distinction are made upon the existence of a national language separate from other languages in the region.

Almost 30 years have passed since the Soviet Union collapsed into 15 independent successor states. Each of those states has struggled with defining its new place in the international system and how to deal with the legacy of 70 years of Soviet rule from Moscow. Much of the conflict that erupted after the fall of the Soviet Union can be attributed to a unique confluence of policies that were in place under Soviet Rule. A combination of a constantly changing policy towards the use of Russian vice titular and tribal languages, the large migration of ethnic Russians and Russian speakers into formerly non-Russian speaking nations, and the de facto marginalization of native languages over time in favor of Russian for conducting business in the post-Soviet space led to a set of circumstances across much of the space that caused a cultural divide between populations that self-identify as Russian-speaking vice those that do not. These divides were exacerbated by years of oppressive manipulation from Moscow and by the sharp changes in policy that followed the collapse as local politicians struggled to maintain power and justify national independence.

The first factor influencing the region is Stalin's legacy of forced migrations. The Kremlin needed the ability to control "a multiplicity of ethnic and linguistic groups, and their varying forms of loyalties and belongings"⁴ and used "the wholesale moving of populations to

⁴ Prina, "Linguistic Justice, Soviet Legacies and Post-Soviet *Realpolitik*," 10.

reconstruct the geographic, social, and ethnic boundaries of the country” as the mechanism to do so.⁵ The Soviet Union additionally established a system of ‘ethnic federalism’ and institutionalized ethnicity as a fundamental part of the Soviet experience.⁶

The population of the republics was mixed with native Russian speakers, with the intention of forcing the local population to assimilate with Russian culture. The intent of this policy was to intersperse Russian speakers with non-Russian speaking populations in order to push for greater homogenization across the Soviet territory. In concert with this policy, however, the Soviet Union also pursued a policy of promoting indigenous and native languages as a means to reduce linguistic-identity based conflict. David Marshall writes, “In the early 1930s there were approximately 130 languages in the USSR, many the product of official encouragement of ‘small dialects.’”⁷ At the same time, Soviet governance was almost exclusively conducted in the Russian language, forcing even local leaders to be Russian-speaking in order to be successful.

Over the course of its history, the Soviet Union pursued a relatively bipolar path with respect to language integration. At the beginning of the Soviet transformation, even as they promoted local languages, leaders in the individual republics were often relocated from Russia—usually from Moscow specifically—in order to promote the use of Russian as a language of common business and governance. The relocation of Russian passport holders helped to ensure that territories were more loyal to Moscow and to break regional loyalties. Nearly all high-ranking ministers, government office holders, and collective farm representatives were Russian, or at least native Russian speakers.

⁵ Shearer, “Elements Near and Alien,” 838.

⁶ Prina, “Linguistic Justice, Soviet Legacies and Post-Soviet *Realpolitik*,” 10.

⁷ Marshall, “The Role of Language in the Dissolution of the Soviet Union,” 35.

By the time the Soviet Union decided to pursue a policy of subjugating national languages to promote a common cultural identity of Soviet nationality, the concept of language among the population was already very confused. Aktürk writes, “Khrushchev repudiated many Stalinist policies” with the goal of “linguistic, (anti)religious, administrative, and economic homogenization in order to create a supraethnic Soviet community.”⁸ After decades of Russian being the de facto state language for most purposes, the Soviet republics often found themselves with a sizeable population of individuals that self-identified with a language that they were increasingly unable to communicate in. Kulyk writes, “the change in language competence and use was not accompanied by a commensurate change in linguistic and ethno-cultural identities. [...] The declaration of a certain native language reflected not so much communicative competence or practices as loyalty to the eponymous ethnic group whose distinguishing feature was considered to be the possession of this language.”⁹ Feeling increasingly disconnected from the language of their ethnic kin led to even stronger feelings of needing to hold on to their cultural heritage.

These rifts between language usage and linguistic self-identification were put to political utility by the Russian Federation in the years following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The disappearance of a strong central government to manage the disaffection of minority ethnic groups led to a resurgence of linguistic conflicts in the early 1990s. In the post-Soviet states with borders to Europe, Russia was especially heavy-handed in stoking conflicts driven by linguistic sentiments. Where language conflicts erupted due to titular ethnic groups attempting to pivot away from Russia and towards nation-state independence, Russia moved to support ethnic

⁸ Aktürk, “Regimes of Ethnicity,” 148.

⁹ Kulyk, “Language Identity, Linguistic Diversity and Political Cleavages,” 632.

Russian and Russophone minorities to ensure a balance of military strength between the central government powers and separatist regions.

Russia saw political utility in making these investments especially in the countries on its western periphery, where it saw the eventual thawing of the relationship between these countries and NATO or the European Union as a direct threat to its sovereignty in the “near abroad.” Russia was directly benefiting from the conflicts that erupted in these countries, as it helped to maintain a degree of instability that made it much more difficult, if not impossible, for these countries to join Western security organizations or integrate more fully into the European economic community. As Pohl writes, “The continuation of this conflict and the unresolved status of Abkhazia’s statehood serve Moscow’s interests in a number of ways. Not only does it allow Russia to continue to hold a military, political, and economic presence, [...] it also prevents Tbilisi from developing stronger regional and international ties, especially with NATO, which does not offer membership to states with territorial disputes.”¹⁰ By preventing these countries from establishing normalized relations with the West, Russia could ensure their continued reliance on Moscow for economic and political prosperity.

The direct benefits that Russia enjoyed from instability on its western periphery were not as prevalent—or present at all—in the countries on its southern periphery. Where linguistic conflict was stoked through both internal and external political pressure in the European post-Soviet landscape, the countries of Central Asia found a new era of coexistence. This can be seen in the constitutions and language policies of these countries, where linguistic unity is explicitly specified and where multilingual societies have found emerging languages of interethnic

¹⁰ Pohl, “Frozen Conflicts, De Facto States, And Enduring Interests In The Russian Near Abroad,” 33–34.

communication both organically and peacefully. For instance, in Kazakhstan, the first president Nursultan Nazarbayev was vocal and proud of the country's ethnic harmony despite a wide array of ethnicities and languages resident there. In 2011, President Nazarbayev signed a decree on language development in Kazakhstan, encouraging state language adoption while ensuring protections for all of the languages spoken in the country. Per the Kazakhstan president's official website: "The goal of the program – a harmonious language policy, which provides full-scale functioning of the state language as the most important factor for strengthening national unity by preservation of languages of all ethnic groups living in Kazakhstan."¹¹

The tides of cultural turmoil Russia stoked in its European post-Soviet neighbors created an environment where local populations were increasingly susceptible to radicalization. As younger generations of Soviet citizens became further and further removed from the languages of their ancestors, they became increasingly disaffected with Soviet policy towards national sovereignty within the republics. As the youth increasingly held onto their ethnolinguistic identity, they became targets for polarizing rhetoric from politicians at both the local and republic level who were intent on using divided populations to build a strong political base to solidify their own power.

This feeling of disaffection was intensified by exclusionary language policies, especially in the period following Soviet collapse. Ethnic Russians transformed almost overnight from the favored ethnicity in the Soviet polity to ethnic minorities who were disfavored by new policies promoting titular languages and ethnicities. Lubomyr Hajda writes, "From a politically dominant majority in the Soviet Union as a whole, the Russians became minorities in fourteen of the fifteen successor states where political power passed chiefly into the hands of natives, while

¹¹ "Strategies and Programs."

the Russian language gave way, in varying degrees, to the local languages as vehicles for social and political advancement.”¹² When states fail to recognize the national language of an ethnic minority, it can exclude that minority community from economic opportunity and lay claims of oppression that drive the call for independence from the incumbent state.

In addition to exclusion from economic opportunity, exclusionary language policies also generally extended into politics, where non-state-language speakers generally cannot hold important or prestigious positions in government, in the court system or in the military or police. The same exclusions often apply in the educational system: posts of school directors, university presidents, deans and others are impossible to get for people who don't speak the state language. These exclusions lead populations to feel like their national language—and by extension—their national identity is under assault.

To understand how the unique confluence of language policies in the Soviet Union led to the establishment of so many frozen conflicts in the years following its collapse, this paper will examine several of the conflicts in the post-Soviet space. Language as a dividing factor in a population plays a key role in conflicts such as in the Transnistria region of Moldova and the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions of Georgia. The paper will contrast the situations in these frozen conflict regions to similar linguistic challenges which exist in the post-Soviet space, such as in the Narva region of Estonia where conflict has never spiraled into armed movements for independence as it has elsewhere.

Conversely, in many other parts of the world, populations that speak different languages live together in relative harmony, such as in Switzerland and Belgium. While conflict over use of language played a large role in Quebec's two failed referendums for independence from

¹² Hajda, “Ethnic Politics and Ethnic Conflict in the USSR and the Post-Soviet States,” 249.

Canada, armed insurrection has never been a concern. These countries do not experience the level of divisive conflict that exist in most of the post-Soviet space. Indeed, even within the post-Soviet space, there is a sharp difference between the level of conflict in the European post-Soviet states vice the Central Asian states. Understanding how and why these outcomes have differed can bring new approaches for solving existing conflicts.

This paper will explore the reasons and salient characteristics of linguistic identity that cause some parts of the world to fall into civil unrest while others thrive. Because it is so visible, language policies and choices are subject to intense scrutiny. Politicians must make choices as to which language to speak and risk alienating groups that don't speak the language. These choices allow politicians to manipulate language and language policy for their own interests, and often it is deliberate policy choices surrounding the use of language in state governance that drives conflict or harmony within the population.

The paper will explore several multilingual societies to look at how language has played a role in the conflict's development. It will look at both the historical development of the conflict before and during the Soviet period plus the more recent developments in the political landscape. Understanding how the situations differ between these different areas—those that live in relative harmony despite linguistic heterogeneity, those that struggle with linguistic divides but have remained peaceful, those where calls for separation from a patron state have occurred but were nonviolent, and those where calls for separation bubbled over into a hot conflict—requires an analysis of the specific situations, circumstances, and policies that have led them to their current state. Specifically, this paper will look at the ethnocultural evolutionary history of the regions and the history of exclusionary linguistic policies as the foundations of strong ethnolinguistic cleavages within the political landscapes of several regions.

Understanding the motivation of the separatist regions to separate requires an understanding of both the “state” motivations as well as their underlying population. When leaders want to separate from their incumbent state, they require the voice of their population to ratify their decision in order to legitimate it internationally. Comparing and contrasting the foundations of conflict in post-Soviet separatist regions with areas of comparatively less turmoil will allow for the building of a model from which an analysis of frozen conflicts in the post-Soviet space can be conducted. From this model, it will be possible to develop a potential set of actions or policies that could be taken to ease ethnolinguistic tensions and lead to a peaceful resolution of existing conflicts. The goal of the paper is to use these case studies to develop a framework for understanding language in the context of frozen-conflict nation building and to determine if there is a pathway towards peace in those regions through the use of inclusionary linguistic policies.

In the next several chapters, the paper will develop a baseline for a historic understanding of sociolinguistic factors that make up the basis of a national identity. It will explore the linguistic factors that most acutely form the basis of national identity and develop a model for comparing the factors laid out in the paper as applied to current frozen conflicts in the post-Soviet space. Once a model is developed, the paper will explore several case studies across the post-Soviet space and compare/contrast those conflicts to the expected outcomes based on the developed model. Given the outcome of the case study comparison, the paper will develop a set of conclusions and common strategies that are or may be successful based on how language and cultural identity are used and manipulated in service of existing conflicts.

