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**ATTITUDES OF ETHNIC MINORITIES TOWARDS NATIONAL DEFENSE AND  
SECURITY IN THE TRIADIC NEXUS: THE CASE OF RUSSIAN-SPEAKERS IN ESTONIA**

by

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Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the  
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## **ABSTRACT**

### **ATTITUDES OF ETHNIC MINORITIES TOWARDS NATIONAL DEFENSE AND SECURITY IN THE TRIADIC NEXUS: THE CASE OF RUSSIAN-SPEAKERS IN ESTONIA**

Nikita Lumijoe  
Old Dominion University, 2023  
Director: Dr. Austin Jersild

The contested loyalty of ethnic minorities between the host nation and ethnocultural homeland can play a significant role in the formation of geopolitical tensions as well as civil and ethnic-based conflicts. When the ethnocultural homeland of an ethnic minority increases the scale of intervention into the inner affairs of the host countries using hybrid, cognitive and even military wise, the attitudes of ethnic minorities towards national security and defense policy become a strategic asset for both sides.

In 2014, pro-Russian separatism in Ukraine focused the attention of the international community to the political attitudes of Russian-speaking ethnic minorities in Eastern Europe. Unlike many post-communist states, Estonia, with significant proportion of Russian-speaking population, after regaining its independence was able to control serious ethnic tensions and avoid violence and separatism on ethnic grounds. Even so, local Russian-speakers still demonstrate less support to Estonian security and defense policy along with its state institutions and Estonian membership with NATO and the EU than ethnic Estonians. However, the formation of the political attitudes of Russians-speakers is not well researched yet.

To understand the formation of the political attitudes of ethnic minorities in the times of geopolitical tensions between the host nation and ethnocultural homeland, I have analyzed the examples of the Triadic Nexus from the past, or the conflicting interrelation between ethnic minorities, ethnocultural homeland, and nationalizing states. Based on the historical analysis I

identified the factors influencing the geopolitical attitudes of ethnic minorities, then applied them as variables in a statistical model to the case of Estonia to see how they affect the attitudes of Russian-speakers towards national security and defense policy.

Among the fifteen identified factors, national pride and threat perception have the strongest positive impact on the attitudes of Russian-speakers regarding national security and defense policy. Ethnic identity and political orientation of the respondents are the only variables that exhibited no effect in connection with their attitudes. While the statistical analysis of this work was based on the case of Estonia, the developed model may be applicable to the research within other nations and cultures.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my father, who encouraged me to aim higher.

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**NOMENCLATURE**

DF	Defense Forces
DL	Defense League
EU	European Union
MOD	Ministry of Defense
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
US	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WW	World War



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### PROBLEM

Growing tension between Russia and the West created a security concern around the political attitudes and loyalties of Russian-speakers living abroad. This issue is particularly relevant for the Baltic states, post-Soviet nations, which are now members of the EU and NATO and have a large Russian-speaking population. The question about the political attitudes of this part of the population became relevant as a topic of research with the growing intensity of Russia's hybrid warfare aimed at neighboring countries. In hybrid operations, the Kremlin is aiming to influence Russian ethnic minorities, Russian citizens, and quasi-citizens in an effort to undermine cohesion among local populations of the targeted nations. These techniques were evident in the operations against Georgia and Ukraine. However, as Brubaker argues, ethnic minorities are not doomed to follow and obey the geopolitical agenda of their ethnocultural homeland. Their affinity may vary as a function of socio-economic, political, and cultural factors.<sup>1</sup>

In times of geopolitical tensions, civil conflicts, and clashes of ethnocultural identities, it is strategically important to understand what makes ethnic minorities choose one or the other side in the triadic interrelation under pressure from the host-nation and the ethnocultural homeland. When the ethnocultural homeland of an ethnic minority increases the scale of intervention into the inner affairs of the neighboring countries using hybrid, cognitive and even military means, the attitudes of ethnic minorities towards national security and defense policy become a strategic asset for both sides.

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<sup>1</sup> Brubaker, Rogers. "National minorities, nationalizing states, and external national homelands in the new Europe." *Daedalus* 124, no. 2 (1995): 107-132.

This research examines the attitudes of ethnic minorities towards national defense and security in a time of tension between the hosting nation and the ethnocultural homeland. Using the Brubaker's Triadic Nexus model as framework of analysis, I identify historical and contemporary factors influencing the political moods and affinity of ethnic minorities generally, and then apply them in a statistical analysis to the case of Estonia, where the orientation of Russophones is targeted by both the nationalizing hosting nation and Russia as the ethnocultural homeland. For this purpose, I analyze Public Opinion and National Defence Survey data collected between 2001 and 2020, which allows an insight into residents' attitudes and stances towards national defense.

The survey distinguishes ethnic Estonian and non-Estonian (mainly Russian-speaking) respondents and covers a great variety of factors. On the one hand, the survey provides information about the socio-economic and ethnocultural background of the respondents. On the other hand, it reflects their attitudes towards national security and defense policy. Using this data, I explore how such factors as national pride, threat perception, personal welfare, socio-economic, and the political situation in the country impact the attitudes of Russian-speakers toward the key aspects of Estonian security and defense policy described in the National Security Concept. Using regression models, I explore the direction and the magnitude of the effect of these factors and see how much they can explain the formation of these attitudes.

While Estonian socio-cultural, geographic, and historical backgrounds create suitable conditions for the research, the results of it may be applicable to other nations and cultures. The hybrid warfare aimed to undermine social cohesion by affecting the attitudes of ethnic minorities remains to be as relevant a problem today as it was in the past. In the age of proxy wars geopolitical attitudes of ethnic minorities become a strategic asset.



## BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, several million Russian-speakers remained to live in emerging or re-emerging post-Soviet states. In 1945 three percent of the Estonian population was comprised of ethnically non-Estonians, but by 1989 this had increased to 38 percent.<sup>2</sup> Most newcomers during this period were of Slavic descent and were predominantly industrial workers. Nowadays, almost one-third of the Estonian population are Russian-speakers.<sup>3</sup> This is an ethnically diverse population group, with Russian as a mother tongue. These are mostly the people who moved to Estonia during the period of Soviet occupation from the other Soviet Republics and their descendants. The Russian language as the *lingua franca* unites this community and distinguishes them from ethnic Estonians, the majority of whom do not use the Russian language. Integration of Russian-speakers into Estonian society is far from complete, partly due to the established ethnocultural, social, and economic segregation between the two parts of the Estonian population.

One may assume that segregation is the legacy of the Soviet past, and it affects only older generations who moved to Estonia during the Soviet occupation. However, some current socio-political practices enhance the segregation affecting the younger generation, who were born in independent Estonia. The current educational system is one of them. Segregation starts from the kindergartens, which in most cases operate either in Estonian or Russian with some level of Estonian language instruction. Russian-speaking children can attend Estonian kindergartens; however, most of them study separately from Estonians. This segregation continues in primary schools, and later leads to labor and habitation segregation. We still can find cities and regions almost entirely populated by Russian-speakers. Narva, for example, the third largest city in

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<sup>2</sup> Kirch, Marika, and Aksel Kirch. "Ethnic relations: Estonians and non-Estonians." *Nationalities Papers* 23, no. 1 (1995): 43-59.

<sup>3</sup> Eesti Statistika. "Kui palju räägitakse Eestis eesti keelt?" Eesti Statistika, March 13, 2017. <https://www.stat.ee/et/uudised/2017/03/13/kui-palju-raagitakse-eestis-eesti-keelt>

Estonia, is mostly populated by ethnically non-Estonians. 97 percent of the nearly 60,000 people living there speak Russian as their mother tongue.<sup>4</sup> While Narva can be considered a special case due to its history and geographical proximity to Russia, the segregation may be found also in other parts of the country, and in the largest cities like Tallinn and Tartu.

Nevertheless, socio-demographics is not the only thing that segregates Russian-speakers and Estonians. These two parts of the population tend to have different views of history, political attitudes, and international threat perception. The Estonian Ministry of Defense (MOD) conducts a public-opinion survey twice a year, which demonstrates that the level of support to Estonian security and defense policy, confidence in state institutions, attitudes towards membership in the EU and NATO, and threat-perception varies between ethnic Estonians and the non-Estonian population (mainly Russian-speakers).<sup>5</sup> The lack of cohesion in the attitudes towards the main aspect of national security and defense doctrine becomes a security concern when the dividing line is formed based on ethnocultural identities, language, and socio-economic status, which go hand-in-hand in a segregated environment.

The question of the political attitudes of this part of Russian-speakers living abroad became relevant as a topic of research because of the growing tensions between Russia and the West. In recent decades, the Kremlin has intensified efforts to restore the influence in the neighboring countries and counter their liberal-democratic transition. Meanwhile, the threat of nuclear war has almost entirely eliminated any desire of a direct armed conflict between nuclear powers or their close allies. It increased the weight of hybrid warfare as a strategic instrument of power. With dynamically developing information technologies, hybrid warfare has significantly shifted into the

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<sup>4</sup> Gardner, Frank. "Narva: The Estonian border city where Nato and the EU meet Russia", BBC, May 26, 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-61555691>

<sup>5</sup> Kivirähk, Juhan. "Public Opinion and National Defence." Estonian Ministry of Defence, April (2020).

direction of the cognitive domain targeting the population of the potential adversaries. Recent conflicts have shown that in hybrid operations in the *Near Abroad*, the Kremlin is often aiming to influence Russian ethnic minorities living abroad to undermine cohesion among local populations of the targeted nations. These techniques we could see, for instance, in the operations against Ukraine and Georgia. NATO and the EU member-states are also targeted and affected by Russia's hybrid warfare. The Baltic States, including Estonia, the members of the EU and NATO with a significant proportion of segregated Russian-speaking population, and countries in close geographical proximity to Russia remain to be the targets for Moscow's geopolitical agenda.

Yet, it would be incorrect to see the Russian-speaking population in the Baltic States as Russia's "fifth column." Brubaker argues that ethnic minorities are not doomed to follow and obey the geopolitical agenda of their ethnocultural homeland.<sup>6</sup> This agenda may in fact contradict the interests of ethnic minorities as a community and social entity. However, it does not mean that ethnic minorities would be loyal to the nationalizing host state. They may have their own distinguished political stances of a dynamic nature that can vary in what Brubaker calls the Triadic Nexus Model, the model of analysis of the triadic interrelation of the conflicting host nation and ethnocultural homeland with ethnic minorities in between.<sup>7</sup> Being an independent actor in this triadic interrelation, ethnic minorities can stand on either side. The question is what makes them choose one or another. Looking at the Triadic Nexus examples from recent history, I have come up with a list of assumptions and hypotheses to apply to the case of Estonia.

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<sup>6</sup> Brubaker, Rogers. "National minorities, nationalizing states, and external national homelands in the new Europe." *Daedalus* 124, no. 2 (1995): 107-132.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND STRUCTURE

I test the hypotheses using statistical analysis of the Public Opinion and National Defense Survey data gathered by the Estonian Ministry of Defense in the period between 2001 and 2020. The data provides two types of information: first, the data illustrates the geopolitical attitudes of the respondents and the extent of their support to Estonian security and defense posture. Second, the data reveals the socio-economic and cultural background of the respondents. Building a linear regression model based on theoretical framework and historical analysis, I examine how various socio-economic factors and the level of national integration are influencing the attitudes of Russian-speakers towards Estonian defense and security concept. This sheds light on the socio-economic reasons for the vulnerability or robustness of national loyalty among ethnic minorities in the condition of geopolitical tension between the host nation and the ethnocultural homeland.

This dissertation is structured as follows. First, I build a theoretical framework of how socio-economic factors impact the robustness or fragility of national loyalty of ethnic minorities. I present the Triadic Nexus as a model of analysis of interrelation between ethnic minorities, ethnocultural homelands and the host nations. I explore the role of habit and cultural capital in the formation of inter-ethnic social structures. In the third chapter I introduce Russia, Estonia, and local Russian-speakers as the actors in the Triadic Nexus model. I describe the roots and implications of Estonian nationalizing state-building and characterize Russian-speakers as ethnic minority. Then I review how Russia's foreign policy and the concept of the "Russian World" evolved in time weaponizing the relations with Russian-speaking minorities living abroad. In the fourth chapter of the dissertation, I give a historic overview of the Triadic Nexus conflicts from the past and outline the factors that had an impact on the political affinity of ethnic minorities. The next chapter is focused on Estonian security and defense policy, the attitudes to which become a

subject of the empirical analysis. Next, I present the methodology, and I conduct a quantitative study exploring how the factors identified in the previous chapters affect Russian-speakers' attitudes towards Estonian security and defense policy. Finally, I discuss how the results of the statistical analysis resonate with the assumptions based on the historical observations. In the conclusion I suggest options for further research.

## CHAPTER II

### TRANSNATIONALISM, *DOXA* AND THE TRIADIC NEXUS

This chapter evaluates the triadic interrelation between ethnic minorities, their ethnocultural homeland, and the host state from the theoretical point of view. It introduces the effects of transnationalism and established social structures in the Triadic Nexus as a model of analysis.

#### TRANSNATIONALISM AND DIVIDED LOYALTY

The increasing globalization of the past century marked the beginning of this new concept of migration.<sup>8</sup> The constant flow of people, goods and information enhance transnationalism, the social process in which migrants create social spaces that cross geographical, cultural, and political borders.<sup>9</sup> In these circumstances, the identity of the minority can be divided between host and kin states. Transmigrants take part of their identity from the host state, which differentiates them from their compatriots in their ethnocultural homeland, and part of their identity from the kin state, differentiating them from natives of their state of residence. For them, the country of origin can become a source of cultural and national identity and the country of residence, a source of legal identity.<sup>10</sup> The divided identity of transmigrants can become a serious problem in the case of conflict between a host nation and the ethnocultural homeland. This section reviews theoretical assumptions regarding transnationalism of ethnic minorities and the interrelation between host nations, ethnic minorities, and their ethnocultural homelands. The main argument here is that ethnic minorities are not doomed to follow the policy of their ethnocultural homeland, nor are they

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<sup>8</sup> Pries, Ludger. "Neue Migration im transnationalen Raum." *Soziale Welt. Sonderband* 12 (1997).

<sup>9</sup> Schiller, N. G., Basch, L., & Blanc-Szanton, C.. "Towards a transnational perspective on migration: Race, class, ethnicity, and nationalism reconsidered" (Vol. 645). *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*. (1992).

<sup>10</sup> Vertovec, Steven. *Trends and impacts of migrant transnationalism*. Centre on Migration, Policy & Society, 2004.

always loyal to host nations. Their geopolitical attitudes depend on a variety of factors and have a dynamic character.<sup>11</sup>

Today we can hardly find an ethnically homogeneous country. In fact, nowadays there are over 180 independent states in the world with 600 living language groups and over 5000 nationalities. As a result, we see that different ethnicities must share the territory of one country and coexist with each other.<sup>12</sup> There are a variety of forms of this coexistence, such as assimilation, acculturation, cosmopolitanism, and multiculturalism.<sup>13</sup> Assimilation is a radical form of coexistence where ethnic minorities change their ethnic identity to integrate into the society of the host nation. Cosmopolitanism is on the other side of the scale. It is based on refusal to recognize the priority of national traditions and culture over the traditions and cultures of other countries and peoples and declares that any manifestations of patriotism are primitive forms of human consciousness.<sup>14</sup>

The way ethnic minorities are treated and their relationship with a hosting nation often depend on whether they are part of the indigenous population or are migrants. However, this dichotomy is not universal. For instance, in the case of Estonia, the Russian-speaking community can hardly be called indigenous, except the Orthodox Old Believers who settled mainly on the western coast of Lake Peipus, escaping from the persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church in the late 17th century after its split.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, it would be wrong to call the Russian-speakers currently living in Estonia immigrants in the classic term. Most of the Estonian Russian-speakers

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<sup>11</sup> Brubaker, Rogers. "National minorities, nationalizing states, and external national homelands in the new Europe." *Daedalus* 124, no. 2 (1995): 112.

<sup>12</sup> Kymlicka, Will. *Multicultural citizenship: A liberal theory of minority rights*. clarendon Press, 1995.

<sup>13</sup> Modood, Tariq. "Post-immigration 'difference' and integration." *Meritum, revista de Direito da Universidade FUMEC* (2013).

<sup>14</sup> Gizatova, Gulnaz K., Olga G. Ivanova, and Kirill N. Gedz. "Cosmopolitanism as a Concept and a Social Phenomenon." *Journal of History Culture and Art Research* 6, no. 5 (2017): 25-30.

<sup>15</sup> Plaat, Jaanus. "The identity and demographic situation of Russian old believers in Estonia (With regard to the period of the 18th to the early 21st century)." *Pro ethnologia* 19 (2005): 7-31.

did not move to Estonia intentionally as to another country. Most of them moved or were relocated in Soviet times, without crossing any international border. In 1991 they appeared to be living in a “different” country - independent Estonia, which changed their civil status from major imperial nation to a minority in an emerging nationalizing state.<sup>16</sup> This situation is common for many cases where ethnicities were separated by emerging borders on the ruins of the collapsed empires, be it after WWI or after the Cold War.

Leaving the territory of the emerging nationalizing states, the regimes, such as the Austro-Hungarian and the German Empire after WWI and the Soviet Union after the Cold War, left behind many representatives of their ethnocultural kin. After the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the USSR, over 25 million ethnic Russians found themselves living abroad.<sup>17</sup> The collapse of the Soviet Union changed not only geographical borders in Eastern Europe, but also the socio-political status of ethnicities, particularly Russian-speakers in many post-Soviet countries. Notwithstanding the geopolitical changes, many Russian-speakers remained socially and culturally affiliated with their ethnocultural homeland. Cross-border communication with relatives in Russia, or other post-Soviet states is still relevant for many Russian-speaking families in Estonia and other post-Soviet republics.<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile, the cultural space for Russian-speakers tends to differ from that of natives, which creates considerable a difference in perceptions of geopolitical developments. Formally living in one country, social and cultural Russian-speakers tend to live in transboundary spaces, somewhere in the middle between their ethnocultural homeland and host states.

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<sup>16</sup> Pettai, Vello, and Klara Hallik. "Understanding processes of ethnic control: segmentation, dependency and co-optation in post-communist Estonia." *Nations and nationalism* 8, no. 4 (2002): 505-529.

<sup>17</sup> Kosłowski, Rey. *International migration and the globalization of domestic politics*. Edited by Rey Kosłowski. London: Routledge, 2005.

<sup>18</sup> Lumijõe, Nikita. *Transnationalism and Attitudinal Integration. Russian-Speaking Youth and Estonian Security and Defence Policy*. 5, University of Tartu. (2018).



The phenomenon of transnationalism has led to a growing concern in international security and geopolitical discussions.<sup>19</sup> Leading commentators argued whether dual national identity, especially when it is supported by dual citizenship, can produce competing loyalties, create a security threat, impede immigrant integration, increase international instability, or violate equality.<sup>20</sup> Transmigrants with dual national identity can play different roles in international relations, stability, and security, depending on geopolitical circumstances, position of kin, and the hosting state and their interconnections. Depending on their political attitudes, transmigrants can be the catalyst of either ethnic conflicts or peacebuilding. In the current fluid, globalized geopolitical context, transmigrants tend to retain not only social and financial links to their homeland, but also political ones. In some cases, this may lead to the situation where a national minority can claim political membership in more than one state and become a political and economic actor for both host and kin state. Problems can arise if the economic and political interests of host and kin states conflict with each other, as it is in case of Western-oriented post-Soviet states *vis-à-vis* Russia.

Strong transnational ties with an ethnocultural homeland may lead to divided loyalty of ethnic minorities or straight-out aversion to host nation, which in the case of the conflict between the host nation and ethnocultural homeland may become a significant security concern. On the one hand, ethnic minorities may seek new identities that would either bring them practical benefits or ease the acceptance and integration in the new socio-political environment. On the other hand, even those willing to acquire a new national identity may find it hard to be accepted by the titular

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<sup>19</sup> Williams, P. D. (Ed.). *Security studies: an introduction*. Routledge. Transnationalism. (2012).

<sup>20</sup> Hansen, Randall, and Patrick Weil. "Dual citizenship in a changed world." *Dual Nationality, Social Rights and Federal Citizenship in the US and Europe*. Oxford: Berghahn Books (2002).

ethnicity of a nationalizing state as an equal part of the community, because the core idea of the nationalizing state is the society with a certain level of ethno-cultural hierarchy.<sup>21</sup>

The problem is not only caused by the unwillingness of the titular nation to accept ethnic minorities as equal, but also by cultural and social differences. Russian-speakers in Estonia living in a dense segregated community are culturally different, which makes it harder to integrate and cooperate with ethnic Estonian counterparts. It is just naturally easier for representatives of the same cultural space to find common ground for communication and ways of cooperation.<sup>22</sup> The Russophones' transnational cultural ties (watching Russian movies, listening to Russian music, following celebrations and cultural events) with Russia increase the cultural gap with the titular ethnic group.<sup>23</sup> Eventually it results in greater habitational, labor, and social segregation on both an ethnic and linguistic basis. The studies conducted in Estonia showed that Russian-speakers living in minority concentration neighborhoods are less likely to integrate into Estonian society.<sup>24</sup> It can have a negative impact on the popular cohesion, especially when there is conflict between the ethnocultural homeland and the host nation.

#### TRIADIC NEXUS AS THE MODEL OF RELATIONS BETWEEN ETHNIC MINORITIES, ETHNOCULTURAL HOMELAND, AND HOST NATION

Conflict in the relations between ethnic minorities, their ethnocultural homeland, and host nations may erupt for various reasons. Among them may be imperial ambitions and revanchism of an ethnocultural homeland, ethno-centrism of the host nation, separatism of an ethnic minority, or

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<sup>21</sup> Brubaker, Rogers. "National minorities, nationalizing states, and external national homelands in the new Europe." *Daedalus* 124, no. 2 (1995): 112.

<sup>22</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre. Cultural reproduction and social reproduction. In *Knowledge, education, and cultural change* (pp. 71-112). Routledge. (2018).

<sup>23</sup> Lumijõe, Nikita. Transnationalism and Attitudinal Integration. Russian-Speaking Youth and Estonian Security and Defence Policy. 5, University of Tartu. (2018).

<sup>24</sup> Mägi, Kadi, Maarten van Ham, Kadri Leetmaa, and Tiit Tammaru. "The neighbourhood context and changes in self-reported ethnic identity." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 46, no. 1 (2020): 277-296.

the combination (in most cases) of the three. This is the complex interrelation depicted by Brubaker in the Triadic Nexus model, where nationalizing states, national minorities, and external national homelands have their own interests and act according to their own aims, but all elements are bound together in a single and highly interdependent relational nexus.<sup>25</sup> Ethnocultural homeland in this model, however, is not always a historical homeland of the ethnic minority. It can be a nation claiming the ethnic minority as its own ethnocultural kin together with the rights to protect it against unfair treatment by the nationalizing state. For instance, Russia is not an ethnocultural homeland for South Ossetians, but arguably stands for their rights by protecting them against the nationalizing state of Georgia. By giving Russian citizenship, Moscow gets not only the moral right to protect, but in some sense also legitimizes the right for intervention.

In the Triadic Nexus model, a nationalizing state seeks to build a national-centric state with a certain level of social cohesion and integration of minorities. Nationalizing policy can include language and citizenship laws that establish ethnocultural hierarchy, where ethnic minorities must either share or obey the political agenda of the titular nation. The external national homelands claim responsibility to protect their ethnocultural kin, promote their welfare, and assert their interests in other states. In the model the diaspora policy is aimed to engage ethnic minorities and by doing it impact the nationalizing host nation. Depending on the context, the national minority can take different positions in the triadic nexus interrelation between external national homeland and host (nationalizing) state. Some members of the national minority may see the importance of demonstrating their loyalty to the host state, while others may seek patronage or protection from the external national homeland or international organizations.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Brubaker, Rogers. "National minorities, nationalizing states, and external national homelands in the new Europe." *Daedalus* 124, no. 2 (1995): 107-132.

<sup>26</sup> Brubaker, Rogers. "National minorities, nationalizing states, and external national homelands in the new Europe." *Daedalus* 124, no. 2 (1995): 107-132.

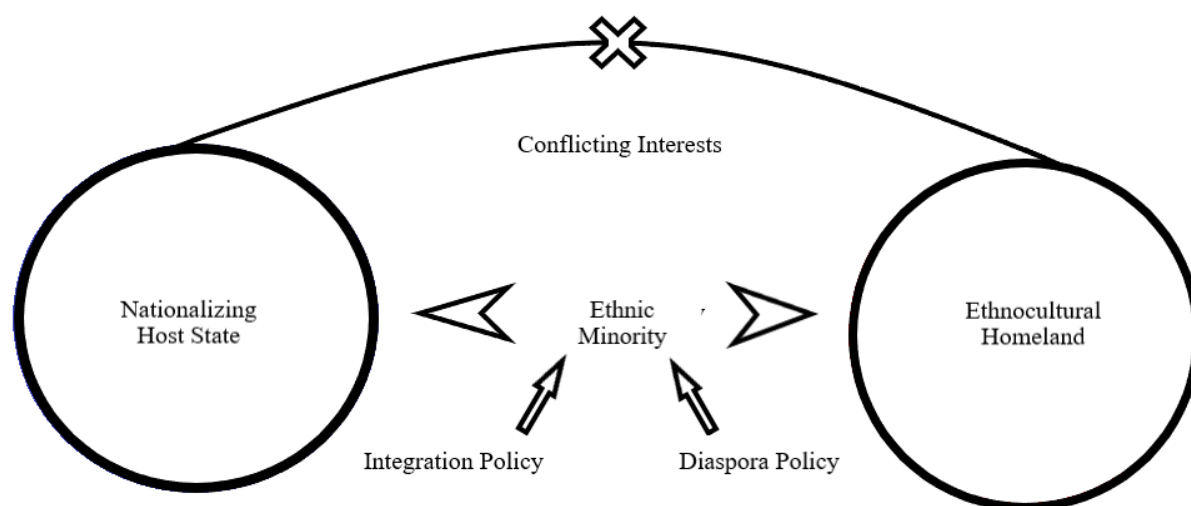


Figure 1. Triadic Nexus Model

The Triadic Nexus model is applied by scholars to a great variety of cases, such as the Abkhaz-Georgian ethno-political conflict,<sup>27</sup> the complex ethnocultural situation in Kazakhstan,<sup>28</sup> Status Law case in Hungary,<sup>29</sup> and the escalation of separatism in Ukraine.<sup>30</sup> The commonality in these cases is the above-mentioned typology of actors and their shared “social field” where they compete over resources, status, power, and other interests. Another thing that is common is the general nature of intentions of the ethnocultural homeland and the nationalizing state as actors of the Triadic Nexus. What varies is the disposition of the ethnic minority and circumstances affecting it, such as the socio-economic, ethnocultural, and historical background of the interrelations.

<sup>27</sup> Nokhrin, I. M. "Abkhaz-Georgian Ethno-political Conflict As A Complex Conflict And Prospects For Its Settlement." *Вестник Удмуртского университета. Социология. Политология. Международные отношения* 5, no. 1 (2021): 57-64.

<sup>28</sup> Oka, Natsuko, and O. Ieda. "The 'triadic nexus' in Kazakhstan: A comparative study of Russians, Uighurs, and Koreans." *Slavic Studies* 51 (2004): 158.

<sup>29</sup> Kemp, Walter. "The triadic nexus: lessons learned from the status law." *Beyond sovereignty: From status law to transnational citizenship* 9 (2006): 109-127.

<sup>30</sup> Fedorenko, Kostiantyn, and Andreas Umland. "A Triadic Nexus Conflict? Ukraine's Nationalizing Policies, Russia's Homeland Nationalism, and the Dynamics of Escalation in 2014–2019." *The Accommodation of Regional and Ethno-cultural Diversity in Ukraine* (2021): 53-82.

Unlike many post-communist states including Moldova, Yugoslavia, Transcaucasian Countries, and Ukraine, Estonia was able to control serious ethnic tensions and avoid violence and separatism on ethnic grounds. Estonia could peacefully overcome circumstances favorable for the eruption of ethnic violence in 1991-93, including an ethnically diverse population, the high social cost of economic transition, the rapid drop in the status of local Russian-speakers (about 28% of population at this time), the proximity of Russia, and the presence of Russian forces on the ground. Most of the factors that contributed to the peaceful resolution of the Triadic Nexus in Estonia are not obvious or tangible, argues Park.<sup>31</sup>

#### DOXA AND CULTURAL CAPITAL IN THE INTER-ETHNIC SOCIAL HIERARCHY

Partly, we can explain the variety of the outcomes of the Triadic Nexus in the post-Soviet space by the nature of the actors involved, their confidence, and ambitions. An American anthropologist, Oscar Lewis, famous for his theory of poverty, considered that culture determines a certain design for living with established patterns, which serves a major adaptive function.<sup>32</sup> The somewhat deterministic position of Lewis tells us that poor people tend to repeat the culturally inherited behavioral patterns which prevents their economic and social growth.

Bourdieu explains these social configurations as habitus.<sup>33</sup> According to Bourdieu, a certain set of social norms and traditions, established as the result of socialization, allows social agents to realize their strategies of actions even if the set is not acknowledged by the agents. The habitus represents the system of social expectations and predispositions acquired through

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<sup>31</sup> Park, Andrus. "Ethnicity and independence: The case of Estonia in comparative perspective." *Europe-Asia Studies* 46, no. 1 (1994): 69-87.

<sup>32</sup> Lewis, Oscar. "The Culture of Poverty: Scientific American (215)." (1966).

<sup>33</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre. "Structures and the habitus." *Material culture: Critical concepts in the social sciences* 1, no. part 1 (2004): 116-77.

experience. The actors reproduce it, unconsciously sustaining certain *doxa* of power relations,<sup>34</sup> which are “taken-for-granted” rules of the game in the social field.

Habitus, however, depends on social structure. Social structure prepares agents for a particular role, and therefore determines their ambitions. Bourdieu speaks about cultural capital, which accumulates from generation to generation.<sup>35</sup> For instance, within the same conditions the students from higher social classes tend to be more successful in education than the student from lower social classes. First, higher social classes accumulate cultural capital, which enhances their ability to communicate in symbolic language used in educational institutions. Second, due to better initial social status, students from higher social classes are more self-confident, and therefore eager to achieve more than their classmates from lower social classes. Hence, social structure enhances the reproduction of the patterns of social distribution of power and resources.

Cultural reproduction takes place in other areas besides education, such as power relations in state building and between the states. Hume asked in his works why the rulers can control the masses, if they are so inferior in numbers.<sup>36</sup> The answer is symbolic power, the accepted *doxa* which allows one group of agents to dominate in power relations over others. Bourdieu<sup>37</sup> argues that relations of force are relations of communication, inseparable from relations of meaning. This can also help us to partly explain why some post-Soviet nations, such as the Baltic states, were able to break ties with the former bloc leader in the early 90s, while some post-Soviet nations like Ukraine could only make it decades later through the Orange Revolution. It may also help us to better understand the stances of ethnic minorities in relation to their host nation and the

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<sup>34</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre. *On the state: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1989-1992*. John Wiley & Sons, 2018.

<sup>35</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre, Cultural reproduction, and social reproduction. In *Knowledge, education, and cultural change* (pp. 71-112). Routledge. (2018).

<sup>36</sup> Hume, David. *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*. United Kingdom: A. Millar, in the Strand. 1753

<sup>37</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre. *On the state: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1989-1992*. John Wiley & Sons, 2018.164.

ethnocultural homeland, and partly answer the question why in Ukraine, with a 17 percent ethnically Russian population, the pro-Russian separatism appeared to be much stronger than in Estonia, with a 24 percent ethnically Russian population. Due to historical and cultural circumstances Ukrainians were more “Russified” or “Sovietized” over centuries of Russian/Soviet rule than the Baltic nations. The distinct cultural capital and social *Doxa* helped the Baltic states and Estonia particularly to overcome the challenges of the transition period and build a stable nationalizing state resilient to the Russia’s influence. Calling Baltic independence into question is not uncommon today (in certain Russian discourse), and there was nothing self-evident about the restoration of Estonia’s independence in the early 90-s. However, restoring the nation on the idea of continuity of the pre-WWII statehood, Estonia was able to develop the society where the national right for independence and primacy of Estonian language and culture is virtually unquestionable.

## CHAPTER III

### TRIADIC NEXUS: RUSSIA, ESTONIA, AND LOCAL RUSSIAN-SPEAKERS

#### ESTONIA AS A NATIONALIZING STATE

The Baltic states partly share the experience of the Soviet occupation with other post-Soviet republics; however, their history is different in some crucial points which provide a specific cultural capital for the Baltic nations. Beside greater belongings to Western European civilization (German, Swedish times), what distinguishes the Baltic states from other post-Soviet republics is the period of independent statehood from 1918 to 1940, during which Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania acquired “powerful national symbols to mobilize their peoples for independent sovereignty.”<sup>38</sup> The experience of independent statehood became a significant part of local cultural capital and contributed to the character of national re-awakening, and relation to the period of occupation. It enhanced the popular support to national self-determination challenging the legitimacy of the Soviet Union.<sup>39</sup>

For the Baltic states the War of Liberation (1918–20), the anti-Soviet Guerrilla war (1945–1956), and the Singing Revolution (1987–1991) became the symbols of nationhood and the basis for a system of values. In this system of values, everything related to the Soviet occupation lost legitimacy, including the power and the legacy of Russia as the former block leader. In these circumstances the nationalizing state was seen as extensionally necessary and legitimate form of government aimed to promote and protect national language, culture, and territory against foreign aggression. It created a symbolic structure where state even though forbidding discrimination on

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<sup>38</sup> Smith, Graham, ed. *The Baltic states: The national self-determination of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania*. Springer, 2016.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.



any ground establishes an ethno-cultural hierarchy. This is reflected in the preamble of the Estonian constitution:

*With unwavering faith and a steadfast will to strengthen and develop the state which embodies the inextinguishable right of the people of Estonia to national self-determination and which was proclaimed on 24 February 1918, which is founded on liberty, justice and the rule of law, which is created to protect the peace and defend the people against aggression from the outside, and which forms a pledge to present and future generations for their social progress and welfare, which must guarantee the preservation of the Estonian people, the Estonian language and the Estonian culture through the ages, the people of Estonia, on the basis of § 1 of the Constitution which entered into force in 1938, and in the referendum held on 28 June 1992, have adopted the following Constitution.<sup>40</sup>*

The change in the symbolic structure came together with the rapid shift in geopolitical orientation starting with the Singing Revolution. Estonia was the first Soviet republic to promulgate the supremacy of its own laws over the all-Union ones.<sup>41</sup> Just in three years after the reestablishment of independence, all Russian troops were withdrawn from Estonia. Former KGB and communist leaders lost their power. Most of the Soviet ideological monuments were demolished, and the period of Soviet rule in the official discourse has never been considered anything but occupation. This made Soviet-era migration illegal, which gave a moral and legitimate reason for Estonia and Latvia not to give citizenship to the people who came to these territories during the Soviet times as well as their descendants. It practically excluded Russian-speakers from the politics in the beginning of the 90s and contributed to the building of an ethno-centric state. Why then did local Russophones not react on that with violent separatist movements as had happened in some other republics?

Among the reasons, we once again come back to the cultural capital. While in most of the Soviet Republics Russophones were perceived as a superior titular ethno-cultural group, in the

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<sup>40</sup> The Constitution of the Republic of Estonia. [RT I 2007, 33, 210 - entry into force 21.07.2007]

<sup>41</sup> Haab, Mare. Estonia. In *Bordering Russia* (pp. 109-130). Routledge. (2018).

Baltic States, even in the Soviet times, their superiority (excluding political) was questionable. More than ten years of the anti-Soviet guerilla war is an example of the challenges that the Soviet political establishment encountered in the Baltics. In addition to the questionable loyalty of the Baltic nations, they were among the most developed regions of the Soviet Union. People moving to Estonia from other Soviet Republics usually experienced improvement in their living conditions, which created a certain level of respect to ethnic Estonians and the Estonian nation. Meanwhile, the cultural and linguistic boundaries between ethnic Estonians and Russophones were significantly higher than, for instance, between ethnic Ukrainians and Russophones. The high level of ethno-cultural distinction, in addition to a certain level of respect, created a *doxa* among Russophones that Estonians are indeed the owners of the nation. However, it would not be possible without the efforts of ethnic Estonians, who as previously discussed had confidence in legal continuity of Estonian state.

The swift shift towards westernization, the dramatic development of economy, and maintenance of political stability would not be possible without the rapid consolidation of political power in the hands of ethnic Estonians.<sup>42</sup> For these purposes, the substantial Russian-speaking community was neutralized as a political power. It would be hardly possible to elect such a pro-Western government should all Estonian residents participate in the elections of 1992. Through citizenship and other policies, post-Soviet Estonian administration basically excluded the Russian-speaking community from the decision-making process. On one hand, it may seem illiberal, but on the other hand there is an opinion that it helped the country to avoid the geopolitical pendulum

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<sup>42</sup> Pettai, Vello, and Klara Hallik. "Understanding processes of ethnic control: segmentation, dependency and co-optation in post-communist Estonia." *Nations and nationalism* 8, no. 4 (2002): 505-529.

and consequent frozen conflicts, that we can see now for instance in Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine.<sup>43</sup>

Estonian political scientists Vello Pettai and Klara Hallik analyze how the tools of ethnic control, such as segmentation, dependency, and co-optation were implied in post-communist Estonia.<sup>44</sup> Segmentation, an isolation of an ethnic minority from the majority, took place in Estonia in the form of legal restorationism, framing the Soviet rule as illegal occupation, and creating a moral and legal justification to differentiate people who lived in Estonia before the occupation and their descendants from those who migrated during the occupation and their descendants; the first group had more rights than the second, primarily the right of citizenship. To see the rationale behind this segmentation we should notice that before the Soviet occupation, there were less than 100,000 ethnic-Russians living in Estonia, and by 1989 their number grew up to 474,834 or up to 30.3 percent of the total population, not including Russian-speaking Soviet-era migrants of other ethnicities.<sup>45</sup> Even those Russian-speakers who received citizenship had to prove their Estonian language proficiency to participate in the parliamentary elections as the candidates.

In some sense unintentionally, the segmentation also affected the creation of dependency, a reliance of the minority on the majority in economic and social terms. Though not required for work, expected public service, language proficiency, and citizenship enhanced the ethnic-based social hierarchy. In addition to this, the overindustrialized east of Estonia, where most of the Russian-speaking population was occupied, lost income sources after breaking ties with Moscow, the main client of production in that area.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 524.

<sup>44</sup> Pettai, Vello, and Klara Hallik. "Understanding processes of ethnic control: segmentation, dependency and co-optation in post-communist Estonia." *Nations and nationalism* 8, no. 4 (2002): 505-529.