In the early 90s after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Transnistria became one of the first frozen conflicts in the space. When Moldova declared independence from the Soviet Union,

the government in Chisinau's moves to change the state language threatened the mostly Russian-speaking population across the Dniester. The prospect of the having their ethnicity subsumed into a mostly Romanian state was the precursor for a civil war that resulted in a de facto independent Transnistrian state. Politicians in Chisinau use the language divide to further their political ends. Promises to make Russian the second state language drove Vladimir Voronin's successful presidential campaign, and appeals to language issues continues to be a topic in campaigns across the country.

Transnistria is a good example of how language can build a new concept of nation. In 1991-1992, during the Transnistrian war, a concentrated population of Russophones residing across the Dniester River fought a war against the government in Chisinau out of fear of being subsumed under a reunited Romania. Their primary grievances with the Moldovan government in Chisinau were related to linguistic policies: the adoption of Moldovan/Romanian as the official state language and the return of written Moldovan/Romanian to the Latin script. They feared these language policies only represented a precursor to an attempt to reunite Moldova with Romania, leading to further minimalization of Russian as a language of commerce and government and further marginalizing the Russian speaking populations on the left bank.¹³ Today, the people of Transnistria mostly identify as "Russian" rather than as Ukrainian or other Russophone nationalities. How these national myths form around lingual factors can help determine the role of language in national identity in the former Soviet states.

Unlike the Transnistrian conflict, the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia have been brewing for centuries. Despite the long-enduring nature of the conflicts, the kind of present-day language policies that affect the region, such as Abkhazian-exclusionary policies for government

¹³ Prina, "Linguistic Justice, Soviet Legacies and Post-Soviet *Realpolitik*," 6.

service, are almost exclusively modern in origin. These policies emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s at the end of the Soviet period and continued to become increasingly extreme until the 2008 Russo-Georgian war solidified both Abkhazia and South Ossetia as *de facto* independent states and legitimized the two regions' language policies.

In Estonia, the situation differs greatly from both Moldova and Georgia because the rapid transition of Estonia from the Soviet Union to NATO precluded any attempts by Russia to stoke a frozen conflict. As such, the region did not suffer from any civil war or other hot conflict and does not currently harbor a frozen conflict or *de facto* state. Despite this difference, the linguistic-identity based conflict that plagues both Moldova and Georgia is also present in the northeastern part of the country, where a significant Russian speaking minority refuses to learn or speak the Estonian language. In the absence of a frozen conflict, Russia has doubled down on the kinds of Russian-language information campaigns that it uses throughout the European post-Soviet space in an attempt to destabilize the country and foment disunity to weaken NATO's eastern flank.

The paper will attempt to answer the question: to what extent has language and its part in driving cultural identity played a role in the establishment of, and ongoing division in, frozen conflicts in the post-Soviet space. How is Russia continuing to use language as a tool to drive division and promote frozen conflicts in the post-Soviet space? Through the case studies, the paper will show how language, as a central part of cultural identity saturated with meaning, can be manipulated and used as a source of cultural division. As the principal instrument for social interaction, it is a key component of self-identity in the narrative of frozen-conflict nation-building and has a large role in the conduct of frozen conflicts in the post-Soviet space.

Politicians looking to stoke popular conflict for their own power will rally their base through the use of incendiary language designed to stoke unrest. Comai and Venturi write, “Policy-makers supporting a national revival movement, in order to be successful, must convince residents of a territory that fluency in the titular language is going to be an asset.”¹⁴ These strategies can be successful due to the fear among some populations that they will be excluded from the functions of government and isolated from its support. This is a tactic that works well in areas that have traditionally seen many years of interethnic strife. Years of conflict between Russian speakers and native language speakers due to decades of forced migration policies is one of the reasons the post-Soviet space is so susceptible to these types of conflicts.

Interethnic conflict has led to a pattern of post-Soviet language patterns that shares a lot of similarities across the various conflicts. The shared history of Soviet language manipulation has led to a generation of citizens that views the other language with distrust. Language is seen as an instrument of oppression and soft power that should be shunned, leading to a younger generation that is increasingly looking to world languages—and especially English—as the means to a better future. As these migration patterns continue, it can become harder and harder to find solutions to language conflict due to the increasing desperation to protect language identities and their positions in society in the face of changing language use and norms.

Coupled with heavy economic migration, the population of citizens who remain in areas of frozen conflict are growing older and less likely to be conversant in the language of the ethnic others. The dream of a post-Soviet state with a shared state language continues to be something difficult, if not impossible, to attain. The increasing inclination of Russia and pro-Russian

¹⁴ Comai and Venturi, “Language and Education Laws in Multi-Ethnic de Facto States,” 888.

minority groups to use soft power tactics and to step in to protect and elevate Russian language over state languages continues to challenge state language policies across the post-Soviet space.

Understanding the role of language and cultural identity is important when attempting to find multicultural and interethnic solutions to frozen conflicts. Each of the post-Soviet scenarios presented have different foundational histories, but they all share the common experience of linguistic policy under the Soviet Union. Kulyk writes that, “national identity is both manifested and constructed” in domains “such as national symbols, historical memory, citizenship and foreign policy.”¹⁵ While the end-state of each conflict largely relies on the historical foundation—and therefore resulted in slightly different governmental and linguistic structures—the common experiences they shared formed the catalyst for the hot conflicts that emerged. Understanding how these factors were manipulated by domestic politicians and foreign powers drives a deeper understanding of the tactics, techniques, and procedures and will help drive more successful strategies for soft-power competition.

¹⁵ Kulyk, “Language Identity, Linguistic Diversity and Political Cleavages,” 630.

CHAPTER II

MOLDOVA

The seeds for the frozen conflict in Moldova were sown long before the collapse of the Soviet Union, but the proximate cause for most of the country's present-day struggles originated in a 1989 language law passed by a nationalist-majority government in the waning years of Gorbachev's *glasnost*. Emboldened by the weakening control exerted by Moscow over the republic, the government passed laws that sought to displace Russian as the primary language of the country. The 1989 law established Romanian as the only official language of Moldova and transitioned the language from Cyrillic to Latin script.

Remembering the days of the pre-World War II era—when current-day Moldova was united in the kingdom of Romania—many ethnic minorities and other Russophones living primarily on the left bank of the Dniester River were incensed. They remember the period of Romanianization as one of oppression and a lack of minority rights, and they feared that the 1989 language law was a signal that the government in Chisinau would seek to reunite with Moldova's western neighbor. The residents of the left bank believed a reunification would mean the loss of rights and status in the new Romania. Matthew Ciscel writes, "Based on disturbingly nationalistic tendencies emerging in the Popular Front and unfounded fears of imminent unification with Romania, leaders in Transnistria, which had never been part of Romania, declared their own independence shortly thereafter."¹⁶

¹⁶ Ciscel, "Reform and Relapse in Bilingual Policy in Moldova," 16.

The 1990 Transnistrian declaration of independence kicked off a series of events that eventually led to civil war between volunteers living on the left bank—backed by Russian military forces—and the Moldovan national army and police forces. After 4 months of hot conflict that lasted from March to June 1992, the fighting subsided and a frozen conflict lay in its wake.¹⁷ Today, the self-styled “Pridnestrovian Moldovan Republic,” more commonly known in the West as Transnistria, is made up of a mix of ethnic Russians, Ukrainians, and Moldovans who live in a *de-facto* independent state.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Moldova’s defining geographic feature is the Dniester River, which served as a historical dividing line and lends its name to the Transnistria (across the Dniester) separatist region whose de-facto border with the rest of Moldova largely rests along the river’s path. The river marks the traditional border of today’s ethnically Moldovan and Romanian people. It is, therefore, not surprising that the people living on each bank of the river exhibit very different ethnic and linguistic preferences.

On the right bank, which lies primarily to the west of the Dniester River, the ethnocultural makeup comprises a population of more than 80% self-identified Moldovan or Romanian people—a number that jumps to nearly 90% when the population of the primarily Turkic-peoples populated autonomous region of Gagauzia. The remainder of the population is a mix of Ukrainians, Russians, and Bulgarians as well as a collection of smaller minority groups. Outside of Transnistria and Gagauzia, Moldovan/Romanian is spoken by 80% of the population as their mother tongue and 78% use the language in day-to-day business transactions.¹⁸

¹⁷ Kolsto and Malgin, “The Transnistrian Republic,” 109–10.

¹⁸ “Key Results of the 2014 Population and Housing Census.”

The breakdown of Moldovan/Romanian vice Russian speakers in the country shows a sharp difference between city and village residents, with a significant Russian speaking population in Chisinau, Balti, and Cahul as compared to the villages. Russian is also significantly more prevalent of a language in the Gagauzia region and in the north, where both Russian and Ukrainian become more widespread in the areas near the Ukrainian border.¹⁹ The disparity between Russian speakers in cities speaks to the effect that migration had on Moldova, with Russian migration generally attracted to cities for manufacturing work and higher-paid management jobs as opposed to the villages where less prosperous professions were all that were available.

By contrast, the left bank consists of a population that is nearly evenly split between persons of Romanian, Ukrainian, and Russian descent. This disparity stems partly from the geographic significance of the Dniester River, and partly from the history of Moldova's formation. The Dniester River formed the historical border between the ancient peoples of Bessarabia when the left bank of the river was part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic before the Soviet Union laid claim in 1940 to what is now the right-bank portion of Moldova.

LINGUISTIC FACTORS IN CULTURAL IDENTIFICATION

One of the major difficulties in resolving the differences between ethnic groups in Moldova are the strong ties between language and ethnic identification. As the term "Moldovan" is generally used to refer to the ethnic descent of an individual rather than their country of citizenship, it is subject to manipulation as Moldovan citizens self-identify either with their Romanian heritage or with their Soviet heritage. Citizens of Moldova that self-identify with their Russian or Soviet heritage do not wish to be referred to as Romanian, as that term is

¹⁹ "Population and Housing Census in 2014."

closely associated with campaigns for reunification and the heroes and myths of the Romanian kingdom.

Because each ethnic minority possesses its own titular language, these issues of ethnocultural self-identification carry over into the issues of naming the state language in Moldova. Because laws targeting language, its teaching, and its use are all common parts of building a multi-ethnic state, this fundamental problem of naming the language prevents further progress towards reconciliation. The rift between the two sides in defining even a name for the language that is spoken and the strong emotional reaction the names cause make it difficult to reconcile. Russian-speaking Moldovan citizens tend to want to emphasize Moldova's uniqueness from Romania, as bring a Moldovan citizen should not carry with it the need to identify with the ethnic heritage of Romania. Romanian/Moldovan speakers tend to choose the name that more closely aligns with their Romanian brothers, as they see a kinship with Romania as a gateway to the European Union.

Furthermore, the split between the left and right banks on the proper alphabet for use with the Romanian/Moldovan language creates a rift in the language that carries over into cultural identification. Residents of the left bank associate their Moldovan heritage with the Moldovan language written in Cyrillic, and harbor a deep distaste for the study or use of the language in Latin script. This cleavage drives the two component Moldovan ethnic groups further apart and further complicates efforts to bring the country together.

STATUS AS AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

The official language of the Republic of Moldova has been subject to significant debate. In the last years of the Soviet Union, politicians in Chisinau passed a law declaring Moldovan the official state language and transitioned the language to Latin script in place of Cyrillic. This

was due, in part to what Federica Prima describes as, “ethnic mobilization, including mass demonstrations organized by the Popular Front,” which led to several new laws including “the Law on the Status of the State Language and the Law on the Functioning of the Languages Spoken in the Territory of the Republic of Moldova.”²⁰ This reform was the Language Law of 31 August 1989, now a national holiday ambiguously called *Limba Noastră* [Our Language], (after a well-known nationalistic poem from the early twentieth century by Alexei Mateevici). The law achieved three reform goals: establishing Romanian as the majority language, making it the sole official language of the republic, and returning it to the Latin script.²¹

The language transition stoked fears among the predominately Russian-speaking population on the left bank of the Dniester River that Moldova may reunite with Romania and that Russian would cease to be a language of communication in the country. To prevent the erosion of Russian-speaking minority rights, authorities on the left bank declared themselves independent of Moldova and formed the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic.²²

It is easy to see why the predominately Russian-speaking minority population in Moldova had such a strong reaction to the sudden change. The changes instituted as part of the 1989 and early 1990s language laws significantly altered the status quo in the Republic of Moldova. Throughout the Soviet period, both Russian and Moldovan enjoyed *de-jure* status as official languages. In practice, however, communication among the political and business elites—and by extension most city residents—was performed almost exclusively in Russian. With this new law, Russian was subjugated to Romanian/Moldovan which was elevated to the status of the only official state language.

²⁰ Prina, “Linguistic Justice, Soviet Legacies and Post-Soviet *Realpolitik*,” 57.

²¹ Ciscel, “Reform and Relapse in Bilingual Policy in Moldova,” 20.

²² Ciscel, 20.

Mathieu Rochambeau discusses this change when he writes, “this social situation got challenged after 1989, when the National Movement started in Moldova and quickly launched Romanisation policies and an ethnic agenda, leading the Transnistrians intimidated and feeling manipulated by these new linguistic discrimination. Indeed the Moldova language law established a switch in the language policies in Moldova.”²³ The language law appears to have achieved its goal: the percentage of Moldovan citizens who report that they speak Russian has steadily declined in comparison to the state language.

This did not come about easily, as officials and leaders in Chisinau were forced to provide protections and resources to encourage the adoption of the state language. As Federica Prina writes, the state language was “a 'minorized majority language' (a majority language that necessitates the protection normally reserved to engendered languages); in turn, Russian in post-Soviet Moldova possesses a number of the attributes of a 'majorized minority language' (the language of a numerical linguistic minority but de facto with the prestige of a majority language).”²⁴ Ciscel points out ways in which specific laws pushed the state language, writing: “the study of the state language of the Republic of Moldova is obligatory in all educational institutions. The requirement to teach and support it is established by the educational standards of the State.”²⁵ At the same time, language laws that excluded Russian from state-language status were the impetus for the hot conflict and civil war. Charles King writes, “in 1989 the Transnistrians’ grievances were almost exclusively associated with the language laws and the threat of union with Romania.”²⁶

²³ Rochambeau, “The Perpetuation of Frozen Conflicts by De Facto States to Gain International Recognition,” 21.

²⁴ Prina, “Linguistic Justice, Soviet Legacies and Post-Soviet *Realpolitik*,” 53.

²⁵ Ciscel, “Reform and Relapse in Bilingual Policy in Moldova,” 21.

²⁶ King, “Moldovan Identity and the Politics of Pan-Romanianism,” 360.

Following in the footsteps of the national language law, the Moldovan constitution also lists Moldovan—written in Latin script—as the only official state language. While the term “Moldovan” rather than “Romanian” already represents a step back from the early attempts to reestablish a common cultural heritage with Romania in the late Soviet period, it still represents a major shift from the existing norm. While various politicians aligned with Russia have promised myriad reforms associated with the Russian language, to include elevating its status in law and the constitution to the status as a second official state language, no such attempts have ever been successful and Russian continues to be a second-class language in the law on the right bank of the Dniester. As Ciscel writes, “But, they have also waged a series of campaigns to roll back some of the reforms of the 1990s, most notably attempting to raise Russian to official status alongside Moldovan, which they insist is separate from Romanian.”²⁷

By contrast, citizens living in the Transnistria separatist region live in relative language harmony. Within this *de-facto* independent polity, the government recognizes three languages as official languages: Moldovan (written in Cyrillic), Russian, and Ukrainian. Comai and Venturi write: “There are currently three main pieces of Transnistria’s legislation that deal directly with Languages. [...] All these documents go to great lengths in stressing the equality of its three official languages [...] in all spheres, from public offices to education, and include provisions meant to meet the needs of those whose mother tongue is not included among the official languages.”²⁸ While Russian does have a significant advantage in the region as a language of interethnic communication between the three ethnic groups that make up the large majority of its population, this advantage is a choice made among regional residents based on convenience and

²⁷ Ciscel, “Reform and Relapse in Bilingual Policy in Moldova,” 17.

²⁸ Comai and Venturi, “Language and Education Laws in Multi-Ethnic de Facto States,” 890.

historical precedent rather than government edict and is rarely a major source of unrest among ethnic groups.²⁹

The insistence from Chisinau not to recognize Cyrillic Moldovan or Russian as official languages, and the strong desire in Tiraspol to exclude Latin-script Moldovan to invade the territory has created a sharp divide between the residents of the left and right banks of the river. The lack of a resolution in this regard has been a serious hurdle in attempts to bridge the divides between the two governments and their people.

EDUCATION

In the days of the Moldavian Socialist Soviet Republic, bilingualism was enforced through the use of education policy. While parents had a choice in the primary language of instruction in the schools where they placed their children, in Moldovan-language schools Russian was a mandatory subject. The primary goal of Soviet education policy was, as Roper writes, “to russify the indigenous titular population” as a counter to the prior Romanian governments use of education “as a means to promote Romanian language and culture in the newly acquired region of Moldova.”³⁰

While the primary stated purpose of these policies was to improve bilingualism, the policies were written in such a way as to favor the use of Russian over Romanian on the territory of Moldova. As Ciscel writes, “While education was available to most in the national language of choice and bilingualism was officially promoted, the *de facto* policies and practices favoured Russian, which was, in many fields, the only language of higher education, and the only language taught as a mandatory subject in all schools.”³¹ This provided a foundation of

²⁹ Comai and Venturi, 890.

³⁰ Roper, “The Politicization of Education,” 503.

³¹ Ciscel, “Reform and Relapse in Bilingual Policy in Moldova,” 16.

bilingualism in school-aged children and ensured both languages were at least widely understood among the population. While this language choice was theoretically protected in higher education as well, in practice nearly all higher education opportunities were offered exclusively in Russian.

Under the 1989 language law and other laws passed in the early days of Moldovan independence from the Soviet Union, this paradigm has shifted significantly. Today, in Moldova the law guarantees a right to education in the language of choice. The law does, however, require that students are provided instruction in the state language. In place of other minority languages and rather than require Russian, students can now choose from a menu of foreign language options. Ciscel writes, “The trends suggest an increasing demand for education in the state language and a troubling move away from institutionally supported local bilingualism (in Romanian and Russian). [...] Essentially, the numbers indicate that four out of five children in Moldova are educated in schools where Romanian is the primary language of instruction and only foreign languages, mostly English and French, are taught as subjects. Additionally, the exclusion of Russian from these schools serves the goal of creating a greater role and increased prestige for the state language.”³²

As students graduate into post-secondary education, a large shift in language of instruction has taken place since independence from the Soviet Union. Roper points out that, during the Soviet period, “in the capital of Chisinau, the polytechnic university treated Romanian as a foreign language.”³³ This has changed dramatically and now a majority of educational opportunities in Chisinau are provided in Romanian as the primary language of instruction. As

³² Ciscel, 22.

³³ Roper, “The Politicization of Education,” 504.

Ciscel writes, “in the 31 institutions at [the post-secondary] level in Moldova, 69.5% of the 123,000 students in 2007 were instructed through the medium of the state language, while 27% studied in Russian and 3.5% in other languages, both local and foreign.”³⁴

These trends are also called out by Federica Prina, who points out that the Russian language had historically been seen as the language of the intelligentsia during the Soviet period, and that legacy continues to hold in modern-day Moldova. Despite efforts to improve the use of Moldovan/Romanian in post-secondary education, it is still not seen as the primary language for that level of education among a portion of the Moldovan population. She writes, “since independence Moldova has struggled to [...] upgrade Romanian to a widely-recognised state language (*limba de stat*) [...] but old perceptions still persist, sustaining views of Russian as the language of education.”³⁵

These trends indicate a further shift away from Russian language proficiency among Moldova’s youth. This is in contrast to education across the Dniester, where students are generally able to study in a language of their choice but Russian remains a key language proficiency for economic success. Ciscel also points out that, “moreover, higher education in Transnistria is available in Russian only.”³⁶ With the balance of Russian-language opportunities in Chisinau waning, this leaves Russian-speaking students to seek educational opportunities in Russia where they can study at a high-quality institution in their native language. Moldovan speaker living in Transnistria who are unable to read or write in Latin script do not have the same opportunities, and find themselves isolated from higher-education opportunities and therefore seek to learn Russian or another foreign language in order to seek opportunities abroad.

³⁴ Ciscel, “Reform and Relapse in Bilingual Policy in Moldova,” 23.

³⁵ Prina, “Language Policies or Language Politics?,” 10.

³⁶ Ciscel, “Reform and Relapse in Bilingual Policy in Moldova,” 20.

By contrast, in Transnistria the forced bilingualism is enshrined by law and is still enforced. As Comai and Venturi write, “this provision, which is actually respected, does not only mean that pupils in Moldovan and Ukrainian schools have to study Russian, but also that all pupils in Russian schools have to study either Moldovan or Ukrainian.”³⁷ This policy allows for greater interethnic harmony in the region and prevents the loss of minority language proficiency in favor of more “useful” foreign languages such as English or French.

Additionally, in Transnistria the Moldovan language is generally taught in Cyrillic rather than the Latin script. While a few schools do exist that teach Latin-based Moldovan in Transnistria, the government in Tiraspol does not always look kindly upon them and do sometimes intervene to limit the influence of these school in the breakaway region. As Comai and Venturi write, “the forced closure of the so-called Romanian schools (teaching in Moldovan with the Latin script) in 2004 obtained significant international attention and was an object of judgement by the European Court of Human Rights (2012). Compromise solutions achieved through the mediation of the OSCE allowed the schools to operate further, but not without complications.”³⁸

ECONOMIC FACTORS

While laws in place require government officials and other specified jobs to be filled with personnel who are bilingual in both the state language and Russian, it is increasingly expected for government-sector personnel to have strong Moldovan fluency. S.D. Roper writes that it is becoming “increasingly difficult for those that [have] no Moldovan language skills to find employment in the state sector. Russian speaking university graduates either were employed in

³⁷ Comai and Venturi, “Language and Education Laws in Multi-Ethnic de Facto States,” 892.