<sup>45</sup> Kuddo. Arvo., Laas.Kaljo. Eesti rahvastik. Eesti Entsüklopeedia. (2002)

Finally, Estonia used integration policy as institutional co-optation. As part of the citizenship policy, the Estonian government reserved the right to grant Estonian citizenship without the naturalization process to people who made a significant national contribution. By giving “carrots” to prominent non-Estonians, the establishment obtained loyalty among Russian-speaking opinion leaders, businessmen, artists, sportsmen, and other influential people. In addition to this, by the end of the 90s, Estonia launched an integration program, which included state-funded Estonian language courses and constitution courses, which prepared people for the naturalization examinations.<sup>46</sup>

The established *doxa* of ethnic hierarchy allowed Estonia to stabilize the situation in the 90s and decisively switch to a market economy and Western geopolitical orientation. However, the segmentation used for these purposes also had side effects. Even though there are certain developments in social integration, for instance such as increasing the number of ethnic non-Estonians holding Estonian citizenship, Russian-speakers and ethnic Estonians remain highly segregated.<sup>47</sup> As the result, these two groups reside in separate information spaces having different perceptions and perspectives about the Estonian state, history, current threat environment, and national security policies.

#### RUSSIAN-SPEAKERS AS ETHNIC MINORITY AND THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARDS NATIONAL DEFENSE AND SECURITY

The events in Ukraine in 2014 turned the attention of the international community to Eastern Europe, and particularly to post-Soviet space, seen by Russia as a sphere of vital national interest. In this area, Russia confronts the desire of the nations that used to be under Moscow's

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<sup>46</sup> Pettai, Vello, and Klara Hallik. "Understanding processes of ethnic control: segmentation, dependency and co-optation in post-communist Estonia." *Nations and nationalism* 8, no. 4 (2002): 505-529.

<sup>47</sup> Kivirähk, Juhan. "Integrating Estonia's Russian-speaking population: Findings of national defense opinion surveys." *International Centre for Defence and Security* (2014): 22.

control to westernize. There is an opinion promoted by Moscow that on the eve of the upcoming collapse of the Soviet Union, Gorbachev agreed to peacefully let Germany go, under the condition that NATO would never expand to the East. However, after the victory in the Cold War, Washington realized it could not just win big but win bigger, argues a prize-winning historian, Mary Elise Sarotte.<sup>48</sup> Not one inch of territory needed to be off limits to NATO, as long as nations pursue the path of democratization. Less than ten years after the collapse of the regime, three former Soviet satellites, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, joined NATO. In 2004, three former Soviet Republics, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, joined the alliance. For Russia, it meant that NATO military installations were now located less than 100 miles from Saint-Petersburg. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were the last post-Soviet countries that were able to use the gap of opportunity, until Russia took a more assertive position in relation to NATO enlargement and the *near abroad*.

The assertive actions of Russia against the aspiring membership in NATO and the EU by post-Color Revolution Ukraine and Georgia indicated that the Kremlin has no intention to let the Western liberal-democratic order expand without obstacles in the post-Soviet space. While the current Russian policy towards the nations in transition is clear, Moscow's intentions regarding NATO's Eastern periphery became a topic of international public concern after the events in Georgia and Ukraine. A particularly worrying factor was the large proportion of Russian-speaking population in the Baltic States, who's national integration is often seen as problematic, making loyalty and political orientations questionable. The biggest question is whether or not they support the Kremlin's current agenda. In the light of the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Estonian

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<sup>48</sup> Sarotte, M. E. *Not One Inch: America, Russia, and the Making of Post-Cold War Stalemate*. Yale University Press, 2021.1.

Internal Security Service's annual review claimed that this kind of support is a direct threat to Estonian constitutional order.<sup>49</sup>

The Estonian Ministry of Defense, since 2001, twice a year conducts public opinion surveys among residents aged fifteen and older in order to determine their attitudes towards credibility of institutions, national security threats, Estonia's defense capability, organization of Estonian national defense, NATO, the EU, international military operations, and other aspects related to national security and defense policy. Through all the years, the biggest differences in the national defense attitudes of the residents continue to be based on their ethnicity.<sup>50</sup> The survey distinguishes the respondents by ethnic identity, dividing them in two groups: ethnic Estonians (further referred to as Estonians), and those with any other ethnic self-identity (further referred to as non-Estonians). Non-Estonians comprise about 32 percent of the total Estonian population, ethnic Russians about 25 percent of the total population of Estonia, and more than a half of the remaining seven percent of non-Estonians speak Russian as a mother tongue.<sup>51</sup> Hence, when we speak about ethnically non-Estonians, we mean mainly Russian-speakers. This is quite a heterogeneous group; however, taken as a group, their attitudes towards national security and defense policy are quite different from those of ethnic Estonians.

Ethnic Estonians show greater support to national security and defense policy and the institutions involved than non-Estonians. The biggest difference between Estonians and non-Estonians is their threat perception, especially in relation to Russia. While Estonians see Russia as a threat, non-Estonians see it as a partner. While Estonians see the increase of defense expenditure

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<sup>49</sup> Klemm, Jürgen. 2021-2022 Kaitsepolitsei Aastaraamat. Kaitsepolitsei. (2022)

<sup>50</sup> Kivirätk, Juhan. "Public Opinion and National Defence." Estonian Ministry of Defence, April (2020).

<sup>51</sup> Küün, Elvira. "Impact Of Change Of The Language Environment On The Extent Of Language Shift In The Context Of Linguistics"; (2015). pp. 73–91.

and membership in NATO as a national security guarantee, non-Estonians find cooperation and good relations with Russia more important for national security.<sup>52</sup>

There are many assumptions that make Russian-speakers of Estonia see national security and defense policy in a darker light than ethnic Estonians. One of the popular arguments is that the difference comes from the media sources that they are using. Russian-speakers prefer Russian television channels over Estonian television (before the Russian TV channels were banned in 2022), while the number of Estonians who would watch Russian television is marginal. However, the difference is less evident in relation to internet media portals, which nowadays are becoming more popular than the television. Russian-speakers in Estonia prefer national internet-based information sources over foreign ones.<sup>53</sup> Taking into consideration that the narrative about national and international security and defense topics varies between Russian and Estonian media, especially when we speak about NATO and Russian foreign affairs, one can assume that attitudes toward national security and defense may vary as a factor of media preferences.

Nevertheless, the patterns of media consumption may be considered not only the cause of the difference in opinions, but a result of certain preconditions. To get to the root cause of the problem, we must understand why Russian-speakers prefer to follow Russian media, and why they find it more attractive than Estonians. Among these reasons may be language proficiency, legal status, and historical and cultural background. Before we move forward into the discussion about these factors, we must understand who the Russians-speakers of Estonia are.

To begin with, Russian-speakers in Estonia, as in many other post-Soviet countries, are not exclusively ethnic Russians. Mostly these are the people of all ethnicities who voluntarily or not moved to Estonian territory occupied by the Soviet Union from 1940 until 1991 (the Soviet

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<sup>52</sup> Kivirähk, Juhan. "Public Opinion and National Defence." Estonian Ministry of Defence, April (2020).

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

occupation was interrupted by German occupation during WWII). Among these people are Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Georgians, Armenians, and others. The Russian language as *lingua franca* became a homogenizing factor, which also distinguishes the majority of non-Estonians from Estonians, who do not use Russian in daily life, or at least not as a mother tongue. One of the main factors that characterize a person's national identity is their mother tongue. According to the Estonian 2000 Census, 98 percent of Russophones considered the Russian language their mother tongue, and these are not only ethnic Russians.<sup>54</sup> 57 percent of Ukrainians and seventy percent of Belarusians living in Estonia considered Russian their mother tongue. However, in turbulent times of geopolitical conflict, the ethnic self-identities and mother tongue become optional. The decline of the Russian reputation can lead to the decline of the number of people claiming Russian ethnic self-identity and the Russian language as a mother tongue.

Nevertheless, during the Soviet times, the Russian language became a tool of communication for labor migrants of different ethnicities. For Estonians, however, the Russian language acquired a reputation as the language of occupation. Intensive Russification at the end of the Soviet period enhanced the averseness of Estonians towards the Russian language. While the prestige of the Russian language was undermined among ethnic Estonians, for the majority of other migrated ethnic groups, it remained to be the main tool of communication. This division still affects segregation of the Estonian population on an ethnic basis, not only because people cannot understand each other, but also because the language of communication often determines social and professional networks, media preferences, and education.

The problem, which emerged in the Soviet times, is still relevant and creates obstacles in communication and integration between the two population groups. The education system, which

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<sup>54</sup> Kuddo. Arvo., Laas.Kaljo. Eesti rahvastik. Eesti Entsüklopeedia. (2002)



is still formed on the basis of the Soviet legacy, where the language of instruction was either Estonian for ethnic Estonians or Russian for everybody else, is one of the key factors which undermine the integration process. Students are still getting segregated starting from kindergarten, which has groups for those who know the Estonian language (mostly for ethnic Estonians) and groups for those who do not have sufficient proficiency in Estonian or prefer to study in Russian. Students also have the option to go to school with either Russian or Estonian language instruction, at least they had this option until 2022. Generally, going to Russian kindergarten implies that you will continue to study in Russian schools. Nine or twelve years of school education in a specific ethnic and linguistic environment impacts the composition of social networks, friends, and future colleagues. In 2022, the government decided to make all education in Estonian language; however, Russian-speakers, according to the new system, will still be studying separately from their ethnic Estonian counterparts.

Even though Estonia tries to improve the situation by incrementation of deep learning of the Estonian language in Russian schools and kindergartens, Russian-speaking youth are lacking real-life communication with Estonian counterparts and vice-versa. This consolidates the Russian-speaking community and alienates them from ethnic Estonians. Later this segregation also affects business relations and social life. Russian-speakers, often lacking the proficiency or practical experience in the Estonian language, must search for workplaces where they can communicate in Russian and the social network where they will be understood.

Business and social relations impact the habitation patterns, making people live around the areas where they can work and study in their language. There are traditionally established Russian-speaking districts in the biggest cities such as Tallinn (Lasnamae) and Tartu (partly Annelinn). The Russian-speaking region Ida-Virumaa has the third biggest city in Estonia, Narva,

where Russian-speakers make up more than 90 percent of the local population. In Russian-speaking districts and regions, it is easy to access education, healthcare, and businesses operated in the Russian language. This creates a certain comfort zone, where without nationalizing pressure from the government, the Estonian language and culture would be in the minority.

It may be problematic to get services in the Estonian language in the Russian-speaking regions. It makes these places hardly attractive for ethnic Estonians, who do not speak or do not want to speak and work in the Russian language, which enhances the habitational segregation. The Estonian government, however, tries to improve the situation by funding Estonian language courses for adults or imposing sanctions on workers of public institutions or the customer service sector who do not speak Estonian. Language Inspection, a governmental agency, conducts checks of language proficiency among non-Estonians who work in public institutions or customer services. To prove language proficiency, Russophones must pass language examinations on a certain level, which some people find hard, especially older generations lacking communication practice in Estonian. If they do not prove their language proficiency, they can get fined, or in the worst-case scenario, lose their jobs. For instance, in 2018, twelve Rescue Department employees in Ida-Virumaa lost their jobs due to insufficient Estonian language proficiency. The workers did not have a B1 language proficiency level required by law. Most of these rescuers had been working in the department for more than 20 years; less than half of them, however, were Estonian citizens. The head of the Rescue Center explained the decision by the fact that these workers could not learn the Estonian language, while the center for eight years provided free language courses. During this period of time, 27 employees passed the examination.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Kulikov, Dmitri. 12 спасателей в Ида-Вирумаа уволены из-за незнания эстонского языка. ERR: 03.28.2018.

All things considered, the Russian-speaking community is heterogeneous, but still quite distinct from ethnic Estonians. The main difference is in the language of work, communication, and education. The Estonian government makes efforts to enhance the integration of Russophones, however 30 years after regaining independence, socio-cultural cleavage remains a problem in Estonia. One of the important aspects of this problem is that it also affects the national attitudinal cohesion in general, particularly in the field of security and defense. Using the Russian language primarily in daily life, the Russian-speaking community often prefers information sources communicating in their mother tongue, among which are the sources sponsored by the Russian government promoting Moscow's geopolitical agenda. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to say that only language determines the attitudes towards national security and defense policy. There is a plethora of factors which can affect the divided loyalty of ethnic minorities between the host nation and the ethnocultural homeland.

Following different worldviews, ethnic Estonians and Russophones drift to opposing poles especially if the factor of Russia being the ethnocultural homeland is involved.<sup>56</sup> Public opinion surveys show that the attitudes of Russian-speakers towards key aspects of national security and defense policy are more negative than those of ethnic Estonians. The divergence increases with the growth of geopolitical tensions between Russia and the West, caused, for instance, by the events such as the 2014 crisis in Ukraine.<sup>57</sup> When modern hybrid warfare becomes more population-centric, and the boundaries between war and peace evanesce, the social cohesion becomes a serious security concern.

In the current Triadic Nexus, Estonia, a small nationalizing state, stands against imperialist Russia as the ethnocultural homeland. The military capacity of Estonia and Russia are not

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

comparable. Therefore, collective security plays a crucial role in Estonian defense strategy. However, the Baltic States is the hardest region for NATO to defend. The area has only minimal land connection with Poland and is surrounded by the sea and non-NATO nations. Therefore, in case of rapid escalation of a conflict, Estonia must rely on own forces, at least to resist an invasion until the arrival of NATO support. Therefore, the Estonian National Defense Strategy<sup>58</sup> is based on the implementation of total defense, an all-inclusive approach that implies the involvement and cooperation of all Estonian state institutions, international allies, and all sectors of society. In the event of an armed conflict, the entire Estonian population should be involved in immediate defense and counterattack, which is supposed to be ensured by the population's high willingness to defend their country, widespread military training, and large membership of the Estonian Defense League, a voluntary national defense organization.<sup>59</sup> However, the public opinion survey shows a drastic difference in the attitudes of ethnic Estonians and local Russian-speakers towards the main aspects of National Defense Strategy and Concept.

The existing studies (World Values Survey, European Values Study) demonstrate that the attitudes of the population toward national defense in the Baltic States can depend on the level of national pride, trust in security and defense institutions, and threat perception.<sup>60</sup> They also show that the attitudes of local Russophones tend to be much more negative than those of the titular nation. Estonia displays an especially drastic difference, where the general public's will to defend the nation is high. In addition to the above-mentioned factors, Estonian defense experts consider that context plays an important role in the formation of popular attitudes towards national security

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<sup>58</sup> "National Defence Strategy 2011 - Kaitseministeerium," National Defence Strategy (Estonian Ministry of Defence), accessed January 29, 2023, [https://kaitseministeerium.ee/sites/default/files/elfinder/article\\_files/national\\_defence\\_strategy.pdf](https://kaitseministeerium.ee/sites/default/files/elfinder/article_files/national_defence_strategy.pdf)

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Andžāns, Māris, and Andris Sprūds. "Willingness to defend one's own country and to resist in the Baltic states." *Security and defence quarterly* 30, no. 3 (2020): 15-30.

and defense, which includes the socio-economic situation, the perception of social justice, the political situation in the country, and external political dynamics,<sup>61</sup> and this context may have a different impact on the titular nations and ethnic minorities.

One of the greatest differences what we can see between the attitudes of ethnic Estonians and those of Russian-speakers is in their threat perception. While ethnic Estonians see Russian geopolitical ambitions as one of the main threats, Russophones rather consider the US foreign affairs as a threat for security.<sup>62</sup> When ethnic Estonians see the membership in NATO and the presence of allies as the key security guarantee, Russophones often considered it as provocation against Russia. Russia, on the other hand, which condemns Estonia's nationalizing policies is not always perceived by them as a threat. Even though, the attitudes of Russian-speakers towards Russia have been changed after the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Russian citizens living in Estonia (about 100,000 people) demonstrate a certain level of approval of Moscow's current geopolitical agenda. For example, according to official sources, ninety percent of votes of Russian citizens living in Estonia were in favor of President Vladimir Putin during the 2018 Russian presidential election. 83,000 Russian citizens eligible to vote in Estonia, 28,077 participated in the 2018 election.<sup>63</sup>

One of the key factors impacting the divergence in popular opinions is the difference in identity, which was partly formed by the Soviet legacy, partly by Estonian segmentation policy, and also partly by Russian compatriots' policy. The national self-identity influences human behavior in daily life, the political preferences and motivation, and the sense of security and

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<sup>61</sup> Riisik, Mark. Will to defend – what is it? ERR. 01.11.2022.

<sup>62</sup> Andžāns, Māris, and Andris Sprūds. "Willingness to defend one's own country and to resist in the Baltic states." *Security and defence quarterly* 30, no. 3 (2020): 15-30.

<sup>63</sup> Cavegn, Dario. Putin garners 94 percent of votes cast at polling stations in Estonia. ERR. 19.03.2018

belonging.<sup>64</sup> Under the Soviet rule, Estonian national identity was threatened, national tricolor forbidden, and any national political movements obviously banned. Therefore, the potential Russian threat seems to be largely a threat to national identity. Integration of local Russophones into Estonian society is also often perceived as a threat to genuine Estonian national identity.<sup>65</sup> For local Russophones, however, Russia's geopolitical agenda does not threaten ethnic and cultural identity. Conversely, the compatriot's policy and condemnation of local nationalism by Moscow may be perceived as a protection of ethnic identity and a helping hand against assimilation.

However, it would be still unfair to say that a hypothetical Russian invasion would be welcomed by Russophones in Estonia. The identity question is more complex and should be analyzed in a wider context. Smith<sup>66</sup> for instance, argues that Triadic Nexus does not represent the full picture of framing the national question in Central and Eastern Europe. He argues that Brubaker neglects the crucial role of international organizations such as the EU, NATO, the OSCE, and the Council of Europe in shaping the identity politics in Central and Eastern Europe. Estonia, which was not ready to share ethnic identity with local Russophones, had a perspective to acquire something larger, the European identity linked to a variety of practical benefits. Therefore, national self-identity especially for the younger generation of Russian-speakers in Estonia, becomes a matter of choice. There is a plethora of types and sub-types of identities, such as Russians, Estonians, Estonian-speaking Russians, Russian-speaking Estonians, Europeans and many more. While in Estonia a Russophone would be perceived by ethnic Estonians as Russian, traveling

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<sup>64</sup> Ulasevich, Semen. "Between Homeland And Fatherland: Russian Identity In Estonia And Latvia." University of Tartu. 2017.

<sup>65</sup> Pettai, Vello, and Klara Hallik. "Understanding processes of ethnic control: segmentation, dependency and co-optation in post-communist Estonia." *Nations and nationalism* 8, no. 4 (2002): 505-529.

<sup>66</sup> Smith, David J. "Framing the national question in Central and Eastern Europe: a quadratic nexus?." *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics* 2, no. 1 (2002): 3-16.

abroad the same person can be perceived as an Estonian to foreigners.<sup>67</sup> Given the impact that national self-identity may have on political attitudes, it is particularly important to understand the identity formation of the minority in the Triadic Nexus context.

As we can see, the outcomes of the Triadic Nexus could vary as a factor of context, identities, power relations, and other factors. Based on the theoretical framework and content of this section we can outline that to analyze the political stances of ethnic minorities; we must consider 1) socio-economic condition of ethnic minorities, 2) level of integration, and 3) national pride. Contextualizing the political loyalty of ethnic minorities in relation to national defense and security in the Triadic Nexus case of Estonia, I suggest three hypotheses related to the factors discussed above:

1) Socio-economic condition of ethnic minorities

*Hypothesis: The better the personal socio-economic condition of a Russian-speakers is, the more one approves of Estonian defense and security policy.*

2) Level of integration

*Hypothesis: The greater level of integration a Russian-speaker is within Estonian society, the more one approves of Estonian defense and security policy.*

3) National pride

*Hypothesis: The greater level of national pride a Russian-speaker has, the more he approves of Estonian defense and security policy.*

The next two sections will give an overview of Russia as the ethnocultural homeland in the context of the Triadic Nexus.

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<sup>67</sup> Lumijõe, Nikita. Transnationalism and Attitudinal Integration. Russian-Speaking Youth and Estonian Security and Defence Policy. 5, University of Tartu. (2018).

## RUSSIA'S FOREIGN POLICY AS ETHNOCULTURAL HOMELAND: WEAPONIZING THE TRIADIC NEXUS

After the collapse of the Soviet Union Russia has incrementally instrumentalized the relations with ethnocultural kin left abroad for achievement of geopolitical goals. The consolidation of domestic power, and declining influence in the post-Soviet space were associated with radicalization of Russia's diaspora policy towards so called compatriots. The scale of the Russian invasion in Ukraine in 2022 shocked both international political and academic communities. At first glance, the "special military operation" to "denazify and demilitarize" Ukraine may seem to be totally irrational. The decision to attack the second biggest country in Europe cost Russia thousands of casualties, great economic sanctions, global international isolation, and a long, devastating military conflict with one of its neighbors. However, looking at Russia's domestic political development and foreign affairs we can better understand the roots and patterns of this international behavior. This section describes Russia as an actor in the Triadic Nexus based on the nature of Russia's cultural capital and the character of international affairs in general and particularly in relation to claimed ethno-cultural kin.

The end on the Cold War was a great success for the Western world in terms of dramatic improvement of the security environment. The main opponent and destabilizing factor, the Soviet Union, collapsed and did not pose a threat anymore. As it was claimed in the NATO Strategic Concept 1991:

*The threat of a simultaneous, full-scale attack on all of NATO's European fronts has effectively been removed and thus no longer provides the focus for Allied strategy*

After the end of the Cold War, Russia attempted to build an alliance with the West. Yeltsin's administration was looking for Western economic, material, and moral support



associated with upcoming democratization and westernization. Even in the Balkan Conflict, Russia, traditionally a Serbian ally, did not stand up against the West.<sup>68</sup>

However, this success appeared to be temporary. Russia expected to get together with Western support for restoration of its economy, which played a role in the decision-making process. Yet, the enlargement of NATO in the former Warsaw Pact region showed that Russian objections are powerless in Westernizing Central and Eastern Europe. The nations of post-Socialist Central and Eastern Europe saw in the alliance with the West a guarantee of their re-established sovereignty and greater socio-economic perspectives. In the eyes of Russian administration and popular opinion, the West was still perceived to be a rival, and the enlargement of NATO only enforced this perception. The exclusion from the decision-making process and growing geopolitical tensions with the West led to development of the new foreign policy doctrine in Russia.<sup>69</sup>

The new doctrine, named after Russian Foreign Minister Primakov, set a Russian foreign policy goal of the re-establishment of great power status and balancing the US influence in the multipolar world. One of the key aspects of this doctrine was the control over post-Soviet territory, which became a complicated task considering the aspirations of the post-Soviet nations to integrate with the West. However, Primakov's vision of the Russian sphere of influence was not limited to the post-Soviet space. He saw Russia as an active player in the global affairs both in Europe and Asia. The idea was to challenge the unipolar world and create more flexible alliances, where Russia would have been an important decision maker.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> HQ SACT. Strategic Plans and Policy Regional Perspectives on Russia Report. Strategic Foresight Branch. (2021)

<sup>69</sup> HQ SACT. Strategic Plans and Policy Regional Perspectives on Russia Report. Strategic Foresight Branch. (2021) 14.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

For the nations in-between, such as the transitioning nations in the post-Soviet space, the balance was hardly an option. The alignment with one side meant alienation from the other. The more decisive the transition was, the less instability and unrest it caused. Take for instance the difference between the Baltic States and Ukraine. While for the Baltic States, the withdrawal of Russian military forces was the primary issue immediately after regaining independence, Ukraine allowed Russian forces to stay in Crimea. Both Ukraine and Georgia associated themselves with the Commonwealth of Independent States after the collapse of the Soviet Union, but eventually they were involved in armed conflicts with Russia when they decided to switch their geopolitical orientation to the West.

The socio-political system of the West has no space for Russian autocracy. The stability of the current Russian regime, which is based on the monopolization of power and oligarchy, contradicts the principles of Western liberal democracy. The normative clash also leads to practical confrontation. The Association Agreement with the EU and the free trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) were mutually exclusive options for Ukraine, as well as liberal-democracy and corruptive oligarchy.

This confrontation is part of the bigger power game, which Huntington called the “Clash of Civilizations.”<sup>71</sup> After the end of the Cold War, it seemed that the liberal-democratic West had finally reached undisputed hegemony in the world. Fukuyama claimed that the world came to the “End of History,” the final stage of socio-cultural development.<sup>72</sup> In this final stage, the victory of the liberal-democratic world order becomes unquestionable, and all nations and peoples which are not yet liberal should voluntarily integrate to Western-led universal, liberal-democratic world order. Indeed, we have seen how alliances aimed to promote liberal-democracy regionally and

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<sup>71</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. *The clash of civilizations?*. Palgrave Macmillan US, 2000.

<sup>72</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. *The end of history and the last man*. Simon and Schuster, 2006.

globally, such as the EU and NATO, rapidly enlarged their own membership and by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, included many nations which used to exist on the other side of the Iron Curtain. However, the stronger the Western alliance became, the stronger the resistance of the opposing forces grew, largely because of the above-mentioned exclusive extensional characteristics.

Huntington claimed that the world awaits this Clash of Civilizations, a major conflict between the liberal-democratic Western world and all others who feel threatened by Western hegemony. Russia's autocratic regime is among the threatened ones. As Europe tries to surround itself with stable, democratic neighbors (European Neighborhood Policy), Russia supports like-minded regimes (Lukashenko in Belarus, Yanukovych in Ukraine). The friendly like-minded buffer zone gives a significant strategic and economic advantage. Therefore, the competition over control of the buffer zone becomes existentially important for all parties.

In this Clash of Civilizations, the West supported the Color Revolutions promoting liberal-democratic norms and values, meanwhile also getting strategic advantage for Western collective security structures. However, with the greater consolidation of power in Russia, Putin's regime tried to close the window of opportunity for the post-Soviet nations to join the Western alliance. In the example of Georgia, Moscow has demonstrated to the region that it will resist further expansion of NATO and the EU in the post-Soviet space. When Yanukovych declined the agreement with the EU and decided to join the EAEU in 2014, the people of Ukraine marched in the streets of Kyiv with the flags of the EU, claiming the intension of joining Western security and economic community. As a result of the Euromaidan, Yanukovych had to flee, and the new administration took the direction of alignment with the West. To prevent it and create a leverage of influence on Ukraine, Russia annexed Crimea and supported the confrontation in Donbas.

The tactics that Russia used in Ukraine and Georgia demonstrated the change in the nature of modern warfare, where the accent is on destabilizing cohesion among the population and provoking an ethnic-based conflict. As we can see on the example of the current war in Ukraine, Western attempts at abating the Russian threat does not help the stability and territorial integrity of the country. The West did not know how to prevent it, as it could not answer the aggression of another nuclear power with conventional or nuclear weapons. It significantly undermined the credibility of Western assurances and extended deterrence aimed at abating threats to regional security. Neither NATO nor the EU could efficiently protect Ukraine from Russian aggression. In The Budapest Memorandum, the USA, Russia, and the UK gave security assurances against threats of the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine. Even though the West is currently supporting Ukraine with weapons, money, and humanitarian aid, it does not take the risk to “close the sky” over Ukraine, as it may lead to a direct armed confrontation with Russia. Nowadays, the credibility of the West depends on the continued support of Ukraine.

If Ukraine was a member of the EU and NATO, the stakes of invasion would be much higher for Russia. That is also one of the reasons why Moscow so eagerly tries to prevent the enlargement of NATO in the post-Soviet space. However, even the principle of Article 5 cannot fully protect the members of the alliance against all aspects of hybrid warfare, which in the nuclear age becomes an effective tool of influence.

Nowadays, an aggressor does not necessarily need to send tanks or troops to cause damage. It is much safer to act semi-anonymously in cyber and media space, making any armed counterattack irrational and unacceptable. The last decades have shown that the Kremlin is using hybrid warfare in situations where conventional attack is not an option. This strategy allows Russia to wield influence without leaving any obvious fingerprints, giving Moscow some semblance of

plausible deniability, helping to shape and soften the battlefield should Russia decide to engage in more overt conventional warfare, and stirring up discontent among local populations. The Kremlin could use non-kinetic means that would not necessarily implicate NATO's Article 5 security guarantee. By using non-kinetic means, Russia can undermine the confidence and cohesion in NATO and other Western alliances, making the extended deterrence, including nuclear, less credible and less relevant.<sup>73</sup>

The problem of dealing with hybrid warfare is that it breaks down the traditional binary delineation between war and peace. It is persistent and with ever-changing intensity, making it harder to address. Hybrid war strategies are always underway, but in decisive moments they gain intensity<sup>74</sup> as it was for instance during Maidan Revolution in Ukraine, or Bronze Night in Tallinn. Disinformation campaigns in combination with cyber operations are becoming especially efficient in turbulent times. In some cases, hybrid war strategies can cross over into conventional combat operations<sup>75</sup> as eventually happened in Ukraine and Georgia.

Hybrid warfare economizes the use of force. Even having little chance of winning a conventional conflict with an entire alliance, an aggressor can use hybrid warfare techniques against particular member-states. Doing so, an aggressor causes damage to the target, and at the same time avoids a direct confrontation with the alliance that may undermine cohesion between the allies. The use of cyber tools is an example of one way in which Russia economizes on the use of force in hybrid warfare.<sup>76</sup> A notable case of Russian cyber-attack against a member of NATO happened during the unrest of the Russian-speaking population in Tallinn, Estonia in April 2007. Flooding the most often utilized webpages in Estonia with cyber access requests, Russia made it

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<sup>73</sup> Umland, Andreas. "The Ukraine example: nuclear disarmament doesn't pay." *World Affairs* (2016): 45-49.

<sup>74</sup> Chivvis, Christopher S. "Understanding Russian "Hybrid Warfare"." *Rand Corporation* (2017).

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.2.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

impossible for Estonians to use their online banking, newspaper websites, and government electronic services for a period of time.<sup>77</sup> Obviously, the Kremlin denied that it was engaged in the cyber-attack and refused Estonia's formal diplomatic request for assistance in tracking the attackers.<sup>78</sup>

Finally, hybrid warfare is population-centric, while the classical extended deterrence is largely territory-centric. Acting within existing political and social frameworks, an aggressor can conduct information and influence operations without the risk of an unacceptable counterattack. Russia's high volume and multichannel operations include targeting television programming, funding European think tanks to promote its own views, and employing large numbers of Internet trolls, bots, and fake news farms.<sup>79</sup> Often this strategy is targeted to mobilize proxies, such as Russian-speaking communities and radical groups which would push through the pro-Kremlin agenda abroad. This "soft" influence may have a serious impact also on extended nuclear deterrence. Following the annexation of Crimea, Russia has found supporters among far-right European politicians. As a result, France, which promised to protect Ukrainian territorial integrity in the 1990s, was represented in the occupied peninsula by members of the European Parliament, which symbolically supported the legitimization of annexation.<sup>80</sup> Even now, after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, French far-right politicians such as Zemmour and Le Pen are very careful in criticizing Russian aggression and prefer putting a part of the responsibility on the West.<sup>81</sup>

Financing the politicians and political parties abroad, impacting the Western audience through information campaigns, and promoting a multi-polar world order are the important parts

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<sup>77</sup> Clarke, Richard Alan, and Robert K. Knake. *Cyber war*. Old Saybrook: Tantor Media, Incorporated, 2014.

<sup>78</sup> Clarke, Richard Alan, and Robert K. Knake. *Cyber war*. Old Saybrook: Tantor Media, Incorporated, 2014.

<sup>79</sup> Chivvis, Christopher S. "Understanding Russian "Hybrid Warfare"." *Rand Corporation* (2017).

<sup>80</sup> Braghiroli, Stefano, and Andrey Makarychev. "Russia and its supporters in Europe: trans-ideology à la carte?" *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 16, no. 2 (2016): 213-233.

<sup>81</sup> Willsher, K. French far-right leader Marine Le Pen forced to defend Putin links. *The Guardian*. 2 Mar 2022.

of Russia's soft power and foreign policy.<sup>82</sup> However, the main target of Russian foreign policy remains to be *Russky Mir*, Russian-speakers, compatriots, Russian citizens, and quasi citizens living abroad. It is a recurring scenario, when Russia actively distributes Russian citizenship (through a simplified procedure of naturalization) in the contested regions (South Ossetia, Donbas, Crimea) and then eventually claims the responsibility to protect that region as a justification of conventional aggression. The primary area of Russia's interest is what they call "near abroad," the nations bordering Russia, that previously used to be under Soviet control.

A professor of Russian Studies at the University of Oslo, Pål Kolstø, suggests understanding this concept not only through the prism of Russia's imperial ambitions, but also against the background of the long, often centuries-old, common statehood between Russia and these countries.<sup>83</sup> These long centuries of interaction generated international links, such as an integrated economy, defense systems, and the presence of substantial diasporas on each other's territories.<sup>84</sup> In concert with symbolic reasoning, this explains the desire of Russia to regain control in the region.

The history of Russia's relation with the near abroad in some sense has certain patterns. The more stable Russia's regime is, the more power it consolidates and the worse and more restrictive relations it has with the nations in the "sphere of influence." (Stalin – Holodomor, occupation of the Baltics; Putin – war with Ukraine). In a time of fragile political situation in Russia, the new leaders try to find consensus with the "near abroad" to ease the fight with the old establishment. After the revolution of 1917 and the Independence War in the Baltics, Bolsheviks were forced to sign a peace agreement with the Baltic States. Just before the collapse of the Soviet Union and

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<sup>82</sup> Van Herpen, Marcel H. *Putin's propaganda machine: Soft power and Russian foreign policy*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2015.

<sup>83</sup> Kolstø, Pål, and Andrei Edemsky. *Russians in the former Soviet republics*. Indiana University Press, 1995.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. 245.

several years after, Yeltsin was eager to establish a friendly relationship with national liberation movements in the Baltic States.<sup>85</sup> It should have given Yeltsin not only allies against the putschists, but also credit in the eyes of the West. Kozyrev, Russia's minister of foreign affairs thought that the countries of the "near abroad" would eventually voluntarily come back to the Russian sphere of influence, that the West would not accept them into the economic and military alliances as they were.<sup>86</sup> Therefore, any forceful intervention into the home affairs of the neighbors, even based on the responsibility to protect Russia's kin, seemed to be risky and unnecessary. Millions of Russian-speakers living abroad during that time was an argument in international dialogue rather than leverage on the internal affairs of neighboring countries.<sup>87</sup>

Nevertheless, this pacifistic and somewhat passive approach had many opponents. Soon it started to change. The polls in Russia showed that the majority of the population considered it important to actively protect and support Russian-speakers abroad. In 1993, presidential advisor Stankevich openly attacked Kozyrev's policy towards Estonia and Latvia, which imposed strict citizenship and language laws affecting local Russophones. According to him, Russia should have been more proactive in the protection of its own ethnonational kin and should have given Russian citizenships to the compatriots abroad. It would have given Russia a better legal base to intervene if it became necessity, as it was in Transnistria.<sup>88</sup> In addition to this, Stankevich was eager to recognize autonomy of the pro-Russian separatist regions in the "near abroad" such as Transnistria and Crimea. This discourse was also supported by Russian military leadership, which lost a

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid. 250.

<sup>86</sup> Kolstø, Pål, and Andrei Edemsky. *Russians in the former Soviet republics*. Indiana University Press, 1995..

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.



significant amount of funding and privilege as the result of the collapse of the Soviet Union and were skeptical about integration with the West.<sup>89</sup>

Kozyrev probably underestimated the desire for independence of the “near abroad” and that it would take the form of anti-Russian nationalism. The war in Transnistria, the Crimean dispute, and the citizenship policy of Estonia and Latvia were among the factors which eventually led to the change of Russia’s agenda towards the “near abroad” and compatriots. Kozyrev’s pro-Western realpolitik based on pacifism and diplomacy was soon substituted by a realist approach where Russia had to use all levers, be they economic pressure, military pressure, or the presence of local communities of Russians, in order to advance Russia's interests in the “near abroad.”<sup>90</sup>

An assistant professor of Russian history and politics at the University of Copenhagen, Mikhail Suslov, divides the evolution of Russia’s approach to the diaspora question into four periods.<sup>91</sup> First, 1991-1997 was an indecisive period which can be characterized by the struggle between a moderate Russian President and revanchist Parliament. The Duma issued the Declaration on the support of compatriots abroad, highlighting the civic and downplaying the ethno-national aspect of the Russian people. Soviet revanchists, including regional and state level politicians, military leadership, and public figures, constructed the category of “compatriots abroad” in the inclusive imperial way, which made greater paternalism more applicable.

According to Suslov, the period between 1998 and 2003 was decisive in the formation of the skeletal structure of Russia’s compatriot policies.<sup>92</sup> This period can be characterized by the creation and promotion of the “Russian World” concept, which became a basis for the

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.259.

<sup>90</sup> Kolstø, Pål, and Andrei Edemsky. *Russians in the former Soviet republics*. Indiana University Press, 1995.

<sup>91</sup> Suslov, Mikhail. "Russian world": Russia's policy towards its diaspora." *Russie. Nei. Visions* 103, no. 7 (2017): 5-30.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

establishment of a broadly inclusive compatriot agenda. The ideological constructors of the concept, such as Pyotr Shchedrovitsky saw Russians as a multiethnic community united by common language and divided by international borders. He writes: “*Русский мир - сетевая структура больших и малых со-обществ, думающих и говорящих на русском языке*” (Russian world – the system of big and small communities thinking and speaking in Russian language).<sup>93</sup> According to this concept, hardly half of the Russian World population lives in the Russian Federation, what requires Russia to claim the economic, political, and administrative influence on the global level.<sup>94</sup> Nevertheless, Russian World was also a volatile concept back in that time. In Shchedrovitsky’s interpretation, which was also shared by Putin in his first presidential term, Russian World was rather a businesslike project of constructing diaspora as a network of equal partners around the globe, who share the same economic interests and the same culture of communication.<sup>95</sup>

2004 brought significant changes in the interpretation and instrumentalization of Russian World by Moscow. The “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine showed that Russia was losing control over the territories in the post-Soviet space.<sup>96</sup> That same year, three former post-Soviet states Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania secured full membership in NATO and the EU. In this period, the idea of the “Russian World” became instrumentalized as a soft-power weapon in confrontation with the West. In 2007, Moscow established the *Russkiy Mir* Foundation, a government-sponsored organization aimed at promoting the Russian language and Russian culture worldwide. In an effort to promote the Russian language in post-Soviet space, the foundation opened Russian language

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<sup>93</sup> Щедровицкий, Пётр Георгиевич. "Русский мир и транснациональное русское." In *АНТОЛОГИЯ РУССКОЙ ФИЛОСОФИИ*, pp. 374-388. 2000.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Kolstø, Pål, and Andrei Edemsky. *Russians in the former Soviet republics*. Indiana University Press, 1995.21.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. 22.

and culture centers in the “near abroad.” In 2008, one of these centers was opened in Estonia and two in Latvia.<sup>97</sup> The same year, Medvedev opened *Rossotrudnichestvo*, a government agency responsible for administering civilian foreign aid and cultural exchange. In the period between 2004-2011, the role of compatriots for Russia shifted from valuable partners to strategic assets in confrontations with the West.<sup>98</sup>

Finally, since 2012, the concept of Russian World started to take civilizational characteristics antagonistic to the Western liberal-democratic world order. One of the most important features which was attached to the concept in this period was the “the gathering of the Russian lands.”<sup>99</sup> In his speech on March 18, 2014, Putin claimed: “*В сознании людей Крым всегда был и остаётся неотъемлемой частью России.* (In the people’s mind, Crimea was and remains an indivisible part of Russia).” He based his argument on historical and linguistic rationality, claiming illegal the transition of Crimea to the Soviet Ukraine by Khrushchev. One of the keystones of his argumentation was the fact that the Russian language was the main language of communication of all ethnicities on the peninsula, as well as the wars, where Russians spilled blood for Crimea.<sup>100</sup> This, however, was only the precedent, which later was escalated to the level of a full-scale invasion in 2022.