³⁸ Comai and Venturi, 887.

the private sector or left the country for Ukraine or Russia. [...] While Moldova is still a bilingual society, Moldovan has become a more important language of inter-ethnic communication.”³⁹

Subsequent laws required government workers to be proficient in both Romanian and Russian by 1994 and removed Russian as a mandatory subject in all schools, replacing it with the unnamed state language (Romanian or Moldovan).⁴⁰ Despite the fact that both languages are required for government employees, all of the documents, records, meetings, and business of the Moldovan government are conducted in the state language, effectively barring from service many qualified Russian-language speakers and residents of Transnistria that are unable to read or write the state language in Latin script. This also extends to jobs in the education and medical professions. Despite the fact that schools are authorized to teach lessons primarily in the Russian language, reports that are due to the Ministry of Education are required to be written in the state language. Additionally, medical professionals that studied in Russian are still required to fill out medical paperwork and sign prescriptions in the state language.

POLITICAL MESSAGING

Language in Moldova and Transnistria is a significant source of political messaging from politicians both in Chisinau and in Tiraspol. As M.H. Ciscel writes:

Rather than seek inclusion and find compromise, the Romanian-speaking leaders of the Popular Front in the capital, Chişinău, and the Russian-speaking leaders in the capital, and particularly in Transnistria, engaged in mutually exclusionary nationalistic rhetoric that led ultimately to the disastrous civil war of 1992 and the emergence of two

³⁹ Roper, “The Politicization of Education,” 505.

⁴⁰ Roper, 505.

governments, an official one on most of the MSSR territory and a separatist one on the small territory of Transnistria.⁴¹

The tendency for politicians to mobilize their respective political bases on the topic of language is well-established in Moldova. There are many aspects of language policy in Moldova that are easily twisted for political gain. Political parties and candidates in Moldova are roughly divided on the basis of whether they are pro-West or pro-East. Pro-West candidates support growing integration with the European Union and favor ethnic and economic bonds with Romania. They target messaging towards Moldovan nationalist elements and citizens that self-identify with their Romanian heritage, and thus favor language policies that highlight the growing importance of integration with Romania and the EU. Pro-East candidates message to Russophones both in Transnistria and the predominately urban population of Russian speakers in other parts of Moldova. Their messaging focuses on the separateness of the Moldovan identity from Romania and favors the elevation of Russian to state-language status and language policies that differentiate Moldova from Romanian language and culture.

The status of Russian as a state language is a common topic of debate among politicians. Many politicians over the years have made some form of promise to alter the status of the Russian language. One of the most striking examples was the 2002 presidential campaign of Vladimir Voronin. Voronin built his entire campaign on the issue of the state language and the perceived injustice to the Russian-speaking population of Moldova. Prima writes, “former Moldovan President Vladimir Voronin and Communist MPs” attempted to “to legislate so as to

⁴¹ Ciscel, “Reform and Relapse in Bilingual Policy in Moldova,” 20.

make Russian an official language alongside Moldovan, as well as to reintroduce Russian as a compulsory subject in all schools.”⁴²

The issue of language can also play a big role in the political aspirations of pro-European Union candidates as well. Maia Sandu was a well-established Western-leaning candidate who represented a minority party in Moldova’s parliamentary elections. Ms. Sandu virtually refused to ever speak in Russian during public events, despite the fact that she is capable of speaking the language well. She chose to speak exclusively in Romanian in order to message to her voting base that she is serious about EU—and especially Romanian—integration. It wasn’t until her party formed a coalition with an especially pro-Russian party to oust from the country a powerful oligarch who led one of the largest political parties that Ms. Sandu became a serious contender for president. In order to achieve a broader voting base, Ms. Sandu began regularly holding public speaking events in both Romanian and Russian to promote a message of unity among the Moldovan people.⁴³

In addition to the question of the state-language status of Russian, there is also significant debate on how to describe the language spoken by the ethnic Moldovan population in the country. The name “Romanian” implies a cultural bond with Moldova’s neighbor to the west, while the term “Moldovan” implies a separateness of Moldovan culture and population from Romania that needs to be protected from Romanianization. As Roper writes, “The Soviet era theory of ‘Moldovanism’ emphasized that the languages were distinct, and therefore Moldovan

⁴² Prina, “Linguistic Justice, Soviet Legacies and Post-Soviet *Realpolitik*,” 57.

⁴³ Luxmoore, “As Kremlin Critics Toast The Defeat Of Moldova’s Pro-Russian President, Others Say Moscow’s Influence Will Remain.”

was a distinct identity separate from Romanian.”⁴⁴ He contrasts that with ‘contemporary Moldovanism’ which he admits: “recognizes that the two languages are not distinct.”⁴⁵

These examples illustrate the challenge of resolving the frozen conflict in Moldova in the context of political messaging that seeks to rally the more radical elements of their voting base with harsh rhetoric aimed at motivating voters to go to the polls on election day. These divisive messages, especially those centered around core identity issues such as language and ethnic identity within the country, are at odds with the stated goal of most politicians in the country to find an amicable solution to the conflict.

MANIPULATION AND OUTSIDE INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS

As a former Soviet republic, the frozen conflict in Moldova is heavily beholden to external influence from Moscow. Russian military forces intervened in the original 1992 civil war and have remained in Transnistria ever since. Despite the fact that today’s Russian military contingent in Transnistria is staffed primarily by residents of Transnistria before enlisting, the Russian flag on the uniforms signals Moscow’s continued presence in the region and prevents a Chisinau-led military solution to the status quo.⁴⁶

Additionally, the fact that “70% of Moldovans rely on foreign media in Russian,”⁴⁷ they are particularly susceptible to messaging from Moscow presented in the Russian language. Bilingual Moldovans are drawn to Moscow-backed, Russian language television channels due to the much higher quality news and entertainment content produced in Russia vice in Romania or

⁴⁴ Roper, “The Politicization of Education,” 505.

⁴⁵ Roper, 505.

⁴⁶ Kolsto and Malgin, “The Transnistrian Republic,” 109–12.

⁴⁷ “Opinion Survey 2018.”

directly in Moldova. Russia leverages this viewership to promote news narratives favorable to Moscow and to stoke continued conflict and stymie resolution.

Russian speaking Moldovans that are watching entertainment programs on Russian-language television are also drawn to Russian news programs. As Marin and Ciochina write: “The former Soviet media sources [...] have remained on the Moldovan market, and over the years have strengthened their audience positions, continuing to promote the Russian Federation policy.”⁴⁸ The prevalence of these sources strongly affects public opinion in the Moldovan market. The authors continue by citing statistics that show that, from 2011 to 2017, public opinion for joining the EU went from 64% in favor of joining—and 15% against—to 47% in favor of joining and further 43% in favor of joining the Russia-Belarus-Kazakhstan Customs Union despite that question never coming up in Moldovan politics.⁴⁹

This same trust of Russian language sources extends to online sources, where a significant share of the population—more than 23%—get informed on issues through online media sources. Russian-speaking Moldovans are thus far more likely to get their news and opinions from sources in Russia or allied with Russian interests, leading to a sharp divide with Romanian-speaking Moldovans who generally get their news from local sources with ties to Western-leaning politicians or from sources inside EU-member-state Romania.

CONCLUSION

The situation in Moldova is complicated by several factors that make it a natural hot bed for ethnic conflict. The natural border formed by the Dniester River provided a natural separation between ancient cultures and formed a historical context for the current language

⁴⁸ Marin and Ciochină, “Russian Propaganda and Media Ownership in the Republic of Moldova,” 193.

⁴⁹ Marin and Ciochină, 193.

divide along the *de facto* border. This divide was further reinforced by the inclusion of the Transnistria region in the Ukrainian SSR before eventually becoming part of the Moldovan SSR at a later date. Coupled with the strong industrial base in the Tiraspol region and the ease of migration into the area, a large population of Russian speakers inhabit the region today.

This is compounded by several factors that complicate the discussion surrounding language in the fractured country. The first factor is the split between writing systems used on the two banks of the river. The decision by authorities in Tiraspol not to change from Cyrillic to Latin characters in response to the 1989 Moldovan language law made the Moldovan language written on the left bank distinct from the language written on the right bank. This differentiation makes it more difficult for Transnistrian Moldovan speaker to communicate with Moldovans in the larger portion of the country. When taken together with the debate over how to name the language, and indeed to which language each name refers, the debate over language in Moldova is difficult to even have let alone solve.

All of these challenges leave the language debate in Moldova ripe for manipulation from politicians that seek to link ethnic identity and self-identification with language. By manipulating not only language policies, but also the names and rhetoric used to describe languages, politicians are able to keep a firm grip on their political bases. The fact that Russian-speaking Moldovans are generally watching Russia-backed news and media sources further helps to cement public opinion around tribal interpretations of language usage and policy.

Poor economic conditions that lead to mass economic migration further divide the country based on language spoken. Romanian speakers are generally more able to find work in the European Union, where a Romanian passport can grant residence benefits and workers are exposed to Western views on the situation in Moldova. Meanwhile, Russian speakers are

generally directed east to Russia where they are more fully engrossed in Russia's perspective on the West.

CHAPTER III

GEORGIA

Conflicts between ethnic Georgians and Abkhazians in the southern Caucasus region long predate the Soviet Union. Conflicting historical accounts of the Abkhazian people are used to alternately promote either Georgian or Abkhazian supremacy over the Abkhazia region. When Abkhazia joined the Georgian SSR, migration of ethnic Georgians and Mingrelians into Abkhazia was opposed due to the cultural memory of the feuds the two sides shared. These long-standing conflicts form the basis for the conflicts that still exist today in the former Soviet state.

Abkhazia initially joined the Soviet Union as its own independent Soviet republic, but after a short period it was downgraded to an autonomous region of the Georgian SSR. Unrest among the people of Abkhazia was constant, with demonstrations popping up once a decade throughout the 1950s to the 1970s. Ethnic Abkhazians were opposed to the influx of Russians, Georgians, and other non-Abkhazians that were steadily eroding their majority in the region to the point that ethnic Abkhazians were vastly outnumbered in their own titular homeland by the last decades of the Soviet period.

The waning period of the Soviet Union led to an escalation of tensions between the Abkhazians and the Georgians. Nationalist rhetoric from the government in Tbilisi combined with growing calls for independence from Abkhazian elites boiled over into open war in 1992-1993. Tensions boiled over into hot conflicts several more times between 1998 and 2006, before the Russo-Georgian war in 2008 resulted in the *de facto* independence of Abkhazia from Georgian control.

In the east, a similar situation occurred in South Ossetia, a region populated primarily by Ossetians who share an ethnic kinship with the Ossetian people that populate the North Ossetia-Alania republic across Georgia's northern border in Russia. In 1990 when the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast was dissolved by the Georgian Supreme Soviet in Tbilisi, the region declared itself independent of the Georgian SSR and remained under the *de facto* control of Ossetian forces until 2008, when the Russo-Georgian War cemented its status as a *de facto* independent state.

The violent political outcomes of ethno-linguistic tensions accompanying Georgia's independence, namely the *de facto* loss of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, generated fear of Azeri and Armenian irredentism amongst politicians and the majority of the Georgian-speaking population.⁵⁰ These complex dynamics create a volatile situation with regard to ethnolinguistic policy within the Republic of Georgia.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Like other countries on Russia's periphery, the ethnocultural makeup of Georgia is significantly different in the capital and areas further from Russia, while the border regions with Russia have a significant ethnic split. In the parts of Georgia that submit to the national census, ethnic Georgians make up nearly 87% of the population. Behind Georgians, Azeri and Armenians make up the next two largest ethnic groups. No other ethnic group makes up 1% or more of the local population.⁵¹

The situation is markedly different in Abkhazia. In contrast to the relatively homogenous population in the rest of Georgia, Abkhazia is home to a sizeable mix of ethnic population.