The development and change in the diaspora policy of Russia is closely linked to the development and change in Russia’s domestic politics (consolidation of power) and relations with the West. The more Russia realizes the inability to control the former spheres of influence, the more it tried to instrumentalize the concept of Russian World. The consolidation of power in the

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<sup>97</sup> Grigas, A. *Legacies, Coercion and Soft Power: Russian Influence in the Baltic States*. (2012): London: Chatham House.

<sup>98</sup> Kolstø, Pål, and Andrei Edemsky. *Russians in the former Soviet republics*. Indiana University Press, 1995.24.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. 25.

<sup>100</sup> Putin, Vladimir. Address to Russian Federation. 18 March 2014. <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>

hands of one political force gave the establishment the capacity to utilize the policy without significant domestic resistance. However, the influence of the “Russian World” and its acceptance by foreign Russian-speaking communities varied in different countries and regions. The next chapter shows that Russia’s policy towards ethnocultural kin is not new in the context of the Triadic Nexus. Both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union weaponized the Triadic Nexus to achieve their geopolitical goals. The following historical analysis aims at exploring the factors that affected the political attitudes of ethnic minorities in the interwar and post-Cold War Triadic Nexus conflicts.

## CHAPTER IV

### HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

#### INTERWAR TRIADIC NEXUS

The period from the late 19th through the mid-20th centuries in Central Europe can be described by great geopolitical transformations, vast national awakening, and ethnic strife. The highly diverse macro region of Central and Eastern Europe became a battlefield for ethno-territorial struggles, while multinational empires gave way to ethnic nation-states. Emerging and transformed nations fought for the territories and the people within them for their national projects. Czech, Polish, and German nationalists (among others) were eager to awaken their populations to their respective national loyalties to establish ethno-centric states. The ambitions of the nationalizing states conflicted with each other, and often threatened the interests of ethnic minorities, whose socio-economic status was also a subject of change as a result of geopolitical transformations. The radical visions of national homogeneity in Central Europe accelerated into the singular bloodshed and terror of the mid-twentieth century.<sup>101</sup>

In this chapter, I analyze the identity of German diasporas in the inter-war period, the policies of Germany as the ethnocultural homeland, and the policies of emerging nationalizing states, namely Poland and Czechoslovakia. I explore the role of ethnocultural affinity and socio-economic status of the German diaspora in formation of their attitudes towards the host nations in Poland and Czechoslovakia, as well as a special case of the disposition of Upper Silesians in the triadic interrelation with Poland and Germany. Later in this chapter, I also discuss Soviet “Nation-Making” and how the USSR justified interventions in Poland and other nations in the interwar

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<sup>101</sup> Karch, Brendan. *Nation and loyalty in a German-Polish borderland: Upper Silesia, 1848–1960*. Cambridge University Press, 2018.

period with the “responsibility to protect” argument, which gives a pre-text for understanding the current compatriots (diaspora) policy of Russia that is rooted in the Soviet legacy.

The aim of the analysis is to enhance understanding of the formation of loyalty of ethnic minorities, in situations where a large and proactive ethnocultural homeland is in geopolitical conflict with an emerging nationalizing host nation. It also elaborates on the concept of the ethnocultural homeland, for which ethnonational kin is larger than just an ethnic diaspora. As a result, I identify the factors affecting loyalty to be applied as variables to the statistical model of the current research. Chapter 2 identifies the following factors: 1) economic situation; 2) access by ethnic minorities to policymaking; 3) territorial proximity of ethnic minorities to ethnocultural homeland; 4) nationalizing (integration/assimilation) policy of the host nation including language policy; 5) level of national pride, and affinity of ethnic minorities with the host nation; 6) compatriots policy of the ethnocultural homeland and ability to impact their ethnocultural kin; 7) ethnic-based political unity, and mobilization of ethnic minorities. Many of these factors are similarly evident in contemporary Estonia.

### Triadic Nexus In The Interwar Czechoslovakia

In the post-Westphalian era, conflicts with the involvement of modern states cannot be initiated without a convincing justification, and there is perhaps no better way to justify the aggression than by the moral responsibility to protect oppressed ethno-cultural kin. Honestly or not, this justification was utilized for centuries by nations to legitimize the application of force.

The role of oppressed people is often played by ethnic minorities, which becomes the capstone of the beginning of international conflicts. Diaspora populations seen as oppressed ethnic minorities in other states have often become the reason for international conflicts. The pre-WWII aggression of Nazi Germany was justified by the rhetoric of necessity and moral obligation to

protect its own ethno-national kin that was discriminated and suppressed abroad. Annexing the Sudetenland or attacking Poland, Hitler to a large extent rationalized his actions by the necessity to help the German diaspora. Invading Poland, Stalin as well as Hitler, partly justified aggression by Poland's illegal treatment of local Ukrainians and Byelorussians, considered to be Russian quasi-compatriots.

There is no doubt that behind official justifications of the aggressors, there was a strategic rationality. However, focusing on the realist nature of the aggressors, the role and living circumstances of ethnic minorities, which became an occasion for ignition of war, may be left in the shadows. In this section, I review the historical background of the interwar period in Europe, in an effort to determine the role of ethnic minorities in the conflict. I do not exculpate German and Soviet actions. However, I argue that the socio-economic status of ethnic minorities in Poland and Czechoslovakia created the preconditions, which were used by the aggressors to justify the invasion.

In 1938, the pro-Nazi Sudeten German Party initiated mass riots in the Czechoslovak border-regions.<sup>102</sup> They turned to the Nazi-German government with a request for help. The same year Germany, Italy, the UK, and France signed a Munich Agreement which implied that Czechoslovakia would give up Sudetenland for Germany in ten days. After *Anschluss Österreichs* for Hitler, it was another significant strategic victory. Czechoslovakia massively produced machinery and weaponry, more than, for instance, the UK at that time. Their army was well equipped, and their defensive strategy was based on the system of defensive establishments in Sudetenland. However, these factors became insignificant in face of the German hybrid threat supported by German diaspora.

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<sup>102</sup> Brügel, Johann Wolfgang. "German diplomacy and the Sudeten question before 1938." *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* (1961): 330.

Before the crisis almost a third of the population of Czechoslovakia was composed of ethnic Germans. While the political preferences of Czech, Slovak, and other ethnicities in the country could vary significantly between Social-Democrats, Communists, and Farmer's League, the political orientation of local Germans was much more homogenic.<sup>103</sup> In the elections of 1935, the Sudeten German Party was supported by a majority of local Germans, making it the second biggest political force in Czechoslovakia.

Homogenized, and politically mobilized groups of ethnic minorities may become a significant security concern for a nation, especially if popular separatist ideas are supported by their ethnocultural homeland. In the case of Czechoslovakia, political mobilization of local Germans was enforced by their unfavorable economic and social situation. After WWI, independence from Austria allowed Czechoslovakia to avoid most of the reparation losses. Until the Great Depression, its economy flourished in comparison with Germany. However, the economic crisis hit the industrial sector oriented on export, which gave local Germans jobs and income.<sup>104</sup> As a result, by the mid-1930s, 60 percent of the unemployed population of Czechoslovakia were Germans. Meanwhile they composed only 30 percent of the total population of the country. The undermined economic situation enhanced the dynamically growing disenchantment of German diaspora in Czechoslovakia.<sup>105</sup>

In addition to this, habitation distribution played an important role in the escalation of the ethnic conflict.<sup>106</sup> Most of the local Germans lived in the bordering regions with Germany and Austria. The idea that local Germans were oppressed by Slavic hegemony rapidly gained popular

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<sup>103</sup> Bahm, Karl F. "The inconveniences of nationality: German bohemians, the disintegration of the Habsburg monarchy, and the attempt to create a "Sudeten German" identity." *Nationalities Papers* 27, no. 3 (1999): 375-405.

<sup>104</sup> Smelser, Ronald M. "At the Limits of a Mass Movement: The Case of the Sudeten German Party 1933-1938." *Bohemia* 17, no. 1 (1976): 254.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Smelser, Ronald M. "At the Limits of a Mass Movement: The Case of the Sudeten German Party 1933-1938." *Bohemia* 17, no. 1 (1976): 254.



support by the overwhelming majority of ethnic Germans in the Sudeten region. The density of the German population in the bordering region simplified the political agitation and enhanced the influence from the ethnocultural homeland. Czechoslovakia tried to appease local Germans by increasing their representation in national and regional administrations and providing education in the German language. However, it did not diminish the tensions, which in the end led to the loss of the territory.

Czechoslovakia, however, was not unique in this situation. A common faith shared with other nations emerged on the ruins of the collapsed empires. New borders and the new order in nationalizing states changed the status of the ethnic groups and separated them from ethnocultural homelands. As well, as in Czechoslovakia, ethnic minorities in interwar Poland comprised about one-third of the population. The Second Polish republic is often criticized for mistreatment of ethnic minorities.<sup>107</sup> Both German and Soviet invasions were backed by claims of Polish repression of ethnic minorities.<sup>108</sup>

#### Germany, Poland, And Upper Silesia

While it is clear today that the invasion of Poland was pre-determined by the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, at the time, Germany needed a *casus belli* to start the war. In addition to territorial claims, Hitler weaponized the rhetoric about the oppression of the German diaspora in Poland. Polish interwar nationalism enhanced international sympathies for locally oppressed national minorities, which in a way gave a certain visibility of legitimacy of German aggression. Joining the League of Nations and becoming a member of the Council in 1926, Germany obtained

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<sup>107</sup> Stachura, Peter D. "National identity and the ethnic minorities in early inter-war Poland." In *Poland between the Wars, 1918–1939*, pp. 60-86. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 1998.

<sup>108</sup> Chu, Winson. "The Geography of Germanness: Recentring German History in Interwar Poland." *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 42, no. 95 (2008): 1918-39.

the right to intervene on behalf of her minority in Poland, which it actively exploited in the years that followed.<sup>109</sup>

Growing post-WWI Polish nationalism enhanced by economic problems and growth of social radicalism significantly undermined national ability and willingness of Poland to protect the rights of ethnic minorities. Meanwhile the German diaspora was treated especially hostilely. Due to historical tensions and German territorial claims, local Germans were looked upon as enemies of the state and an instrument of foreign propaganda. In fact, this perception could be justified by constant attempts to affect the German diaspora exercised by both Weimar and Nazi regimes.<sup>110</sup>

In addition to this, Polish ethnocentrism and negative attitudes towards the German diaspora may be seen as a counterreaction to the pre-WWI German hegemony and colonization program which enforced Polish nationalism and the opposition to German rule. Historians argue that a dominant ethnocentrism, a pursuit of self-interest, whether aggressive or defensive, is an element of grave importance in the understanding of the political and social problems of Polish history.<sup>111</sup>

After WWI, it was hardly possible to create frontiers that did not cut some people off from their ethnocultural homelands. The same happened with the German diaspora in Poland. The Allied powers were anxious to protect national minorities and insisted upon special guarantees which became part of the peace treaties. Although, post-WWI Poland, on the wave of Eastern-European national awakening, was eager to reestablish historical justice. It pledged to respect the legitimate aspirations of minority groups and grant them full political and civil equality, permitting

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<sup>109</sup> McKinley, Jane. "A Survey of the Status of the Jews and the Germans in Poland Up to 1939." (1948).

<sup>110</sup> McKinley, Jane. "A Survey of the Status of the Jews and the Germans in Poland Up to 1939." (1948).

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

them to maintain their cultural identity through their own schools and the development of their own language.<sup>112</sup>

The Paris Peace Conference tried to protect minorities in emerging and nationalizing states by the Minorities Treaties. However, creating special rights and privileges for the parts of the population based on nationality may have an ambiguous effect. On the one hand, it protects minorities from oppression, and on the other hand it undermines the social integration process. The treaties protecting ethnic minorities lacking the enforcement mechanisms created more problems than solutions. The League of Nations was not able to force the implementation of the liberal ethnic policy in the nationalizing states. In the cases where the ethnocultural homeland claimed a moral obligation to support its own diaspora in neighboring countries, as it was in the case of Poland, the failure of the international institutions to solve ethnic problems became a justification for intervention. Inter-war Germany promoted the idea that the separation of Danzig (Free City) from Prussia was against the will of the local population and produced an intolerable situation for ethnic Germans. The growing political power of the German diaspora, supported by Germany and international forces, enhanced Polish nationalism.<sup>113</sup>

Nazi power in Germany significantly affected the situation in Poland. Victory of national socialism gave a new impetus to German ethno-nationalist movement *Völkisch*, increasing its attractiveness for German diaspora in neighboring countries, who were separated from the *Fatherland* as a result of WWI. Hitler's policy was obviously directed against the Treaty of Versailles procurements and for the creation of greater Germany. These ambitions, enforced by ethnic conflict on the Polish-German border, and mobilization of nationalist movements, led to total collapse of German-Polish relations. Hitler's claims on the Polish Corridor and the

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> McKinley, Jane. "A Survey of the Status of the Jews and the Germans in Poland Up to 1939." (1948).

unwillingness of the Polish Government to submit, enhanced ethnic tensions in 1939. Six months before the German invasion in Poland, Nazi media and politicians launched a massive propagandistic campaign on local, national, and international levels, blaming the Polish administration for ethnic cleansing and oppression of the German diaspora. The consequences of this situation we can see in the tragic events like Bloody Sunday, where the brutal execution of *Selbstschutz* and civilian local Germans in Bydgoszcz, was followed by the retaliatory slaying of Polish hostages by the *Wehrmacht*.<sup>114</sup>

However, in these circumstances, Upper Silesia as a frontier region offers a great case to study the ethnic ambiguity and resistance to national categorization. Both Germany and Poland failed, despite all efforts, to effectively compel Upper Silesians into becoming durably loyal Germans or Poles.<sup>115</sup> Even though Upper Silesians often had to comply with the regimes under the threat of violence, the popular attitudes were resistant to both German and Polish nationalist projects. Both Polish and German nationalist movements frustrated by popular skepticism used violence and repressions to achieve their goals. However, national radicalism only enforced the reluctance among Upper Silesians.<sup>116</sup>

Upper Silesians prioritized family, homeland, village, class, or other social ties above national belonging, notwithstanding the efforts of both Polish and German nationalists. Most Upper Silesians adopted what Max Weber called an instrumental rationality<sup>117</sup> towards nationalism

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<sup>114</sup> Matthäus, Jürgen, Jochen Böhrer, and Klaus-Michael Mallmann. *War, Pacification, and Mass Murder, 1939: The Einsatzgruppen in Poland*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2014.

<sup>115</sup> Karch, Brendan. *Nation and loyalty in a German-Polish borderland: Upper Silesia, 1848–1960*. Cambridge University Press, 2018.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Oakes, Guy. "Max Weber on value rationality and value spheres: Critical remarks." *Journal of Classical Sociology* 3, no. 1 (2003): 27–45.

in contrast with a value driven approach. Tired of national politics, they often favored social integration and economic advancement over their own supposedly innate national loyalties.<sup>118</sup>

As a result of the Upper Silesian plebiscite held in 1921, Upper Silesia was partitioned between Germany and Poland, with Opole, the historical capital largely populated by bi-lingual Catholic Silesians, landing on the German side. While the Weimar Republic promised protection of bilingual rights, most locals shunned the institutions of Polish nationalism, such as Polish schools, and did not support Polish nationalist movements that promoted national awakening. Bi-lingual Silesians in Opole mostly did not share value-based nationalist ideas. For them, the aspects such as the need for their children to learn German in a German-speaking economy, the social isolation of students in the Polish schools, the quality of instruction, and desire to promote bilingual education were much more important than Polish national loyalty.<sup>119</sup> However, they also did not manifest loyalty to Germany as a nation. If Upper Silesians claimed partial or even full German loyalty, they did it quietly by taking clerical jobs, marrying German speakers, or migrating to economically healthier German regions.

In 1932 Polish-speakers in Germany supported Hitler more than the Polish party. However, the process of *Gleichschaltung* “coordination” that suppressed Catholic and workers’ associations, local Polish youth groups, sport leagues, theater troupes, and other ethno-cultural institutions only enhanced their popularity in the German part of Upper Silesia. Upper Silesians used Polish nationalism instrumentally to reestablish social and religious networks shattered by the Nazis.

After the war, the situation repeated. Opole became a part of Poland, and the German language and culture was criminalized. Upper Salesians answered to it with alienation from Polish

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<sup>118</sup> Karch, Brendan. *Nation and loyalty in a German-Polish borderland: Upper Silesia, 1848–1960*. Cambridge University Press, 2018.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

national movements and when the Polish – West German border opened for family reunifications in late 1950s, thousands of Upper Silesians fled west, reclaiming their German citizenship. In the case of Upper Silesia, we have seen how value-driven national radicalism triggered a feedback loop effect increasing instrumentally driven national skepticism.<sup>120</sup> The more pressure applied on the minority with dual ethnic and linguistic identity, the more reluctant they become to nationalist projects.

### Ukrainians In The Second Republic Of Poland

Just like Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union justified interventions by the “responsibility to protect.” However, the nature of the relations with the protected minorities had another basis. One of the main differences was that for the Soviet Union, ethno-national kin was not limited to ethnic Russians. The core idea of the Soviet nation-building was internationalism, the union of ethnicities and cultures with common socialist norms and values. This made a pre-text for a variety of Soviet interventions, including the invasion of Poland in 1939.

In his note, to Wacław Grzybowski, the Polish Ambassador in Moscow, Molotov underlined two main reasons for invasion. First, the inability of the Polish government to control the situation in the country, which could create a threat to the national security of the USSR: “Poland has become a suitable field for all kinds of hazards and surprises, which may constitute a threat to the USSR.” Second, he claimed the Soviet responsibility to protect the people of Western Ukraine and Belarus. “Under these circumstances, the Soviet Government has directed the High Command of the Red Army to order troops to cross the frontier and to take under their protection the life and property of the population of Western Ukraine and Western Belarus.”<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Karch, Brendan. *Nation and loyalty in a German-Polish borderland: Upper Silesia, 1848–1960*. Cambridge University Press, 2018.

<sup>121</sup> Molotov, Vyacheslav. *Нота правительства СССР, врученная польскому послу в Москве утром 17 сентября 1939 года*. Text of the Soviet communique in English translation. Electronic Museum, (1939)

Here we see another example of the Triadic Nexus, with Poland as a nationalizing state, the USSR as an ethnocultural homeland, and Ukrainians and Belarusians living in Poland as ethnic minorities. Similar to the case of Germany in Czechoslovakia and Poland, the USSR justified the invasion as the responsibility to protect its own ethnoculturally.

The Triadic Nexus in Poland emerged as a result of geopolitical transformations after WWI. On the ruins of the collapsed German and Russian empires, Poland restored independence and inherited the territories together with a variety of ethnicities living in them. The restoration of independence came together with the raising nationalism as a reaction to national suppression during previous political establishments. Poland was actively building an ethno-centric state where ethnic Poles as a state-bearing nation monopolized state power. In the interwar Poland ethnic minorities played no part in the running of government although they constituted one third of the population.<sup>122</sup> Among the largest minorities were Ukrainians and Belarusians (17 percent), Jews (9 percent) and Germans (2.3 percent).<sup>123</sup>

In attempts to be recognized in the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, Poland signed the treaty taking the responsibility in relation to ethnic minorities. All Polish citizens of any race, language, and religion had to be equally treated by law and bear all civil and political rights.<sup>124</sup> According to the treaty, residents were free to use any language in public communication, business, and religion. In the areas, where ethnic or linguistic minorities dominated, Poland was obligated to provide public administration and education in their language.<sup>125</sup> In the light of the Wilsonian

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<sup>122</sup> Millard, Frances. Nationalism in Poland. In *Contemporary Nationalism in East Central Europe* (pp. 105-126). Palgrave Macmillan, London. (1995).

<sup>123</sup> Karch, Brendan. *Nation and loyalty in a German-Polish borderland: Upper Silesia, 1848–1960*. Cambridge University Press, 2018..

<sup>124</sup> Knox, Philander. C. Treaty of Versailles. [Washington, Govt. print. off] [Web.] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, (1919) <https://lccn.loc.gov/43036001>.

<sup>125</sup> Борисёнок, Елена. *Несоветская украинизация: власти Польши, Чехословакии и Румынии и «украинский вопрос» в межвоенный период*. Litres, 2022.

national self-determination principle, Allied powers tried to protect the interest of ethnic minorities in emerging nations. In response to recognition of territorial demands, Poland was ready to promise autonomy to regions like Galicia, populated mainly by ethnic Ukrainians, hardly loyal to the emerging nationalizing government. However, these promises were in fact never kept in interwar Poland.

The agenda of the Polish administration in the 1920s aimed to incorporate local Ukrainians by various means from integration to assimilation. First of all, Poland tried to limit the Soviet influence on local Ukrainians. After 1923, part of the Ukrainian population of Poland saw in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic the power to accomplish the national idea, to unite Ukrainian people and territories under one flag. The unsolved ethnic question in Poland created a favorable soil for the communist influence from Moscow and Kiev. However, far-right Ukrainian nationalists, such as the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), were active in Poland promoting the ideas of independent and united Ukraine, especially in Eastern Galicia. OUN actively conducted sabotage and terroristic attacks against Polish administration. The government answered with “pacification” operations, arresting Ukrainian nationalists and politicians, and closing cultural and educational institutions.<sup>126</sup>

One of the biggest issues in the relations between Poles and Ukrainians in the interwar period was education. Most of the schools with Ukrainian as a language of instructions in the beginning of the 1920s became bi-lingual. Some of them switched to Polish language instruction. The Polish government was reluctant to open the Ukrainian University. The Polish Ministry of Interior in the 1920s considered that the dissatisfaction with the status of the Ukrainian language

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.



and education is the reason for the hostile attitudes towards Poland and Poles in the Eastern regions of the country.<sup>127</sup>

In this situation, a special approach was taken by Henryk Jozewski as voivode (governor) of Volhynian Voivodeship (1928–38). The cultural and political program, also called the “Volhynia Experiment” was aimed at improving the attitudes of local Ukrainians towards Poland and Poles. Volhynian Voivodeship was an administrative region in the East of interwar Poland, mostly populated by Ukrainian-speakers (68 percent). Only 16.6 percent of the population in the region spoke Polish as a mother tongue.<sup>128</sup> The idea of the experiment had three main pillars. First, the relatively rural and agricultural Volhynian territory had to be isolated from more urbanized and radicalized Eastern Galicia. Second, the ethno-cultural clubs and unions had to be substituted by labor and farmers institutions uniting Ukrainians and Poles. Third, the Ukrainian language had to be promoted, but only in particular fields, such as religion.

As the result of the reforms, many Ukrainian ethno-cultural and para-military organizations were closed. Instead, the priority was given to the cultural, professional, and youth organizations with ethnically neutral goals such as agricultural issues; these organizations were expected to unite Poles and Ukrainians by common interests. Jozewski wanted to incorporate Ukrainians in Polish socio-political life as a part of the nation, not as an ethnic minority. In education, he gave priority to the schools with Polish language of instruction, but with obligatory classes in Ukrainian. Teachers in these schools were mostly Poles. Nevertheless, Jozewski promoted Ukrainization of the Volhynian orthodox churches. The goal was to give local Ukrainians a sense of recognition by Polish administration and undermine the ongoing Russification of the orthodoxy in the region.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Census of Poland: Wołyń Voivodeship (1931)

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

The efforts of Jozewski were unpopular among radical groups. Both far-right Ukrainian nationalists, and radical left activists supported by the USSR tried to assassinate him. The experiment did not bring the expected results and was canceled in April 1938. Instead, the government decided to forcefully increase Polish presence in the Volhynian region, limiting cultural and religious freedoms. Jozewski, who was assigned to another position, argued that the full Polinization of Ukrainian schools and dismissing Ukrainian intelligentsia would increase popular aversion to everything Polish.<sup>130</sup>

American historian Timothy Snyder<sup>131</sup> claims that the later notorious ethnic cleansing of Poles by Ukrainian nationalists in Volhynia 1943 was caused by interwar Ukrainian nationalism. Ukrainian nationalists blamed Poles, as a political collective, in hindering the building of a Ukrainian state. However, there is no evidence of the connection between the Volhynian experiment and Volhynian ethnic cleansing. This kind of event could be rather anticipated in more radicalized Galicia. Snyder explains that by the fact that in 1943, Volhynia was in economic and social chaos.<sup>132</sup> Ukrainian nationalists used the gap of opportunity when neither Germany nor the USSR had effective control over the territory.

Even though in the long-term, the Volhynian experiment appeared to drive down the overall pro-Russian effect of identity-building policies;<sup>133</sup> in the short run, it failed to significantly control the pro-Soviet sentiments. As part of the nativization (*коренизація*) policy, the Soviet Union promoted the culture and language of the titular nations in the Soviet Republics including Ukraine. In the Soviet Ukraine, Ukrainian was the official language, schools and universities

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Snyder, T. "The Causes of Ukrainian-Polish Ethnic Cleansing, 1943." *Past & Present*, (179), (2003): 204

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Peisakhin, Leonid. "Cultural legacies: Persistence and transmission." *The Political Economy of Governance: Institutions, Political Performance and Elections* (2015): 21-39.

operated in the national language, and ethnic Ukrainians were in the government. Even though nativization had a highly controlled pro-Russian and pro-Soviet character, the Ukrainian communists in Eastern Poland were attracted by the idea that the Ukrainian state existed, even though it was in the Soviet Union.<sup>134</sup> The Soviet Union successfully promoted this idea. Even during the terror-famine and political purges in Soviet Ukraine in 1938, Jozewski complained that Volhynian Ukrainians followed Soviet news broadcasted by radio in Ukrainian. Before the invasion, the West Ukrainian Communist Party stood against Poland as a country and for the absorption of its south-eastern territories by Soviet Ukraine. It created a favorable pre-text for the Soviet invasion in 1939.<sup>135</sup>

#### Interwar Triadic Nexus, Conclusion

The historical examples listed in this section have several things in common. First, they all happened after serious geopolitical transformations. These transformations also affected the distribution of power and status between ethnic groups. The collapse of the empires in concert with dynamically growing national awakening of nations in Central and Eastern Europe created a new social environment dominated by nationalizing states. This transformation was enforced by the Wilsonian national self-determination principle, which had quite contradictory signals. On the one hand, it gave the green light for emerging nations on the ruins of the empires to build ethno-centric governments as a step to national liberation and self-determination. On the other hand, it gave hope of protection to ethnic minorities who remained behind the border from their ethnocultural homelands, as a result of geopolitical transformations. The transnationalism of ethnic minorities, ethno-centrism of emerging nationalizing host nations, and imperial ambitions of the

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<sup>134</sup> Борисёнок, Елена. *Несоветская украинизация: власти Польши, Чехословакии и Румынии и «украинский вопрос» в межвоенный период*. Litres, 2022.

<sup>135</sup> Snyder, T. "The Causes of Ukrainian-Polish Ethnic Cleansing, 1943." *Past & Present*, (179), (2003): 204

ethnocultural homelands created the triadic nexus context, where the stances of ethnic minorities impacted the development of conflict.

The German invasion of Czechoslovakia had a favorable precondition in the form of popular support of ethnic Germans. Among other factors, we can outline that this support was conditioned by 4) a habitation density of a German-speaking population in the regions in proximity to Nazi Germany, 5) significant political unity and mobilization of German-speakers, and 6) an economic crisis that hit the industry mostly occupied by German-speakers. These factors enabled Nazi Germany to efficiently mobilize popular support in Czechoslovakia.

In the case of Upper Silesia, 7) the affinity of the ethnic minority with Poland and Germany was marginal, which made it difficult for both states to accumulate loyalty among them. The political pressure from both Germany and Poland caused the feedback loop, where ethnic minorities answered with apathy and aversion. Supporting one or another side Upper Silesians did it guided by instrumental reasoning rather than by normative values.

Even though the Ukrainians lost the Polish-Ukrainian War in 1919, the experience of a proclamation of independence and fighting for it caused a strong national awakening in Galicia, a center of Ukrainian nationalism in the inter-war Poland. The effect of this nationalism spilled over also on other regions such as Volhynia, which also were affected by the Soviet political agitation. In this situation Poland tried to build an ethno-centric state with assimilation of ethnic minorities to avoid any potential separatism. However, the limitation of 8) the political rights and 9) polonization of education and local governments only increased the resistance among Ukrainians. The communist-oriented Ukrainians, especially in the Northern Part of Eastern Ukraine, were also significantly affected by the 10) information campaigns of the Soviet Union. The claimed *korenization* (nativization) of the Soviet Ukraine, opportunity to study and work in the Ukrainian

language, and the access to local policy making seemed to be attractive as the background of Poland's nationalizing policy. The weak national cohesion with ethnic minorities made Poland even more vulnerable to German and Soviet influence and the consequent invasion.

Based on these historical examples, I outline seven factors that theoretically can affect the disposition of ethnic minorities in the triadic nexus. Obviously, this is not the exclusive list of the factors that affected the situation. They must be also understood in the context of historical culture and regional and international socio-political environments. However, these factors can also be reflected on the modern triadic nexus cases.

- 4) Habitational density and territorial proximity of ethnic minorities to the ethnocultural homeland
- 5) Political unity and mobilization of ethnic minorities
- 6) National economy
- 7) Ethno-cultural and civic identity
- 8) Political status and rights of ethnic minorities
- 9) Nationalizing language policy
- 10) The information campaigns of the ethnocultural homeland

All things considered, ethnic minorities may play a significant role in international conflicts. The historical examples explored in this chapter give us an idea for how the interpretation of the status of a diaspora and the claimed duty of the ethnocultural homeland to protect one's own ethnocultural kin can be exploited to support aggressive intentions and geopolitical ambitions. In the following section, I analyze modern conflicts and the role of ethnic minorities in them. Particularly, I discuss two instances of armed conflicts which happened in Eastern Europe during

the last decade based on claimed oppression of ethnic minorities by nationalizing states, namely Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014.

## POST-SOVIET TRIADIC NEXUS CONFLICTS

Along with the collapse of empires after WWI, the end of the Cold War was associated with the emergence of new borders, not only between nations but also between political systems and orientations. After WWI, it was hardly possible to create frontiers that did not cut people off from their ethnocultural homelands. In addition to this, in giving the right of self-determination and independence for one nation, it was impossible not to discriminate against other nations which were not satisfied with the new regional order. This chapter describes two such cases where emerging nationalizing states encountered resistance from ethnic minorities eventually associated with the armed conflicts. Based on the existing literature on the ethnic conflicts in Georgia (South Ossetia, 2008) and Ukraine (Donbass, 2014) I identify the drivers of the divided loyalty of ethnic minorities. One of the key factors is the identity crisis, where the nationalizing agenda of the new government, such as the post-Rose Revolution in Georgia and the post-Maidan Revolution in Ukraine, conflicts with the ethnocultural and civic identity of ethnic minorities. Nevertheless, the identity crisis could not lead to these conflicts alone, without the impetus from economic, political, and external factors.

### Claiming Ethno-Cultural Kin: The Conflict Between Georgia, Russia, And South Ossetia

The frozen conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, two regions of Georgia, are instances of ethnocultural conflict where separatist ambitions supported by a former block leader have changed the disposition of power and the geopolitical environment in the region for decades. By supporting separatism in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russia effectively turned them into a

Russian protectorate, creating an additional instrument of power and control in the region in the form of frozen conflicts.<sup>136</sup>

With the rise of Putin's regime, Russia established a decisive foreign policy in relation to neighboring former members of the Socialist bloc (in Russian these are often referred to as *Near Abroad*), aimed at reinforcing its hegemonic position based on extensive political, economic, and security ties without denying their formal sovereignty. With Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russia established extraordinary political, military, and economic linkages. In 2008, Moscow unilaterally recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia; since that time, Russia remains the only significant power recognizing it. Russia provides direct financial aid to the regions and appears to be the biggest trade partner, in fact for South Ossetia, it is the only trade partner. To protect national interests in the region, Moscow established military facilities in both regions, including a new naval base in Abkhazia, and the 4th Military Base in South Ossetia.<sup>137</sup>

Russia started to build patronage of the two regions in the early 1990s. The official reason was the same which we observed in the historical examples discussed in the previous chapter. Namely, the responsibility to protect the interests of oppressed ethnic minorities in emerging nationalizing states. However, behind the official political statement, we can observe a rational realist strategy aimed at undermining the dynamic growth of Western influence and increasing power in the North Caucasus region. As long as Georgia has these "frozen conflicts", the chances for accession in the EU and NATO are negligible. After President Saakashvili came to power as a result of the Rose Revolution in 2003 and was supported by the West, Moscow's influence in the region was undermined. Trusting the support from the West, Saakashvili saw an opportunity to

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<sup>136</sup> Gerrits, Andre WM, and Max Bader. "Russian patronage over Abkhazia and South Ossetia: implications for conflict resolution." *East European Politics* 32, no. 3 (2016): 297-313.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

resolve the conflicts by force and regain control over the separatist regions. However, the above-mentioned linkages between Russia and the two regions doomed the reintegration attempts of Georgia to failure.<sup>138</sup>

The conflicts in the region had a long history; however, the Soviet regime managed to keep it under control until late 1980s.<sup>139</sup> Georgians and Ossetians lived for centuries in the region, however having distinct languages, culture, and political affinities. Living closely to each other, both peoples claim their rights for South Ossetia. Ossetians gained their autonomous status as the result of the Russian Civil War in 1922. Back at that time the Bolsheviks, in an attempt to establish and consolidate power, provided autonomy to many small nations, former parts of the Russian Empire. By doing so, they gained allies in the fight against counter-revolution.<sup>140</sup> Georgians, claiming their territorial rights, now consider South Ossetian autonomy a part of the illegal Soviet occupation of Georgia.

In the Soviet times, this discourse was latent. Georgians started to publicly express their opinion in the end of Perestroika. The establishment of Ademon Nykhas, the South Ossetian National Front (National Fronts were common in emerging post-Soviet republics) in 1988 was an attempt to mobilize Ossetian resistance. Georgian politician and Soviet dissident Zviad Gamsakhurdia organized the march on Tskhinvali on November 23, 1989, when some 12,000–14,000 Georgians attempted to enter the Ossetian capital. Following clashes with Ossetians, this became the beginning of armed conflict, which steadily escalated until the summer of 1992, when a ceasefire agreement was signed beginning the joint Ossetian, Georgian, and Russian

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<sup>138</sup> Gerrits, Andre WM, and Max Bader. "Russian patronage over Abkhazia and South Ossetia: implications for conflict resolution." *East European Politics* 32, no. 3 (2016): 297-313.

<sup>139</sup> Saparov, Arsène, and Arsène Saparov. *From Conflict to Autonomy in the Caucasus : The Soviet Union and the Making of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno Karabakh*, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014.

<sup>140</sup> Suny, Ronald Grigor, and Terry Martin, eds. *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*. Oxford University Press, 2001.



peacekeeping mission. 100,000 Ossetians and about 23,000 Georgians were displaced at the result of the conflict.<sup>141</sup> South Ossetia, as well as Abkhazia became *de facto* republics, and President Shevardnadze's administration promised a peaceful, negotiated solution to the conflicts.<sup>142</sup>

Saakashvili, who came into power as the result of the Rose Revolution in 2003, initiated a significant shift of the Georgian foreign policy towards alliance with the West. In addition to this, one of his main political promises was the integration of separatist regions lost by previous Georgian administrations. Meanwhile, in an effort to meet NATO standards, the Georgian defense budget skyrocketed from US\$50 million in 2003 to US\$1 billion in 2008. Collaborating with the US, Georgia trained its own forces and received valuable military equipment from Washington and other allies. Having this support, Saakashvili made several attempts to take Abkhazia and South Ossetia by force. Resolution of the frozen conflicts would increase Georgian chances for integration with the Euro-Atlantic alliance and decrease Russian influence in the region.

However, South Ossetian paramilitaries were eager to resist, which led to full scale escalation in August 2008. Georgia launched an artillery attack on Tskhinvali, followed by a ground attack with tanks and armored vehicles, which soon reached the center of the capital of South Ossetia. Saakashvili blamed South Ossetia and Russia in provocation, justifying the military operation against the separatist region. Russia answered with a massive counterattack within hours after Georgians attacked South Ossetia. Russia pushed Georgian troops out from South Ossetia and moved forward towards Tbilisi. The US did not take any significant efforts to stop the

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<sup>141</sup> Saparov, Arsène, and Arsène Saparov. *From Conflict to Autonomy in the Caucasus : The Soviet Union and the Making of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno Karabakh*, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014. 150.

<sup>142</sup> Cheterian, Vicken. "The August 2008 war in Georgia: from ethnic conflict to border wars." *Central Asian Survey* 28, no. 2 (2009): 155-170.

Russians. However, French negotiation support led by Nicholas Sarkozy helped to reach a ceasefire agreement five days after the start of the armed confrontation.<sup>143</sup>

The Kremlin has its own perception of international law and pays little heed to Western criticism. Since the very beginning of the 1990s Russia has claimed the right to protect its own citizens and quasi-citizens abroad with all possible means. In 1992, a Russian foreign ministry spokesman asserted that “with documents or without, our compatriots outside Russia, are under Russia's protection.”<sup>144</sup> This was enforced with time and a growing westernization of the post-Soviet space. During the summit of Russian diplomats in July 2014, Putin directly stated that Russia “will continue to defend the rights of Russians, of our compatriots abroad, using everything we have in our arsenal.”<sup>145</sup> This rhetoric also became a basis for intervention in the conflict in South Ossetia.

As with other post-Soviet states, since the Sochi Agreement in 1992, Russia has been extending Russian citizenship to the local populations of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.<sup>146</sup> By giving Russian citizenship to the residents of South Ossetia, Moscow created an additional argument to justify the intervention by the right and responsibility to protect its own citizens whose lives were arguably threatened by Georgian aggression.

Russia blamed Georgia in the genocide of South Ossetians. In making these justification statements, the Kremlin referred to the case of Kosovo, where Western intervention had a similar basis. In both cases the autonomous regions populated mainly by ethnic minorities were attacked by the central government, seemingly violating their rights, and initiating ethnic cleansing.

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<sup>143</sup> Cheterian, Vicken. "The August 2008 war in Georgia: from ethnic conflict to border wars." *Central Asian Survey* 28, no. 2 (2009): 155-170.

<sup>144</sup> Karagiannis, Emmanuel. "The Russian interventions in South Ossetia and Crimea compared: Military performance, legitimacy and goals." *Contemporary Security Policy* 35, no. 3 (2014): 401.

<sup>145</sup> Shuster, Simon, and Charlotte McDonald-Gibson. "Russia's Fifth Column." *Time* 184 (2014): 23-46.

<sup>146</sup> Karagiannis, Emmanuel. "The Russian interventions in South Ossetia and Crimea compared: Military performance, legitimacy and goals." *Contemporary Security Policy* 35, no. 3 (2014): 401.

Supporting Kosovo, the West did not recognize South Ossetia. Russia considered it a double standard, claiming that international laws must equally treat all subjects.<sup>147</sup>

South Ossetia could not find much international recognition. Russia's military and political presence in the region created an image of the occupied territory, where ethnic conflict was instrumentalized to control the westernization of Georgia. However, this viewpoint does not fully reflect the reality, without considering the political attitudes and moods of the local population. A public opinion survey conducted in South Ossetia in 2010 showed that most of the respondents highly welcomed a Russian military presence and cooperation, while have strong negative attitudes toward ethnic Georgians and Georgian leadership.<sup>148</sup>

The South Ossetians who were displaced and lost their property in Georgia had more negative stances towards Georgia than others. For them, Russia was rather a stabilizing force, which helped to stop the conflict or reach the frozen stage of it. Most of them saw Saakashvili's government, however, as non-reliable and nationalistic. It is important to note that the supporters of the current order in South Ossetia that blame Saakashvili for nationalism, often find that political decisions in the region must be taken primarily by ethnic South Ossetians.<sup>149</sup>

The Triadic Nexus conflict in South Ossetia has several special characteristics. First, the ethnic conflict has a long history. Soviet power could keep it under relative control, but with the collapse of the system, the conflict escalated. Even though South Ossetians ethnically do not belong to Russia's ethnocultural kin, Moscow as the successor of the USSR was ready to claim the role of the patronizing state. However, Georgia also could not be fairly considered an

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Toal, Gerard, and John O'Loughlin. "Inside South Ossetia: a survey of attitudes in a de facto state." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 29, no. 2 (2013): 136-172.

<sup>149</sup> Toal, Gerard, and John O'Loughlin. "Inside South Ossetia: a survey of attitudes in a de facto state." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 29, no. 2 (2013): 136-172.

ethnocultural homeland for South Ossetians. The wave of Georgian national awakening after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and especially after the Rose Revolution in 2003, was not welcomed with enthusiasm in South Ossetia, which has a distinguished ethnocultural identity. Both South Ossetians and Georgians claimed the territory without claiming the people, which led to displacement and property loss that remained to be an important obstacle in improvement of inter ethnic relations. For South Ossetians, the minor power in the conflict, Russia was in some sense an empire by invitation, especially for the supporters of separatist South Ossetian leadership. For Russia, it was another opportunity to halt the alignment process of Georgia with the West. The next section continues the discussion regarding the post-Soviet Triadic Nexus. It is devoted to the clash of identities and the factors that escalated this clash to the armed conflict in Ukraine in 2014.

#### Identity War In Ukraine And Conflict Catalysts

Regarding the Triadic Nexus conflicts on the post-Soviet space, we cannot leave without attention to the war in Ukraine. This conflict had a long history with escalation to a full-scale invasion in 2022. There is a plethora of pre-conditions which made this war possible. These include the following: the decline of American involvement in world affairs (Trump Presidency), Moscow's success in recent operations (South Ossetia, Syria, Crimea), quite marginal effect of international sanctions on Putin's regime, lack of progress in the Minsk Accords on Donbas, and advancement of armaments of Ukraine Armed Forces. However, the core reason of the conflict takes root in the Ukrainian struggle for new identity, identity as a sovereign state, and identity as an independent Western-oriented nation. In this section, I discuss not the War in Ukraine of 2022, which was initiated and executed by Russia, but the conflict in Donbass in 2014 and the attitudes of the local population to separatism. Based on the existing literature, I find that the core driver for

the conflict was the clash of identities in Ukraine, which was catalyzed by economic, political, and foreign factors.

From the perspective of Russia's regime, the Ukrainian desire to join the Western international community could cause an existential threat, not only because Ukraine could eventually become a member of NATO and the EU, but also because the democratization and westernization of Ukraine could spill over to other not yet westernized post-Soviet nations, such as Belarus and Russia itself. However, this westernization of Ukraine has always been associated not only with the change of political orientation, but also with the change of cultural background. In this process, cultural orientation, or identity, is closely interrelated with the political one.

The westernization of Ukraine historically has always been associated with alienation from Russia in both cultural and geopolitical meanings. The heroes and events nowadays glorified in independent Ukraine have a villainous reputation in Russia's official discourse, the discourse it tries to promote in the "Russian world," and which is often shared by Russian-speakers abroad. The national heroes proclaimed in Ukraine after the collapse of the USSR, such as Ivan Mazepa or Stepan Bandera, in the Soviet times were considered traitors of Russia and the presumed Russian-Ukrainian brotherhood. Meanwhile, the legacy of Bohdan Khmelnytsky, a Ukrainian military commander and Hetman, who was glorified in Soviet and Russian culture for pledging to the Russian Tsar, is nowadays contested in Ukrainian nationalist circles. Ukraine's national anthem is based on lines from a 19th-century poem by Chubynsky, *Shche ne vmerla Ukraina*, omitting the following line: Oh Bohdan, Bohdan/Our great Hetman!/For what purpose did you give Ukraine/to the evil Moskals (a derogatory term for Russians).<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Mamo, Christian. The contested legacy of Bohdan Khmelnytsky. *Emerging Europe*. April 3, 2021.

In addition to the historical perspective, language also plays an important role in building and defining new cultural identity. Linguistic identity is closely related to political stances, even if a person may not always communicate in that language. Native language remains to be a powerful predictor of people's attitudes and policy preferences in Ukraine with regard to both language use and other socially divisive issues, such as foreign policy and historical memory.<sup>151</sup> However, the military intervention resulted in the decline of popularity of Russian ethnic self-identity in Ukraine.<sup>152</sup>

Russian aggression in 2022 intensified the Ukrainization of the entire nation. However, Ukraine always had significant differences in identity between the East and West of the country. After the Russian annexation of Crimea and the aggression in Donbas in 2014, in his interview to *Ukrayinska Pravda*, ex-president Viktor Yushchenko explained that even though the blame for the conflict is on Russia, the pre-condition for it was rooted in the lack of Ukrainian socio-cultural identity in the region.

*Я розумію, що можна гнівити, звичайно, окупанта, Путіна, що збожеволів, але, з іншого боку, є відчуття, що він прийшов туди, де найменше українського, де нема нашої мови практично, де нема нашої пам'яті, де нема нашої церкви, де нема нашої культури...там стоять пам'ятники Леніну, де чужина чужиною, де багато з того, що властиво було для цільної і неподільної нації, втрачено... (I understand that it is possible to blame, of course, the occupier, Putin, who went crazy, but on the other hand, there is a feeling that he came to the place where is the least Ukrainian, where [there] is no "our language," where [there] is no "memory," where [there] is no "our church," where [there] is no "our culture"... there are monuments to Lenin, there is everything so strange, much of what was characteristic of a whole and indivisible nation has been lost there.)<sup>153</sup>*

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<sup>151</sup> Kulyk, Volodymyr. "Language identity, linguistic diversity and political cleavages: evidence from Ukraine." *Nations and nationalism* 17, no. 3 (2011): 627-648.

<sup>152</sup> Haran, Olexiy, Maksym Yakovlyev, and Maria Zolkina. "Identity, war, and peace: public attitudes in the Ukraine-controlled Donbas." *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 60, no. 6 (2019): 684-708.

<sup>153</sup> Ukrainska Pravda. "Yushchenko pro Krym i Donbas: tam chuzhina chizhinoyu," 26 December 2014. <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2014/12/26/7053324/> (Accessed: 29 March 2022).

This socio-cultural dichotomy is also reflected in the political preferences. The east, especially Donbass and Crimea, for decades showed the voting patterns opposite to the West, such as Galicia.<sup>154</sup> Here we can see the clash of Eastern cosmopolitanism (partly as a legacy of the Soviet times), and Western nationalism. In the presidential elections of 1994, the Eastern regions supported more Russian-friendly Kuchma, while the Western regions supported Kravchuk, who had a more moderate position in foreign affairs with Russia. However, when the option was between Kuchma and Symonenko, the presidential candidate from the Communist Party of Ukraine, the Western regions stood on the side of Kuchma, selecting the “lesser of two evils.” Quite similar voting behavior could be observed on the elections of 2004, where Western regions supported the pro-Western Yushchenko, and the East supported Yanukovych, who eventually became president in 2010. The overthrow of Yanukovych, in the Maidan Revolution, mostly symbolized the overthrow of the political choice of the East, where he had the biggest support.<sup>155</sup>

The problem in the political dichotomy of Ukraine is that supporting a political power, willingly or not, also supports a certain socio-cultural orientation. The pro-Western president Yushchenko in 2010, awarded Stepan Bandera (Ukrainian nationalist hero) the posthumous title of Hero of Ukraine, which was condemned not only by Russia, but also by Poland and the European Parliament. Yanukovych as the carrier of a contrasting ethno-cultural agenda annulled the award.<sup>156</sup> It partly explains why the Eastern Russian-speaking regions demonstrated less support to Westernization of Ukraine, and more support to partnership with Russia, at least until

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<sup>154</sup> Petro, Nicolai N. "Understanding the other Ukraine: identity and allegiance in russophone Ukraine." *Ukraine and Russia: People, Politics, Propaganda and Perspectives, Bristol, United Kingdom: E-International Relations Edited Collections* (2015): 19-35.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Zhurzhenko, Tatiana. "Memory wars and reconciliation in the Ukrainian–Polish borderlands: Geopolitics of memory from a local perspective." *History, memory and politics in central and eastern Europe: Memory games* (2013): 173-192.

the war.<sup>157</sup> For Western Ukraine, Russia is a threat for ethno-cultural identity, as it tries to downplay its singularity. In his essay *On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians* published in 2021, Putin claims: *Современная Украина — целиком и полностью детище советской эпохи (Modern Ukraine is utterly and completely the brainchild of the Soviet era)*,<sup>158</sup> referring to the Soviet policy of *korenizatsiya*. According to Russian leadership, Ukrainian and Belorussian are parts of Russian World. While for ethnic Ukrainians and Belarusians this claim is a direct attack on the singularity of their ethno-cultural identity, it does not affect the ethno-cultural identity of those who identify themselves as Russians.

Identity, therefore, may play an important role in the determination of political stances. Studies show that in Ukraine, people who identify themselves as Ukrainians, Ukrainian-speakers, and Western Ukrainians are usually pro-democratic and pro-market oriented, while those who consider themselves Russian, Russian-speakers, or Eastern/Southern Ukrainians often have antidemocratic and antimarket orientations.<sup>159</sup> The ties between identities and political cleavages give the ethno-cultural orientations of population a strategic importance in the times of geopolitical conflict.

In this conflict, Russia tries to engage the population of the neighboring countries based on their ethno-cultural and linguistic identity. However, the identity is not exclusively based on ethnicity and language. The surveys in Ukraine demonstrate that Russian-speakers often prefer to identify themselves based on civic belongingness, such as citizenship or residency in Ukraine.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Petro, Nicolai N. "Understanding the other Ukraine: identity and allegiance in russophone Ukraine." *Ukraine and Russia: People, Politics, Propaganda and Perspectives*, Bristol, United Kingdom: E-International Relations Edited Collections (2015): 19-35.

<sup>158</sup> Putin, Vladimir. Essay *On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians*. Kremlin. (2021)

<sup>159</sup> Shulman, Stephen. "National identity and public support for political and economic reform in Ukraine." *Slavic Review* 64, no. 1 (2005): 59-87.

<sup>160</sup> Kulyk, Volodymyr. "Identity in transformation: Russian-speakers in post-Soviet Ukraine." *Europe-Asia Studies* 71, no. 1 (2019): 156-178.



According to a Kyiv International Institute of Sociology survey in 2012, 53 percent of Russian-speaking respondents identified themselves as Ukrainians, and 36 percent as Russians.<sup>161</sup> These self-identification patterns changed slightly with rising tensions between Russia and Ukraine in 2014. That year the survey showed that the popularity of Russian identity among Russophones declined, while the selection of hybrid identity (Ukrainian and Russian combined) increased.<sup>162</sup>

Even though national identity, be it civic or ethno-cultural, can significantly determine the political cleavages in Ukraine, it cannot alone explain the separatism and support of Russian aggression in Donbas. Studies found historical and economic circumstances, alienation from the new government after Maidan, Russian sponsorship, the role of local elites,<sup>163</sup> the Yanukovich government, far-right organizations, the role of the US, and the EU among the factors explaining the separatism in Donbas.<sup>164</sup>

While the majority of researchers in the field stress the ethno-cultural identity and Russian involvement as the main drivers of the separatism in Donbas, an Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Michigan, Yuri Zhukov, claims that the local economy is an equally important factor in the explanation of the conflict.<sup>165</sup> He claims that separatists may have pro-Russian political cleavages for reasons other than ethnicity or language. One of the significant drivers of civil conflict, according to Zhukov, is the high regional economic dependency on foreign markets. When the central government, as happened with the Maidan Revolution, decides to cut ties with a trade partner of high importance of a particular region, the risk of civil conflict

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid. 172.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Wilson, Andrew. "The Donbas in 2014: Explaining civil conflict perhaps, but not civil war." *Europe-Asia Studies* 68, no. 4 (2016): 631-652.

<sup>164</sup> Katchanovski, Ivan. "The separatist war in Donbas: a violent break-up of Ukraine?." *European Politics and Society* 17, no. 4 (2016): 473-489.

<sup>165</sup> Zhukov, Yuri M. "Trading hard hats for combat helmets: The economics of rebellion in eastern Ukraine." *Journal of comparative economics* 44, no. 1 (2016): 1-15.

significantly increases, especially if the region has doubts about the legitimacy of the central government. The statistical analysis shows that in the Donbas, where numerous enterprises are almost entirely dependent on exports to Russia, the more dependent areas and municipalities, such as those involved in machine-building, fell under rebel control earlier than those where the labor force was less dependent on export to Russia.<sup>166</sup> The economic factor in Donbas appeared to be a stronger predictor of greater separatism than the ethno-cultural composition of the area.<sup>167</sup>

A Professor in Ukrainian Studies at University College London, Andrew Wilson, however, claims that economy cannot explain the separatism in Donbas alone. He finds that what is more important is the combination of historical identity in Donbas and the efforts of local political elites supported by Russia.<sup>168</sup> The current pro-Russian and pro-Soviet historical identity of the Donbas nation/community is a relatively new project. It takes root from the Donetsk–Krivoy Rog Soviet Republic (DKR) established in 1918, the largest communist formation of Eastern Ukraine which was later incorporated by Soviet Ukraine. Nowadays, Donetsk Peoples Republic proclaims itself the successor of DKR, which can be seen as an antagonist to Ukrainian National Republic (UNR) of 1917, the predecessor of modern Ukraine. DKR was never a part of UNR, neither was it included in Ukraine declared by supporters of Bandera in L'viv in June 1941. This pro-Soviet and pro-Russian identity in Eastern Ukraine significantly contradicted modern Ukrainian pro-Western, pro-democratic, and ethnic-based national ideas. The ethnic nationalism of modern Ukraine, based largely on anti-Soviet (often anti-Russian) ideas and symbols, contributed to the Donbass

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<sup>166</sup> Zhukov, Yuri M. "Trading hard hats for combat helmets: The economics of rebellion in eastern Ukraine." *Journal of comparative economics* 44, no. 1 (2016): 1-15.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Wilson, Andrew. "The Donbas in 2014: Explaining civil conflict perhaps, but not civil war." *Europe-Asia Studies* 68, no. 4 (2016): 631-652.

attachment to the Soviet identity in the form of resistance.<sup>169</sup> This contradiction created an opportunity for mobilization of the most radicalized groups.

Nevertheless, Soviet nostalgia and anti-fascist discourse in Donbass before 2014 could hardly indicate dominance of separatism in the regional public opinion. The polls in April 2014 showed that most locals supported territorial integrity of Ukraine, even with greater decentralization and advancement of the status of the Russian language. It was a period of great ambivalence; people preferred neutrality over support of either Ukraine or Russia. According to Wilson, in this ambivalent time, Russia was much more active in the region, backing separatism and working with community leaders and media, than Ukraine. It gave Moscow and separatists the momentum to take leadership over the relatively neutral and indecisive local majority. Yanukovych's family and companies, local oligarchy, and corrupted law enforcement with the support from Russia, were actively involved in organizing and funding of separatist demonstrations, which eventually escalated to violence. The identity confrontation could hardly lead to the conflict without the stimulus from interested parties.<sup>170</sup>

Finally, the abrupt political change in Ukraine played an important role in the development of the conflict. After the Maidan Revolution, the new government delegitimized public support of separatism. As a result of this policy, the far-left Communist party of Ukraine and public opinion leaders of the Party of the Regions were prosecuted. Indeed, the post-Maidan polls show that the supporters of the Communist party more often supported separatism than others. On the other side of the conflict, the far-right formations, such as the Azov battalion/regiment, the Volunteer Ukrainian Corps, the Right Sector, the Social-National Assembly, and Svoboda were disproportionally largely involved in the violent conflict, specifically violence against civilians

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

and prisoners of war.<sup>171</sup> The antagonistic character of the opposing forces enhanced the escalation of violence and decreased chances for a peaceful resolution. It was also easier for Russia to promote the myth about “Nazi Ukraine” with the examples of symbols and rhetoric of far-right groups.

All things considered, the scholars agree that the conflict in Eastern Ukraine in 2014 was a clash of identities, where one side combined pro-Western political orientation and cultural nationalism, and the other stand for post-Soviet cosmopolitanism and closer cooperation with Russia. Nevertheless, this clash of identities could hardly lead to active separatism without facilitating factors. Among them are a dramatic change in national politics, (Maidan that generated Anti-Maidan), economic problems, high regional dependency on the ethnocultural homeland, intervention by ethnocultural homeland, insufficient efforts of the host nation in the region, and activization of extremist groups on both sides. All of this enhanced the escalation of the conflict.

#### Post-Soviet Triadic Nexus Conflicts, Conclusion

If history does not repeat itself, then it often rhymes. The complexity of inter-ethnic relations in Eastern Europe in the interwar period has many parallels with the post-Cold War situation. Similar to post-WWI, after the Cold War, Eastern Europe encountered on massive geopolitical transformations, which led also to redistribution of power among different ethnic groups. The collapse of the empires after WWI happened in concert with a great wave of national awakening among the ethnic groups that desired to become independent. The same thing happened to many nations of the former Soviet Union and the communist bloc. As a result, new international and interideological borders appeared on the map of Europe, creating new social structures in the former “imperial” territories. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the formerly occupied nations

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<sup>171</sup> Katchanovski, Ivan. "The separatist war in Donbas: a violent break-up of Ukraine?." *European Politics and Society* 17, no. 4 (2016): 473-489.

such as Georgia and Ukraine regained independence and took the form of their own kind of empire. Both nations succeeded regions largely and compactly populated by non-titular ethnicities and had to spread state power on the people with different ethno-cultural identities. The clash of conflicting identities in both cases became a basis for conflict, where Russia claimed patronage over ethnic minorities which eventually served as justification for intervention.

In conclusion, ethnic minorities and their status is as relevant today as it was in the pre-Cold War period, especially when there is an interest of a regional or global power. Factual or fictional suppression of ethnic minorities may still serve as a *casus belli* for escalation of an armed conflict. The examples of South Ossetia and Eastern Ukraine demonstrate how Russia used the discourse of the undermined rights of its own ethno-national kin and local ethnic minorities to justify assertive actions.

Previously, I identified seven factors that influenced the affinity of ethnic minorities in the Triadic Nexus conflicts from the past. Among them are: 4) Habitational density and territorial proximity of ethnic minorities to the ethnocultural homeland; 5) Political unity and mobilization of ethnic minorities; 6) National economy; 7) Ethno-cultural and civic identity; 8) Political status of ethnic minorities in the host nation; 9) The nationalizing language policy of the host nations; and 10) engagement of the ethnocultural homeland through communication with ethnic minorities. All these factors are also relevant for the political stances of ethnic minorities in Donbass and South Ossetia. As additional factor, that we could see these cases was the 11) abrupt change of political power (Rose Revolution, Orange/Maidan Revolution) in the nation that significantly affected the relations between the central government and ethnic minorities. This change of power was closely related to alienation from the former block leader and the claimed patronizing state (ethnocultural homeland) for ethnic minorities. Both Donbass and South Ossetia have significant

economic ties with Russia. The studies found that another important factor contributing to separatism was a high regional economic dependency on the ethnocultural homeland. Finally, in both cases, the change of international geopolitical orientation played an important role. The Rose Revolution and Orange/Maidan Revolution had highly pro-NATO/the EU character. These events of the transition to a Western type of liberal democracy were welcomed by the West and confronted by Russia. The alignment with the West, for many reasons, excludes the close cooperation with the current Russian regime. As it was discussed earlier in both South Ossetia and Donbass, the partnership with Russia was seen as important by many respondents. Therefore, we can consider 12) the geopolitical stances of ethnic minorities important in building their attitudes toward the host nation in transition. Based on the literature discussed in this chapter, I suggest two additional factors that can influence the attitudes of ethnic minorities towards the policy of the host nation:

- 11) Abrupt change of political power
- 12) Geopolitical stances of ethnic minorities

#### HYPOTHESES BASED ON THE FACTORS FROM HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

The historical analysis conducted in this chapter helps to show the development of ethnic conflicts in the triadic nexus interrelations and the factors that can influence the disposition of ethnic minorities between the ethnocultural homeland and host nation. Both the interwar and post-Cold War triadic nexus examples have two common conditions. First, all these cases happened after significant geopolitical changes and were associated with emerging national borders and changes in social (ethnic) structures. Second, these cases are the instances of a clash of two nations' geopolitical interests, where political moods of ethnic minorities are of a strategic value for both sides. Based on the analyzed cases and literature review, I outlined twelve factors that potentially may impact the political attitudes of ethnic minorities towards ethnocultural homeland:

- 1) Socio-economic condition of ethnic minorities
- 2) Level of integration
- 3) National pride
- 4) Habitational density and territorial proximity of ethnic minorities to the ethnocultural homeland
- 5) Political unity and mobilization of ethnic minorities
- 6) National economy
- 7) Ethno-cultural and civic identity
- 8) Political status and rights of ethnic minorities
- 9) Nationalizing language policy
- 10) The information campaigns of the ethnocultural homeland
- 11) Abrupt change of political power
- 12) Geopolitical stances of ethnic minorities

In much the same way as in the examined historical cases, the triadic nexus in Estonia corresponds to the above-mentioned conditions. First, the social status of Russophones in Estonia has been significantly changed by the collapse of the Soviet Union and reestablishment of national independence. Second, Estonia's pro-Western geopolitical agenda contradicts the interests of the current Russian regime. Estonia was one of few nations that the Russian government included in the list of unfriendly countries even before the invasion in Ukraine in 2022.<sup>172</sup> The relations between Estonia and Russia, for many reasons, can be considered to be in conflict. Strong national security and defense of a bordering, unfriendly nation is a strategic disadvantage for Russia. In this situation, the popular support of national security and defense policy becomes an important asset

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<sup>172</sup> TASS. Russian government approves list of unfriendly countries and territories. Russian news agency. URL: <https://tass.com/politics/1418197>. (2022) Accessed: 04/08/2022.

for Estonia, as it also reflects the attitudes towards nationhood and national sovereignty. The public opinion surveys regularly conducted by the Estonian MOD shows the lack of cohesion between the attitudes of ethnic Estonian and Russian-speakers. In the next chapter I outline and analyze factors that affect the attitudes of Russian-speakers in Estonia towards national security and defense policy. Based on these factors outlined earlier, I suggest twelve hypotheses to be tested:

1) Socio-economic condition of ethnic minorities

*Hypothesis: The better the personal socio-economic condition of a Russian-speakers is, the more one approves of Estonian defense and security policy.*

2) Level of integration

*Hypothesis: The greater level of integration a Russian-speaker is within Estonian society, the more one approves of Estonian defense and security policy.*

3) National pride

*Hypothesis: The greater level of national pride a Russian-speaker has, the more one approves of Estonian defense and security policy.*

4) Habitational density and territorial proximity of ethnic minorities to the ethnocultural homeland

*Hypothesis: The approval level of Estonian defense and security policy by the Russian-speakers is lower within the regions bordering Russia that are densely populated by them.*

5) Political unity and mobilization of ethnic minorities

*Hypothesis: The approval level of Estonian defense and security policy is lower among Russian-speakers supporting parties with a high ethnic (Russian) political profile.*

6) National economy



*Hypothesis: The better national economy is, the more a Russian-speaker approves Estonian defense and security policy.*

7) Ethno-cultural and civic identity

*Hypothesis: The approval level of Estonian defense and security policy is higher among Russian-speakers with Estonian national self-identity.*

8) Political status

*Hypothesis: The approval level of Estonian defense and security policy is higher among Russian-speakers with full political rights (citizenship).*

9) Nationalizing language policy

*Hypothesis: New language restrictions decrease the approval level of Estonian defense and security policy among Russian-speakers.*

10) Information campaigns of the ethnocultural homeland

*Hypothesis: The approval level of Estonian defense and security policy is lower among Russian-speakers regularly following Russian media.*

11) Change of political power

*Hypothesis: Representation of the interest of Russian-speakers regarding the government increases the approval level of Estonian defense and security policy among them.*

12) Geopolitical stance of ethnic minorities

*Hypothesis: The approval level of Estonian defense and security policy is higher among Russian-speakers who support greater cooperation with Russia.*

Before we can apply this list of hypotheses to the case of Estonia, we must first understand Estonian security and defense policy, as well as the general attitudes of local Russian-speakers towards it.

## CHAPTER V

### ESTONIAN SECURITY AND DEFENSE POLICY

The historical background of the country has played a crucial role in how the current Estonian defense and security doctrine has been developed. Occupations of the 20th century and struggles to restore independence stimulated the national will to develop and maintain strong defense capabilities and search for allies in the West. The framework document that regulates Estonian security and defense policy is the National Security Concept of the Republic of Estonia (NSC). A subject to approval by the Estonian Parliament, the NSC establishes the objective, principles, and directions of security policy. The NSC offers three main pillars to Estonian defense strategy. First, society must have a strong national willingness to defend its own country, notwithstanding the character and the scope of international threat. “Estonia will defend itself in any case, no matter how overwhelming the opponent might be.”<sup>173</sup> Second, the nation must have own defense capabilities to counter any threat and allow time for international allies to react. Third, due to the relatively small size of the population, territory, economic and military capacity, and taking into consideration the historical experience, Estonia strongly relies on collective security structures in the national defense strategy. “Estonia’s defense is based on initial individual defense system and NATO’s collective defense.”<sup>174</sup> In this chapter, I review these three pillars of Estonian security and defense policy and public opinion towards it, which is the main subject of the following quantitative analysis.

#### WILLINGNESS TO FIGHT

According to the NSC, protection of Estonia’s independence and sovereignty, territorial integrity, constitutional order, and public safety are the main objectives of Estonian security policy.

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<sup>173</sup> National Security Concept. Estonian Ministry Of Defence. (2017) 3.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid. 3.

It makes no difference how powerful or how big the potential opponent is, Estonia will defend its integrity and sovereignty against any aggression regardless of the threat scenario. If some part of the Estonian territory is temporarily occupied, Estonian citizens would be supported and encouraged to participate in organized resistance. Taking into consideration the relatively small size of the country, the population's willingness to defend the nation against any foreign threat becomes increasingly important.

Estonian defense strategy is based on the Integrated National Defense Concept, which implies the involvement and cooperation of all Estonian state institutions, international allies, and all sectors of society. Networks of civilian volunteers and public- private partnerships also play a vital role in this cooperation. In the event of an armed conflict, the entire Estonian population should be involved in defense actions. The NSC calls for participation of the entire society in national defense, which is supposed to be ensured by the population's high willingness to defend their country, widespread military training, and the large membership of the Estonian Defense League, the voluntary military organization.

The resistance of Ukraine to Russian aggression in 2022 has demonstrated the prominence of national willingness to fight and defend its own country. On the first stages of the armed confrontation, US intelligence was concerned that Kyiv could fall under Russian control within days. However, the Ukrainian willingness to fight was significantly underestimated.<sup>175</sup> Rand Corporation defines national will to fight as:

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<sup>175</sup> Sciutto, Jim. & Williams, Katie. US concerned Kyiv could fall to Russia within days, sources familiar with intel say. CNN. February 25, 2022.

*The determination of a national government to conduct sustained military and other operations for some objective even when the expectation of success decreases or the need for significant political, economic, and military sacrifices increases.*<sup>176</sup>

Ukrainian leadership has shown dedication; however, without national support, any defense plan would be doomed to failure. Among the Baltic States, Estonia shows the highest willingness to fight and defend its own nation. However, Estonia has the biggest opinion gap among the Baltic States between Russian-speakers and the titular nation towards national defense.<sup>177</sup> According to the survey conducted in 2019, among Estonian-speaking respondents, the willingness to defend the country was more than twice higher than among Russophones.

The difference in the willingness to defend the nation between the titular ethnicities and Russophones can be associated with the difference in threat perception. While the Russian current geopolitical agenda is considered to be the biggest security threat in the Baltic region, local Russian-speakers show significantly less concern about it. For instance, a survey conducted in Latvia in 2017 showed that Russian-speakers find the United States the most unfriendly country and trust the president of Russia more should any geopolitical crisis occur.<sup>178</sup> According to the Public Opinion and National Defense 2020 survey, 49 percent of Estonian-speaking respondents considered Russia's geopolitical ambitions threatening, while only 9.9 percent of Russian-speakers thought the same.

The studies find that threat perception can significantly determine the national willingness to fight. In general, peace and prosperity are associated with the declining willingness to fight for

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<sup>176</sup> McNerney, M. J., Connable, B., Zimmerman, S. R., Posard, M. N., Lander, N., Castillo, J. J., ... & Parasiliti, A. (2019). *National will to fight: Why some states keep fighting and others don't*. Rand Corporation.

<sup>177</sup> Andžāns, Māris, and Andris Sprūds. "Willingness to defend one's own country and to resist in the Baltic states." *Security and defence quarterly* 30, no. 3 (2020): 15-30.

<sup>178</sup> Andžāns, Māris, Ilvija Bruģe, and Andris Sprūds. "Psiholoģiskā aizsardzība Latvijā: ievainojamības un iespējas." (2017).

one's country.<sup>179</sup> In Estonia, among the male population liable to the national defense obligation, the respondents with the highest willingness to fight for their country are those who believe that the nation is under threat. There is an especially high willingness to fight among the respondents who plan to stay in the country in case of an armed conflict. Their counterparts, who do not see any threat to Estonian security, are less willing to actively participate in national defense. There are more ethnic Estonians in the first group, and Russian-speakers in the last group. What is interesting to note is that the attitudes are reproducing in social networks. For instance, people who are related to defense forces, were conscribed, are related to the Defense League, or those who are personally close to these people show greater willingness to fight for the nation.<sup>180</sup> Taking into consideration the divergence of opinions between Russophones and Estonian-speakers, we can assume that the greater the ethnic segregation is, the bigger this gap would be.

## NATIONAL DEFENSE CAPABILITY

### Defense Forces: Great Participation, Questionable Motivation

Beside the reliance on the Total Defense concept, Estonia remains committed to maintain and develop national defense capabilities. Estonia's defense budget is one of the highest among NATO members in percentage of GDP. Estonian independent military defense capability is composed of two main parts: Defense Forces and the Estonian Defense League, both of which act under the authority of the Ministry of Defense.

The Defense Forces plan and conduct military operations to defend the territory, territorial waters, and airspace of Estonia, and consists of professionals and reservists. While professional members of Defense Forces are intensively involved in international missions, the conscripts and

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<sup>179</sup> Inglehart, Ronald F., Bi Puranen, and Christian Welzel. "Declining willingness to fight for one's country: The individual-level basis of the long peace." *Journal of Peace Research* 52, no. 4 (2015): 418-434.

<sup>180</sup> Uulimaa, Ulvi. *Defence Willingness Of Estonian Male Population Liable To National Defence Obligation In 2000-2017*. University of Tartu. (2019).

reservists provide national security locally. While most European countries have only contract-based military service, Estonia has compulsory conscription for men between 18 and 27 years old. It does not matter if one pursues higher education or not, he still is liable to his national defense obligation if there are no health or other eligible obstacles for it. Conscription remains the main source for reserve units and recruitment of professionals of the Defense Forces and the Defense League. Therefore, the motivation of conscripts has become an important foundation of national defense.

Roughly 3.3 thousand people enter the conscription service annually, after which they become reservists and can be called for military exercises. The average number of personnel in the Estonian regular defense forces during peacetime is about 6.5 thousand, with about 50 percent of them being conscripts.<sup>181</sup> The conscription duty is equal for all male citizens, be they ethnic Estonians or Russian-speakers. Many of the conscripts, especially from the East of the country, have grown up in a Russian-speaking environment and have low levels of proficiency in the Estonian language by the time of conscription. However, all military service is performed exclusively in the Estonian language. It may create certain difficulties for Russian-speaking conscripts, who are often used by Russia-funded information sources to blame the Estonian government for unequal and unfair treatment of soldiers from a Russian background.<sup>182</sup>

In addition to this, conscription usually puts together males from different ethnic backgrounds. Often young ethnic Estonian and Russian-speaking conscripts have their first opportunity to have in-depth communication experiences and cooperation with each other during their service. Therefore, conscription is seen as another tool of integration of Russian-speakers.

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<sup>181</sup> Andžāns, Māris, and Viljar Veebel. "Deterrence dilemma in Latvia and Estonia: finding the balance between external military solidarity and territorial defence." *Available at SSRN 3141799* (2017).

<sup>182</sup> Petrovsky, Petr. *Как эстонский боец-срочник уложил на лопатки "кремлевскую пропаганду"*. Sputnik. 03.16.2018

For those who lack the proficiency of the Estonian language, the Defense Forces provide courses and study materials.

Russian-speakers in general demonstrate quite high eagerness to serve in the Estonian military. First, they inherit a culture of respecting the men who served. “Russians, in principle, have a long-lasting tradition of military service. It a part of mentality, the guys are aware of it from family, because almost all men served,” claimed the Commander of Defense Forces General Ants Laaneots.<sup>183</sup> Second, they often see conscription as an opportunity to improve their proficiency in the Estonian language, that significantly broadens their career opportunities in Estonia. Third, the Russian-speaking population in general occupies lower levels in the job market hierarchy and earns lower salaries in comparison with ethnic Estonians. Military service, therefore, looks like a good opportunity to earn a stable income, and conscription is the first step to it. It creates a certain disproportion of ethnic representation in the Estonian Defense forces, where Russian-speakers are proportionally overrepresented in relation to ethnic Estonians.<sup>184</sup>

The fact, that Russian-speakers in general are less willing to fight for Estonia than their Estonian counterparts, but more willing to serve in the Defense Forces, creates certain concerns regarding their motivation, especially at times when Russia actively tries to involve military personnel with Russian backgrounds in espionage against Estonia. For example, in 2019, Denis Metsavas, a Russian-speaking officer of the Estonian Defense Forces was sentenced to 15 years in prison for handing Estonian and NATO secret information to Russia’s intelligence. He was a veteran of the NATO mission in Afghanistan with 15-years of experience in the Estonian military. He gained a reputation as the Estonian military’s de facto spokesman for the country’s Russophone

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<sup>183</sup> Karabeshkin, Leonid A. "Civil-military Relations in Estonia: Legal Background and Contemporary Discourse." (2007).

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

community, appearing on Russian-language media, and giving lectures at high schools on patriotism and democracy.<sup>185</sup> Even though the great representation of Russian-speakers in the Estonian Defense created certain concerns, there was no evidence of an increasing threat. Conversely, the studies show that in general, people who served in the Defense Forces have higher willingness to fight for Estonia in the case of a foreign aggression.<sup>186</sup> Therefore, we may assume that the attitudes of the Russian-speaking active military and reservists follow similar trends. However, the question is still to be examined statistically.

#### Defense League: History Still Plays Role

The Estonian Defense League is a voluntary, militarily organized, armed, national defense organization. The organization is funded by the government and has a long history in fighting for Estonian independence. Nowadays, the main task of the Defense League is to enhance the population's will to defend its country and ensure readiness for national defense by planning military defense activities, including guerrilla activities and resistance movements, and participating in such activities. In addition to this, the institution conducts various social, educational, and cultural practices. During wartime, the Estonian Defense League members shall be deployed as part of the Defense Forces' structure.

The organization was established since the very beginning of Estonia's independent statehood. It started as a voluntary national defense organization of the members of the armed services, the border guard, the Prison Board during WWI, and the beginning of the Estonian War of Independence. The main aim of the defense league was to maintain public order. However, it

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<sup>185</sup> Weiss, Michael. The Hero Who Betrayed His Country. *The Atlantic*. June 26, 2019.

<sup>186</sup> Uulimaa, Ulvi. *Defence Willingness Of Estonian Male Population Liable To National Defence Obligation In 2000-2017*. University of Tartu. (2019).



played a significant role in terms of military training, national defense education, social life, and sand sporting events. It was and remains a carrier of Estonian patriotic symbolism.

Representing a popular para-military organization aimed at protecting ethno-cultural values, identity, and national sovereignty, the Estonian Defense League was historically seen as a force resisting any occupation and foreign invasion. For these reasons, since the beginning of the Soviet occupation, the members of the Defense League and their families were the first victims of repression and deportation. Many of them initiated a guerilla war against the Soviet Union. Those involved are known as the “Forest Brothers.” Nowadays, the Estonian Defense League bears the legacy of the glorified guerilla movement.<sup>187</sup>

The legacy of the “Forest Brothers” and the history of the Estonian Defense League is closely associated with the resistance to Soviet occupation. This resistance, however, is also linked to cooperation with Nazi Germany. Many of the current Estonian national heroes were awarded Estonian Defense League White Cross decorations, such as Alfons Rebane, Harald Nugiseks, and Friedrich Kurg. They were all who were the officers of the Waffen-SS and other Nazi military formations during WWII. Some of them were actively involved in the Holocaust and the organization of concentration camps. After the German retreat from Estonian territory, many of the collaborators decided to stay and escaped from Soviet prosecution in the dense Baltic forests. The last Forest Brothers in Estonia were found by the KGB in the late 1970s. In this complex historical period, it is hard to draw a line between patriotism and nationalism. On the one hand, Estonian sovereignty was under the threat of Soviet occupation and Nazi Germany was the main ally fighting against the Soviet Union. On the other hand, this kind of collaboration leaves the stain

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<sup>187</sup> Kaitseliit. Hot summer of 1940. URL: <https://www.kaitseliit.ee/en/hot-summer-of-1940>. (2022) Accessed: 05/03/2022

of war crimes on the fighters for Estonian independence of that time, at least in the eyes of local Russian-speakers, whose ancestors mostly fought on another side of the frontlines.