⁵⁰ Amirejibi-Mullen, "Language Policy and National Identity in Georgia," 11.

⁵¹ "2014 General Population Census Main Results."

During the Soviet Period, Abkhaz in Abkhazia made up less than 20% of the region's population, although that changed significantly following Georgia's independence in 1991. Before Georgian independence and the war that followed, the share of ethnic Abkhaz in their titular homeland was steadily declining. As a result of the Georgian SSR's migration policies, more and more ethnic Mingrelians and Georgians were migrating into Abkhazia. As Kolossov and O'Loughlin write, "Overall, the Abkhaz share of the population of their titular republic had declined to 15–18 percent by the end of the Soviet era. The Abkhaz felt themselves a small discriminated minority during Soviet times, suffering from forced attempts at assimilation."⁵² As many Georgians fled the region following the 1992-1993 war, the percentage of Abkhaz remaining in Georgia climbed and today Abkhaz represent only a slight majority in Abkhazia at just over 50% of the population. The remaining population consists of approximately 20% remaining ethnic Georgians, and sizeable populations of both Armenians and Russians.

In South Ossetia, the situation is very different. Ossetians make up nearly 90% of the region's population, followed by 7% ethnic Georgians and smaller populations of Russians and Armenians.⁵³ This is in contrast to the steady share of 65-70% of the population that ethnic Ossetians occupied throughout most of the Soviet period. Unlike ethnic Abkhazians, Ossetians also have a sizeable population in the region just across the Russian border. With a population of only 54,000 in 2010, Ossetians living in South Ossetia make up less than 10% of ethnic Ossetians in the combined North and South Ossetia region.⁵⁴

The fact that Ossetians have a concentrated ethnic kin across the border in the Russian Federation complicates the potential for a settlement between Georgia and South Ossetia. Ethnic

⁵² Kolossov and O'Loughlin, "After the Wars in the South Caucasus State of Georgia," 633.

⁵³ "2014 General Population Census Main Results."

⁵⁴ Kolossov and O'Loughlin, "After the Wars in the South Caucasus State of Georgia," 633.

Ossetians are unlikely to choose to give up claims to independence from Georgia in a settlement that would keep them separated from North Ossetia.

LINGUISTIC FACTORS IN CULTURAL IDENTIFICATION

The Georgian language has a distinctive script that is unique among world languages, and is a point of national pride for ethnic Georgians. For this reason, Georgians have a strong desire to protect their linguistic and cultural heritage. Due in part to its cultural distinctiveness, Georgian was one of only two titular languages of soviet socialist republics that was not forced to convert to Cyrillic script.

Abkhazian is a language that is significantly distinct from Georgian. Where Georgian is a south Caucasian language, Abkhazian shares more in common with north Caucasian languages. Over the years, Abkhazian has been written variously in Arabic, Cyrillic, Latin, and Georgian script though today it is standardized in Cyrillic. Despite sharing a common script, Abkhazian shares little in common with Russian either and Abkhazians who wish to communicate outside of Abkhazia generally must learn a completely different language for interethnic communication. With the decline of Russian proclivity among ethnic Georgians in the main part of the country, it becomes increasingly difficult for ethnic Abkhazians to communicate outside of the Abkhazia region.

Ossetian is a language that shares more similarities with Persian languages than Georgian or Russian, making it relatively unique for the European continent. The lack of similarities between the languages complicates the ability of native speakers of the language to learn Russian or Georgian. The language's isolation to North and South Ossetia further cements in the Ossetian people the divide between themselves and the Georgian-speaking majority in the former Georgian SSR.

Georgia's hostility towards the Abkhazian and Ossetian languages has been a point of contention with the European Union. When Georgia joined the Council of Europe, it undertook to satisfy certain provisions including the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. As Amirejibi-Mullen writes, "the Charter is based on the notion of a civic, rather than ethnic, understanding of citizenship and views linguistic diversity as an enrichment of, rather than threat, to the state. However, it is hard to win round to this view a country where ethno-linguistic nationalism has been a powerful political ideology dominated by historical and cultural claims, and where the language issue has been inextricably linked to violent ethnic conflicts."⁵⁵ The continued issues surrounding language is somewhat unique in the post-Soviet space, in that the language conflicts are between Georgian and non-Russian minority languages. This differs from the frozen conflicts in other parts of Russia's periphery in this regard. Russia's attempts to manipulate this conflict are, therefore, predicated on longer-standing ethnocultural and linguistic conflicts rather than issues that were caused by the Soviet presence in the region. Russia's decision to intervene, then, is a more clear example of the Kremlin taking advantage of the existing situation for political leverage, rather than an attempt to defend the standing of Russian language and culture in its sphere of influence.

STATUS AS AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the Parliament of Georgia passed several initiatives establishing Georgian as the sole official state language. This was also enshrined into Article 8 of the Georgian constitution.⁵⁶ Both the constitution and the language laws of Georgia do

⁵⁵ Amirejibi-Mullen, "Language Policy and National Identity in Georgia," 11–12.

⁵⁶ "Constitution of Georgia."

recognize Abkhazian as a second official language, but only within the borders of the territory of Abkhazia.

Throughout the years, Georgia has passed several laws aimed at ensuring minority language rights in the country. In many cases, however, minority language rights laws in the country generally only apply to Russian and Abkhazian, and rarely include Armenian or Azeri despite sizeable populations of those ethnic minorities living in the country. This serves to further isolate the pockets of Armenian and Azeri citizens from the rest of the country.

Despite these laws, the government in Tbilisi frequently passes laws designed to encourage adoption of the state language among minorities. These efforts are rarely successful, as ethnic minorities are generally not particularly motivated to learn Georgian and report that the language is too hard to learn. This is despite the economic and political benefits ethnic minorities would have in Georgia if they spoke the state language.

Additionally, ethnic minorities in Georgia generally find the Russian language presents more opportunities for economic advancement. Those minorities that are able to find work in Russian-speaking jobs, either in Russia or neighboring countries, often do so and rarely return to Georgia. In recent years, the population has also started shifting towards a desire to learn English as a language with significant international opportunity. By reducing the incentive to learn the state language, these language trends serve to undermine the goal of the official language policy to improve Georgian fluency among national minorities.

The conflicts that erupted in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia led to fears that similar outbreaks of violence might occur in other heavy pockets of language minorities. As Amirejibi-Mullen writes, “the violent political outcomes of ethno-linguistic tensions accompanying Georgia’s independence, namely the de facto loss of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, generated fear

of Azeri and Armenian irredentism amongst politicians and the majority of the Georgian-speaking population.”⁵⁷ These fears led the government to institute a series of reforms aimed at placating these language minorities, especially in Tbilisi and the surrounding areas.

ECONOMIC FACTORS

Both Abkhazia and South Ossetia were hit hard by the economic consequences of the conflicts shortly after the Soviet collapse and in 2008. The ethnic cleansing of Georgians from the territories caused a severe shortage of labor and production, with the result that economic prosperity in the regions is severely lacking. As Kolossov and O’Loughlin discovered in a 2010 survey of the region, “79.8 percent of respondents in Abkhazia and 85.3 percent in South Ossetia list ‘lack of economic development and unemployment’ as a ‘very big’ or ‘big’ problem.”⁵⁸

Today’s poverty being experienced in Abkhazia belies its history as an extremely prosperous and economically flourishing region during the Soviet period. The conflict in the waning years of the Soviet Union, however, saw a drastic downturn in economic prosperity in the region. Due to the widespread devastation and the depopulation of some of the more fertile parts of the country, Abkhazia today is in a dire situation. As Gomelauri writes, “The overall damage inflicted to the economy of Abkhazia by the war amounts, by Abkhazian estimates, to more than US\$100bln in current prices. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1994 was US\$60.3mln, which, compared with 692.5mln in 1988, makes up only 14% of the prewar level.”⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Amirejibi-Mullen, “Language Policy and National Identity in Georgia,” 11.

⁵⁸ Kolossov and O’Loughlin, “After the Wars in the South Caucasus State of Georgia,” 632.

⁵⁹ Gomelauri, “The Role of Economic Factors in Conflict Resolution in Georgia and the Caucasus,” 6.

This is similarly true in South Ossetia, where conflicts between Tbilisi and the autonomous oblast reached a head in the late Soviet period. Due in part to interference from Moscow, the two sides clashed over Ossetian moves to elevate its status from an autonomous oblast to an ASSR. Violence erupted in the region in late 1990 which left widespread devastation that has yet to be rebuilt, leaving empty factories, high unemployment, and a state of destitution. This state of destitution draws a stark line between the Ossetians living in South Ossetia and their comparatively better off ethnic cousins to the north. Ossetians who continue to live in the South Ossetia region of Georgia earned an average US\$250 in 2009, compared to their northern neighbors earning more than 10 times that amount⁶⁰

EDUCATION

Language laws in Georgia guarantee the rights of ethnic minorities to study in their primary language, the state only provides language instruction in the Georgian and Abkhazian languages. While study in other languages is permitted, it must be provided by private entities. Given the small population of ethnic Armenians and Azeri living in Georgia, students in these communities are often forced to choose schools in one of the state languages or in Russian. Given the increased economic outcomes available to minorities with Russian language abilities, most Armenian and Azeri residents of Georgia opt to go to school in Russian.

The lack of state funding provided for instruction in languages other than Georgian makes it difficult to learn for non-Georgian speakers and disadvantages minority children. The government recognizes this and has attempted to pass laws that help to rectify the situation. For instance, the “Law on Education” (1997) established the obligation of the state, in accordance with the recommendations of local authorities, to create conditions for native-language primary

⁶⁰ Kolossov and O’Loughlin, “After the Wars in the South Caucasus State of Georgia,” 633–34.

and secondary education to be provided for non-Georgian speakers.⁶¹ In practice, however, these laws have provided little relief to the situation and instruction in native languages is still difficult and expensive to obtain for many minority families.

When students opt to attend school in a language other than the official state language, classes in the state language are mandatory.⁶² That includes study in both Georgian and Abkhazian for schools in Abkhazia that provide instruction in languages other than the state languages. These policies aim to build a level of bilingualism among the Georgian population and to cement the Georgian language as the language of interethnic communication in the country. Schools in Abkhazia have been steadily migrating away from teaching Georgian language, relegating Georgian to the minimum hours of instruction and supplanting foreign language instruction with the Russian language, further emphasizing the area's de facto autonomy from the government in Tbilisi. This migration, however, further alienates the remaining Georgians and Mingrelians in the region.⁶³

In the late 2000s, the government of Georgia introduced new laws requiring that civics lessons in Georgia be taught in the state language. This change upset local residents who did not believe their children could achieve a proficiency in the state language sufficient to pass these courses. Policies like this reinforce the lack of educational opportunities for minority non-Georgian speaking families and further stoke tensions among ethnic minorities, furthering the message from the Kremlin that Russian speaking populations in the country require Russia's continued benefaction for the protection of their language and culture.

⁶¹ Broers, "From 'Frozen Conflict' to Enduring Rivalry," 282.

⁶² Parliament of Georgia, "On Official Language."

⁶³ Mateu, "Language Policy in Abkhazia: Promoting Abkhazian or Forgetting Georgian?"