The Defense League, as an organization, was several times accused of nationalism. For instance, in 2015, there was a scandal when a Defense League public relations specialist, Urmas Reitelmann, posted unflattering statements about migrants and the Russian-speaking population of Estonia on social media.<sup>188</sup> Criticizing European migration policy, he referred to Estonia's Russian-speaking residents as “parasitical *tiblas*” (a derogatory term for a Russian person) and called refugees “cockroaches of convenience.” After this event, Reitelmann continued working for the Defense League. Later, parliament assigned him to be a representative of Estonia's delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.<sup>189</sup>

The controversial historical legacy and certain public statements can have a negative impact on the attitudes of Russophones towards the Estonian Defense League. In 2020, the Estonian Public Opinion survey showed that 81 percent of ethnic Estonian respondents trust the Estonian Defense League. Among Russian-speaking respondents, only 42 percent demonstrates trust in the institution. Nowadays, however, there is no evidence that the Defense League ideology and history hinder trust among Russian-speakers. Nevertheless, the riots caused by reallocation of the Soviet WWII monument in Tallinn in 2007, and the annual commemoration of Victory in the Great Patriotic War, show the Russian-speaking community remains politically sensitive towards this historical period. The same survey in 2020 showed that while for ethnic Estonians the term *veteran* is associated first with the military personal who participated in Estonian missions, only

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<sup>188</sup> Põld, Anna. Kaitseliidu spetsialist peab Euroopasse tungivaid põgenikke saastaks, inimrämpsuks ja mugavusprussakateks. Delfi. 29.08.2015

<sup>189</sup> ERR. MP who made remarks on Russians, refugees elected to PACE delegation. ERR News. 12.11.2019

10 percent of Russian-speaking respondents think the same. 72 percent of the Russian-speaking respondents still find that a veteran is first of all a participant of WWII.

#### INTERNATIONAL ALIGNMENT, NEVER ALONE AGAIN

The historical experience of wars and occupations gives two important lessons to Estonia as a nation. First, the eastern neighbor is a threat to security and sovereignty. Second, even with strong defense forces, and society eager to defend the nation, sovereignty is at risk without foreign security guarantees. Therefore, membership in the EU and NATO became the apex goals of Estonian foreign policy since the regaining of independence in 1991, when the speaker of the Estonian Parliament, Ülo Nugis, claimed that only NATO could guarantee the security of Estonia.<sup>190</sup>

Even though the Baltic States collectively expressed their willingness to join the Western collective security organization, the attitude of NATO members-states towards Eastern enlargement was ambiguous. On one hand, it went in line with the support of the expansion of Western liberal-democratic order. On the other hand, it could lead to growing tensions with Russia. This made the Baltic States compete with other regions for the accession. The leaders of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were afraid that the earlier NATO enlargement to East-Central Europe, the formal admission of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland would leave Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in a kind of a gray zone, exposed (as in the past) to Russian pressure and possible neo-imperial ambitions.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Riim, Toomas. "Estonia and NATO: A Constructivist View on a National Interest and Alliance Behaviour By Toomas Riim Introduction After regaining its independence in 1991, Estonia has sought NATO." *Baltic Security & Defence Review* 8 (2006).

<sup>191</sup> Asmus, Ronald D., and Robert C. Nurick. "NATO enlargement and the Baltic states." *Survival* 38, no. 2 (1996): 121-142.

This aspiration stimulated the reforms and initiatives in the Baltic States, making their economic growth rates among the highest in Europe by the early 2000s. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania made considerable progress in meeting the economic, political, and military requirements for NATO membership. They had a functioning democratic system and viable market economies that made them ready for accession. Unlike some other NATO candidates from Central and Eastern Europe, which inherited legacy military from their membership in the Warsaw Pact, the Baltic States created their own militaries from scratch after the collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>192</sup> In addition to this, unlike Ukraine, the Baltic States were consistent in their aspiration to join the collective security organization. In 2002, 68.5 percent of Latvians, 70 percent of Estonians, and 75 percent of Lithuanians supported their countries membership in NATO.<sup>193</sup> We must note here that in Estonia, the attitudes of ethnic Estonians and Russian-speakers towards NATO membership differ.

In addition to this, all three Baltic States prior to the accession raised their defense spending to the level of 2 percent, and since that time, they have not significantly decreased it. Even though, the military capacities of the Baltic States, due to the size of population and economies, were not comparable with bigger NATO members, they focused on development of specializations to enhance their value for the alliance. Latvia and Estonia, for instance, developed specialized minesweeping units, while Lithuania created a medical unit. All three Baltic States demonstrated willingness to contribute to the war on terrorism. They supported the US-led effort to disarm Iraq. Since 1993, they enforced regional defense cooperation. The Baltic states created a joint Baltic Peacekeeping Battalion (BALTBAT) composed of a combined Lithuanian-Latvian-Estonian staff and national ships from the navies of the three Baltic countries. They established the Baltic Air

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<sup>192</sup> Larrabee, F. Stephen. *The Baltic states and NATO membership*. Vol. 1. Rand, 2003.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

Surveillance Network (BALTNET), based in Lithuania, designed to improve international cooperation between civilian and military authorities in aviation matters and to increase operational effectiveness. The joint Baltic Defense College (BALTDEFCOL) has been set up in Tartu, Estonia to train senior staff officers and civilians from the Baltic states in NATO-based staff procedures, strategic planning, and management. Taking into consideration these and other developments, RAND on April 3, 2003 presented a testimony to the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, where it strongly supported the accession of the Baltics to NATO.<sup>194</sup>

Although small in absolute terms, the three Baltic states contribute greatly to NATO in relative terms.<sup>195</sup> Nowadays Estonia hosts the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defense Centre of Excellence, and Latvia hosts the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence. All three Baltic states are among few members which fulfill their commitment to spend at least 2 percent of GDP on defense. The Baltic States contributed to the NATO mission in Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo, and other countries. Estonian troops have served in Helmand province in southern Afghanistan, one of the deadliest areas in the country.<sup>196</sup> Since 2014, Estonia has hosted the NATO Baltic Air-Policing aircrafts on the Ämari Air Base. Due to their geographic proximity, these three countries became an important strategic point for the collective deterrence of Russia. In 2016 at the Warsaw Summit, answering the annexation of Crimea, NATO members made a unanimous decision to establish the Enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) in the Eastern Flank of the Alliance – in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Larrabee, F. Stephen. *The Baltic states and NATO membership*. Vol. 1. Rand, 2003.

<sup>195</sup> Coffey, Luke, and Daniel Kochis. *The Baltic states: The United States must be prepared to fulfill its NATO treaty obligations*. Vol. 29. Washington, DC: Heritage Foundation, 2015.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.2.

<sup>197</sup> NATO. Shape. Nations. (2021) URL:

[https://shape.nato.int/estonia#:~:text=Currently%20Estonia%20is%20contributing%20to,\(CCD%20COE\)%20in%20Tallinn](https://shape.nato.int/estonia#:~:text=Currently%20Estonia%20is%20contributing%20to,(CCD%20COE)%20in%20Tallinn). Accessed: 04.25.2021

Nevertheless, the membership of the Baltic States in the alliance has certain complexities. Coffey and Kochis find five challenges for sharing the security umbrella with the Baltic States.<sup>198</sup> First, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are geographically isolated from the Alliance. The only land border which connects the Baltics with other NATO members is a tiny 65-mile long border with Poland. Second, the Baltic states are geographically small. Coffey and Kochis compare the combined size of the Baltic's territory with the population of Missouri. The Baltic region is the only region inside NATO which depends on its defense on rapid reaction forces based elsewhere. It requires the Baltic states to have a strong, robust ground defense, which will in the case of an invasion, give time to allies to react, otherwise NATO would have to liberate occupied states. Third, the Baltic States critically depend on their non-NATO neighbors in logistical terms. History has shown that the sea, air, and land space of Finland and Sweden are essential for the operations in the region. This means, that for NATO, it would be extremely difficult to react to a crisis in the region without the involvement of Sweden and Finland, that currently seeks membership in NATO. Fourth, Americans as the leading NATO nation are largely unaware of the importance of the transatlantic partnership. A recent Pew poll showed that only half of Americans think that the United States should deliver a military response if Russia attacks a NATO ally. That makes it very hard for any American President to find popular support for this kind of operation. Finally, all three Baltic States share a border with Russia. Estonia is the only NATO member which does not have an official border agreement with Russia. It is a significant obstacle for defense of these territories, as it gives a potential adversary space for provocations and disruptive operations. In 2014, Russian agents kidnapped an Estonian Internal Security Service officer from Estonian territory bordering Russia. According to the Kremlin statement, he was caught in Russian territory,

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<sup>198</sup> Coffey, Luke, and Daniel Kochis. *The Baltic states: The United States must be prepared to fulfill its NATO treaty obligations*. Vol. 29. Washington, DC: Heritage Foundation, 2015.

but according to Estonian sources, Russian agents crossed the border using communication-jamming equipment, smoke bombs, and stun grenades.<sup>199</sup>

However, the most specific challenge to the Baltic States as NATO members is the large proportion of the Russian-speaking population. This issue is particularly relevant to Estonia and Latvia where about a third of the population speaks Russian as their mother tongue. In Lithuania, the number is twice as small, but still considerable. Even though, Moscow's influence on compatriots is gradually declining since the end of the Cold War, this factor was seriously taken into consideration in the accession period.<sup>200</sup>

The manipulation of Russian ethnic minorities, Russian citizens, or quasi-citizens (i.e. in Transnistria or Abkhazia) abroad as legitimization for coercive actions became a roadmap for Russia's strategy in the "near abroad." In addition to this, the Kremlin actively uses levers such as visa regimes, media campaigns, and subversion to achieve its own strategic goals without active military involvement.<sup>201</sup> These tools were also practiced in the Baltic States.

To destabilize pro-Western oriented neighbors, Russia uses soft power, which is impossible to address with military means. It creates a totally new challenge for NATO. Propaganda and diplomacy enhance Moscow's influence on Russian-speakers living abroad for political purposes, without provoking a direct armed confrontation with the West. However, it builds a basis also for the justification of aggression in cases like Transnistria, Georgia, and Ukraine.

Moscow's compatriot policy aims to mobilize ethnic feelings and stimulate affinity of Russian-speakers. In addition to this, Russian media sources tend to depict the national policies of

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<sup>199</sup> Coffey, Luke, and Daniel Kochis. *The Baltic states: The United States must be prepared to fulfill its NATO treaty obligations*. Vol. 29. Washington, DC: Heritage Foundation, 2015.

<sup>200</sup> Larrabee, F. Stephen. *The Baltic states and NATO membership*. Vol. 1. Rand, 2003.

<sup>201</sup> Hedenskog, Jakob, and Robert L. Larsson. *Russian Leverage on the CIS and the Baltic States*. Stockholm: Defence Analysis, Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI), 2007.

the Baltic states critically, speaking about the “neo-Nazi threat” and the limitation of human rights, for example, within national language and citizenship policies.<sup>202</sup> All these means may be qualified as parts of Russia’s hybrid warfare against the West, which as we discussed earlier, creates a formidable threat to Russia’s security in the vision of the Kremlin.

The public support of Russian-speakers to the national governments and NATO in the Baltic States becomes a strategic asset.<sup>203</sup> However, the increase of public sympathy and support for Russian geopolitics can hardly create a pretext for Russian military intervention in the Baltic States, as it was in Georgia and Ukraine. The Kremlin is likely to prefer hybrid warfare over a direct conventional confrontation with NATO. This strategy allows Russia to wield influence without leaving any obvious fingerprints, giving Moscow some semblance of plausible deniability. It helps to shape and soften the battlefield should the Kremlin decide to engage in more overt conventional warfare. The discontent among Russians living in the Baltic States with a nationalizing policy can create a *casus belli* for the Kremlin to justify low-end responses that would not necessarily trigger NATO’s Article 5 security guarantee. Using non-kinetic means, Russia aims to undermine the confidence of the allies in NATO’s security guarantee.<sup>204</sup>

The main target of the above-mentioned strategy is the local population, especially one with potential sympathy towards Russia. The results of the Public Opinion Surveys consistently show the differences in attitudes towards Estonian security and defense policy, state institutions, Estonian membership in NATO and the EU and threat perception between Estonians and Russian-speakers. As discussed earlier, there is extensive evidence that Russia is projecting the idea of

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<sup>202</sup> Grigas, Agnia. *Legacies, coercion and soft power: Russian influence in the Baltic States*. Vol. 1. London: Chatham House, 2012.

<sup>203</sup> Sokolsky, Richard D. *The new NATO-Russia military balance: implications for European Security*. Vol. 13. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2017.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.



“Western expansionism and threat” internationally, trying to influence NATO’s support among the populations of the member-states. In Estonia, this rhetoric finds a certain level of support among local Russian-speakers. The Public Opinion and National Defence shows that the support of the membership in NATO among Russian-speakers is significantly lower than among ethnic Estonians. The international events with Russia’s involvement can have significant impact on the attitudes of Russian-speakers. After the events in Ukraine in 2014, the proportion of Russian-speakers supporting Estonian membership in NATO has dropped from 52 percent to 31 percent. This can be partly explained by the differences in threat perception among Estonians and Russian-speakers, which is another large topic for further discussion.

#### ESTONIAN SECURITY AND DEFENSE POLICY: CONCLUSION

Estonian security and defense policy stands on three pillars: popular willingness to defend the country, national defense capability, and international alignment. While the general willingness to fight is relatively high in Estonia, we can still observe certain differences between ethnic Estonians and Russian-speakers. Ethnic Estonians tend to have a slightly higher willingness to defend the country than Russian-speakers. However, existing studies show that the people who are not going to leave the country in case of an armed conflict have a higher willingness to defend it. Therefore, we can assume that the 10) willingness to stay in the country in case of a military conflict can be associated with a higher level of support of Estonian security and defense policy among Russian-speakers.

Estonian national defense capability consists of two main parts: the Defense Forces and the Defense League. Studies show that Russian-speakers have quite supportive attitudes towards conscription, which is the main source of the Estonian active military and reserves. There is even a slight overrepresentation of Russian-speakers in the professional defense forces. However, the

level of trust towards the Defense League is lower among Russian-speakers than among the ethnic Estonians. Russian-speakers are also significantly underrepresented in the organization. According to the estimation of the head of the Narva Defense League district, in the city with about a 94% Russian-speaking population, only 30-40% of the district's Defense League members are Russophones.<sup>205</sup> As was discussed earlier, studies show that the general level of trust of the Defense Forces and the Defense League is higher among the people with 1) personal connections to the institutions. Therefore, we can assume that the Russian-speakers who either served, and/or have friends and relatives involved in the Defense Forces and the Defense League should have better attitudes towards Estonian security and defense policy.

Finally, the third pillar of Estonian security and defense policy is international alignment. The international support, however, depends on the position that Estonia holds in the international arena, as well as its reputation. The decisive transition to a market economy and liberal-democratic political system was stipulated by the desire to join the Western international community. Unlike many other post-Soviet Republics, in Estonia, this transition was swift and linked to a drastic limitation of the economic and political dependence on Russia. Sharing common values and visions with NATO and the EU partners, Estonia started actively contributing to the promotion of a liberal-democratic world order based on international law by participation in international humanitarian and peace-keeping missions. The Public Opinion survey shows that Russian-speakers did not support Estonian membership in NATO as much as ethnic Estonians. Their current support of membership in the alliance and participation in NATO missions abroad is also lower. One of the potential factors that can affect this attitude is the concern about the impact that

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<sup>205</sup> Tubalkain, Marge. Narvalastele on Kaitseliit ka võimalus eesti keele harjutamiseks. Delfi. 06.24.2015.(2015). URL: <https://www.postimees.ee/3233111/narvalastele-on-kaitseliit-ka-voimalus-eesti-keele-harjutamiseks>. Accessed 05.05.2022.

the alignment has on Estonian-Russian relations. As it was discussed earlier, ethnic Estonians and Russian-speakers have significantly different threat perceptions. While ethnic Estonians see Russia as the main international threat, Russian-speakers often find the source of provocation in the West. Therefore, the 12) threat perception can be also considered an important factor in the formation of attitudes towards national security and defense policy.

All things considered, this section reviews the Estonian security and defense policy and outlines three factors that potentially may have a significant impact on the attitudes of Russian-speakers. The factors are 13) willingness to stay in the country even in the case of a military conflict, 14) personal connections to the defense institutions, and 15) threat perception. Based on these factors, I suggest the following hypotheses:

13) Willingness to stay in the country even in the case of a military conflict

*Hypothesis: The approval level of Estonian defense and security policy is higher among Russian-speakers who are going to stay in Estonia in the case of military conflict.*

14) Personal connections to defense institutions

*Hypothesis: The approval level of Estonian defense and security policy is higher among Russian-speakers who served or have relatives/friends who served either in the Defense Forces or the Defense League.*

15) The threat perception

*Hypothesis: The more threatening a Russian-speaker finds Russian foreign policy, the more one approves of Estonian defense and security policy.*

The next chapter reviews the data and the method used in an effort to test the hypotheses outlined in this and previous chapters.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **DATA AND METHOD**

#### **DATA**

Since 2001, the Estonian MOD has conducted a semiannual public opinion survey asking questions about ethnocultural affinity, socio-economic status, and attitudes toward the key aspects of the Estonian security and defense policy. The survey provides data about education, language, media preferences, social networks, occupation, and family on one hand, and the attitudes towards NATO presence in Estonia, Estonian membership in the EU, mandatory conscription, geopolitical threats, Estonian Defense Forces, and governmental institutions on the other hand. Every answer is coded and given a numeric value for further analysis.

The Public Opinion and National Defense survey offers consistent and reliable data about the popular attitudes towards national security and defense policy. It fits very well for the purposes of the current research as it distinguished respondents by their nationality and language, which offers an opportunity to analyze the attitudes of ethnic minorities independently and in comparison with ethnic Estonians. Even though the Estonian MOD publishes a review of the latest survey twice a year, deep statistical analysis focusing on the attitudes of ethnic minorities has never been conducted yet. During times of growing geopolitical tensions between Russia and the West and increasing pressure on Russian-speaking ethnic minorities in the “near abroad,” the topic and the aim of the current research becomes especially relevant.

#### **METHOD OF ANALYSIS**

Looking on the triadic nexus cases from late modern history, I identify the potential factors impacting the affinity and loyalty of ethnic minorities in times of geopolitical tensions between the ethnocultural homeland and a hosting nation. Using OLS and ordered logit models, I explore

whether all these factors together or some of them could have a statistically significant relationship with the attitudes of Russophones in Estonia towards national security and defense policy.

Based on the historical analysis and theoretical framework, I build a model where the attitudes toward national security and defense policy are the dependent variable (DV), and the socio-economic, geopolitical, and ethnocultural factors are the independent variables (IV). I divide the coded answers from the public opinion survey into the clusters corresponding to the factors identified in historical and theoretical analysis. The main division is between the background information (respondents' age, ethnicity, language, media preferences, economic situation, education, occupation etc.) and attitudinal information (respondents' attitudes towards NATO, national defense, the Defense Forces, and the Defense League). I divide background information into the smaller clusters such as ethnocultural affinity, integration, and economic status. Each cluster or the factor is operationalized with the different scales described in the following section.

As the result of the research, using OLS, I determine if each of the IVs have a statistically significant relationship with the DV, or only some of them. I compare the magnitudes of the effects of IVs on DV, figuring out which of the factors has the biggest effect. The last question may help to determine the focus for national integration policy, which should bring the best possible outcome. I transform the variables as needed from continuous to dichotomous. It helps to answer a variety of questions, like how large is the probability that people with a poor economic situation would have negative attitudes towards national defense and the security policy.

Following is the list of factors and hypotheses:

Table 1. The List of Factors and Hypotheses

Factor	Hypothesis
1) Socio-economic condition of ethnic minorities (personal wealth)	<i>The better the personal socio-economic condition of a Russian-speakers is, the more one approves of Estonian defense and security policy.</i>
2) Level of integration (language proficiency)	<i>The greater level of integration a Russian-speaker is within Estonian society, the more one approves of Estonian defense and security policy.</i>
3) National pride	<i>The greater level of national pride a Russian-speaker has, the more one approves of Estonian defense and security policy.</i>
4) Habitational density and territorial proximity of ethnic minorities to ethnocultural homeland	<i>The approval level of Estonian defense and security policy by the Russian-speakers is lower within the regions bordering Russia that are densely populated by them.</i>
5) Political unity and mobilization of ethnic minorities	<i>The approval level of Estonian defense and security policy is lower among Russian-speakers supporting parties with a high ethnic (Russian) political profile.</i>
6) National economy	<i>The better national economy is, the more a Russian-speaker approves Estonian defense and security policy.</i>
7) Ethno-cultural identity	<i>The approval level of Estonian defense and security policy is higher among Russian-speakers with Estonian national self-identity.</i>

Table 1 Continued

Factor	Hypothesis
8) Political status and rights of ethnic minorities (citizenship)	<i>The approval level of Estonian defense and security policy is higher among Russian-speakers with full political rights (citizenship).</i>
9) Nationalizing language policy	<i>New language restrictions decrease the approval level of Estonian defense and security policy among Russian-speakers.</i>
10) The information campaigns of the ethnocultural homeland	<i>The approval level of Estonian defense and security policy is lower among Russian-speakers regularly following Russian media.</i>
11) Abrupt change of political power	<i>Representation of the interest of Russian-speakers regarding the government increases the approval level of Estonian defense and security policy among them.</i>
12) Geopolitical stances of ethnic minorities	<i>The approval level of Estonian defense and security policy is higher among Russian-speakers who support greater cooperation with Russia.</i>
13) Willingness to stay in the country in case of a military conflict	<i>The approval level of Estonian defense and security policy is higher among Russian-speakers who are going to stay in Estonia in the case of military conflict.</i>
14) Personal connections to the defense institutions	<i>The approval level of Estonian defense and security policy is higher among Russian-speakers who served or have relatives/friends who served either in the Defense Forces or the Defense League.</i>

Table 1 Continued

Factor	Hypothesis
15) The threat perception	<i>The more threatening a Russian-speaker finds Russian foreign policy, the more one approves of Estonian defense and security policy.</i>

The statistical analysis is structured as following. First, I present the descriptive statistics of aggregated attitudes towards the key aspect of Estonian security and defense policy. Second, I create a series of regression models including all the factors as independent variables and the attitudes towards national defense, the Defense Forces, the Defense League, and NATO as dependent variables. Finally, I discuss how each of the factors identified in the first chapter is related to these attitudes.

#### Operationalization

##### DV – Attitudes towards national policy of defense and security

The DV of the current research is operationalized as the popular attitudes towards the core pillars of national security and defense policy listed in the NSC. The research had four dependent variables, the attitudes towards NATO, trust of the national Defense Forces and Defense League, and the willingness to defend the country in case of a foreign military aggression. All of them are operationalized based on the MOD survey scale from 1 to 4, where 1 is the most positive answer and 4 is the most negative.

##### IV – Socio-economic condition of ethnic minorities (personal wealth)

The MOD survey asks the respondents about their average monthly family income per capita. The income brackets vary across the surveys. Therefore, the variable is operationalized as



the income percentile to which the respondent belongs among others participating in the same survey period.

#### IV - Level of integration (language proficiency)

There is a variety of ways for interpretation of the integration. However, in the case of Estonia, language remains to be the main factor segregating the community on two parts: ethnic Estonians and Russian-speakers. Therefore, the level of integration in the framework of current research is measured by the level of Estonian language proficiency that is measured in the MOD Survey on the scale from 1 to 4, where 1 is the highest proficiency and 4 is the lowest.

#### IV - National pride

The MOD Survey measures national pride by the question how frequently one feels proud about living in Estonia. It is measured on the scale from 1 to 4, where 1 is the highest frequency and 4 is the lowest.

#### IV - Habitational density and territorial proximity of ethnic minorities to the ethnocultural homeland

Ida-Virumaa is the region in Eastern Estonia bordering Russia. The region has the highest density of a Russian-speaking population and has two of the biggest cities, mainly populated by Russian-speakers, Kohtla-Järve and Narva. The IV is operationalized as binary variable of whether the respondent lives in Ida-Virumaa (value 1) or not (value 0).

#### IV - Political unity and mobilization of ethnic minorities

The MOD Survey asks which party a respondent would support if the parliamentary elections took place tomorrow. The IV is operationalized as a binary variable of whether the respondent supports parties with high Russian profiles such as the Russian Party in Estonia, the Center Party or Estonian United Left Party (value 1) or not (value 0).

#### IV – National economy

The variable is operationalized by the quarterly change of Estonian GDP.

#### IV - Ethno-cultural identity

A Russian-speaking person may self-identified in a variety of ways. Among the three options given by the MOD Survey, (Estonian, Russian, Other) most of the respondents identify as either Estonians or Russians. The variable is operationalized by whether a person self-identifies as Estonian (value 1) or not (value 0).

#### IV - Political status and rights of ethnic minorities

One of the biggest unsolved questions in Estonian integration policy is the citizenship issue. Many Russian-speakers have either a Russian or indefinite citizenship. With a population of 1,328,439, there are almost 200,000 residents without Estonian citizenship, most of whom have either a Russian or indefinite citizenship. These people have no right to vote in parliamentary elections. The variable is operationalized by the fact of presence of Estonian citizenship; if true it has value 1, if not, 0.

#### IV - Nationalizing language policy

Since regaining independence in 1991, Estonia has taken a decisive direction on Estonization of society, public services, and education. Among these steps were education and public services reforms, which were taken ambiguously by the Russian-speaking community. The variable is based on the timeline of nationalizing language policy reform in education, so it looks at how attitudes have changed with the introduction of language reform in education in 2011.

#### IV - The information campaigns of the ethnocultural homeland

This variable measures the effect of Russia's media on the attitudes of Russian-speakers towards Estonian security and defense policy. The MOD Survey asks respondents how often they

watch Russia's TV channels or check Russia's newspapers and internet media portals. The variable is measured on the scale from 1 to 4, where 1 is the highest frequency and 4 is the lowest.

#### IV - Abrupt change of political power

This variable measures the reaction on a change in governmental orientation. It checks how the attitudes of Russian-speakers change when the Center Party (the party that traditionally has the biggest support of Russian-speakers) is present in the government (value 1) and not (value 2).

#### IV - Geopolitical stances of ethnic minorities

The MOD Survey asks respondents what they think is the most important guarantee for Estonian security. Among the options is good relations and cooperation with Russia. The binary variable shows if a person finds good relations and cooperation with Russia important for Estonian security (value 1) or not (value 0).

#### IV - Willingness to stay in the country in case of a military conflict

The MOD Survey asks the respondents if they are ready to stay in the county in case of any foreign military aggression or if they prefer to escape abroad. Taking into consideration the reliance of Estonia on the total defense doctrine, the question has strategic importance and shows the relation to national security and defense policy. The variable is operationalized on the scale from 1 to 4, where 1 is the highest probably to escape and 4 is the highest probability to stay.

#### IV – Personal connections to the defense institutions

Prior studies show that in general, people in Estonia trust the security and defense institutions more when they have personal connections to them (for instance they have served in the Defense Forces, the Defense League, or have relatives and friends who have served). This variable is binary and measures if a person has any personal connections to the defense institutions (value 1) or not (value 2).

#### IV - Threat perception

The MOD Survey asks respondents their opinion on what creates a security threat for Estonia. Among the options is the Russian ambition to restore the status of regional power in the post-Soviet space. The variable is operationalized on a scale from 1 to 3, where 1 is the highest threat perception and 3 is the lowest.

## CHAPTER VII

### EMPIRICAL RESULTS

In this chapter, I analyze how the factors identified in the historical and theoretical analysis can explain the formation of the attitudes of Russian-speakers in Estonia towards national security and defense policy. In an effort to do so, I merged the data of 41 Estonian MOD surveys conducted between 2001 to 2020 into one comprehensive dataset. I enhanced the dataset by including additional variables, such as national, regional, and international economic and security dynamics. Using this data, first, I present the descriptive and comparative statistics of the attitudes of Russian-speaking and Estonian respondents towards national security and defense policy. Then I conduct the regression analysis to identify the relation between each of the factors and aggregated attitudes towards the key aspect of Estonian security and defense policy. I create a series of linear regressions and ordered logit models, including all identified factors, to see if and which statistical effect they have on the attitudes of ethnic minorities.

#### ATTITUDES TOWARDS NATIONAL SECURITY AND DEFENSE POLICY OF ESTONIANS AND RUSSIAN-SPEAKERS

From 2001 to 2020, the Estonian MOD survey collected more than 43,831 observations. 13,858 (32 percent) of the surveys and interviews were conducted in Russian and 29,973 (68 percent) in Estonian. This proportion quite closely represents the distribution of the languages people speak as a mother tongue in Estonia. *Table 2* shows the distribution of the answers to the questions about the attitudes towards four key aspects of Estonian security and defense policy between Estonian and Russian-speaking respondents.

Table 2. Attitudes of Ethnic Estonians and Russian-Speakers

Answers to the questions			Most positive	Rather positive	Rather negative	Most negative	Total
			1	2	3	4	
Should we resist foreign military aggression	EST	Count	12624	10181	3810	1426	28041
		% within	45.00%	36.30%	13.60%	5.10%	100.00%
	RUS	Count	4728	4783	1546	967	12024
		% within	39.30%	39.80%	12.90%	8.00%	100.00%
Total		Count	17352	14964	5356	2393	40065
		% within	43.30%	37.30%	13.40%	6.00%	100.00%
Do you trust the DL	EST	Count	7714	15093	2954	956	26717
		% within	28.90%	56.50%	11.10%	3.60%	100.00%
	RUS	Count	1094	4152	2567	1924	9737
		% within	11.20%	42.60%	26.40%	19.80%	100.00%
Total		Count	8808	19245	5521	2880	36454
		% within	24.20%	52.80%	15.10%	7.90%	100.00%
Do you trust the DF	EST	Count	10132	15629	1892	655	28308
		% within	35.80%	55.20%	6.70%	2.30%	100.00%
	RUS	Count	1676	5915	2592	1628	11811
		% within	14.20%	50.10%	21.90%	13.80%	100.00%
Total		Count	11808	21544	4484	2283	40119
		% within	29.40%	53.70%	11.20%	5.70%	100.00%
Should Estonia be in NATO	EST	Count	13927	11672	1701	794	28094
		% within	49.60%	41.50%	6.10%	2.80%	100.00%
	RUS	Count	1299	3826	3435	2835	11395
		% within	11.40%	33.60%	30.10%	24.90%	100.00%
Total		Count	15226	15498	5136	3629	39489
		% within	38.60%	39.20%	13.00%	9.20%	100.00%
Mean attitude	EST	Count	7040	19441	3123	248	29852
		% within	23.60%	65.10%	10.50%	0.80%	100.00%
	RUS	Count	972	6603	4978	1091	13644
		% within	7.10%	48.40%	36.50%	8.00%	100.00%
Total		Count	8012	26044	8101	1339	43496
		% within	18.40%	59.90%	18.60%	3.10%	100.00%

Should we defend in the case of any military aggression against Estonia?

The first question represents the attitudes of the respondents towards the necessity to defend the nation in case of any foreign military aggression. Russian-speakers show slightly less supportive attitudes towards this question with their mean answer being 1.90 (see *Table 3*) compared to Estonian-speaking respondents whose average answer is 1.79. It shows that generally, Russian-speakers, as well as Estonians find national defense important.

*Table 3. The Attitudes Towards Necessity to Resist*

Answers to the question		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Should we resist foreign military aggression	EST	28041	1.79	.863	.005
	RUS	12024	1.90	.913	.008

Nevertheless, we can still see the statistically significant difference in these attitudes especially when we look at the distribution of the options that respondents choose. While the majority of Estonian-speaking respondents are completely confident in the necessity of armed resistance in the case of any military aggression, the most popular answer among Russian-speakers is “maybe.” The slope of the line that demonstrates the answers of Estonian-speaking respondents is sharply negative between the answer 1 and 2. It is the opposite for Russian-speakers where the correspondent slope is slightly positive. In addition to this, we can see that among Russian-speakers, there are more respondents who find that Estonia should not militarily defend in case of aggression. In other words, these people prefer the “Konstantin Päts” scenario over “Mannerheim:” - surrender over resistance with potential losses. The difference in the attitudes can be associated with the difference in threat perception.

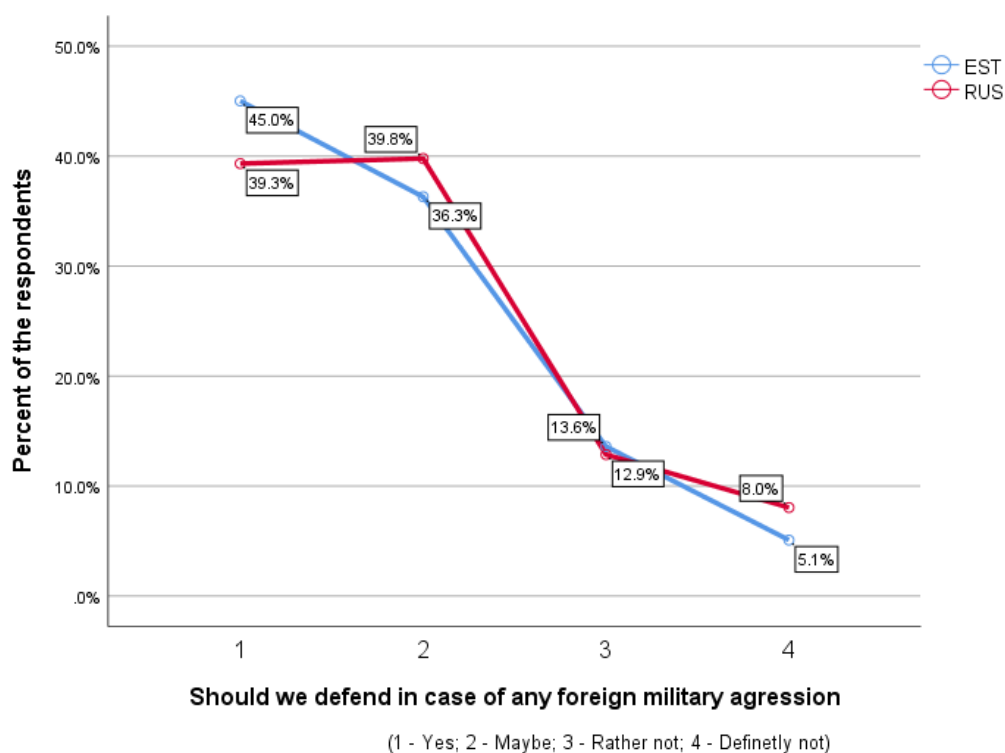


Figure 2. Distribution of the Attitudes Towards the Necessity to Resist

Since 2014, MOD regularly included the question in the survey regarding threat perception. The respondents were asked to what extent the listed factors threaten peace and stability in the world. Among potential sources of threat, they listed Russia's attempt to restore its own power of influence in neighboring countries and American financial and military domination in the world.

Table 4. Are the Russian Attempts to Restore Regional Power Threatening?

Answers to the question			Definitely	To some extent	Definitely not	Hard to tell	Total
Russian attempts to restore own power of influence	EST	Count	4448	3211	742	423	8824
		% within	50.4%	36.4%	8.4%	4.8%	100.0%
	RUS	Count	354	998	3213	547	5112
		% within	6.9%	19.5%	62.9%	10.7%	100.0%
Total		Count	4802	4209	3955	970	13936
		% within	34.5%	30.2%	28.4%	7.0%	100.0%



Almost all Estonian-speaking respondents answered absolutely or to some extent when asked if the Russian attempt to restore power in neighboring countries threatened peace and stability in the world (see *Table 4*). However, the majority of Russian-speaking respondents were convinced that this was not the case. Nevertheless, we must take into consideration that the current research is based on the data collected before Russia's full-scale aggression in Ukraine, which affected popular attitudes.

*Table 5. Is the U.S. Dominance Threatening?*

Answers to the question			Definitely	To some extent	Definitely not	Hard to tell	Total
American financial and military domination in the world	EST	Count	2200	3950	1755	919	8824
		% within	24.9%	44.8%	19.9%	10.4%	100.0%
	RUS	Count	1889	1969	695	559	5112
		% within	37.0%	38.5%	13.6%	10.9%	100.0%
Total		Count	4089	5919	2450	1478	13936
		% within	29.3%	42.5%	17.6%	10.6%	100.0%

On the other hand, the attitudes towards US financial and military domination were quite different. Here most Russian-speaking respondents were absolutely or relatively confident in the threatening nature of the current financial and military dominance of the United States. Taking into consideration that the current Estonian Security Concept sees Russia as a threat and the Western allies led by the United States as a stabilizing factor, the contradiction with the threat perception of the Russian-speakers becomes obvious. I include the threat perception as a factor in the regression analysis presented below to show how it affects the attitudes towards the necessity to defend the nation in case of a military conflict and the attitudes towards national security and defense policy in general.

### Trust to the Defense League and the Defense Forces

While the attitudes towards the necessity to defend the nation were slightly different between Estonian and Russian-speaking respondents, the attitudes towards key national defense institutions are more different. In general, ethnic Estonians show greater trust in the Defense League and the Defense forces. The standard deviation of their answers is also smaller, showing more consistency in their answers (see *Table 6*).

*Table 6. The Attitudes Towards the Defense League and the Defense Forces*

Answers to the question		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Do you trust the DL?	EST	26717	1.89	.729	.004
	RUS	9737	2.55	.932	.009
Do you trust the DF?	EST	28308	1.76	.676	.004
	RUS	11811	2.35	.888	.008

Among positive answers, a higher percentage show Estonian-speaking respondents and among negative answers, Russian-speaking respondents. While for both groups the most popular answer was somewhat trust in both institutions, Russian-speakers frequently demonstrate absolute distrust, especially to the Defense League. Almost 20 percent of the Russian-speaking respondents do not trust the Defense League at all. For comparison, less than four percent of Estonian-speaking respondents distrust the Defense League. (see *Figure 3*).

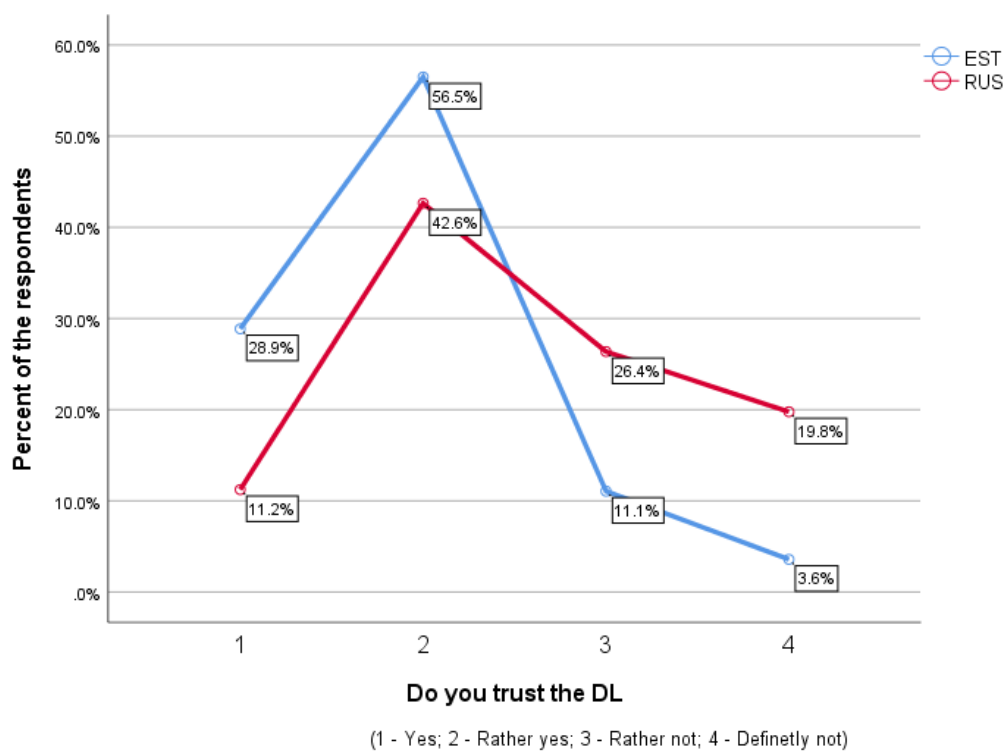


Figure 3. Distribution of the Attitudes Towards the Defense League

Russian-speakers trust the Defense Forces more than the Defense League (see *Figure 4*). They may find this institution more official and understandable than the Defense League, membership in which is much more popular among ethnic Estonians than among Russian-speakers.

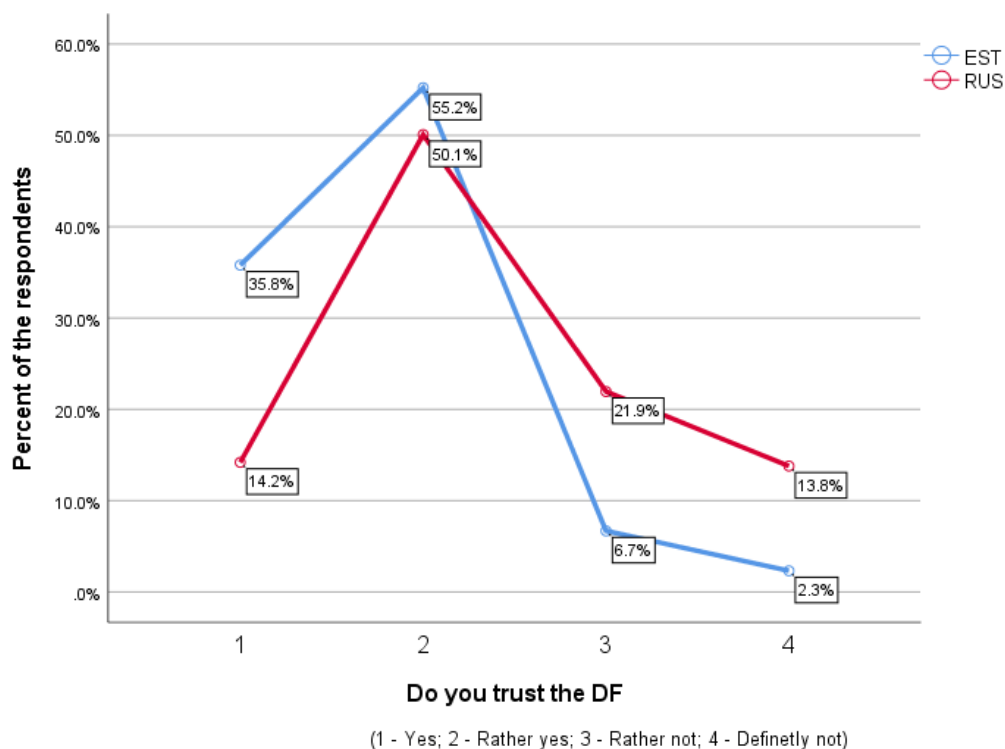


Figure 4. Distribution of the Attitudes Towards the Defense Forces

Almost a quarter of the Estonian-speaking respondents claimed a certain level of relation to the Defense League. This means that they have either personally served in the Defense League or have relatives and friends who served. Among Russian-speaking respondents, only six percent have some form of personal relation to the Defense League (see *Table 7*).

*Table 7. Personal Relation to the DL*

Combined answers to the questions			No	Yes	Total
Are you personally or are any of your friends or relatives current or former members of the DL	E	Count	22870	7103	29973
	S	% within	76.3%	23.7%	100.0%
	T				
	R	Count	13071	787	13858
	U	% within	94.3%	5.7%	100.0%
	S				
Total		Count	35941	7890	43831
		% within	82.0%	18.0%	100.0%

The personal relation to the Defense League may be an important predictor of trust in the institution. The respondents who served in the Defense League or who have relatives or friends in the organization show more trust to it than those who have no personal connection (see *Table 8*). Taking into consideration the fact that the membership in the Defense League is more popular among ethnic Estonians than among Russian-speakers, it partly explains the lower level of trust among the last group.

Table 8. Trust to DL and Personal Relation

Language	Relation to the DL		Trust to the DL (1-max, 4-min)				Total
			1	2	3	4	
EST	Not related	Count	5306	11528	2384	817	20035
		% within	26.5%	57.5%	11.9%	4.1%	100.0%
	Related	Count	2408	3565	570	139	6682
		% within	36.0%	53.4%	8.5%	2.1%	100.0%
	Total	Count	7714	15093	2954	956	26717
		% within	28.9%	56.5%	11.1%	3.6%	100.0%
RUS	Not related	Count	959	3860	2440	1841	9100
		% within	10.5%	42.4%	26.8%	20.2%	100.0%
	Related	Count	135	292	127	83	637
		% within	21.2%	45.8%	19.9%	13.0%	100.0%
	Total	Count	1094	4152	2567	1924	9737
		% within	11.2%	42.6%	26.4%	19.8%	100.0%

Unlike the case with the Defense League, more than one third of Russian-speaking respondents have personal connections to the Defense Forces (see *Table 9*). That means that either they have served or have relatives and friends who have served. One of the reasons, obviously, is the compulsory conscription. If there are no legitimate obstacles, every male must serve in the defense forces for at least eight months, and after that, participate in the reserve exercises. However, as was mentioned earlier, Russian-speakers have a generally high willingness to join military service. Among the reasons is the general cultural background of the Russian-speaking community, which promotes the idea that every man must complete military service. On top of that, the professional military service may be seen as a great opportunity for stable income, a governmental job, and public prestige, especially for Russian-speakers.

Table 9. Personal Relation to the DF

Combined answers to the questions			No	Yes	Total
Are you personally or any of your friends or relatives are current of former members of the DF	E	Count	12924	17049	29973
	S	% within	43.1%	56.9%	100.0%
	T				
	R	Count	8578	5280	13858
	U	% within	61.9%	38.1%	100.0%
	S				
Total		Count	21502	22329	43831
		% within	49.1%	50.9%	100.0%

When it comes to trust and personal relation to the Defense Forces, the difference is not as obvious as in case of the Defense League. The personal relation to the defense institutions will be included as a factor in the following regression analysis.

Table 10. Trust to DF and Personal Relation

Language	Relation to the DL		Trust to the DF				Total
			1	2	3	4	
EST	Not related	Count	3969	6786	885	320	11960
		% within	33.2%	56.7%	7.4%	2.7%	100.0%
	Related	Count	6163	8843	1007	335	16348
		% within	37.7%	54.1%	6.2%	2.0%	100.0%
	Total	Count	10132	15629	1892	655	28308
		% within	35.8%	55.2%	6.7%	2.3%	100.0%
RUS	Not related	Count	948	3574	1593	988	7103
		% within	13.3%	50.3%	22.4%	13.9%	100.0%
	Related	Count	728	2341	999	640	4708
		% within	15.5%	49.7%	21.2%	13.6%	100.0%
	Total	Count	1676	5915	2592	1628	11811
		% within	14.2%	50.1%	21.9%	13.8%	100.0%

### Attitudes Towards NATO

The greatest difference in the attitudes between Estonian and Russian-speaking respondents is towards Estonian membership in NATO. Estonia's National Security Concept

amplifies the importance of the Alliance for Estonian defense and security. Nevertheless, among Russian-speakers, there are still many people who do not share this point of view (see *Table 11*).

*Table 11. The Attitudes Towards NATO*

Answers to the question		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Should Estonia be in NATO	EST	28094	1.62	.725	.004
	RUS	11395	2.69	.970	.009

The majority of Russian-speaking respondents have either slightly positive or slightly negative attitudes towards Estonian membership in NATO. Estonian-speaking respondents, on the other hand, almost exclusively support the alignment. Only 11 percent of the Russian-speaking respondents are confident in the necessity of Estonian membership in NATO, while 25 percent of the Russian speaking respondents have an opposite opinion. This is almost ten times higher than the frequency of the correspondent answer among ethnic Estonians (see *Figure 5*).



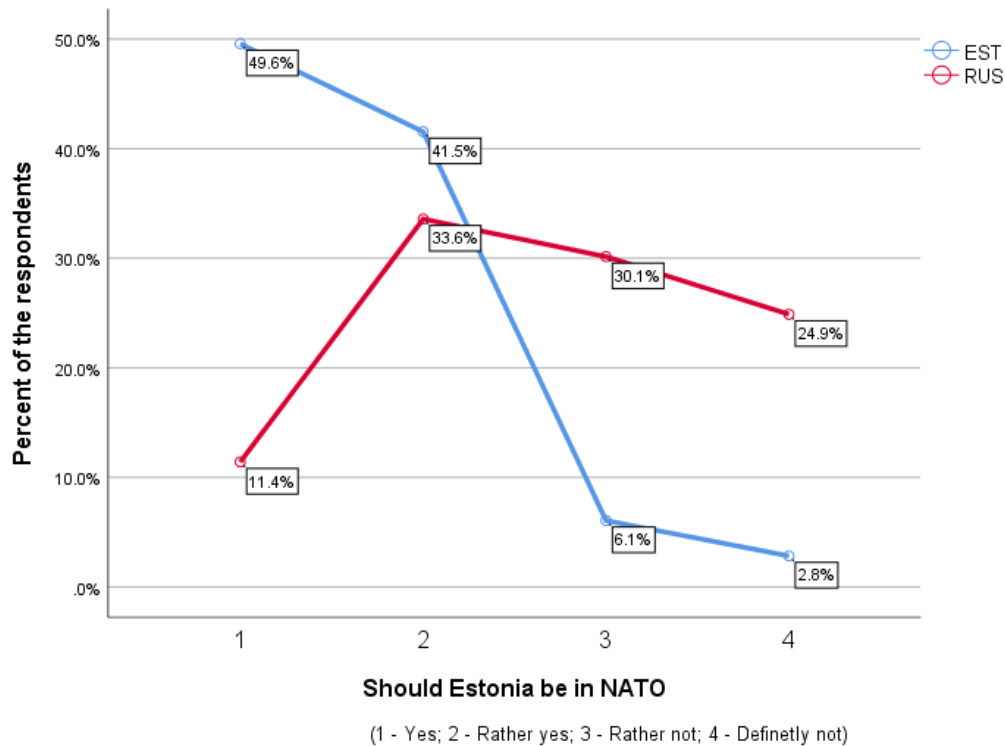


Figure 5. Distribution of the Attitudes Towards NATO

#### Average Attitudes Towards National Defense And Security

The descriptive statistics in this section provide an overview of the attitudes of Estonian and Russian-speaking respondents towards the four key elements of the National Security Concept. Among them are the trust in their own defensive capabilities (the Defense Forces and the Defense League), the attitude towards Estonian membership in NATO, and the attitudes towards the necessity to defend the country in case of any military aggression. While the aggregated attitudes of Estonian-speaking respondents can be described as mostly positive, the Russophones are more neutral in their positions (see *Table 12.*)

Table 12. Average Attitudes Towards National Defense and Security

Combined measure		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Average attitudes towards national defense and security	EST	29852	1.8854	.60046	.00348
	RUS	13644	2.4535	.74181	.00635

For both groups, the most frequent position in relation toward national defense and security is *Rather positive*. However, while for ethnic Estonians, the second most frequent position is *Positive*, but for Russian-speakers it is *Rather negative* (see Figure 6). Among Russian-speaking respondents, there are ten times more people with totally *Negative* attitudes than among Estonians, and three times less people with totally *Positive* attitudes.

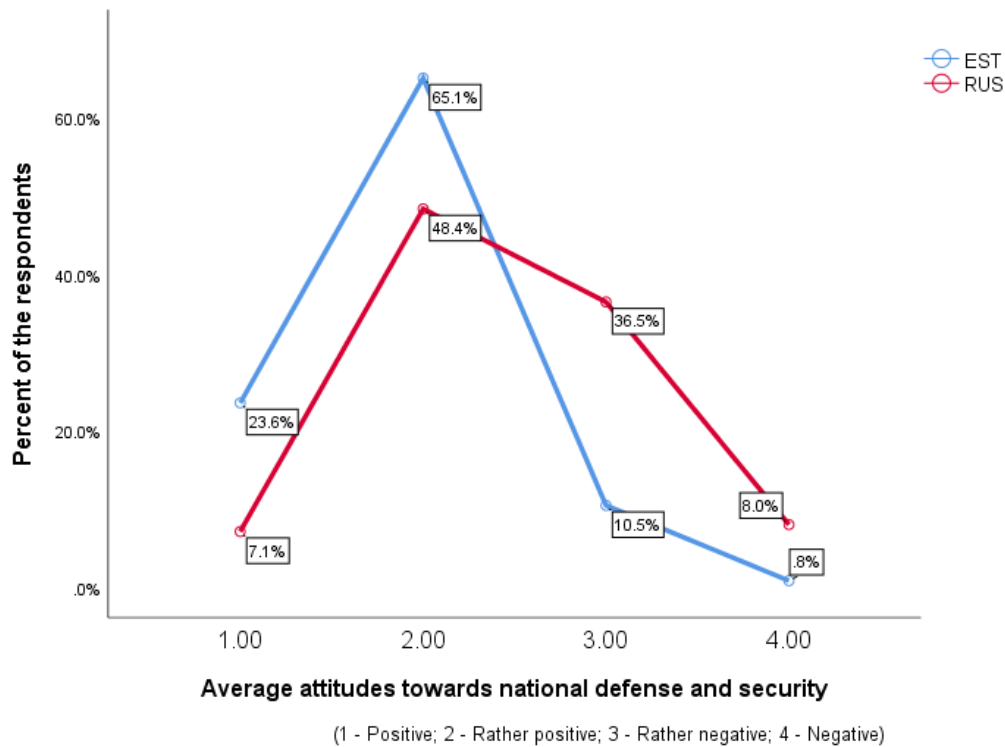


Figure 6. Distribution of the Average Attitudes Towards National Defense and Security. (The means are rounded to the nearest integer.)

In the next session, I examine how the factors identified in the previous chapters are related to the difference in attitudes towards national defense and security using linear regression.

## TESTING HYPOTHESES WITH LINEAR REGRESSION

Based on the historical analysis and theoretical framework, I outlined 15 factors and related hypotheses (see section *Method of Analysis*) which I test on the case of Estonia. I build a series of four linear regression models, each related to one of four key elements of Estonian national defense: popular willingness to defend the nation, national defense capabilities (Defense Forces and Defense League), and international alignment (NATO).

In the regression models, I use mainly the Public Opinion and National Defense Survey data in combination with other databases such as Statistics Estonia. The data, however, does not allow for conducting the regression in one step, putting all the variables together. The questions varied over the 20 years of the survey, and just few of them cover most of the survey timeline. Among the questions that appeared in every survey were the ones used for the operationalization of the dependent variables, namely the attitudes towards NATO, necessity to defend the country in case of a foreign military aggression, and attitudes towards the Defense Forces (DF) and Defense League (DL). Some questions used for the operationalization of independent variables appear only in certain survey periods. For instance, the questions about threat perception were systematically included in the MOD survey starting in November 2014. The questions about the political orientation of the respondents, though, were included in the survey until November 2011. Therefore, we cannot use these questions for the operationalization of the variables in a single model. Instead, I conduct the analysis in three steps, running the models with a different composition of the variables and different timeframes. To determine the effect of the temporal factor, I conduct three additional regressions with the same variables and different timeframes.

## Model 1

As the first step (Model 1), I analyze how the dependent variables are impacted by personal wealth of the respondents, region of residency, legal status (citizenship), Russian media, whether a respondent is willing to leave the country in case of a military conflict, personal relation to the Defense Forces and the Defense League, political situation in the country, nationalizing policy change (language reform), and national economic situation. Based on these factors, I suggest the following hypotheses in relation to each of the dependent variables (see the full list of the factors and hypotheses in *Table 1*):

H0: There is no relationship between the attitudes and the variables mentioned below.

### *Alternative hypotheses:*

1. Higher personal income is associated with better attitudes
2. Higher willingness to leave the country in case of a military conflict is associated with more negative attitudes
3. National economic decline has a negative impact on the attitudes of the respondents
4. Respondents in Ida-Virumaa have less supportive attitudes
5. Respondents with Estonian citizenship have more supportive attitudes
6. Respondents following Russian media have less supportive attitudes
7. In the periods with Central Party (KE) in the government, Russian-speakers have more supportive attitudes
8. Respondents with a personal relation to DL have more supportive attitudes
9. Respondents with a personal relation to DF have more supportive attitudes
10. Language reform as an instance of nationalizing policy has negative impact on the attitudes of Russian-speakers

Model 1 covers the timeline from October 2001 to September 2020. Together with the following models, it has four alterations, each with a different dependent variable: national defense necessity, Defense League, Defense Forces, and NATO. All four alterations of Model 1 appeared to be statistically significant with the confidence interval of 95 percent. Therefore, we can reject the null hypothesis. However, the statistical significance and the effect of the factors showed noteworthy variation between the models, which sheds light on the formation of the attitudes towards the key aspects of the national security concept. Even though the models allow a comparison of the effect and statistical significance of the predictors, they cannot explain the variation of the attitudes alone. The low R-square confirms that there are more factors affecting the attitudes which will be included in the following analysis.

All the dependent variables are operationalized on the scale from 1-4 where 1 is the most positive answer and 4 is the most negative. The attitudes towards national defense are operationalized using the MOD survey question if Estonia should apply armed resistance in case of any foreign aggression, even if the result is unknown. The attitudes towards the Defense Forces and the Defense League are operationalized using the question how much the respondents trust these institutions. The attitudes towards NATO are operationalized using the question if Estonia should join NATO (before 2004), and if the respondents support the membership in the alliance (since 2004).



Table 15. Attitudes of Russian-Speaking Respondents Towards DF, Model 1

Attitudes of Russian-speaking respondents towards DF						
Model 1		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
Dependent Variable: Trust DF	(Constant)	2.841	0.044		63.847	0.000
	Personal wealth	0.000	0.000	-0.014	-1.228	0.220
	Leave the country	-0.150	0.011	-0.160	-14.276	0.000
	Economy	-0.030	0.008	-0.050	-3.948	0.000
	Region Ida-Virumaa	0.031	0.022	0.016	1.397	0.163
	Citizenship	-0.046	0.021	-0.026	-2.228	0.026
	RUS media	0.079	0.022	0.042	3.658	0.000
	KE government	-0.037	0.023	-0.020	-1.578	0.115
	Relation to DL	-0.081	0.042	-0.022	-1.923	0.055
	Relation to DF	-0.028	0.021	-0.015	-1.334	0.182
	Language reform	0.225	0.057	0.045	3.941	0.000
N = 7818						
R Square = 0.039						

Table 16. Attitudes of Russian-Speaking Respondents Towards NATO, Model 1

Attitudes of Russian-speaking respondents towards NATO						
Model 1		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
Dependent Variable: NATO membership	(Constant)	2.901	0.050		58.459	0.000
	Personal wealth	-0.001	0.000	-0.039	-3.345	0.001
	Leave the country	-0.029	0.012	-0.028	-2.495	0.013
	Economy	-0.056	0.009	-0.084	-6.599	0.000
	Region Ida-Virumaa	0.030	0.024	0.014	1.240	0.215
	Citizenship	-0.141	0.023	-0.072	-6.182	0.000
	RUS media	0.125	0.024	0.061	5.197	0.000
	KE government	0.086	0.026	0.043	3.373	0.001
	Relation to DL	-0.204	0.046	-0.051	-4.425	0.000
	Relation to DF	-0.107	0.023	-0.053	-4.559	0.000
	Language reform	0.073	0.066	0.013	1.101	0.271
N = 7664						
R Square = 0.039						

### Personal Wealth

The first independent variable in the model measures the personal wealth of the respondents. The variable is based on the question what is an average monthly family income per capita. The respondents were asked to select their family income within brackets. The brackets

vary from year to year. Therefore, the variable is operationalized by the percentile (from 1 to 100) among the respondents of the same survey period. The higher the family income is, the higher the percentile.

The income did not show a statistically significant impact on the attitudes of Russian-speaking respondents towards the necessity of defending the country in case of military aggression and national defense institutions (See *Tables 13-15*). The only statistically significant effect income has is on the attitudes towards NATO (See *Table 16*). This can be explained by the general perception of the Western liberal-democratic international community, which generally is associated with greater incomes of the population. Therefore, we can assume that the respondents with higher income may appreciate the Estonian membership of and protection by the Western international community, more linking the growth of personal wealth with it.

#### Willingness To Leave The Country

The MOD Survey asks respondents if they are ready to stay in the country in case of any foreign military aggression or prefer to escape abroad. Taking into consideration Estonia's reliance on the total defense doctrine, the question has a strategic importance and shows the relation to national security and defense policy. The variable is operationalized on the scale from 1 to 4, where 1 is the highest probability to flee and 4 is the highest probability to stay.

The analysis shows that the willingness to leave the country in case of an armed conflict has a statistically significant relation with the attitudes in all four alternations. The biggest standardized coefficients of the effect the variable had on national defense (-0.172). The effect on the attitudes towards NATO is significantly smaller (-0.028).



## Economy

Hypothetically, a positive change in the national economy should be associated with the greater popular support to national security and defense policy, especially among ethnic minorities in the context of Triadic Nexus (see chapter *Triadic Nexus from the past*). In the context of the current research, the economic variable is operationalized by the quarterly change in Estonian gross domestic product (GDP) published by Statistics Estonia.<sup>206</sup>

As a variable, the economy appeared to be a statistically significant predictor in all models except one. Economy does not have any impact on the attitudes of Russian-speakers towards the Defense League. The increase in GDP is associated with better attitudes among Russian-speakers towards NATO and the Defense Forces. In relation to national defense, however, an increase in GDP is associated with a certain decrease of the attitudes among Russian-speakers.

## The Ida-Virumaa Region

The variable checks if a respondent lives in Ida-Virumaa. This region is in Eastern Estonia bordering Russia. The region has the highest density of Russian-speaking population and has two of the five biggest cities in Estonia, mainly populated by Russian-speakers, Kohtla-Järve and Narva. The IV is operationalized as a binary variable of whether the respondent lives in Ida-Virumaa (value 1) or not (value 0).

The region as the variable has statistically a significant negative impact on the attitudes of Russian speakers towards national defense and the Defense League, with the standardized coefficients 0.088 and 0.042 respectively. First, respondents living in the region bordering Russia may see national defense as less rational and less necessary. Second, the Russian-speakers from

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<sup>206</sup> Statistics Estonia, RAA0012: Sisemajanduse Koguprodukt Ja Kogurahvatulu. SKP aheldatud väärtuse muutus võrreldes eelmise perioodiga. (n.d.).

Ida-Virumaa could be less familiar with the Defense League, which is mostly popular among ethnic Estonians.

### Citizenship

This variable represents the civil status and political rights of respondents. One of the biggest unsolved questions in Estonian integration policy is the citizenship issue. Many Russian-speakers have either Russian or indefinite citizenship. With the population of 1,328,439, there are almost 200,000 residents without Estonian citizenship.<sup>207</sup> These people have no right to vote in parliamentary elections. In addition to this, only citizens can serve in the Defense Forces and the Defense League. This variable is operationalized by Estonian citizenship status. If the respondent is a citizen of Estonia the value is 1, if not 0. Based on historical analysis described in the previous chapter, we could assume that greater political rights would increase the support of national defense.

Citizenship as a variable has a statistically significant positive impact on the attitudes of Russian-speakers towards the Defense Forces, the Defense League, and NATO. However, it does not have a statistically significant impact on the attitudes towards national defense. While among Russian-speaking respondents almost half are not Estonian citizens, among Estonian-speaking respondents there is only 2 percent of non-citizens. These people are regularly not ethnic Estonians (most ethnic Estonians received citizenship by birth), but they are proficient in the Estonian language.

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<sup>207</sup> Statistikaamet. "Rahvastiku Demograafilised Ja Etno-Kultuurilised Näitajad," Rahvastiku demograafilised ja etno-kultuurilised näitajad | Statistikaamet, accessed January 29, 2023, <https://rahvaloendus.ee/et/tulemused/rahvastiku-demograafilised-ja-etno-kultuurilised-naitajad>.

### Russian Media

The model also explores the effect of Russian media on the attitudes of the respondents. The MOD Survey asks respondents how often they watch Russia's TV channels or check Russia's newspapers and internet media portals. I combined the answers to these questions in a binary variable which has the value 1 if a respondent claims that he regularly follows at least one of the information channels originally from the Russian Federation, and 0 if not. The assumption is that the respondents who regularly follow Russian media, will have less supportive attitudes towards national security and defense policy.

The regression shows that the variable has no statistically significant impact on the attitudes of the respondents towards the necessity to defend the nation in case of a military conflict. However, it has a statistically significant negative impact on the attitudes towards the Defense League, the Defense Forces, and NATO. It is worth mentioning that among Russian-speakers, 64 percent of the respondents regularly follow at least one of the sources originating from Russia.

### KE Government

The next variable measures the reaction in the change of governmental orientation. The biggest political power that occupies the niche of protecting Russian-speakers' rights and interests is the Centre Party (Keskerakond or KE). The binary variable is based on the timeline when Centre Party was present in the government. It has the value 1 in the period when the party was in the government and 0 when the party was not.

The presence the Centre Party in the government is associated with more positive attitudes of Russian-speaking respondents towards the national defense and the Defense League. The attitudes towards the Defense Forces are not affected by the presence of the Centre Party in the government. The presence of the Centre Party in the government is associated with more negative

attitudes towards NATO. Even though the Centre Party does not advocate any anti-NATO policy, some of its members questioned the rationality of Estonian membership.<sup>208</sup>

#### Personal Relation to the Defense Forces and the Defense League

The next two variables can be discussed together. Prior studies show that in general, people in Estonia trust the security and defense institutions more when they have personal connections to them (for instance if they had served in the Defense Forces, the Defense League, or have relatives and friends who served).<sup>209</sup> These variables are binary and measure if person has any personal connections to the Defense Forces and the Defense League (value 1) or not (value 0).

The regression shows that the Russian-speaking respondents with a personal relation to the Defense Forces have more positive attitudes towards the national defense, and the personal relation to the Defense League has no effect. On the other hand, the personal relation to the Defense League increases the chances of positive attitudes of Russian-speakers towards the institution. Personal relation to the Defense Forces does not have any statistically significant effect on the attitudes of Russian-speakers towards the Defense Forces. Russian-speaking members with personal relation to either Defense Forces or the Defense League tend to support Estonian membership in NATO more than others.

#### Nationalizing Policy (Language Reform)

The next independent variable is language reform. Since the regaining of independence in 1991, Estonia has taken a decisive direction on Estonization of the society, public services, and education. Among these steps were education and public services reforms, which were taken ambiguously by the Russian-speaking community. One of the greatest reforms that was initiated

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<sup>208</sup> Vahtla, Aili. "Minister Korb: I Am Not in Favor of NATO Membership," ERR, May 24, 2017, <https://news.err.ee/597853/minister-korb-i-am-not-in-favor-of-nato-membership>

<sup>209</sup> Uulimaa, Ulvi. *Defence Willingness Of Estonian Male Population Liable To National Defence Obligation In 2000-2017*. University of Tartu. (2019).

since the 1990s was the transition of school and university education to Estonian as the language of instruction. At that time, many public and private institutions were teaching students in Russian. After years of political debate, the big shift happened in 2011, when all Russian high schools (10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade) were obliged to teach at least 60 percent of their programs in the Estonian language. The binary variable has the value 1 for all observations in the first survey after the implementation of the reform conducted in October 2011. It was the second month after the first cohort of high school students in Russian schools in Estonia were obliged to study in the Estonian language for 60 percent of the program. The variable is used to measure the first reaction on the implementation of language reform.

Using the variable based on the timeline, we must acknowledge certain limitations. We cannot exclude the effect of other temporal factors. The variable has a statistically significant negative impact on the attitudes of Russian-speakers towards the national defense and the Defense Forces. However, it does not have an impact on the attitudes of Russian-speakers towards the Defense League and NATO.

### Model One Summary

The first regression model showed that the attitudes of Russian-speakers towards the necessity to defend the nation in case of a military aggression were affected by factors such as: willingness to leave the country (-0.172), the economy (0.067), the Ida-Virumaa region (0.088), Central Party in the government (-0.077), personal relation to the Defense Forces (-0.037), and language reform (0.027). The direction of the effect of change in the national economy is opposite of what was assumed (the economic growth is associated with decline in the attitudes).

The attitudes of Russian-speakers towards the Defense League are affected by the willingness to leave the country (-0.104), the region of Ida-Virumaa (0.042), citizenship (-0.032),

Russian media (0.053), Centre Party in the government (-0.059), and personal relation to the Defense League (-0.080). The Centre Party in the government had exclusive effect on the attitudes of Russian-speakers. Running the same model for ethnic Estonian respondents, we see no statistically significant impact.

The attitudes of Russian-speakers towards the Defense Forces were affected by the willingness to leave the country in case of a military conflict (-0.160), change in national economy (0.050), citizenship (-0.26), Russian media (0.042), and language reform (0.045).

Finally, the statistically significant effect on the attitudes of Russian-speaking respondents towards NATO had personal wealth (-0.039), willingness to leave the country in case of a military conflict (-0.028), change in national economy (-0.084), citizenship (-0.072), Russian media (0.061), Central Party in the government (0.043), personal relation to the Defense Forces (-0.053), the Defense League (-0.051), and Language reform (0.013).

## Model 2

Model 2 covers the timeline from October 2001 to January 2010. In addition to the factors used in Model 1 (personal wealth of the respondents, region of residency, legal status, Russian media, whether a respondent is willing to leave the country in case of a military conflict, personal relation to the Defense Forces and the Defense League, composition of the government, and national economic situation). Model 2 includes the following factors: cooperation with Russia and political orientation. Model 2 excludes the nationalizing policy as a factor because the timeline does not cover the period when the language reform was adopted. Based on these factors, I suggest the following hypotheses in relation to each of the dependent variables (for a full list of factors and hypotheses, see in *Table 1*):

H0: There is no relationship between the attitudes and above-mentioned variables

1. Higher personal income is associated with better attitudes
2. Higher willingness to leave the country in case of a military conflict is associated with more negative attitudes
3. National economic decline has a negative impact on the attitudes of the respondents
4. Respondents in Ida-Virumaa have less supportive attitudes
5. Respondents with Estonian citizenship have more supportive attitudes
6. Respondents following Russian media have less supportive attitudes
7. In the periods when Centre Party (KE) is in the government, Russian-speakers have more supportive attitudes
8. Respondents with personal relation to DL have more supportive attitudes
9. Respondents with personal relation to DF have more supportive attitudes
10. The more a respondent speaks Estonian, the better the attitude will be
11. The respondents who find cooperation with Russia important have less supportive attitudes
12. The respondents who have a higher level of national pride have more supportive attitudes

Similar to the first model, all four alterations, each with a different dependent variable (national defense necessity, Defense League, Defense Forces, NATO), appeared to be statistically significant with a confidence interval of 95 percent. Therefore, we can reject the null hypothesis. However, including more variables and changing the timeframe also affected the statistical impact and the magnitude of the effect of the variables used in the first model.







To begin with, I first review the new variables that were not introduced in Model 1: Cooperation with Russia and Political orientation. After that, I review how the effect of the core variables changed with the inclusion of an additional two to the model.

### Cooperation with RUS

The first new variable in Model 2 measures the attitudes of the respondents towards national cooperation with Russia. The MOD Survey asks respondents what they think is the most important for Estonian security. Good relations and cooperation with Russia is one of the options. The variable, based on the answers to this question, is binary and shows if person finds good relations and cooperation with Russia important for Estonian security (value 1) or not (value 0). The assumption is that the respondents who find cooperation with Russia important for Estonian security will have less supportive attitudes towards national security and defense. Indeed, the analysis shows that the respondents supporting good relations with Russia see national defense less necessary than others.

Indeed, the current model shows a positive statistically significant impact of the attitudes of Russian-speakers towards all four aspects of Estonian security and defense policy. The highest impact the variable has on the attitudes is towards Estonian membership in NATO (0.192). This means that the more Russian-speaking respondents find cooperation with Russia important for Estonian security, the less they find reasonable Estonian membership in NATO.

### Political Orientation

The MOD Survey asks which party a respondent would support if the parliamentary, local, or EU elections took place tomorrow. The IV is operationalized as a binary variable of whether

the respondent supports parties with high Russian profiles such as the Russian Party in Estonia, the Centre Party, or the Estonian United Left Party<sup>210</sup> (value 1) or not (value 0).

The political orientation of the Russian-speaking respondents has no statistically significant effect on any of the dependent variables. Generally, Russian-speakers in Estonia are relatively passive voters. The lowest voting activity is consistently reported in the most Russian-speaking region, Ida-Virumaa.<sup>211</sup> However, studies show that Russian-speakers in Estonia are usually loyal to a single party, while ethnic Estonians change their political views more often.<sup>212</sup> The Estonian Central Party (Keskerakond) remains to be the most popular party among Russian-speakers in Estonia, having by October 2022 over 50 percent support among non-Estonians.<sup>213</sup> The analysis shows that when the Central Party is in the government, Russian-speakers generally have more supportive attitudes towards national security and defense policy.

### Personal Wealth

Personal wealth remains to be statistically insignificant in relation to all dependent variables, except the trust of the Defense League. This, however, is likely to be related to the temporal factor, as the second model only covers the period from October 2001 to January 2010. The effect of the temporal change will be analyzed in the following section.

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<sup>210</sup> The full list: Eestimaa Ühendatud Rahvapartei, Eesti Keskerakond, Vene Ühtsuspartei, Vene Balti Erakond, Vene Erakond Eestis, Eestimaa Ühtsus. Eesti Vasakpartei

<sup>211</sup> "Eelmiste Valimistega Võrreldes Kasvas Valimisaktiivsus Ligi Kümme Protsenti," Delfi (Delfi, October 17, 2021), <https://www.delfi.ee/artikkel/94876903/eelmiste-valimistega-vorreldes-kasvas-valimisaktiivsus-ligi-kumme-protsenti>.

<sup>212</sup> Okia, "Rahvuslik Tööjaotus Valimiskäitumises," Sirp, accessed January 29, 2023, <https://sirp.ee/s1-artiklid/c9-sotsiaalia/rahvuslik-tooejaotus-valimiskaeitumises/>.

<sup>213</sup> "Reitingud," Erakondade reitingud, accessed January 29, 2023, <https://reitingud.ee/reitingud/>.

### Willingness To Leave The Country

Willingness to leave the country in case of a military conflict remains to be a significant predictor of the less supportive attitudes towards all four dependent variables. The trend did not change in the second model.

### Economy

The effect of the economy as a predictor also did not change much in the new model.

### The Ida-Virumaa Region

The Ida-Virumaa region as an independent variable and remains statistically significant on attitudes towards national defense. However, in the second model including the new variable, it has no statistically significant impact on the attitudes towards the Defense League, Defense Forces, and like the first model, towards NATO.

### Citizenship

In the new model, citizenship remains to be a statistically significant predictor of change in the attitudes, only in relation to NATO. It has no impact on the other three dependent variables.

### RUS Media

The second model showed that Russian Media has no effect on the analyzed attitudes. In the first model, respondents that regularly follow Russian Media had less supportive attitudes towards the Defense League, Defense Forces, and NATO.

### KE Government

In the second model, the Central Party Government remains a significant predictor of positive attitudes toward the national defense and the Defense League; however, it lost impact as a variable on the attitudes towards NATO.

### Relation to DL and DF

The impact of personal relation to the Defense League did not have a significant difference between the two models. However, personal relation to the Defense Forces in the new model has no effect on the attitudes towards national defense and NATO.

### Model two summary

The second model included two new variables: cooperation with Russia and political orientation. The second model showed that the Russian-speaking respondents, who believe that good relations with Russia creates a security guarantee for Estonians, have less supportive attitudes towards national security and defense policy. Political orientation, however, did not appear to be a statistically significant predictor of the attitudes. Among the variables used in the first model, the willingness to leave the country remains to be one of the most significant predictors of negative attitudes towards national defense, the Defense Forces, the Defense League, and NATO. The inclusion of the new variables did not change this pattern. Also, the impact of the national economy did not change the pattern of this effect. The impact pattern of other variables is changing, which may have two potential causes. First, the difference may be caused by a temporal factor. Second, the difference could be caused by change in the composition of the model. This change is examined in the following sections.

### Model 3

Model 3 covers the timeline from November 2014 to September 2020. In addition to the factors used in Model 1 and Model 2 (personal wealth of the respondents, whether a respondent is willing to leave the country in case of a military conflict, national economic situation, region of residency, citizenship, Russian media, national government, personal relation to the Defense Forces and the Defense League, and cooperation with Russia), Model 3 includes the following

factors: language of communication, national pride, ethnic identity, and threat perception. Model 3 excludes the nationalizing policy as a factor because the covered timeline does not include the period when the language reform was adopted. I also do not include political orientation, as during the observed time period, this information was not collected. Based on these factors, I suggest the following hypotheses in relation to each of the dependent variables (for the full list of the factors and hypotheses see in *Table 1*):

H0: There is no relationship between the attitudes and above-mentioned variables

*Alternative hypotheses:*

1. Higher personal income is associated with better attitudes
2. Higher willingness to leave the country in case of a military conflict is associated with more negative attitudes
3. National economic decline has a negative impact on the attitudes of respondents
4. Respondents in Ida-Virumaa have less supportive attitudes
5. Respondents with Estonian citizenship have more supportive attitudes
6. Respondents following Russian media have less supportive attitudes
7. In the periods when the Central Party (KE) is in the government, Russian-speakers have more supportive attitudes
8. Respondents with a personal relation to DL have more supportive attitudes
9. Respondents with a personal relation to DF have more supportive attitudes
10. The more proficient a respondent is in Estonian, the better the respondent's attitude will be
11. Higher national pride is associated with better attitudes
12. Personal ethnic self-identity as Estonian is associated with better attitudes
13. The respondents who find cooperation with Russia important have less supportive attitudes

14. The respondents who perceive Russia as a threat have more supportive attitudes

All four alterations of Model 3 appeared to be statistically significant with a confidence interval of 95 percent. Therefore, we can reject the null hypothesis. However, the new variables and temporal factor brought some changes in the effect of the variables used in the previous models.