The lack of strong command of the Georgian language causes significant difficulties for ethnic and language minorities. These minorities generally have trouble passing the state exams due to a lack of command of the Georgian language. Upon graduating to post-secondary education, non-speakers of the state language are often forced to look outside the country in order to continue their education. Once they have left, it is often difficult for these younger generations to return to their homeland. As Mekhuzla and Roche point out, “those who obtain higher education in foreign countries find it difficult to secure employment in Georgia upon graduating, again due to the poor command of the state language.”⁶⁴

POLITICAL MESSAGING

Georgian political leaders continue to make the case that the establishment of Georgian as a language to unite the multiethnic country is an important part of long-term plans for unity and prosperity in the country. In 2019, Georgian President Salomé Zourabichvili gave a speech to that effect in opening a conference on civic integration in Tbilisi.⁶⁵

These politicians continue to emphasize the unifying nature of a singular state language, even as language policies promote Georgian language proficiency at the expense of ethnic minorities and their ability to learn and participate in the economy.

MANIPULATION AND OUTSIDE INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS

As in the other countries where Russian sustains frozen conflicts, Russia supplements its military peacekeeping mission with a sizeable misinformation campaign. The campaign seeks to take advantage of the disunity in Georgia to further Moscow’s political goal of preventing further European integration in Georgia. This information campaign is particularly effective when

⁶⁴ Mekhuzla and Roche, “National Minorities and Educational Reform in Georgia,” 46.

⁶⁵ Colchen, “State Language as Means of Civic Integration.”

targeted against non-Georgian speakers, as they are more dependent on Russian media for news and entertainment and more susceptible to Moscow's message. As Gogolashvili et al write, "certain population groups are especially vulnerable to the Kremlin propaganda: people aged 50 and over (because of the experience of living in the USSR), ethnic minorities (feeling isolated and marginalized), those with a lack of knowledge of Georgian (which makes them an easy target for Russian TV propaganda), [...] families, whose members work in Russia."⁶⁶

CONCLUSION

The situation in Georgia is significantly more complex than the situation in other post-Soviet states. This is due to a combination of preexisting conflicts and several rounds of ethnic cleansing that have created deep-seated divisions beyond those caused by the Soviet period. Authorities in Tbilisi, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia have all used language policies designed to promote the titular language to the expense of minority languages.

⁶⁶ Gogolashvili et al., "Hybrid Threats in EaP Countries: Building a Common Response," 24–25.

CHAPTER IV

ESTONIA

Estonia differs from the other countries in this paper in that it does not currently have a frozen conflict within its territorial boundaries. While there are significant demographic and linguistic identity patterns that closely mirror those found in the frozen conflicts in other post-Soviet countries, the conflicts that exist in Estonia between the Estonian ethnic majority and Russophone or Russian ethnic minorities in the Narva area have never boiled over into hot conflict and the Narva region remains under the control of the government in Tallinn.

Unlike many other national languages in the Soviet Union, the Estonian language was never transitioned to the use of Cyrillic script. This was due in part to Estonian resistance to the alphabet change, but likely also due to other factors. As Raun writes, “The relatively advanced development of Estonian by 1940 has meant that Russian has had little influence on grammar [and] phonological change has also been minimal. Adoption of the Cyrillic alphabet was probably not considered during the Stalinist era because written Estonian [...] was simply too developed.”⁶⁷ Regardless of the reason, the fact that Estonian remained written in its original script made learning Estonian that much harder for native Russian speakers.

Despite these considerations for the Estonian language, Moscow continued to push to preference Russian as the premier language for interethnic communication in the Estonian SSR. As Laitin writes, “From the late 1950s, however, there was a secular trend in the promotion of Russian as a language of ‘internationality communication.’”⁶⁸ He describes how parents were

⁶⁷ Raun, “Language Development and Policy in Estonia,” 23.

⁶⁸ Laitin, “Language Planning in the Former Soviet Union,” 46.

encouraged to send their children to schools that provided instruction in Russian, and that Russian became a mandatory subject from the first grade in Estonian language schools. Laitin even cites “a secret decree of the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Estonian Communist Party legalized the priority of Russian over Estonian, declaring Russian the only means of active participation in social life.”⁶⁹

While Estonia shares a lot of similarities with other border republics of the Soviet Union, it followed a very different path when the Soviet Union collapsed. Laitin writes, “*Glasnost*’ provided an opportunity for titular nationalities to regain lost ground. National movements grew in all republics in the late 1980s, and the new language laws were quite radical Statements of republican linguistic sovereignty. Estonia's opening declaration leaves little doubt as to the goal of language rationalization:”⁷⁰ Unlike other countries in the post-Soviet space, Estonia migrated very quickly to EU membership. This created a situation for ethnic minorities that differed significantly from those other countries. Unlike ethnic minorities living in countries like Moldova and Georgia, ethnic Russian in Estonia were given a choice: learn the Estonian language and assimilate or be denied citizenship.

Despite the rapid changes occurring in Estonia, the pockets of Russian speakers resisted learning Estonian. The language had very little use in their daily lives in places like Narva, and the vast difference between Estonian and Russian meant the task of learning the new language would be exceedingly challenging. As Laitin writes, “the chances for the full Estonization of the Estonian language within Estonia, with 35 percent of the population having little or no facility in

⁶⁹ Laitin, 46.

⁷⁰ Laitin, 46.

Estonian, are slim.”⁷¹ The result of Estonia’s string citizenship laws meant a sizeable portion of the population were left stateless.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

The Baltic countries are significantly more homogenous when it comes to ethnic makeup than the other countries in Russia’s western periphery. Estonia is a country comprised of two primary ethnic groups: Estonian and Russian. These two ethnic groups make up 93% of the population of Estonia, with Ukrainians at 2% being the only ethnic group with more than 1% of the share of the population. While Estonians comprise only 68.8% of the total national population, they make up over 90% of the population in most of the country except in the extreme northwest, where the population of the city of Narva and the surrounding regions are comprised of nearly 90% ethnic Russians and less than 10% ethnic Estonians.⁷²

“In terms of population, this shifted the demographics of Estonia drastically, with ethnic Estonians experiencing a decrease from 90% to 60% between the years of 1945 and 1989 (ECMI 1999, 6).”⁷³

This distinct difference in the ethnic makeup of the two regions of the country provide a stark cleavage allowing the two parts of the country to accomplish all aspects of daily life without a significant need for language cross-pollination. Taken together with the lack of a strong impetus to learn Russian among the ethnic Estonians and the elites in Tallinn is leading to the gradual fading of Russian as the language of interethnic communication in the country. As both Estonians and Russians are eschewing each other’s languages in favor of languages with

⁷¹ Laitin, 44.

⁷² “Population by Sex, Ethnic Nationality and County, 1 January, Administrative Division as at 01.01.2018.”

⁷³ Delgrande, “Politics of Integration,” 73.

more international import—especially English—Russian/Estonian bilingualism continues to decline. As Laitin writes:

“The sociolinguistic reality in Estonia during the Soviet period was that of a Slavic population that was mostly monolingual in Russian and an Estonian population with a significant percentage of bilinguals in Russian so that Russian served as the language of internationality communication. The trend in the late 1980s and hastening in the postindependence years of the 1990s is that of a Slavic population that is in pockets developing a facility in Estonian but in greater numbers learning English and an Estonian population that is intergenerationally losing Russian but rapidly learning English.”⁷⁴

This phenomenon is visible in several studies that were conducted among native Russian speakers in the late Soviet and early post-Soviet period. The studies sought, among other things, to test the knowledge of Estonian language among Russian-speaking populations. Laitin quotes three studies conducted between 1986 and 1992 with similar results: only 10-15% of native Russian speakers considered themselves to be able to freely speak Estonian. Only around 30% claimed to speak some Estonian. Among these populations, more than half spoke little or no Estonian.⁷⁵

Despite the challenges that face modern residents, the Russification of Estonia that took place during the Soviet period was fairly successful in integration the Russian language into everyday life and facilitating the language’s use as a *lingua franca* and a language of interethnic communication, with a large percentage of personnel in Tallinn who spoke Russian as either a first or second language. At the same time, the same could not be said about Russian speakers

⁷⁴ Laitin, “Language Planning in the Former Soviet Union,” 47–48.

⁷⁵ Laitin, 49.

using Estonian as a second language. Delgrande writes, “by the end of the Soviet Union, only 13.1% of Russian speakers could also speak Estonian proficiently.”⁷⁶ Russian language ability declined sharply following independence from the Soviet Union, as more than 150,000 mostly Russians and Ukrainians fled the country fearing the repercussions of Estonian language laws and related legal developments in the country.

Together with the flight of ethnic Russians, Russian use in everyday life took and even sharper decline as ethnic Estonians began to refuse to speak the language or admit their ability to do so. As Laitin writes about the state of Estonian language in the first decade following independence, “While Estonians were reluctant to acknowledge their knowledge of Russian, a 1988 poll found that 73.7 percent of Estonians knew enough Russian to communicate on a good level.”⁷⁷

For Russian-speaking citizens of Estonia, the situation is not much different. In Narva, government programs to bring Estonian-language education to primary schools continues to suffer from a lack of qualified teachers and a general reluctance to accept Estonian in their daily lives. This belies the truth of changing demographics in the country. A 2011 study found that some pockets of Russian speaking minorities are beginning to change their attitudes. The study found that 21% of Estonians, mostly found in the younger and educated communities, have successfully integrated into Estonian society and have a good command of the Estonian language. A further 16% speak Estonian poorly but are encouraged to learn and to communicate with their Estonian neighbors. Thirteen percent have the ability to speak Estonian but generally refuse to do so. Among low-income workers, Estonian language skill is the worst. Among those

⁷⁶ Delgrande, “Politics of Integration,” 74.

⁷⁷ Laitin, “Language Planning in the Former Soviet Union,” 48.

populations are 29% of non-ethnic Estonians who are little integrated and most of whom are not Estonian citizens, and 22% of the population who are mostly older Russian-speaking residents who are completely unintegrated and are not interested in learning.⁷⁸

LINGUISTIC FACTORS IN CULTURAL IDENTIFICATION

Unlike Estonia's Baltic neighbors, the Estonian language is much more closely related to Finnish than to Latin-based or Slavic languages. This made the concept of becoming bilingual in both Russian and Estonian much harder for residents of the northern-most Baltic country than it was for its neighbors or for other Eastern European ethnicities. As Katja Koort writes, "The Estonian language belongs to the Finno-Ugric grouping of the Uralic language family, which is completely separate from the Indo-European languages, a fact that brings Estonians closer to Finland than to their southern neighbors whose languages are related, albeit distantly, to Russian."⁷⁹

Having joined the Soviet Union in 1940—significantly later than most of the other countries added to the Union in the Soviet period—Estonia was not subject to some of the harsher attempts to subjugate the national language that existing during the Stalinist period. While the spread of Russian language was successful despite the late start, leaders in the Estonian SSR continued to resist the spread of Russian at the expense of Estonian through a series of laws that pushed the limits of how much the republic could get away with when it came to preferencing Estonian over the designated language of interethnic communication in the USSR.

⁷⁸ Koort, "The Russians of Estonia," 68–69.

⁷⁹ Koort, 67.

This was further exacerbated by the view—shared among ethnic Estonian elites and much of Europe—that Estonia had not joined the Soviet Union willingly and were, instead, occupied territories for the entirety of their 51-year history of Moscow rule. This viewpoint played a significant factor in the disdain with which Estonians of the early 1990s viewed the Russian language and facility in its usage.

Unlike many countries that found themselves newly independent following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Estonia did not automatically grant citizenship to all of its residents at the time of independence. Instead, Estonia required a language proficiency exam in order to naturalize as an Estonian citizen. This left many people who lived in the northeastern parts of the country unable to claim Estonian citizenship. Non-speakers of the Estonian language then faced the choice of seeking foreign citizenship—such as Russian—or choosing to remain stateless.⁸⁰ To this day, approximately 6% of the Estonian population remains stateless, further alienating this segment of the population from a connection to the central government in Tallinn.

STATUS AS AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

The language law of 1989, which remained in place following the collapse of the Soviet Union, maintained that both Estonian and Russian were official languages of Estonia and both were provided protections under the law. Government services were provided in both languages. This gradually changed following the collapse of the Soviet Union, and in 1995 Estonia changed course and removed Russian as an official language.

An agreement exists in Estonia for the protection of ethnic minorities, including the protection of their culture and language. In accordance with this framework, the right to speak and study in national minority languages is theoretically protected. In reality, Estonian law

⁸⁰ Kempainen, “Language Policy in Estonia,” 53.

frequently breaks with this agreement and challenges the use of Russian in schools and at other venues.

Despite promises to resolve interethnic conflict and the protect minority rights in accordance with European Union norms, Estonia still denies citizenship to residents of the country that do not speak the Estonian language. As Laitin writes, “With renewed sovereignty in 1991, the Estonian state turned monolingual Russian-speaking Estonians into foreigners as fluency in Estonian became a principle criterion for citizenship and positions of authority within the state apparatus.”⁸¹ This policy essentially turned many residents, especially in the northeast of the country, into stateless persons who do not have the right to participate in the government or access to Estonian elections. Laitin continues, “they will be denied some key rights reserved for citizens: to vote in national elections; to hold any elective office in Estonia; to join a political party; to serve in the higher civil service or police forces; or to own land.”⁸²

ECONOMIC FACTORS

From an economic perspective, being a Russian speaker in Estonia was economically advantageous. Of those Russian speakers that resided in Tallinn, almost three quarters of them held senior management positions that afforded them a high standard of living. Compared with the average Russian speaker in Russia, Russian-speaking Estonians were in a much better condition. The prosperity experienced by this population attracted additional Russian-speaking talent to Tallinn and further contributed to this phenomenon.

That pattern changed significantly in the late 1980s and early 1990s when ethnic Estonian leaders in Tallinn began to enact exclusionary language policies designed to economically

⁸¹ Laitin, “Language Planning in the Former Soviet Union,” 45.

⁸² Laitin, 45.

disadvantage Russian speakers and establish the economic dominance of ethnic Estonians in the country. In addition, policies on Estonian language requirements for citizenship and language policies requiring Estonian language further prevented ethnic Russians from finding gainful employment, especially in the capital. This was a large factor in the large-scale economic emigration of Russian speakers in the years immediately following independence, choosing to seek employment in countries where they could more comfortably speak in their native tongue than compete on the uneven playing field in the new economic environment in Estonia.

Russian economic prospects in Estonia were further hindered by the closing of several large factories in the northeastern part of the country. As part of the Soviet economic engine, several factories were built in the Russian-populated sector of the Estonian SSR that provided the majority of employment for the populations in the region. In the waning years of the Soviet economy, Moscow resorted to heavily subsidizing these factories to keep them operating even as they began to operate at significant losses. After independence, the Estonian government abandoned these economic policies in favor of policies designed to spur rapid economic stability leading to the closure of many of these factories. Due to the closures, unemployment amongst the Russian population in the area skyrocketed and many residents struggled to put food on the table.

EDUCATION

Students in Estonia are required to learn two foreign languages as part of their education. For students who study at Estonian-language schools, a choice of four foreign languages is offered as the primary foreign language and any language can be selected as the second foreign language. For students who study at other language schools—which are predominantly Russian-

language schools—are forced to learn Estonian as the primary foreign language but can select any language for their second foreign language.

While European Union norms and constitutional guarantees theoretically protect the right of students to study in their native language, Tallinn has continued to enact educational policies designed to disenfranchise Russian speakers and promote Estonian as the sole state language. For instance, in 1993, Estonia introduced a law that would force all secondary education to be conducted primarily in the state language by the year 2000. While the implementation of this law has been delayed numerous times, it still represents a significantly more draconian approach to language in education than has been attempted to be implemented elsewhere in the post-Soviet space.

Estonia continues to work towards transitioning its secondary education program to require that all secondary education be taught in the Estonian language. Students in primary schools that instruct in Russian would need to acquire the required language skills in Estonian through the foreign language program so they could study in Estonian by the time they reach secondary-school age. While this move is wildly unpopular among Russian speakers in the region surrounding Narva, Russian speaking families without Estonian citizenship do not have a voice in the legislature to call for change.

POLITICAL MESSAGING

The treatment of Russian language is a frequent subject of debate in Tallinn. Politicians who speak negatively about Russian try to walk the fine line between European Union norms and the outright banishment of Russian language in the public sector. They argue against the translation of the laws of Estonia into the Russian language, citing the lack of need to translate

the laws into Russian for the benefit of “elderly Russian-speaking ladies” who “will not understand the laws even if they are translated into their mother tongue.”⁸³

MANIPULATION AND OUTSIDE INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS

Moscow appears to take a particular interest in Estonian policies that disproportionately affect the Russian speaking minorities in the country. Any implementation of policies designed to privilege Estonian over Russian is met with sharp rebukes and claims of human rights violations from the Kremlin.

Russia bolsters its position in Estonia through a sophisticated information operations campaign across Russian media on Estonian cable and other news and internet sites. “Russia can use information operations through its mainstream media networks to influence Russian speakers within Estonia, many of whom have family still living in Russia, to vote for candidates who are sympathetic to Putin. Russian media broadcasts news, political commentary, and entertainment worldwide in a modern format with the objective, according to the International Center for Defense and Security (ICDS) to ‘build support among Russians for Putin and his vision of a powerful, reascent Russia.’ ICDS also states that with access to cable channels in Estonia, they are sharing that message with Russia’s ‘compatriots’ abroad.’ Marko Mihkelson, Chairman of the Estonian National Defense Committee underscores that ‘Russia’s level of sophistication using television, internet, and social media is on the highest level.’”⁸⁴

Incidents such as the Russian statue riots illustrate the level to which Russian agitation can boil over when issues affecting Estonia’s Russian minority are contemplated by the government in Tallinn. “More recently, suspected Russian hackers overwhelmed Estonia’s

⁸³ Adamson and Tshuikina, “The Russian Language in Estonia,” 209.

⁸⁴ Zilhaver, “Beating America at Its Own Game: How Russia Can Use Democracy to Influence Estonia and Undermine the NATO Alliance.”

internet infrastructure in response to Estonia relocating a Soviet war memorial within the capital city of Tallinn in 2007. As Estonia relocated the statue to a local cemetery, Russian sympathizers within the country initiated a riot that resulted in 153 injuries and 800 arrests. During the course of the unrest, the Russian government unequivocally stated that moving the statue would be ‘disastrous for the Estonians.’ Simultaneously, Estonia suffered an unprecedented cyber-attack that crippled banks, broadcasters, police, and the national government. As Estonia was brought to its knees, Putin commented that “those who are trying today to desecrate memorials to war heroes are insulting their own people, sowing discord and new distrust between states and people.”⁸⁵

The outsized messaging campaign against Estonia likely stems from two complementary factors: (1) the lack of a Russian-speaking minority party due to Estonian citizenship laws and the lack of a separatist government to force Tallinn to the negotiating table remove several options for Moscow to push its agenda within the country and (2) Russia has increased motive to undermine the government in Tallinn and destabilize the country to weaken the European Union in a region of Europe that is particularly sensitive due to its proximity to the Russian border.

CONCLUSION

Despite conditions that would seem ripe for a frozen conflict to develop, none has yet materialized on the territory of this former Soviet republic. Estonia has some of the most restrictive laws in the former Soviet space related to the privilege of Estonian over other minority languages and a sharp divide between the populations of the Narva region and the rest of the country. Language manipulation through both local political speech and outside information

⁸⁵ Zilhaver.

campaigns is, in some ways, much more prevalent than it is in other countries and the rhetoric is much sharper.

One reason for this apparent result may be, counterintuitively, the lack of any frozen conflicts in the region. While conflicts such as Transnistria serve as a counterbalance to Moldovan nationalistic tendencies in the government in Chisinau, no such opposition exists. In the absence of a de facto independent government to bring both sides to the negotiating table, there is less motivation to moderate behavior. The government in Tallinn feels less restricted from enacting language laws like the secondary education law, and Russian minorities and their supporters in Moscow have little recourse but to resort to ramped-up information campaigns that leads to response-in-kind from politicians in the Estonian capital.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

By analyzing the trends of language ability and usage across the spectrum of frozen conflicts in the post-Soviet space, several interesting conclusions come to light. The first is that the type and history of interethnic conflict have little bearing on the emergence of a linguistic conflict. The primary factor influencing linguistic conflicts appears to be the direct manipulation of linguistic identity by politicians who hope to create a loyal base of supporters and a group that can be used to pursue narratives that bring them more political power. In the case studies presented in this paper, a variety of conflicts with different origin time periods and basis for conflict result in relatively similar situations when it comes to language conflict within their borders.

Despite a shared history of language manipulation under the Soviet Union, these politically-motivated conflicts seem to exist primarily in the European part of the post-Soviet landscape. Other factors—both similarities and differences—do not have the same correlation with language conflict that geographic location does. This shows the power that external influence can have on the nature of language conflict; in areas where Moscow gains a direct benefit from language conflict, these types of conflict thrive. In areas where there is no clear benefit to the elites in Russia, relative language harmony is more likely to prevail. Russia's continued soft-power manipulation of the conflicts in these locations is a major factor in their continuance.

In these European conflicts, the central government's attempts to turn their society towards bilingualism have failed despite attempts to encourage or mandate language learning in

primary and secondary schools. The preferencing of titular national languages over minority languages does more to stoke resentment among minority groups than they do to encourage bilingualism among the population. Russia's attempts to counterbalance national leadership with Russian information campaigns and military presence serves to bolster regional conflict and assures each side of the conflict conflates spoken language with tribal loyalty.

The tie between language ability and economic status is an aspect of language in conflict that cannot be ignored. In many of these countries, language ability ties residents to a limited set of economic opportunities. Fluency in a major language like Russian or English opens up opportunities for economic migration, while fluency in titular languages generally provides more limited economic opportunities limited generally to the domestic markets. Language also has a strong tie to social status. When residents of the post-Soviet region select a language for communication, they prefer languages that reflect well on their social status. During much of the Soviet times, Russian was considered a language that was used by social elites and brought with it a sense of higher status. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, areas with language conflict generally saw that paradigm shift and use of the Russian language to be associated with negative emotions and a lower social status. This was especially true in locations where the leaders in the central government preferenced titular languages over Russian and were successful in transitioning high-status political positions and jobs in the commercial sector to the state language.

One clear conclusion that surfaces in three of the conflicts—Transnistria, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia—is that the use of language by political elites looking to cement their own power by building a base among minority ethnic groups is a strong precursor to violent outcomes. As language is a strong identifying characteristic of ethnic identity, it is a strong motivator among

ethnic minorities. By driving the narrative towards a feeling that an ethnic minority group's language is being systematically stamped out, local politicians can both drive a strong desire to protect the minority group's ethnic heritage and also stoke fears that the central government is attempting to stamp out one ethnic group altogether.