Table 21. Attitudes of Russian-Speaking Respondents Towards National Defense, Model 3

Attitudes of Russian-speaking respondents towards national defense						
Model 3		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
Dependent Variable: National Defense	(Constant)	2.190	.136		16.108	.000
	Personal wealth	.001	.001	.026	1.149	.251
	Leave the country	-.135	.020	-.153	-6.867	.000
	Economy	-.019	.020	-.022	-.928	.354
	Region Ida-Virumaa	.072	.045	.037	1.596	.111
	Citizenship	.023	.042	.013	.546	.585
	RUS media	-.047	.042	-.025	-1.114	.265
	KE government	-.061	.042	-.035	-1.442	.149
	Relation to DL	-.160	.073	-.049	-2.188	.029
	Relation to DF	-.022	.040	-.012	-.541	.589
	EST language	.026	.023	.029	1.162	.245
	National pride	-.182	.024	-.174	-7.721	.000
	Ethnic ID	.057	.115	.011	.492	.623
	Cooperation with RUS	.055	.041	.030	1.336	.182
	RUS threat	.139	.031	.101	4.515	.000
a. N = 2007						
b. R Square = 0.099						

Table 22. Attitudes of Russian-Speaking Respondents Towards the DL, Model 3

Attitudes of Russian-speaking respondents towards the DL
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Table 24. Attitudes of Russian-Speaking Respondents Towards NATO, Model 3

Attitudes of Russian-speaking respondents towards NATO						
Model 3		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
Dependent Variable: NATO membership	(Constant)	1.876	.144		13.043	.000
	Personal wealth	-.002	.001	-.064	-3.046	.002
	Leave the country	.006	.020	.006	.304	.761
	Economy	-.025	.021	-.026	-1.195	.232
	Region Ida-Virumaa	.074	.047	.035	1.595	.111
	Citizenship	-.021	.044	-.011	-.487	.627
	RUS media	.032	.044	.016	.734	.463
	KE government	-.011	.043	-.006	-.254	.800
	Relation to DL	-.107	.074	-.030	-1.447	.148
	Relation to DF	-.147	.042	-.074	-3.530	.000
	EST language	.073	.024	.071	3.021	.003
	National pride	-.153	.025	-.129	-6.136	.000
	Ethnic ID	.140	.124	.023	1.128	.259
	Cooperation with RUS	.420	.043	.202	9.765	.000
	RUS threat	.400	.033	.257	12.232	.000
a. N = 1977						
b. R Square = 0.224						

The new composition of the model considerably changed the statistical impact of most of the factors used in the previous models. The new variables, such as national pride and threat perception (RUS threat), appeared to be statistically significant predictors of the change in attitudes towards each of the four aspects.

### Estonian Language

The first new variable included in Model 3 measures Estonian language proficiency of the respondents. This is an important social factor, as language remains to be the most segregating element in Estonian society, dividing it by Russian-speakers and ethnic Estonians. The discussion about this division may be found in the previous chapters. In the MOD Survey, all respondents, whose mother tongue is not Estonian were asked what their level of Estonian language proficiency is. The respondents had to self-evaluate their own language proficiency on a scale from 1 to 4, where 1 is the most fluent, and 4 is the least.

Language proficiency appears to have a statistically significant positive impact on the attitudes towards the Defense League (0.074) and NATO (0.071). However, the model showed no relation between language proficiency and the attitudes of the respondents towards national defense and the Defense Forces.

### National Pride

The MOD Survey measures national pride by the question of how frequently you feel proud about living in Estonia. It is measured on a scale from 1 to 4, where 1 is the lowest frequency and 4 is the highest.

The model shows that the level of national pride has a statistically significant impact on the attitudes towards all four elements. The prouder a person is of being Estonian residents, the better his attitude is towards national defense (-0.174), Defense Forces (-0.167), Defense League (-0.206), and Estonian membership in NATO (-0.129)

### Ethnic ID

Ethnic self-identity is another factor that hypothetically can be a predictor of the change in the political attitudes of ethnic minorities in the Triadic Nexus. In Estonia, as well as in other ethnically diverse nations, mother tongue or citizenship does not always determine ethnic self-identity. A resident of Estonia with Russian citizenship and limited Estonian language proficiency can still identify as Estonian, as well as an Estonian citizen can chose a Russian ethnic self-identity. The dummy variable has two values: 1 is given if a respondent self-identifies as Estonian and 0 if not.

The model, however, shows that ethnic self-identity does not have a statistically significant impact in all four alternations. Therefore, we can reject the 12<sup>th</sup> hypothesis and conclude that ethnic

self-identity as Estonian cannot be a statistically significant predictor of supportive attitudes towards national security and defense policy.

### RUS Threat

The MOD Survey asks respondents according to their opinion, what creates a threat for Estonian national security. Russian ambition to restore regional power is one of the options that the respondents evaluate on a scale from 1 to 3, where 1 is the highest level of threat and 3 is the lowest.

The model shows that people who consider Russia as a threat to national security have more supportive attitudes towards all four analyzed elements: national defense (0.101), the Defense Forces (0.134), the Defense League (0.176), and NATO (0.257). The attitudes of the respondents towards the Estonian membership in NATO are affected by the threat perception the most.

### Personal Wealth

In Model 3, personal wealth as a predictor has positive statistically significant impact on the attitudes towards NATO (-0.054), but does not have any impact in other three alterations. The pattern of the effect is similar to Model 1, however, it differs from Model 2 which observes another period of time.

### Leave the Country

The willingness of the respondents to leave the country in case of a military conflict remains to be a significant predictor of the change in the attitudes towards national defense (0.153), the Defense Forces (-0.114) and the Defense League (-0.075). However, this is the first model where the variable does not have an impact on the attitudes towards NATO.

### Economy; Region Ida-Virumaa; Citizenship; RUS media; KE government

In this model the change in national economy the Ida-Virumaa region, Citizenship, Russian media, and the presence of the Centre Party in the government do not have statistically significant impacts on attitudes in all four alternations.

### Relation to DL and DF

Personal relation to the Defense League increases the chance of having supportive attitudes towards national defense (-0.049) and the Defense League (-0.049). Personal relation to the Defense Forces shows a statistically significant impact only on the attitudes towards NATO (0.074)

### Cooperation with RUS

In Model 3, the position of the respondent in relation to national cooperation with Russia remains to be a statistically significant predictor of a change in the attitudes towards the Defense Forces (0.170), the Defense League (0.113) and NATO (0.202). It does not affect the attitudes towards national defense.

### Model 3 summary

Model 3 included four new variables: language proficiency, national pride, ethnic identity, and the position regarding a national threat from Russia. National pride and the position towards the threat from Russia appeared to be statistically significant predictors in all four alternations. Ethnic identity did not show any statistically significant impact, and language proficiency has an impact on the attitudes towards NATO and the Defense League.

In general, we can see that including additional variables significantly decrease the statistical impact of the variables used in Model 1. The willingness to leave the country in case of a military conflict, though, remains to be a statistically significant predictor in three cases out of

four, as well as the position about the national cooperation with Russia, the variable included in Model 2. As was mentioned earlier, the reason for this change may be either the effect of the included variables, or the change of the timeframe. The next section will examine this question.

#### Comparison Of The Models And Statistically Significant Predictors

To analyze if the change in the statistical significance of the variables is caused by the change in the model composition or the temporal factor, I run three additional regression models, only with the factors that are covered in the entire observed period and see how their effect is changing across time. I conduct this procedure in relation to all four dependent variables to see how predictors impact them in different models and different timeframes.

#### Attitudes Towards National Defense

To begin with, we can exclude the factors that showed no impact on the attitudes in all variations of the model. Among these factors are personal wealth, citizenship, and Russian media. Estonian language proficiency and ethnic identity also did not show a statistically significant impact, but these two variables could be observed only in the period from November 2014 to September 2020. Political orientation observed in the period from October 2001 to January 2010 also did not show impact on the dependent variables. Willingness to leave the country is the only variable that remains to be a statistically significant predictor of the change in attitudes towards national defense in all models and the entire timeframe. National pride and threat perception also showed a statistically significant impact on the attitudes towards national defense, but the variables could be observed only in the period from November 2014 to September 2020.

The effect of other variables changes across the models and over time. The national economy was a statistically significant predictor in Model 1 and Model 2. However, it lost significance in Model 3, which observes the period from January 2014 to September 2020. If we

run the regression model in the same period of observation without additional variables, the change in national economy remains a statistically insignificant predictor. This means that the impact of the variable is probably affected more by the temporal factor than by additional variables included in Model 3. In the case of the region of Ida-Virumaa and the composition of government, we see another picture. The significance of the variables is still sufficient in Model 4. This indicates that they became insignificant in Model 3 as the result of inclusion of additional variables with higher explanatory power.

*Table 25. Comparison of the Models. Attitudes Towards National Defense*

Model #	1	2	3	4	5	6
Attitudes towards national defense	2001OCT 2020SEP	2001OCT 2010JAN	2014NOV 2020SEP	2014NOV 2020SEP	2001OCT 2010JAN	2001OCT 2020SEP
Personal wealth	0.006	-0.013	0.026	0.024	0.003	0.006
Leave the country	-0.172*	-0.218*	-0.153*	-0.172*	-0.178*	-0.173*
Economy	0.067*	0.102*	-0.022	0.017	0.084*	0.064*
Region Ida-Virumaa	0.088*	0.070*	0.037	0.078*	0.075*	0.087*
Citizenship	-0.004	0.027	0.013	-0.016	0.022	-0.004
RUS media	0.01	0.008	-0.025	-0.030	0.017	0.012
KE government	-0.077*	-0.076*	-0.035	-0.065*	-0.064*	-0.080*
Relation to DL	-0.016	-0.018	-0.049*	-0.045*	-0.010	-0.017
Relation to DF	-0.037*	0.004	-0.012	-0.033	-0.016	-0.036*
Language reform	0.027*					
EST language			0.029			
National pride			-0.174*			
Ethnic ID			0.011			
Cooperation with RUS		0.075*	0.03			
RUS threat			0.101*			
Political orientation		0.011				

\*  $p < 0.05$

### Attitudes Towards the Defense Forces

Among the variables that had no effect on the attitudes towards the defense forces are personal wealth, the Central Party government, personal relation to Defense Forces, Estonian

language proficiency, ethnic identity, and political orientation. Here we can underline an interesting phenomenon that personal relation to the Defense Forces does not impact trust of Russian-speaking respondents towards the institution. In general, it may be explained by the cultural factor discussed in the previous section. For Russian-speakers, military service is considered prestigious, in accordance with saying “a man must serve.”

The willingness of the respondents to leave the country in case of a military conflict in all alterations predicts less trust of the Defense Forces. Change in national economy is another important predictor. A decreasing economy is associated with a decline in trust of the Defense Forces. It can be explained by two reasons. First, in the declining economy, it is harder for a nation to provide sufficient funding for the Defense Forces. Second, during an economic decline, public spending on the defense policy is generally less welcomed by taxpayers. Model 3 is the only one where a national economy lost a statistically significant impact. It indicates that in comparison with national pride and threat perception, national economy is a less reliable predictor of change in the attitudes towards the Defense Forces.

Table 26. Comparison of the Models. Attitudes Towards DF

Model #	1	2	3	4	5	6
Attitudes towards DF	2001OCT 2020SEP	2001OCT 2010JAN	2014NOV 2020SEP	2014NOV 2020SEP	2001OCT 2010JAN	2001OCT 2020SEP
Personal wealth	-0.012	0.033	-0.036	-0.042*	0.027	-0.015
Leave the country	-0.150*	-0.147*	-0.114*	-0.145*	-0.133*	-0.162*
Economy	-0.045*	-0.044*	-0.025	-0.054*	-0.038*	-0.055*
Region Ida-Virumaa	0.023*	0.000	0.017	0.078*	-0.005	0.016
Citizenship	-0.034*	-0.021	0.035	0.013	-0.034*	-0.026*
RUS media	0.045*	0.036	-0.008	0.035	0.022	0.045*
KE government	-0.018	-0.035	0.005	-0.013	-0.026	-0.024
Relation to DL	-0.020	-0.026	-0.018	-0.015	-0.020	-0.023*
Relation to DF	-0.022	0.002	-0.002	-0.029	-0.014	-0.013
Language reform	0.094*					
EST language			0.031			
National pride			-0.167*			
Ethnic ID			0.008			
Cooperation with RUS		0.090*	0.170*			
RUS threat			0.134*			
Political orientation		0.014				

\*  $p < 0.05$ 

### Attitudes Towards the Defense League

National economy, personal relation to the Defense Forces, language reform, ethnic identity, and political orientation did not show any effect on the attitudes of Russian-speaking respondents towards the Defense League. The willingness to leave the country in case of a military conflict, as well as personal relation to the Defense League, are the most consistent predictors of change in the level of trust of the Defense League. Estonian language proficiency, national pride, the position in relation to cooperation with Russia and threat perception showed an impact on the attitudes in the periods from October 2001 to January 2010 and from November 2014 to September 2020.



Among the variables, with changing effect over time is the Ida-Virumaa region. Russian-speakers from this region showed less supportive attitudes towards the Defense League in the overall observed period from October 2001 to September 2020, as well as particularly in the period from November 2014 to September 2020 (if we do not include the additional variable from Model 3). In the period from October 2001 to January 2010, the variable did not show an impact on attitudes. This means, that in recent years, the negative impact of the region on the attitudes towards the Defense League is growing.

*Table 27. Comparison of the Models. Attitudes Towards DL*

Model #	1	2	3	4	5	6
Attitudes towards DL	2001OCT 2020SEP	2001OCT 2010JAN	2014NOV 2020SEP	2014NOV 2020SEP	2001OCT 2010JAN	2001OCT 2020SEP
Personal wealth	0.011	0.086*	-0.009	-0.016	0.071*	0.011
Leave the country	-0.104*	-0.068*	-0.075*	-0.113*	-0.076*	-0.105*
Economy	-0.006	0.002	-0.027	-0.031	0.000	-0.008
Region Ida-Virumaa	0.042*	0.035	0.009	0.075*	0.033	0.042*
Citizenship	-0.032*	-0.023	0.022	-0.004	-0.034	-0.032*
RUS media	0.053*	0.032	0.019	0.061*	0.037	0.054*
KE government	-0.059*	-0.059*	-0.043	-0.046	-0.041*	-0.061*
Relation to DL	-0.080*	-0.131*	-0.049*	-0.060*	-0.113*	-0.081*
Relation to DF	-0.003	0.000	0.020	0.011	-0.012	-0.002
Language reform	0.020					
EST language			0.074*			
National pride			-0.206*			
Ethnic ID			0.020			
Cooperation with RUS		0.090*	0.113*			
RUS threat			0.176*			
Political orientation		0.007				

\*  $p < 0.05$

### Attitudes Towards NATO

In relation to NATO, we see that all the variables except language reform, political orientation, and ethnic identity had an impact on the attitudes in one or more models. At the same time, there is no variable which showed a statistically significant impact across all models.

National economy is one of the variables that had a statistically significant impact on the attitudes towards NATO across most of the models. At the same time, personal wealth became a statistically significant predictor in more recent periods of observation (November 2014 – September 2020). It should be noted that Estonia joined NATO in 2004, the same year it joined the European Union. Joining the Western European and North Atlantic international community was associated with the growth of its national economy, foreign investments, and new security guarantees. Therefore, the respondents may link NATO membership with Western international community and associated benefits including national economic growth and stability. People may feel that their personal wealth is better protected under the security umbrella of the alliance. Here, however, we can see, that citizenship appears to an important predictor of the change in attitudes towards NATO. Estonian citizenship also means the citizenship of a NATO nation, so people with Estonian citizenship have more opportunities to travel to NATO nations, which creates a certain level of personification and familiarity with international allies. Estonian citizens also have an opportunity to serve in the Defense League and Defense Forces which often participate in common exercises with NATO allies. It creates personal connections, which as a result appear to be another important factor contributing to better attitudes towards NATO.

However, the above-mentioned factors, except personal wealth and relation to the Defense Forces, are not statistically significant in the model that includes Estonian language proficiency, national pride, and position towards cooperation with Russia and threat perception. People who

find that the cooperation with Russia is an important security guarantee for Estonia understand that NATO membership is a serious obstacle for this cooperation under the current political establishment in Moscow. At the same time, the respondents who find that Russian geopolitical ambitions are threatening Estonian security have more supportive attitudes towards NATO.

*Table 28. Comparison of the Models. Attitudes Towards NATO*

Model #	1	2	3	4	5	6
Attitudes towards NATO	2001OCT 2020SEP	2001OCT 2010JAN	2014NOV 2020SEP	2014NOV 2020SEP	2001OCT 2010JAN	2001OCT 2020SEP
Personal wealth	-0.039*	0.007	-0.064*	-0.083*	0.009	-0.039*
Leave the country	-0.028*	-0.041*	0.006	-0.033	-0.029	-0.029*
Economy	-0.084*	-0.063*	-0.026	-0.063*	-0.072*	-0.086*
Region Ida-Virumaa	0.014	0.016	0.035	0.117*	0.014	0.014
Citizenship	-0.072*	-0.095*	-0.011	-0.043*	-0.091*	-0.073*
RUS media	0.061*	0.033	0.016	0.080*	0.041*	0.061*
KE government	0.043*	0.007	-0.006	-0.012	0.031	0.042*
Relation to DL	-0.051*	-0.080*	-0.030	-0.030	-0.081*	-0.051*
Relation to DF	-0.053*	-0.002	-0.074*	-0.089*	-0.026	-0.053*
Language reform	0.013					
EST language			0.071*			
National pride			-0.129*			
Ethnic ID			0.023			
Cooperation with RUS		0.192*	0.202*			
RUS threat			0.257*			
Political orientation		-0.030				

\*  $p < 0.05$

### Summary of the Comparison

To begin with, we can outline the factors that showed no statistically significant impact on the attitudes. Ethnic identity and political orientation of the respondents are the only variable that showed no effect on any of the attitudes. Therefore, we can potentially reject the hypotheses that Russian-speakers in Estonia, who ethnically self-identify as Estonians and do not support the political forces with a strong ethnic (Russian) agenda, have better attitudes towards national security and defense policy. However, we must admit some limitations of this conclusion, as the observation of these variables does not cover the entire timeframe.

One of the most significant and constant predictors of the change in attitudes was the willingness to leave the country in case of a military conflict. The respondents who are willing to leave the country show less trust of Defense Forces and the Defense League, find it less important to defend the country in case of any military aggression, and often have rather negative stances in relation to NATO.

The level of national pride and threat perception showed strong impact on the dependent variables in all models. The respondents, who often feel proud to live in Estonia and those who consider Russian geopolitical activities a threat to national security showed greater support to all four analyzed elements of Estonian security and defense policy. The position regarding the cooperation with Russia also had one of the strongest impacts in most of the models. The respondents who find cooperation with Russia important for national security tend to have less supportive attitudes than others.

Finally, there are variables, which have changing impact across the models and timeframes. There are two potential reasons of this change, first the temporal factor, and second the composition of the models. Threat perception and national pride included in Model 3 have a

significantly stronger impact, making other factors less significant. It is mostly because newly included variables appeared to have stronger explanatory power. Running the regression in the timeframe of Model 3 without additional variables brought back statistical significance to most of the predictors.

## INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS

In this section, I compare the results of the statistical analysis with the assumptions based on a historical and theoretical framework. In the first chapter of the current dissertation, I introduced Brubaker's Triadic Nexus Model of analysis of the complex interrelation between ethnocultural homeland, nationalizing state, and ethnic minorities. The interrelation between Russia, Estonia and local Russian-speakers is an instance of the Triadic Nexus. However, in relation to Russia I use the term "claimed ethnocultural homeland" because Russian-speakers in Estonia are not exclusively of Russian ethnicity. Among this group there are people who have never been to Russia but use the Russian-language as either their mother tongue or the language they use the majority of the time. Moscow, however, tends to claim all Russian-speakers as own ethno-cultural kin, which makes Russia the claimed ethno-cultural homeland in the context of the Triadic Nexus in Estonia.

It must be noted that the Triadic Nexus model in reference to the current dissertation does not serve as a theory itself. It rather offers a structure through which I select relevant cases from the past. Based on the analysis of the historical Triadic Nexus cases, I identified a list of factors and associated assumptions which could affect the political attitudes of ethnic minorities. I expanded this list with the factors identified in related studies and specific factors related particularly to Estonian security and defense policy. The full list of these factors and associated hypotheses can be found in *Table 1*. Applying these factors to the statistical model, I learned how

they affect the attitudes of Russian-speakers towards four main pillars of Estonian security and defense policy: national willingness to defend, the Defense Forces, the Defense League, and NATO. As the attitudes towards each of the four aspects may be different, it is important to analyze them separately and in comparison with each other, as these related aspects may have different meanings for Russian-speakers. In the following section, I offer my interpretation of the results.

#### Socio-Economic Conditions (Personal Wealth)

As it was discussed in chapter 1, socio-economic conditions of ethnic minorities can play a significant role in the development of political attitudes of ethnic minorities in critical moments of history. For instance, the Great Depression that hit the industrial sector in Czechoslovakia had an especially dramatic effect on the socio-economic conditions of ethnic Germans. By the mid-1930s, 60 percent of the unemployed population of Czechoslovakia were Germans. Meanwhile Germans made up only one third of the total population of the country. This increased radicalization and popular support of the Sudeten German Party that eventually orchestrated the mass riots followed by annexation.<sup>214</sup>

On the other hand, the dynamic economic growth and increase in the standard of living in the Baltic States after the collapse of the Soviet Union could have a positive effect on the attitudes of ethnic minorities toward the new nationalizing political establishment. The Legatum Prosperity Index 2021 puts Estonia in 17<sup>th</sup> place in the world by human prosperity, while Russia holds 70<sup>th</sup> place.<sup>215</sup> In addition to this, Estonia, as well as Latvia and Lithuania, aimed at membership in NATO and the EU, the Western liberal-democratic international community that is associated with high standards of living, economic prosperity, and stability. According to previous studies, these

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<sup>214</sup> Smelser, Ronald M. "At the Limits of a Mass Movement: The Case of the Sudeten German Party 1933–1938." *Bohemia* 17, no. 1 (1976): 254.

<sup>215</sup> Legatum Institute "The Legatum Prosperity Index 2021" <https://www.prosperity.com/about/resources>, (2022).

advantages may significantly improve loyalty of ethnic minorities to their host nation in the context of the Triadic Nexus.<sup>216</sup>

Taking into consideration the potential impact of socio-economic conditions on the attitudes of ethnic minorities, I included this in the statistical model as an independent variable operationalized by personal wealth and with the hypothesis that the greater personal wealth, the more supportive the attitudes would be of Russian-speakers in Estonia toward national security and defense policy.

The analysis showed that personal wealth did not have a statistically significant impact on the attitudes of Russian-speaking respondents towards national defense, and had only marginal impact in some variation of the models on the attitudes towards the Defense League and the Defense Forces. However, the supportive attitudes towards NATO more frequently were demonstrated by the Russian-speakers with a higher level of personal wealth, especially in the models observing the later periods of the survey. Estonian membership in NATO may be associated with the prosperous and stable liberal-democratic world order, and therefore, the people with higher personal wealth who benefited more from the associated economic and social growth demonstrate greater support to NATO. This assumption may require further qualitative examination.

#### Willingness To Stay In The Country In Case Of A Military Conflict

Estonia has a population of just over a million people. Therefore, the popular willingness to stay in the country and protect it in case of a military aggression becomes an essential part of the defense strategy. This strategy is based on the Integrated National Defense Concept, which

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<sup>216</sup> Kemp, Walter. "The triadic nexus: lessons learned from the status law." *Beyond sovereignty: From status law to transnational citizenship* 9 (2006): 109-127.

implies the involvement and cooperation of all Estonian state institutions, international allies, and all sectors of society.

The will to stay and defend one's own country in case of an armed conflict may mean more in legal, practical, and cognitive ways in Estonia than it does elsewhere.<sup>217</sup> From the legal point of view, the Estonian constitution (article 54) obliges all citizens to defend the independence of Estonia.<sup>218</sup> Obviously, it would be impossible for the state to enforce this duty on a fleeing population. Second, Estonian defense capabilities are based on compulsory military service for all male citizens who form the reserve for mobilization in case of military aggression against the nation. The reserve must be present in the country to conduct national defense activities.

However, not everyone can and must protect the country with weapons. The Estonian National Defense Strategy<sup>219</sup> is based on the implementation of total defense, an all-inclusive approach that entails the involvement of civil society. According to the National Defense Concept, the entire Estonian population should be involved in national defense, which is supposed to be ensured by the population's high willingness to stay and defend their country in the event of an armed conflict. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Estonia decided to grant the Defense Forces additional power to prepare for a scenario of occupation. It includes the employment of undercover agents to engage people in collaboration. Undercover agents may

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<sup>217</sup> Juurvee, I. "Willingness to Defend Estonia: Fostered by Civil-Military Integration and Communication." *Willingness to Defend Own Country in the Baltic States: Implications for National Security and NATO's Collective Defence*. (2021).

<sup>218</sup> AS Andmevara, "The Constitution of the Republic of Estonia," The Constitution of the Republic of Estonia–Riigi Teataja, accessed January 29, 2023, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/521052015001/consolide>.

<sup>219</sup> "National Defence Strategy 2011 - Kaitseministeerium," National Defence Strategy (Estonian Ministry of Defence), accessed January 29, 2023, [https://kaitseministeerium.ee/sites/default/files/elfinder/article\\_files/national\\_defence\\_strategy.pdf](https://kaitseministeerium.ee/sites/default/files/elfinder/article_files/national_defence_strategy.pdf)



handle communications in occupied territory, gather intelligence on the foreign power, or store equipment and arms for resistance in hidden places.<sup>220</sup>

All in all, the Estonian government puts high expectations on the population in terms on national defense. A strong emphasis of the Estonian defense strategy on the total defense concept makes popular willingness to stay in the country an important factor to be included as a predictor of the attitudes towards national security and defense policy. People who want to stay in the country should have more supportive attitudes than those who prefer to flee in case of an armed conflict.

Statistical analysis showed that the willingness of the respondents to stay in the country in case of an armed conflict is one of the strongest and most consistent predictors of supportive attitudes. Most Russian-speakers who are not going to flee consider national defense important. Their trust of the Defense Forces and the Defense League is higher than among the respondents who plan to leave the country. However, it is not unreasonable to think that this relation may have the opposite causality; the respondents who trust the defense institutions are more willing to stay in the country in case of foreign aggression. One way or another, we can conclude that the popular willingness to stay in the country is an important element of national defense that is strongly linked to general attitudes towards national security and defense policy. However, we must note that even having a certain positive correlation to the willingness to leave or stay in the country is not the strongest predictor of a change in attitudes towards NATO. It may be caused by the fact that many of the Russian-speaking respondents do not see NATO as a national security guarantee.

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<sup>220</sup>Johannes Voltri, “EDF to Get Additional Powers to Organize Armed Resistance in Occupation,” ERR, September 5, 2022, <https://news.err.ee/1608705340/edf-to-get-additional-powers-to-organize-armed-resistance-in-occupation>.

### Level Of Integration (Language Proficiency)

The greatest division in Estonian society is based on language. By 2022, Estonian children are still largely segregated by the education system on the basis of being Estonian-speaking or Russian-speaking. Even though many Russian-speaking parents are sending their children to Estonian language schools, it is still rather an exemption than the rule. It creates a segregated community of Russian-speakers from early ages. Even having classes of Estonian language and some parts of the program instructed in Estonian, the students in “Russian” schools often lack communication experience with ethnic Estonian counterparts.

The Soviet legacy of ethnic segregation in education still impacts Estonian society, creating a spiral effect. Graduating from “Russian” school, a student often stays in Russian-speaking social circles, preferring to work and live in the regions densely populated by his or her own ethno-cultural kin. The effect of this spiral is intensified by the fact that during Soviet times, whole regions, cities, and districts of the biggest cities were intentionally populated by non-Estonian labor migrants from other Soviet Republics, whose main language of communication in Estonia was Russian.

After the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Estonia, along with Latvia, stopped broadcasting Russia’s main media channels. However, for decades, the Russian speaking community lived in segregated cultural and information spaces. The efforts of the Estonian government to broadcast national agenda in the Russian language had marginal effects. Moscow-sponsored Russian media remained to be much more popular among Russian-speakers than Estonia’s national broadcasting in the Russian language (ETV+).

The MOD Public Opinion Survey shows a constant difference between the attitudes of ethnic Estonians and Russian-speakers towards the key elements of national security and defense

policy. Therefore, we can assume that a segment of the Russian-speaking population, that has limited Estonian language proficiency and consequently lack of communication with ethnic Estonians, should have less supportive attitudes than their counterparts who can speak and understand the language.

The analysis partly confirmed the assumption. Russian-speaking respondents who speak the Estonian language showed greater trust in the Defense League and NATO. The Defense League, as was discussed earlier, has a strong ethno-cultural agenda that takes roots from the legacy of the Forest Brothers. Russian-speakers with greater language proficiency have more of a chance to understand and appreciate this culture. Their support of NATO, however, could be linked to a variety of factors. First of all, the Russian-speaking respondents who are lacking Estonian language proficiency have more chances to become the target audience of the anti-NATO and anti-Western discourse. The lack of language proficiency may lead to the limited access to the Estonian national media, which offers alternative information. Second, lacking the language proficiency, Russian-speakers limit their social circles. Taking into consideration that the general attitudes towards NATO among Russian-speakers are significantly less supportive than among ethnic Estonians, the people who communicate predominantly in Russian-speaking social circles are more impacted by these negative popular attitudes. The same factor also has an impact on the attitudes towards the Defense League, which has a predominantly ethnic-Estonian composition.

Nevertheless, language proficiency did not show any impact on the attitudes towards national defense and the Defense Forces. The attitudes towards national defense were mostly impacted by factors like national pride and willingness to leave the country in case of a military conflict. In the model with these significant predictors, language proficiency appeared to be insignificant. The relation towards the Defense Forces among Russian-speakers in general is less

related to the Estonian ethno-cultural agenda. As was discussed in the previous chapter, Russian-speakers' service in the Defense Forces is associated with a certain level of prestige. "A man must serve," is a phrase familiar to most Russian-speakers. Therefore, the Defense Forces do not solely have an association with the protection of Estonian culture and language. Instead, the association is often based on the stereotype regarding the prestige of military service in general. In addition to this, unlike the Defense League, the Defense Forces are largely composed of Russian-speakers. All men in Estonia are subjects of conscription regardless of the level of language proficiency.

#### National Pride

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I discussed the importance of *Doxa* and the social habits on ethnic hierarchy. In the case of Estonia, as well as other post-Soviet states, we can see the change of *Doxa*. 1991 has changed the distribution of power between ethnic groups and switched the roles of titular nation and ethnic minority. In some cases, this shift was smoother than in others. In the worst case scenarios, the social transformation has led to ethnic conflicts and separatism. In the best case scenarios, ethnic minorities accepted the new *Doxa* and surrendered their political emancipation to the new regime.

One of the important factors that makes the difference between these scenarios is the level of appreciation of the host nation by ethnic minorities, in other words, their national pride. In the analyzed Triadic Nexus from the past, we have seen how the lack of national pride affected the averseness of ethnic minorities towards host nations. The formerly titular Russian-speakers in Transnistria were not ready to accept the ethno-centric agenda of Moldova. South Ossetians, who for centuries were in conflict with Georgians, were not ready to accept them as the ruling elite. In Estonia, however, as well as in other Baltic States, Russian-speakers marginally protested against

the new order. This was partly possible due to a certain level of national pride among ethnic minorities in the Baltic States.

Even during the Soviet era, the Baltic States were considered the most developed part of the Union. Russian-speaking labor migrants were mostly proud to move from other republics to Soviet Estonia, where the quality of life and the level of personal freedom were higher, partly due to the proximity to “free” Europe. Therefore, even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, there were no significant protests among Russian-speakers against the new power.<sup>221</sup> A growing economy and living standards related to joining the EU only increased the level of national pride among ethnic minorities in the Baltic States. The same perspectives also can partly explain why Russian-speakers in Ukraine showed significant resistance to Russia’s invasion in 2022.

The significance of national pride in the formation of the general attitudes of ethnic minorities towards the nationalizing state becomes the basis of the assumption that Russian-speakers in Estonia with a greater level of national pride will show more supportive attitudes towards all four analyzed aspects of national security and defense policy.

The statistical analysis confirmed that the level of national pride can be a significant predictor of change in the attitudes towards all four analyzed aspects of national security and defense. It appeared to have the strongest effect, among the factors included in the model, on the attitudes towards national defense and the Defense League. The respondents who frequently feel proud of living in Estonia have a stronger will to defend the country in the case of military aggression. They trust the Defense League and the Defense Forces more than others, as well as support Estonian membership in NATO.

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<sup>221</sup> With certain exceptions like Intermovement and referendums in Narva and Sillamae.

## Habitational Density And Territorial Proximity Of Ethnic Minorities To Ethnocultural Homeland

Looking on the Triadic Nexus conflicts from the past, we can see that many of them happened in the regions which are mostly populated by ethnic minorities and located close to the ethnocultural homeland. This factor enforces the political mobilization and enables the ethnocultural homeland to project influence on particular regions. The ethnic-based habitational segregation creates additional opportunities to undermine cohesion in the society.

This is a classic scenario; when the ethno-cultural homeland promotes the separatists' perspective among ethnic minorities in the host nation with the argument that the national government takes advantage of the regions populated by ethnic minorities, it treats them unfairly. Sudetenland, mostly populated by ethnic Germans before WWII, was the center of Austrian heavy industry. The narrative that the region producing the most gets the least from the government enforced the political mobilization of ethnic Germans and their support of the following invasion. In Ukraine, quite a similar narrative was used in the case of Donbass, the center of coal production.

In addition to this, habitational segregation undermines national integration. Living in the segregated regions, ethnic minorities have limited opportunities to contact and communicate with the titular nation. It expands the gap between the groups creating mistrust and envy from both sides. For the party willing to undermine national cohesion, it is easier to affect the group which densely populates one region.

In Estonia, as well as in other post-Soviet states, the ethnic-based habitational segregation is quite common. Partly, it is caused by the Soviet labor-migration policy aimed to create distinctive communities that would represent Soviet power in those republics. Often, it was closely related to industrial development. Shale oil mining in Eastern Estonia was dynamically developed by Soviet power. New towns and cities were created around the mines where the regime was

directing labor from other parts of the Union. This Soviet legacy still impacts the current habitational patterns. The cities mostly populated by Russian-speakers, such as Narva, Sillamae and Kohtla-Järve, are all located in the Ida-Virumaa region, which is bordering Russia.

Looking at the examples of the Triadic Nexus cases from the past, we can outline that most of the conflicts between ethnic minorities and their host nation took place in the regions densely populated by minorities (South Ossetia, Donbass, Transnistria). Therefore, we can assume that the attitudes of ethnic minorities towards the host nation would be worse in such regions. In my current work, I have observed how Ida-Virumaa as a region of residency impacts the attitudes of Russian-speakers towards Estonian security and defense policy.

After the events in Ukraine, and annexation of Crimea, there was a certain concern about Narva as the next target of Russia's hybrid warfare. However, years after these events, Narva and Ida-Virumaa in general have not experienced any emergence of separatism or ethnic-based conflicts. Even governmental order to take down the Red Army monument in Narva did not cause any unrest, as with the Bronze Night in Tallinn in 2007.<sup>222</sup> The statistical analysis shows that in most of the analyzed models, living in the region of Ida-Virumaa cannot be a reliable statistically significant predictor of change in the attitudes of Russian-speakers towards the Defense Forces, the Defense League, and NATO. However, the region has a certain negative impact on the attitudes of the respondents towards the necessity to defend the nation in case of a military conflict. Russian-speakers living in Ida-Virumaa find it less reasonable than those living in other regions. Among other reasons, it may be caused by the lack of popular confidence in the ability of Estonia to protect the region bordering Russia from a hypothetical attack.

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<sup>222</sup> "Estonia Removes Soviet-Era Tank Monument amid Russia Tensions," The Guardian (Guardian News and Media, August 16, 2022), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/16/estonia-removes-soviet-era-tank-monument-amid-russia-tensions-narva>.

## Political Unity And Mobilization Of Ethnic Minorities

Ethnic-based separatism often grows in concert with political mobilization of ethnic minorities against the policy of the host nation. The annexation of the Sudetenland was preceded by the growing power and popularity of the pro-Nazi Sudeten German Party in Czechoslovakia. Homogenized on ethnic basis, by 1935 it was the second biggest political force in the country. Promoting the idea that ethnic Germans were oppressed by Slavic hegemony, Nazi Germany was able to use the Sudeten German Party as leverage in Czechoslovakia to initiate riots and justify the annexation.

In Ukraine, the Party of Regions was the major political force representing the interests of ethnic Russians and pro-Russia oriented Ukrainians. The Orange Revolution and Euromaidan were instances of the clash of the nationalizing state and politically mobilized ethnic minorities. Taking down Yanukovich, Ukraine took away political power from pro-Russia oriented, mainly Russian-speaking, minorities. Doing it by force, Ukraine gave the symbolic justification for recusancy of politically mobilized Russian-speakers in the East, who mostly supported the ex-President and the Party of Regions.

In Estonia, as well as in other Baltic States in the early 90s, Russian-speakers lost the power and status that they used to have during the Soviet occupation. The most politically mobilized Russian-speaking groups tried to oppose the emerging *Jus sanguinis* uniting in the movements, such as Intermovement (Estonia), Interfront (Latvia), and Yedinstvo (Lithuania). However, their efforts against strong nationalizing governments were doomed to failure without the decisive support from Moscow, which was unavailable by that time. In 1991, the Estonian government banned the political activity of Intermovement. In 1993, Intermovement activists organized an unconstitutional separatist referendum in Narva and Sillamae, demanding autonomy for the



Russian-speaking areas in the East of Estonia. However, the results of the referendum were never accepted by the government and could not be enforced.

Since that time several political parties tried to unite and mobilize Russian-speakers in Estonia, among these are Eestimaa Ühendatud Rahvapartei, Eesti Keskerakond, Vene Ühtsuspartei, Vene Balti Erakond, Vene Erakond Eestis, Eestimaa Ühtsus, and Eesti Vasakpartei. Even though all these parties had certain levels of a pro-Russia international agenda, their main promise for Russian-speakers in Estonia was the preservation of their status and language rights. To some extent, these parties positioned themselves as a protection of Russian-speakers against the nationalizing Estonian state. Therefore, in the statistical analysis, I assumed that the respondents supporting some of these political parties in elections may have less supportive attitudes towards Estonian security and defense policy.

However, the statistical analysis showed no statistically significant impact of the political orientation of the respondents on their attitudes toward the Defense League, Defense Forces, national defense, and NATO. This can be explained by the fact that the Russian-speaking respondents willing to protect their status and language right are not necessarily willing to do it against Estonian security and defense interests. Disagreement with nationalizing policy cannot be directly translated as disloyalty to national security and defense policy.

#### National Economy

The historical analysis has shown that the attitudes of ethnic minorities to the hosting nation and ethnocultural homeland often have a rational basis. A national economic downfall may negatively impact the attitudes of ethnic minorities to the nation in general, especially when it is correlated with the pressure from the ethnocultural homeland. On the other hand, a strong national economy can be a reason of greater support and loyalty among ethnic minorities to the host nation.