It is interesting that this phenomenon did not come to pass in the northeastern part of Estonia. Ethnic Russian living in and around Narva were hit especially hard by early Estonian government policies tying citizenship to Estonian language ability and the closing of factories in the region. The lack of citizenship and corresponding lack of ability to participate on the political stage likely contributed heavily to this outcome. Despite the lack of a hot or frozen conflict in Estonia, it shares many aspects of language use over time with other countries that gained independence after the fall of the Soviet Union. The gradual transition away from the state language and towards global languages by minority ethnic groups represents a significant language shift brought about by the conflict and perception of the state language as a language of oppression. This shifts the societies of these post-Soviet countries away from a bilingual country where harmony exists between the state language and the minority language, and towards a society where little work is able to be done in the mother tongue of either side when interethnic communication is required.

The result of decades of interethnic language conflict is that societies tend to migrate to third languages to facilitate interethnic communication. Where language blocks are created through political manipulation and resentment, younger generations are increasingly rejecting the language of the "other" group in favor of these third languages and the percentage of young residents of conflict countries that preference English and other world languages over their national language or major minority languages is increasing every year.

While this paper comes to several conclusions regarding demographics and economic outcomes of language conflict, and considers the outcomes and influences on language and conflict, it poses an interesting question of its own. Why is it that certain ethnic groups preference their national language and how does political manipulation affect the cognitive and social behavior of both majority and minority groups? Further research in this area should focus on answering these questions of “why?” to more clearly define the causal linkages between these factors.

REFERENCES

- “2014 General Population Census Main Results.” National Statistics Office of Georgia, April 28, 2016. Internet Wayback Machine.
https://web.archive.org/web/20170205175903/http://geostat.ge/cms/site_images/_files/english/population/Census_release_ENG_2016.pdf.
- Adamson, Inna, and Natalia Tshuikina. “The Russian Language in Estonia: Between Politics and Pragmatism.” *Russian Journal of Communication* 7, no. 2 (May 4, 2015): 208–13.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19409419.2015.1044866>.
- Aktürk, Şener. “Regimes of Ethnicity: Comparative Analysis of Germany, the Soviet Union/Post-Soviet Russia, and Turkey.” *World Politics* 63, no. 1 (January 2011): 115–64.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887110000304>.
- Amirejibi-Mullen, Rusudan. “Language Policy and National Identity in Georgia.” Thesis, Queen Mary University of London, 2011.
<https://qmro.qmul.ac.uk/xmlui/handle/123456789/2679>.
- Anderson, Christopher J., and Aida Paskeviciute. “How Ethnic and Linguistic Heterogeneity Influence the Prospects for Civil Society: A Comparative Study of Citizenship Behavior.” *The Journal of Politics* 68, no. 4 (2006): 783–802. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2508.2006.00470.x>.
- Beetaversioon. “Population by Sex, Ethnic Nationality and County, 1 January, Administrative Division as at 01.01.2018.” Accessed October 17, 2021.
<http://andmebaas.stat.ee/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=RV0222U>.
- Broers, Laurence. “From ‘Frozen Conflict’ to Enduring Rivalry: Reassessing the Nagorny Karabakh Conflict.” *Nationalities Papers* 43, no. 4 (July 2015): 556–76.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2015.1042852>.
- Ciscel, Matthew H. “Reform and Relapse in Bilingual Policy in Moldova.” *Comparative Education* 46, no. 1 (2010): 13–28.
- Colchen, Gabrielle. “State Language as Means of Civic Integration.” *Georgia Today*, June 3, 2019. <http://gtarchive.georgiatoday.ge/news/15876/State-Language-as-a-Means-of-Civic-Integration>.
- Comai, Giorgio, and Bernardo Venturi. “Language and Education Laws in Multi-Ethnic de Facto States: The Cases of Abkhazia and Transnistria.” *Nationalities Papers* 43, no. 6 (November 2015): 886–905. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2015.1082996>.
- “Constitution of Georgia.” Legislationline.org. Accessed October 1, 2021.
https://www.legislationline.org/download/id/8153/file/Georgia_Const_am2018_ENG.pdf.

- Delgrande, A. J. "Politics of Integration: Estonia and Its Russian Minority." *International Journal of Russian Studies* 8, no. 1 (January 2019): 72–81.
- Gogolashvili, Kakha, Valeriu Pasa, Mikayel Hovhannisyan, Viktor Ohienko, and Julya Sahakyan. "Hybrid Threats in EaP Countries: Building a Common Response." Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies. Accessed October 25, 2021. <https://www.gfsis.org/files/library/pdf/English-2739.pdf>.
- Gomelaury, Tebrone. "The Role of Economic Factors in Conflict Resolution in Georgia and the Caucasus." Central European University Center for Policy Studies, 2002. <http://pdc.ceu.hu/archive/00001807/01/Gomelaury.pdf>.
- Hajda, Lubomyr. "Ethnic Politics and Ethnic Conflict in the USSR and the Post-Soviet States." *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations* 19, no. 2 (1993): 193–278.
- Kemppainen, Raija. "Language Policy in Estonia: A Review." *Deseret Language and Linguistic Society Symposium* 26, no. 1 (April 7, 2000): 51–58.
- King, Charles. "Moldovan Identity and the Politics of Pan-Romanianism." *Slavic Review* 53, no. 2 (1994): 345–68. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2501297>.
- Kolossov, Vladimir, and John O'Loughlin. "After the Wars in the South Caucasus State of Georgia: Economic Insecurities and Migration in the 'De Facto' States of Abkhazia and South Ossetia." *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 52, no. 5 (September 1, 2011): 631–54. <https://doi.org/10.2747/1539-7216.52.5.631>.
- Kolsto, Pal, and Andrei Malgin. "The Transnistrian Republic: A Case of Politicized Regionalism." *Nationalities Papers* 26, no. 1 (March 1998): 103–27. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00905999808408553>.
- Koort, Katja. "The Russians of Estonia: Twenty Years After." *World Affairs* 177, no. 2 (2014): 66–73.
- Kulyk, Volodymyr. "Language Identity, Linguistic Diversity and Political Cleavages: Evidence from Ukraine: Language Identity, Linguistic Diversity and Political Cleavages." *Nations and Nationalism* 17, no. 3 (July 2011): 627–48. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8129.2011.00493.x>.
- Laitin, David D. "Language Planning in the Former Soviet Union: The Case of Estonia." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 118, no. 1 (1996): 43–62. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl.1996.118.43>.
- Luxmoore, Matthew. "As Kremlin Critics Toast The Defeat Of Moldova's Pro-Russian President, Others Say Moscow's Influence Will Remain." *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, November 16, 2020, sec. Moldova. <https://www.rferl.org/a/moldova-presidential-election-moscow-reaction-sandu-winner/30953421.html>.

- Marin, Constantin, and Simion Ciochină. "Russian Propaganda and Media Ownership in the Republic of Moldova." *InterConf* 74 (September 19, 2021).
<https://ojs.ukrlogos.in.ua/index.php/interconf/article/view/14520>.
- Marshall, David F. "The Role of Language in the Dissolution of the Soviet Union." *Work Papers of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, University of North Dakota Session* 36, no. 1 (January 1, 1992). <https://doi.org/10.31356/silwp.vol36.03>.
- Mateu, Sandra Veloy. "Language Policy in Abkhazia: Promoting Abkhazian or Forgetting Georgian?" *Nationalia*, September 16, 2016.
<https://www.nationalia.info/new/10844/language-policy-in-abkhazia-promoting-abkhazian-or-forgetting-georgian>.
- Mekhuzla, Salome, and Aileen Roche. "National Minorities and Educational Reform in Georgia." European Centre for Minority Issues, September 2009.
http://ecmcaucasus.org/upload/publications/working_paper_46_en.pdf.
- National Bureau of Statistics. "Key Results of the 2014 Population and Housing Census," March 31, 2017. <https://statistica.gov.md/newsview.php?l=en&id=5583&idc=168>.
- National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova. "Population and Housing Census in 2014." Accessed October 24, 2021.
<https://statistica.gov.md/pageview.php?l=en&idc=479&>.
- Official Website of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. "Strategies and Programs." Accessed October 31, 2021.
https://www.akorda.kz/en/official_documents/strategies_and_programs.
- "Opinion Survey 2018: Republic of Moldova." EU Neighbors, June 2018.
<https://euneighbourseast.eu/news-and-stories/opinion-polls/opinion-survey-2018-republic-of-moldova/>.
- Parliament of Georgia. "On Official Language." *Legislative Herald of Georgia*, July 22, 2015.
<https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/2931198>.
- Pohl, Brittany A. "Frozen Conflicts, De Facto States, And Enduring Interests In The Russian Near Abroad." Missouri State University, 2016.
<https://bearworks.missouristate.edu/theses/3039>.
- Prina, Federica. "Language Policies or Language Politics? The Case of Moldova." Cluj-Napoca, Romania, 2012.
- . "Linguistic Justice, Soviet Legacies and Post-Soviet *Realpolitik* : The Ethnolinguistic Cleavage in Moldova." *Ethnopolitics* 14, no. 1 (January 2015): 52–71.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2014.928097>.
- Rajagopalan, Kanavillil (Brasil). "The Politics of Language and the Concept of Linguistic Identity." *CAUCE, Revista de Filología y Su Didáctica* 24 (2001): 17–28.

- Raun, Toivo U. "Language Development and Policy in Estonia." In *Sociolinguistic Perspectives on Soviet National Languages*, edited by Isabelle T. Kreindler. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 1985. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110864380-003>.
- Rochambeau, Mathieu. "The Perpetuation of Frozen Conflicts by De Facto States to Gain International Recognition: Case Studies of Transnistria and Somaliland." Charles University, 2019. <https://dspace.cuni.cz/handle/20.500.11956/107933>.
- Roper, Steven D. "The Politicization of Education: Identity Formation in Moldova and Transnistria." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 38, no. 4 (2005): 501–14.
- Shearer, David. "Elements Near and Alien: Passportization, Policing, and Identity in the Stalinist State, 1932–1952." *The Journal of Modern History* 76, no. 4 (December 2004): 835–81. <https://doi.org/10.1086/427570>.
- Smetana, Michal, and Jan Ludvík. "Between War and Peace: A Dynamic Reconceptualization of 'Frozen Conflicts.'" *Asia Europe Journal* 17, no. 1 (March 2019): 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-018-0521-x>.
- Zilhaver, Cody. "Beating America at Its Own Game: How Russia Can Use Democracy to Influence Estonia and Undermine the NATO Alliance." *Small Wars Journal*, July 18, 2017. <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/beating-america-at-its-own-game-how-russia-can-use-democracy-to-influence-estonia-and-under>.

VITA

Irina Paquette
Department of International Studies
Old Dominion University
7045 Batten Arts & Letters
Norfolk, VA 23529

Education

- December 2021 M.A., International Studies
Dept. of International Studies, Old Dominion University
- January 2018 M.A., English Language Didactics and Strategies of Communication
Dept. of Foreign Languages, Ion Creanga State Pedagogical
University, Moldova
- February 2016 B.A., English Language and Literature and French Language
Dept. of Foreign Languages, Moldova State University

Leadership and Awards

Treasurer, Graduate Society of International Studies

Fall 2020 – Fall 2021