In 2001, Viktor Orbán's FIDESZ government adopted a legislative initiative to support Hungarians living abroad. The law was aimed to protect ethnocultural kin and maintain close links with diaspora in neighboring countries. The initiative was based on the assumption that the minorities in the neighboring countries, such as Slovakia and Romania, needed help from their ethnocultural homeland. However, both neighboring countries had good relations with their Hungarian ethnic minorities. Both Slovakia's and Romania's GDPs were skyrocketing from 2000 to 2007. Both nations were EU member-candidates. The GDP change in Hungary during the same time was much less promising. Hungarian minority communities in Slovakia and Romania became the most outspoken critics of Orbán's status law. In some sense, support of this law meant the accusation of the Slovak and Romanian governments in not doing a good job of protecting and promoting the rights and interests of Hungarian minorities under their jurisdiction. Local Hungarian political elites in Slovakia and Romania did not want to break good relations with Slovak and Romanian governments.<sup>223</sup>

Largely thanks to economic advantage, Estonia could avoid the scenarios of South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Transnistria. When Narva and Sillamäe voted in the 1993 referendums for autonomy, Prime Minister Laar went to Narva, not to meet local political activists, but only entrepreneurs and heads of leading regional industries. The key signal that the Estonian government gave was that, in the worst-case scenario, Narva could become a part of Russia, switch to Russian rubles, and be cut off from trade with Europe through Estonia. Regional leaders made a rational choice to stay loyal to the Estonian nation. The Estonian government has never considered violence as a potential means to address the Eastern separatism. A growing economy

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<sup>223</sup> Kemp, W. The Triadic Nexus: Lessons Learned from the Status Law. *Beyond Sovereignty: From Status Law to Transnational Citizenship*, 9, (2006): 109-127.

and European perspectives were the strongest tools in Estonia's political arsenal addressing separatism.

National economy may also have a significant impact on the attitudes towards national security and defense policy. From the point of view of capitalist peace theory and liberal pacifism, people are less willing to support the investment for armed forces, and even less willing to use them in economically developed societies.<sup>224</sup> However, this assumption is mostly related to the willingness of people to support the force-based expansionism, rather than national defense. Capitalist democracies can hardly tolerate the high costs of violent imperialism. According to Cooper, economically and morally developed post-modern societies are not willing to fight and conquer.<sup>225</sup> Though it does not mean that these societies are less willing to invest in their national defense. Hypothetically, the larger a national economy is and the higher the national prosperity is, the more people should be ready to devote a share of national income to defense, instead of increasing budgets of, for instance, social security.

Estonian security and defense policy agenda requires significant investments. As NATO-member Estonia must spend at least 2 percent of GDP for defense purposes. In addition to this, the concept of total defense based on conscription is also financially demanding. The conscripts instead of working and bringing taxes for almost a year rely on the national defense budget. Therefore, we can assume that people should support the expensive national security and defense policy more when the nation can afford it.

Statistical analysis has demonstrated that the attitudes of Russian-speaking respondents towards the Defense Forces and NATO are generally better in a period of national economic

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<sup>224</sup> Doyle, M. W. (1986). Liberalism and world politics. *American political science review*, 80(4), (1986): 1151-1169.

<sup>225</sup> Cooper, Robert. *The post-modern state and the world order*. Demos, 2000.

growth. This means that the Russian-speaking respondents are more willing to tolerate NATO's defense spending requirements and a financially demanding national security and defense agenda if the nation does economically well. Most of the models showed that people find it more necessary to defend the country in the period of economic growth. However, attitudes towards the Defense League, the voluntary organization, do not change much with a change in the national economy. It can be related to the popular perception of the Defense League as a voluntary organization, which does not require significant national investment.

#### Ethno-Cultural And Civic Identity

When ethno-cultural identity of ethnic minorities is in conflict with the nationalizing agenda of the host nation, it can increase the level of mistrust and undermine social cohesion. In many post-Soviet nations, Russian as the ethno-cultural identity is associated with the Soviet occupation. In 2011, Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves gave an interview to the Swiss newspaper *Der Bund*. Explaining why Russian is not given status as an official national language in Estonia, the President called it the language of an occupying power (referring to the Soviet occupation of Estonia).<sup>226</sup> The problem is that ethno-cultural identity is often linked to certain political stances and beliefs, including the perception of historical events. In the context of the age of hybrid warfare, these beliefs, stances, and perceptions can be weaponized and used to undermine political cohesion between ethnic groups in nationalizing states.

In the historical analysis, I have discussed how the difference between Eastern and Western Ukrainian identity became a trigger of ethnic conflict that was manipulated by Russia to justify the invasion. The Orange Revolution and in part the Maidan Revolution were the instances of the clash of identities in Ukraine. In this clash, post-Soviet Eastern pro-Russian identity forces (led by

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<sup>226</sup> Turovski, Marcus. "Latvian Expert: PBK Very Careful about Airing Propaganda," ERR, February 17, 2020, <https://news.err.ee/1036259/latvian-expert-pbk-very-careful-about-airing-propaganda>.

the Yanukovych administration) were fighting for power against the nationalizing, liberal Western identity force.

This, however, may seem symbolic. This struggle for power between the identities has significant practical impact on the entire state structure. In Ukraine, this fight of identities was not only for language rights or historical memory. It was also a fight for geopolitical orientation of the nation. It was a competition between the pro-Western liberal democratic identity (with nationalizing character) and pro-Russian conservative identity (with a Soviet-nostalgic character). The practical impact of this clash of identities was the option between the Eurasian Economic Union and association with the EU, mutually exclusive single markets. The clash of identities supported by the outer patrons became the precondition for ethnic conflict and the following invasion.

Based on the Triadic Conflict in Ukraine and other similar cases, we can conclude that ethnocultural identity may be an important factor predicting change in the political attitudes of ethnic minorities. However, the statistical analysis of the case of Estonia did not confirm this assumption. As a factor, ethnocultural identity did not have a statistically significant impact on the attitudes of Russian-speaking respondents towards national security and defense policy. Partly it shows that a respondent who does not self-identify as Estonian can be equally loyal to national security and defense policy as others. Secondly, it may in the Estonian social context be harder for a Russian-speaker to claim national self-identity due to greater linguistic and cultural difference than for instance between Russians and Ukrainians.

My conclusions regarding ethnic self-identity have several limitations. First, it is one thing to ask a person to name his ethnic self-identity, and another thing to give a respondent a choice between options: Estonian or Russian. The current analysis has only checked the impact of

Estonian identity on these attitudes. The research conducted earlier has shown that there is plethora of ethno-cultural identity variations among Russian-speaking residents of Estonia. The qualitative research may offer a deeper analysis of the effect of the identity on these attitudes.<sup>227</sup> Second, the regression model covering ethnic identity included a limited amount of observation as the question about identity was not addressed systematically across the entire survey period.

### Nationalizing Language Policy

The historical analysis has shown that a nationalistic agenda such as a restrictive language policy may have short-term negative impacts on integration of ethnic minorities in the host nation. Even though in the long-term perspective the nationalizing language policy may have a positive impact on cohesion, in the short-term, it often creates a counterreaction among ethnic minorities in the Triadic Nexus Model. This counteraction could be weaponized by the ethnocultural homeland with the aim to undermine social cohesion in an adversarial host nation. This rhetoric was used by both Nazi Germany and Russia to justify the invasions (protecting the rights of ethnocultural kin).

In the interwar period, the contested region of Upper Silesia was targeted by both Polish as well as German nationalisms. Both mechanisms often resulted in unwanted effects. Popular attitudes in the region were resistant to both German and Polish nationalist projects. The more pressure that was applied to the bi-lingual population, the more the reluctance grew as a response among the Upper Silesians.<sup>228</sup>

In Estonia, a restrictive language policy can be seen as an effort to homogenize the population, which is still largely divided in two groups: Russian-speakers and ethnic Estonians.

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<sup>227</sup> Lumijõe, Nikita. Transnationalism and Attitudinal Integration. Russian-Speaking Youth and Estonian Security and Defence Policy. 5, University of Tartu. (2018).

<sup>228</sup> Karch, Brendan. *Nation and loyalty in a German-Polish borderland: Upper Silesia, 1848–1960*. Cambridge University Press, 2018.

However, some political observers consider it to be an ethnic revanchism for the years of occupation and Russification.<sup>229</sup> The nationalizing language policy has always been highlighted during parliamentary elections by both nationalist political parties and the parties which stand for securitization of language rights of Russian-speakers.

One of the key issues in Estonian language policy was the language of education. Since the regaining of independence in 1991, Estonia tried to conduct language reform in education. By 2023, many public and private schools are still teaching in the Russian language. On the one hand, it allowed Russian-speakers to get an education in their mother tongue. On the other hand, it created obstacles for integration, segregating Russian-speaking students from their Estonian-speaking counterparts. After years of political debate, the big shift happened in 2011, when all Russian high schools (10-12 grade) were obliged to teach at least 60 percent of their program in the Estonian language.

The attitudes of Russian-speaking respondents toward the National Defense and the Defense Forces were slightly more negative in the post-reform period. The attitudes towards the Defense League and NATO did not change. Certain limitations, however, must be taken into consideration evaluating these results. First of all, the effect of language reform was taken as a temporary factor. We cannot exclude that the period was affected by other temporary factors. Second, after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, the Estonian government decided to switch all public schools completely to the Estonian language. For future research purposes, including this period into the study could help make more reliable conclusions.

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<sup>229</sup> Kalakauskas, Igor. Жажда мести оказалась сильнее: это моя последняя статья о переходе школ на эстонский язык. Postimees, December 29, 2022. <https://rus.postimees.ee/7680157/igor-kalakauskas-zhazhda-mesti-okazalas-silnee-eto-moya-poslednyaya-statya-o-perehode-shkol-na-estonskiy-yazyk>

## The Information Campaigns Of Ethnocultural Homeland

From the Triadic Nexus conflicts in the past, we learned that the pro-active communication of the ethnocultural homeland with own claimed kin in the host nation may have a significant impact on the political stances of ethnic minorities. In times of geopolitical conflict, in the Triadic Nexus format ethnocultural homeland plays a role of the opposition by weaponizing all weaknesses of the host nation government in relation to ethnic minorities. Successful communication campaigns can undermine social cohesion and increase the alienation of ethnic minorities from the host nation.

In inter-war Poland, the mostly Ukrainian-speaking population of the Eastern regions demonstrated hostile attitudes towards Poland and Poles, caused by the dissatisfaction with the status of the Ukrainian language in public administration and education.<sup>230</sup> The efforts to create a Ukrainian identity loyal to the Polish state, such as the Volhynia Experiment, were significantly undermined by Soviet propaganda projecting the privilege of the Ukrainian language and culture in Soviet Ukraine. The Volhynia Governor, and the author of the Volhynia Experiment, Henryk Jozewski, noted that even in times of the worse Soviet atrocities in Ukraine, locals were still following Soviet propaganda. The pro-Soviet orientation of leftist Volhynian Ukrainians created a favorable pre-text for the Soviet invasion in 1939.<sup>231</sup>

In the Baltic States, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia's government-sponsored media has also been trying to constantly project its own geopolitical agenda on local Russian-speakers. Even though the most popular Russian TV channels, such as Perviy Baltiyskiy Kanal (PBK), were carefully airing propaganda, trying to affect people's mentality mostly through

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<sup>230</sup> Борисёнок, Елена. Несоветская украинизация: власти Польши, Чехословакии и Румынии и «украинский вопрос» в межвоенный период. Litres, 2022.

<sup>231</sup> Snyder, Timothy. "The causes of Ukrainian-Polish ethnic cleansing 1943." *Past & Present* 179 (2003): 204.



entertainment with the political shows and messages in between, they still tried in a subtle manner to impact local politics.<sup>232</sup> In 2011, approximately 70 percent of Russian-speakers in Estonia watched PBK; in the capital, the popularity of the channel among Russian-speakers was about 80 percent. During Estonia's parliamentary election campaign in early 2011, PBK almost exclusively promoted top pro-Moscow politician, Edgar Savisaar, head of the Centre party, and the Mayor of Tallinn.<sup>233</sup> After Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Estonia banned all Russian government-sponsored TV channels as a threat to national security.

Taking into consideration the potential impact of the communication campaigns of ethnocultural homelands on the attitudes of ethnic minorities, it was included as a factor in the statistical analysis. The aim was to check if Russian-speaking respondents, who regularly follow any information sources from Russia, have more negative attitudes towards Estonian security and defense policy. The results, however, show that Russian media has no impact on the attitudes of Russian-speakers towards national defense. It has a marginal impact on the attitudes towards the Defense Forces and the Defense League. However, the biggest and the most constant impact it has is on the attitude towards NATO. This is partly explained by the fact that NATO is considered by Moscow to be the major threat to Russia's security. It makes NATO the main target of misinformation in the field of security and defense. The goal of Russia's state-controlled media channels is to show that NATO is an example of the danger of Western expansionism, that NATO is not a trustworthy partner for the member-states, and that the true decision-making is made without consideration of the interests of the Eastern and smaller member-states such as Estonia.

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<sup>232</sup> Turovski, Marcus. "Latvian Expert: PBK Very Careful about Airing Propaganda," ERR, February 17, 2020, <https://news.err.ee/1036259/latvian-expert-pbk-very-careful-about-airing-propaganda>.

<sup>233</sup> Leviat, Laas. "Russian media outlets in Estonia are tasked with Kremlin's propaganda" Estonian World. 2011. <https://www.eesti.ca/russian-media-outlets-in-estonia-are-tasked-with-kremlin-s-propaganda/article33815>

Furthermore, it is easier to create a publicly acceptable negative narrative about foreign forces and allies than about its own defense forces.

### Change Of Political Power

A change in the composition of government or parliament unfavorable to ethnic minorities may trigger their alienation from the host nation or even an ethnic conflict. The representation of ethnic minorities and their interests in the legislative organs of the host nation gives it additional legitimacy. In the moment when they lose the power of influence on the government, any decision of the host nation can be seen as oppression by ethnic minorities in this situation.

As discussed earlier in this dissertation, Ukraine has always been divided on two ethnic-based groups of identities: the Eastern and the Western. This division was obvious in language, culture, and threat perception. In his interview to *Ukrayinska Pravda*, ex-president Viktor Yushchenko, after the events in 2014, described Eastern Ukraine as the place least Ukrainian, where there was no Ukrainian language, Ukrainian memory, church, and culture.<sup>234</sup> The period between the collapse of the Soviet Union and Euromaidan in 2014 can be described as a struggle for power between Eastern and Western Ukraine. During Euromaidan, the Yanukovich administration and the Party of Regions that represented the interests of the Russian-speaking and Russian-minded East was taken down by force. It triggered frustration among the Russian-speakers, who supported the Party of Regions and considered the revolution illegitimate. Russia took advantage of the situation, supported Eastern separatism, and annexed Crimea.

The ethnic conflict in Ukraine has been present for centuries. Before the revolution of 1917 and during Soviet times, the armed confrontation was prevented by force of the hegemon. In democratic Ukraine after 1991, the active confrontation was prevented by the rule of law and

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<sup>234</sup> Ukrainska Pravda. "Yushchenko pro Krym i Donbas: tam chuzhina chizhinoyu," 26 December 2014. <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2014/12/26/7053324/> (Accessed: 29 March 2022).

political balance. Corruption and electoral fraud undermined the rule of law. The revolution of 2014 destabilized the political balance. In a situation where the political change was made by force, supporters of the Yanukovych administration (mostly Russian-speakers) and the most Soviet/Russian-minded layers of the population, rose up against the post-Maidan political establishment.

In Spring 2014, Ukraine as a nation was standing between liberal-democratic Western and conservative pro-Russian tracks of development. It was a decisive moment, where the Euromaidan revolution played a key role. However, the following escalation of the conflict between the new power in Kyiv and Eastern Ukraine, which was under control for more than 20 years of independence, created the ground for the assumption that the abrupt change of power that limits the representation of the interests of ethnic minorities in a Triadic Nexus context, can lead to the confrontation between the host nation and ethnic minorities, especially when the conflict is fueled by the support from the ethnocultural homeland.

In Estonia, as well as in Latvia, the political situation after 1991 was different, as well as ethnic *doxa*, which was described in chapter one. Unlike Ukraine, Estonia excluded most of the Russian-speaking population from politics by the citizenship policy. Therefore, in the beginning of the 90s, Russian-speakers had very limited political rights and almost no representation in parliament. However, over the following years, a large part of the Russian-speaking population gained citizenship through the naturalization process and therefore were given rights to vote on parliamentary elections. There was a plethora of parties that claimed the political niche of protection of ethnic rights of the Russian-speakers (mostly language rights). However, the most successful and popular among Russian-speakers in Estonia was the Centre Party. One of the most outspoken politicians of this party, a member of the European Parliament, Yana Toom, stands for

liberalization of the citizenship and language laws.<sup>235</sup> We can draw many parallels between the Centre Party of Estonia and the Party of Regions in Ukraine. The Centre Party used to have a cooperation protocol with United Russia, Russian President Vladimir Putin's political party. The representatives of the Centre Party made public claims questioning the logic of Estonian membership in NATO, supporting the legitimacy of the 2014 referendum in Crimea, and standing for protection of the Soviet monuments.<sup>236</sup>

Even though the Centre Party has significantly limited any pro-Russian sentiments since the invasion of Ukraine, within the framework of current research, I analyzed how the presence of the Centre Party in the government impacted the attitudes of Russian-speakers towards national security and defense policy until 2020. The results show that the presence of the Centre Party in government has no effect on the attitudes towards the Defense Forces. Trust in the Defense Forces among Russian-speakers is not linked to the composition of the government. Some models have shown that the factor had a positive impact on the attitudes towards the Defense League. The most constant positive impact the Centre Party has is on the attitudes towards national defense. When the interests of Russian-speakers are represented in the government by their favorite party, they are more willing to defend the country in case of an armed conflict. However, some models have shown that the presence of the Centre Party in the government may have a negative impact on the attitudes towards NATO. It can be associated with the anti-NATO and pro-Russia discourse promoted by some representatives of the party.

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<sup>235</sup> Whyte, Andrew. "Russian Cultural Autonomy Needs Serious Consideration, Says Yana TOOM MEP," ERR, September 28, 2018, <https://news.err.ee/864989/russian-cultural-autonomy-needs-serious-consideration-says-yana-toom-mep>

<sup>236</sup> Vahtla, Aili. "Minister Korb: I Am Not in Favor of NATO Membership," ERR, May 24, 2017, <https://news.err.ee/597853/minister-korb-i-am-not-in-favor-of-nato-membership>

## Geopolitical Stances Of Ethnic Minorities

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I discussed how geopolitical orientation was related to the attitudes of ethnic minorities towards the host nation. Historical analysis has shown that in both pre-WWII and post-Cold War Triadic Nexus situations the relation between ethnic minorities and the claimed ethnocultural homeland play a significant role in contextualization of the conflict. Historical observation demonstrates that the more ethnic minorities rely on the ethnocultural homeland as their security guarantee, the greater is their alienation from the host nation.

In 2010, a public opinion survey was conducted in South Ossetia to understand, among other topics, the attitudes of the local population (a Georgian ethnic minority) towards Russia (the claimed ethnocultural homeland).<sup>237</sup> The survey showed that South Ossetians consider Russia the main security guarantee. They demonstrate hostile relations to Georgia and see Russia's military presence as a protection from the nationalizing host nation. We cannot exclude that the attitudes of South Ossetians are manipulated by propaganda. One way or another, their belief in Russia's ability to protect them gives South Ossetians an additional argument against Georgia as a host nation.

In Estonia, the Triadic Nexus makes Russian-speakers especially vulnerable in case of the escalation of geopolitical conflict. The transnational ties with Russian culture and language do not make Russian speakers loyal to Russian foreign policy; however, it can be associated with certain mistrust towards them. Even though the concept of Russian World includes Russophones in Estonia as Russia's own ethnocultural kin, many local Russian-speakers do not share this affinity, especially among the younger generation.<sup>238</sup> However, any conflict between Estonia and Russia

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<sup>237</sup> Toal, Gerard, and John O'Loughlin. "Inside South Ossetia: a survey of attitudes in a de facto state." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 29, no. 2 (2013): 136-172.

<sup>238</sup> Lumijõe, Nikita. *Transnationalism and Attitudinal Integration. Russian-Speaking Youth and Estonian Security and Defence Policy*. 5, University of Tartu. (2018).

will shadow local Russian-speakers. They are afraid to be considered the “Fifth Column” by Estonia as a host nation.<sup>239</sup> This conflict-averseness partly explains the desire to stay in friendly relations with Russia. It also explains the relative lack of support to the military presence of NATO allies in Estonia, as that is a perceived threat of provocation. Many Russian-speakers still see the cooperation with Russia as the main security guarantee for Estonia. According to the Public Opinion and National Defense Survey, until 2021 cooperation and good relations with Russia was considered to be the primary security guarantee by most non-Estonian respondents. In 2022, however, the attitudes of non-Estonians to Russia have changed. The latest survey has shown that non-Estonians now see membership in NATO and the EU more important for national security than good relations with Russia.<sup>240</sup>

The Estonian security and defense policy largely contradicts the geopolitical ambitions of Moscow. It is a Zero-Sum Game, where Estonian security and defense enforcement and good relations with the current Russian regime are mutually exclusive political goals. Therefore, in the framework of this research, I checked how the respondents’ opinion about cooperation with Russia impacts their attitudes towards Estonian security and defense policy. The assumption was that Russian-speakers who consider good relations with Russia to be the main national security guarantee, have less supportive attitudes towards Estonian security and defense policy. The statistical analysis has shown that the assumption was correct. Russian-speaking respondents who consider good relations with Russia to be the main national security guarantee demonstrate less trust in the Defense Forces and the Defense League. An especially significant negative impact these factors have is on the attitude towards NATO. Good relations with the current Russian regime could not be achieved by increasing the presence of international military allies in Estonia.

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> Eesti Uuringukeskus OÜ. “Public Opinion On National Defence 2022”. Estonian Ministry of Defense. 2022.

However, it is worth noting that in 2022, the support of NATO membership among Russian-speakers had increased, but the support of a NATO military presence remains low.<sup>241</sup> It may lead to the conclusion that nowadays mostly Russian-speakers in Estonia understand the significance of international alignment with the West; however, they still would try to avoid provoking Russia's regime.

#### Personal Connections To The Defense Institutions

Most post-Soviet states still run their armed forces with conscripts. Besides military purposes, the conscription may also serve certain socio-cultural goals. As was discussed earlier, the collapse of empires, such as the Soviet Union, often leave the emerging nationalizing states with ethnically diverse populations, where transnational ties of ethnic minorities with their ethnocultural homeland may be stronger than loyalty to the nationalizing host nation. The conscription of ethnically diverse societies and military service in general is often seen as a “melting pot” or the “school for the nation.”<sup>242</sup> Under certain conditions, the conscription, commonly linked to civic, political, and historical education, may promote social cohesion and enforce integration of ethnic minorities.<sup>243</sup>

Estonia's armed forces is composed of two main parts: the Defense Forces and the Defense League. While the Defense League is a voluntary organization, the Defense Forces are mainly based on conscription. All eligible male citizens, including Russian-speakers, are the subjects of conscription. In Estonia, conscription serves the purposes of integration in multiple ways. First, military service provides the platform for cooperation and socializing between ethnic groups.

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<sup>241</sup> Eesti Uuringukeskus OÜ. “Public Opinion On National Defence 2022”. Estonian Ministry of Defense. 2022.

<sup>242</sup> Poutvaara, Panu, and Andreas Wagener. “The political economy of conscription.” In *The handbook on the political economy of war*. Edward Elgar Publishing, 2011.

<sup>243</sup> Peled, Alon. 1994. “Force, Ideology and Contract: The History of Ethnic Conscription.” *Ethnic & Racial Studies* 17 (1): 61.

Second, conscription includes some forms of socio-cultural and historical education. For instance, all conscripts have an obligation to watch governmental-sponsored evening news on the national broadcasting channel. Finally, military service in Estonia is conducted exclusively in the Estonian language. The conscripts, whose Estonian language proficiency is not sufficient, are forced to complete language courses.<sup>244</sup>

As was discussed in the first part of this work, culturally, military service in Russian culture is commonly considered to be not only respectful, but almost required from a man. Also, in a ethnically hierarchical society, professional military service, which becomes available after conscription, is an opportunity for Russian-speakers to build a stable and perspective career in the public sector. Russian-speakers are disproportionately represented in Estonian Defense Forces. However, they are significantly underrepresented in the Defense League, the voluntary military formation.

Studies show that in Estonia, people who were personally involved in national military service or those who are personally close to these people, demonstrate a greater willingness to fight for the nation in case of a military conflict; they also show greater level of trust in the Defense Forces and the Defense League.<sup>245</sup> Hence, we can assume that the Russian-speakers who either served, and/or have friends and relatives involved in the Defense Forces and the Defense League should have better attitudes towards Estonian security and defense policy.

Statistical analysis has shown that the personal relation to the Defense Forces and the Defense League is not a reliable predictor of the change in attitudes towards the national defense.

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<sup>244</sup> Urmet Kook, “Kaitsevägi Hakkas Vene Noortele Kohustuslikult Eesti Keelt Õpetama,” ERR (Eesti Rahvusringhääling | ERR, October 17, 2019), <https://www.err.ee/992525/kaitsevagi-hakkas-vene-noortele-kohustuslikult-eesti-keelt-opetama>.

<sup>245</sup> Uulimaa, Ulvi. *Defence Willingness Of Estonian Male Population Liable To National Defence Obligation In 2000-2017*. University of Tartu. (2019).



It also cannot explain any change in the level of trust of the Defense Forces. However, Russian-speaking respondents who either served, and/or have friends and relatives involved in the defense institutions, show greater support to Estonian membership in NATO. The personal relation to the Defense League appears to be a statistically significant predictor of the positive change in trust of the Defense League in all models.

Based on these results, we can conclude that the attitudes towards national defense and the Defense Forces are not determined by the personal relations to the defense institutions. As was discussed earlier, attitudes towards the Defense Forces among Russian-speakers have rather cultural patterns. However, the personal relation to the Defense League, the organization where Russian-speakers are underrepresented, significantly improves attitudes towards the organization. Greater participation of Russian-speakers in the Defense League may improve their understanding and support of the organization. If the service in the Defense Forces has rationality and culture reference for Russian-speakers, the reputation of the Defense League may only be improved through personal experience and/or involvement of social circles. We can draw certain parallels also with the reputation of NATO. Common exercises of the Defense Forces and the Defense League with the allies improve the personification of their image. Russian-speakers involved in the Defense Forces and the Defense League get the chance, if not to meet NATO allies in person, then definitely to learn more about them, which improves the level of trust.

#### Threat Perception

If we look at defense spending as a share of GDP among the NATO member-states, we can see that the Baltic States and Poland are among the leaders. The governments can invest such a big share of national budget to defense mostly because of popular support. This support can be possible only if people believe in the rationality of this spending. The threat perception stimulates

this belief. Hence, the support of national security and defense enforcement largely depend on the threat perception.

In Ukraine, as was discussed earlier, the attitude towards Russia in the East and in the West were completely different. While for the Eastern Regions that supported Yanukovich, cooperation with Russia was perceived as a security guarantee, but in Western Ukraine, Russia was seen as a threat for national independence. This explains why during the Euromaidan revolution, which was largely the reaction of people to Yanukovich' refusal to sign an EU association agreement, most of the protestors were from the West.<sup>246</sup> The association agreement with the EU is the first significant step in the direction of potential membership. Even though there is no guarantee that EU membership will lead to membership in NATO, the pure fact that all post-Soviet Eastern European EU member-states are now also members of NATO may lead to certain conclusions and expectations. NATO's security umbrella serves as the main security guarantee for the post-Soviet states that took a Western liberal-democratic trajectory of development, which narrows down Russia's sphere of influence.

In Estonia, as well as in Ukraine, the threat perception is different between ethnic groups. While 85 percent of ethnic Estonians in 2022 considered Russia's attempts to restore its influence in neighboring states as the most likely security threat to the world, only 15 percent of Russian-speakers believed the same. However, while 54 percent of Russian-speakers think that US global dominance in economic and military affairs is threatening the world, only 20 percent of Estonians shared this opinion.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> Daryna Shevchenko, "Poll Discovers Euromaidan Evolution from Dreamy to Radical: Article," KyivPost, accessed January 28, 2023, <https://www.kyivpost.com/article/content/ukraine-politics/poll-discovers-euromaidan-evolution-from-dreamy-to-radical-336389.html>.

<sup>247</sup> Eesti Uuringukeskus OÜ. "Public Opinion On National Defence 2022". Estonian Ministry of Defense. 2022.

As was discussed earlier, the difference in threat perception may affect the attitudes towards the security and defense policy. Given that the Estonian security concept sees Russia as a threat and NATO as a security guarantee, the contrasting position of Russian-speakers can be potentially correlated with a lower level of support to national security and defense policy. Therefore, in the current research, I checked if Russian-speakers, who consider Russia as a threat, would have more supportive attitudes to Estonian security and defense policy.

Statistical analysis has confirmed the assumption. The level of trust in the Defense Force and the Defense league is higher among Russian-speaking respondents who see Russia as a threat. They also see the national defense more necessary in case of a military conflict. Yet the highest impact the threat perception of Russian-speakers has is on the attitudes towards NATO. The perception of Russia as a threat is a strong and reliable predictor of the supportive attitudes of the Russian-speakers towards Estonian membership in NATO. Along with the level of national pride, the threat perception appears to be the strongest and the most reliable predictor of change in the attitudes of Russian-speakers towards national security and defense policy.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

History shows that hybrid warfare, where ethnic minorities play a central role, is not a new phenomenon. Both Germany and the Soviet Union used the responsibility to protect their ethnocultural kin abroad to justify international aggression. Negative attitudes of ethnic minorities toward their host nation were weaponized by bigger and stronger ethnocultural homelands to destabilize their neighbors, creating beneficial circumstances for invasion. We observe the implementation of similar tactics in the post-Cold War conflicts in Europe. Ethnic minorities and their status became a basis of the conflicts between an ethnocultural homeland (or patronizing state) and host nations in such cases as the wars in Georgia and Ukraine.

Today, dynamically developing communication technologies open new avenues for strategic communication and information operations. It makes modern conflicts population-centric, where an aggressor can destabilize a nation without escalation to an armed stage of a conflict. While NATO's Article Five protects member-states from armed or cyber aggression, it is not applicable in civil conflicts, which makes NATO nations vulnerable for hybrid aggression. Nations like Estonia, being members of the EU and NATO and having a large proportion of its population made up of non-ethnic Estonians, become a focus of research as potential targets of hybrid aggression. Russia's aggression in Europe, with an active involvement with its ethnocultural kin, creates concerns about the divided loyalty of the large Russian-speaking community living in Estonia and other post-Soviet states.

The theory tells us that the loyalty of ethnic minorities can vary as a factor of different circumstances. To understand why the attitudes of Russian-speakers in Estonia towards national security and defense policy remain significantly different from the attitudes of ethnic Estonians,

30 years after regaining of independence, we must analyze how these attitudes are formed and what factors have an impact on them. In this research, I identified the factors impacting national loyalty of ethnic minorities in the Triadic Nexus cases from the past to apply them in the statistical model in the case of Estonia, focusing on the level of support of ethnic minorities to national security and defense policy.

Using a series of linear regression models, I analyzed how such factors as ethno-cultural identity, national pride, personal wealth, and language proficiency are correlated with the attitudes of Russian-speakers towards Estonian security and defense policy. The analysis was based on historical review of modern conflicts with involvement of ethnic minorities, the ethnocultural homeland, and the host nation. In addition to this, this dissertation examines the role of Estonia in international security organizations, Estonian national security and defense policy, and how it contradicts with the current Russian foreign policy agenda. Even though the current research is focused mostly on Eastern Europe and particularly on Estonia, it develops a new approach to analysis of the formation of political attitudes of ethnic minorities, which may be applicable to a variety of circumstances. The results of this study create a better understanding of popular attitudes of Russophones in Estonia, which may be used in development of national integration, citizenship, and language policies.

## CONTRIBUTION TO THE LITERATURE

Currently, the War in Ukraine became the most discussed topic in the fields of international relations and security studies. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, it was hardly foreseeable that a full-scale war could erupt in Europe. The war in Ukraine challenges the neo-liberal post-Cold War global order and brings significant change in our understanding of modern conflict. This current dissertation is an effort to contribute to the existing literature regarding the roots of the

ethnic conflicts like the one in Ukraine, and particularly explains the formation of political attitudes of ethnic minorities in times of geopolitical tensions between their host nation and their ethnocultural homeland.

The conflict in Ukraine that erupted in 2014 was an instance of the Triadic Nexus, the triadic interrelation between host nation, ethnocultural homeland and ethnic minority. The Triadic Nexus is the model developed by Rogers Brubaker that applies to many Eastern European nations. Scholars apply this model to a great variety of cases, such as the Abkhaz-Georgian ethnopolitical conflict,<sup>248</sup> the complex ethnocultural situation in Kazakhstan,<sup>249</sup> Status Law case in Hungary,<sup>250</sup> and the escalation of separatism in Ukraine.<sup>251</sup> The common aspect of these cases is the above-mentioned typology of actors and a certain level of the conflicting interests of ethnocultural homeland and host nation. What varies is the political orientation of ethnic minorities and circumstances affecting it, such as socio-economic, ethnocultural, historical, and the international context of interrelations.

In this dissertation, I analyzed the Triadic Nexus conflicts from the past followed by military intervention of ethnocultural homelands. In these cases, I looked on the political orientation of ethnic minorities and their attitudes towards intervention. I analyzed both the interwar cases such as in Czechoslovakia and Poland, and post-Cold War cases such as in Georgia and Ukraine. I identified a series of factors that could play a role in the formation of attitudes of

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<sup>248</sup> Nokhrin, I. M. "Abkhaz-Georgian Ethnopolitical Conflict As A Complex Conflict And Prospects For Its Settlement." *Вестник Удмуртского университета. Социология. Политология. Международные отношения* 5, no. 1 (2021): 57-64.

<sup>249</sup> Oka, Natsuko, and O. Ieda. "The 'Triadic Nexus' In Kazakhstan: A Comparative Study Of Russians, Uighurs, And Koreans." *Slavic Studies* 51 (2004): 158.

<sup>250</sup> Kemp, Walter. "the Triadic Nexus: Lessons learned from the status law." *beyond sovereignty: from status law to transnational citizenship* 9 (2006): 109-127.

<sup>251</sup> Fedorenko, Kostiantyn, and Andreas Umland. "A Triadic Nexus Conflict? Ukraine's Nationalizing Policies, Russia's Homeland Nationalism, and the Dynamics of Escalation in 2014–2019." *The Accommodation of Regional and Ethno-cultural Diversity in Ukraine* (2021): 53-82.

ethnic minorities in the analyzed cases. This collection, systematization, and comparison contributes to the literature that explores the Triadic Nexus as a model explaining the formation of ethnic conflict.

Unlike many post-communist states including Moldova, Yugoslavia, Transcaucasian Countries, and Ukraine, Estonia was able to control serious ethnic tensions and avoid violence and separatism on ethnic grounds. Meanwhile, Estonia has the biggest non-ethnic Russian-speaking share of the population in the post-Soviet space. Applying the factors identified in the historical analysis in the case of Estonia, I examined how they affect the attitudes of Russian-speakers under pressure from the nationalizing host nation and the claimed ethnocultural homeland. This contributes to the existing literature, not only regarding the formation of attitudes of ethnic minorities in general, but also specifically about Russian-speakers in the Baltic states.

Finally, there is a plethora of studies about attitudes of the population of the Baltic states towards national security and defense policy. Most of it has a descriptive nature focusing on the comparison of attitudes of the titular nations and Russian-speakers. The studies often find that the attitudes of Russian-speakers towards national security and defense policy are significantly less supportive than those of ethnic Estonians or Latvians.<sup>252</sup> However, the formation of these attitudes, the reasons why Russian-speakers think one way or another, is not well researched yet. The statistical model developed in this dissertation may help to open new avenues of research and improve our knowledge of the topic which becomes increasingly important in the context of the growing geopolitical tensions with Russia.

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<sup>252</sup> Andžāns, Māris, and Andris Sprūds. "Willingness to defend one's own country and to resist in the Baltic states." *Security and defence quarterly* 30, no. 3 (2020): 15-30.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The current research sheds light the formation of the political attitudes of ethnic minorities in the Triadic Nexus context. However, it does not reveal the whole picture. First, the work examines how the identified factors impact attitudes, but it does not tell that the list of the impacting factors is complete and final. Second, the statistical analysis is based on survey data, which varied from year to year. It makes the dataset merging process arbitrary and complicates the comparison of the effects of the predictors. Finally, there is certain statistical limitations. Having statistically significant factors, the explanatory power of the model remains to be low, which means that there are significant factors that could be included in further research.

First of all, this work is an attempt to identify the factors that impact attitudes of ethnic minorities in the Triadic Nexus conflict. It contributes to the knowledge about the formation of the attitudes; however, the explanation of the entire process goes beyond the scope of this work. For instance, this work mainly does not take into account the major geopolitical changes and some significant political events, which definitely have impacted the attitudes of Russian-speakers in Estonia. However, based on the observations from the MOD Survey reports, we already know that the attitudes of Russian-speakers towards NATO declined after the events in Ukraine in 2014.<sup>253</sup> Building a more comprehensive model could add the explanatory power, though leave in the shadows more nuanced factors which were of interest in the framework of this current research.

Second, while the MOD Survey data is great material for research, it is not completely consistent. Throughout the last 20 years, the survey has been significantly modified. Some questions were included, some were omitted. For instance, the threat perception of respondents was not systematically measured until 2014, while questions about political orientation were

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<sup>253</sup> Eesti Uuringukeskus OÜ. “Public Opinion On National Defence 2022”. Estonian Ministry of Defense. 2022.



included in the survey only up until 2011. Therefore, we do not have the ability to measure political orientation and threat perception at the same time. We can only compare how these factors interacted with the attitudes in different models.

While the regression models used in the statistical analysis were robust in terms of most OLS assumptions, we cannot exclude a certain level of omitted variable bias. Even though the linear regression effects were checked for robustness with ordinal regression models, we still can be missing statistically significant predictors.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK

All things considered, the formation of attitudes of ethnic minorities in the Triadic Nexus context is a growing topic of research. There is a plethora of ways to expand our knowledge about it. In the current research framework, I want to suggest two general directions for possible future research: the contextual and methodological.

First, even though the models presented in this work can be applied in the context of other cultures and nations, they are still rather specific for the case of Estonia. The application of the method used in the current research to another nation and culture would require adjustments in terms of the composition of the variables, especially the dependent variables. It may be very useful to compare how the composition of the factors that have impacted the attitudes of Russian-speakers in Estonia would impact, for instance, the attitudes of Russian-speakers in Latvia. It may allow us to see a similar pattern of the effects and consolidate the conclusions.

Second, the research can be developed methodologically in several ways. First, statistical analysis can be more comprehensive, including more variables. For instance, we can include temporal variables that reflect the change in a geopolitical situation. We can also measure the chain effect of the variables. For instance, we can see how language proficiency impacts media

preferences of the respondents. Finally, the quantitative analysis results may be tested in a qualitative way. In future research efforts, we can conduct a series of interviews where we ask respondents their opinion about the effect of the identified factors. For instance, why they might consider good relations with Russia important for Estonian security versus membership in NATO; why they do not trust the Defense League but trust the Defense Forces; or what makes them prefer Russian information sources versus Estonian. The continuing dilemmas of newly independent states shaped by the Triadic Nexus will attract the attention of scholars into the foreseeable future.

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