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Turning Megalomanians into Ruritians*

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Ernest Gellner, in his classic work *Nations and Nationalism*, addressed the question of whether the rural, semiliterate, and socially inert immigrants from the mythical backwater of Ruritania living in the modernizing and exciting mythical state of Megalomania would themselves become (through assimilation) Megalomanians, or whether they would become disaffected with chances for social mobility and return home, now socially mobilized and literate, as Ruritanian nationalists, ready to transform a rural dialect into a world-class literary language. In the Soviet period, asking whether Kazakhs, or Yakuts, or any other non-Russian nationality would become, through exposure to Russia's modernization, russified is a question central to the domain of Gellner's theory.¹ As for the situation of a "beached" diaspora, Gellner never theorized about a change in the tide, in which Megalomanians would have to decide whether or not to become Ruritians.

Gellner's Theory of Assimilation

The most important contribution of Gellner's work on nationalism has been its unrelenting insistence that the existence of a "nation" is not a sufficient condition for the emergence of nationalism; rather, nationalism is the result of the uneven diffusion of industrialization. The theory is evocatively explicated in Gellner's robust "just-so" story, related in *Thought and Change*, about two territories, A and B, which are parts of an overarching empire. Modernization hits the world "in a devastating but untidy flood," coming first through A, and only later to B. This means that as A finally plows through the misery and dislocation of early modernization, B will still be mired in it. Impoverished and hopeless youth in B will consequently seek to better their lives by emigrating to A. From this situation, different sorts of nationalism will arise. If Bs can blend into A without being noticed, and if B's intellectuals get elite positions in A, then here will emerge a wider A-&B society, on the road to becoming a nation. Nationalism will be the doctrine of the A-&B elites seeking to naturalize state power inside the boundaries of A-&B, through the standardization of a national culture.² But if Bs cannot blend in –

that is, when Bs are radically differentiated from As by race, skin color, or religion, what Gellner later calls "entropy-resistant" classifications³ – the discontent caused by this inability to achieve social mobility in A will express itself in a form of separatist nationalism, of an A vs. B type. In both the A-&B and A vs. B cases, nationalism was impelled, not by culture, but rather by the uneven development of modernization.

Language is not an entropy-resistant classification. Full citizenship in a modern society requires literacy; and practical necessity demands that from clerks to those in more specialized occupations, citizens of a modern society must be able to communicate efficiently with each other in a single language. Small communities with their own languages cannot produce the range of specialists needed to run a modern society; therefore, the nation-state is the minimal territorial unit in the modern world. And the nation-state will impose a standard dialect or language within its boundaries, one more associated with scholastic high culture than with the folk cultures of the peasants – demonstrating that the claim by nationalists that they represent the "folk" is a sham – and this new standard language will become the distinguishing mark of the nation. This theory, however, does not predict a universal industrial culture, or a universal language of industrial society, mainly because uneven development will assure breakaway nationalisms (from those places where assimilation is blocked by a jealous working class focusing on cultural difference in order to discriminate against immigrants) whose leaders will consecrate some dialect or a language that differentiates it from its neighbor.⁴

The motivating factor in this model – quite parallel to the most-favored-lord model I proposed in Chapter 3 – is the opportunity for bureaucratic and other literacy-demanding jobs that impels rural folk to learn the elite language of the cities to which they have migrated. If mobility prospects are blocked, these migrants will sense higher expected economic returns for having their own nation-state, where the elite dialect of their language would be the standard. These frustrated job seekers would then become recruits for a nationalist movement, whose victory would make them highly paid clerks. To be sure, Gellner shied away from this bald economism and claimed that his theory had been "travestied" by others who held that nationalism was based on calculation. This formulation, he protests, is a misrepresentation. He points to the real experience of rural migrants in a city ruled by bureaucrats who speak a language absolutely foreign to them. "This very concrete experience" Gellner imagines, helps them learn "the difference between dealing with a co-national, one understanding and sympathizing with their culture, and some-one hostile to it." From this experience, a sort of "love" can emerge for their

* An earlier version of this chapter was presented at what was to be a celebration of Gellner's work at the Central European University in Prague, in December 1995. He tragically died weeks before the conference, and consequently, this critical discussion of his work lacks any reference to what I am sure would have been a spirited and devastating counterattack. The conference version of this paper is published as "Nationalism and Language: A Post-Soviet Perspective," in John A. Hall, ed., *Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

¹ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp. 58-70.

² Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 166-68.

³ Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, chap. 6.

⁴ See Gellner, *Thought and Change*, pp. 158-63. In *Nations and Nationalism* Gellner writes about "assimilation" without defining it formally. Because many citizens throughout the globe are fully incorporated into political life without having assimilated, it seems unduly provocative, as Alfred Stepan pointed out at the Prague presentation of this chapter, to hold this to be the criterion of ultimate loyalty to a nation-state. Nonetheless, any theory of the nation needs to have a criterion of culture shift in line with a national standard, for which the term "assimilation" as I defined it in Chapter 1, is perfectly appropriate, and I believe consistent with Gellner's use of the term.

culture, “without any conscious calculation of advantages and prospects of social mobility.” Nonetheless, Gellner admits, “*had* there been such calculation (which there was not) it would, in quite a number of cases . . . have been a very sound one [to become nationalists].”⁵ And so, even though his peasant migrants never calculated, they more or less acted as if they had!

It is an intellectual treat to read Gellner’s dear, acerbic, and powerful prose, whether he is battling Kedourie, one-upping Hroch, or elaborating his alternative vision. Yet Gellner’s work, as is especially apparent today when modernization theory has faced generations of critics, is deeply flawed. Its functionalism runs mad. Its reifications deny human agency. And when the theory does include agents, these agents are portrayed in caricature.⁶

In functionalist logic, the identification of a “need” is used to explain an put-come, ignoring the historical reality that many needs go unfulfilled, to the detriment of organizations and individuals. The need itself, it should be apparent, can hardly explain its fulfillment, though Gellner often writes as if it can. In *Nations and Nationalism*, for example, Gellner summarizes his explanation of why centralized states monopolize culture within their boundaries. This kind of state, he tells us,⁷

must be so. Its economy depends on mobility and communication between individuals, at a level which can only be achieved if those individuals have been socialized into a high culture, and indeed into the same high culture. . . . Also, the economic tasks set these individuals do not allow them to be both soldiers and citizens of local petty communities. . . . So the economy needs both the new type of central culture and the central state; the culture needs the state; and the state probably needs the homogeneous cultural branding of its flock. . . . So the culture needs to be sustained *as* a culture, and not as the carrier or scarcely noticed accompaniment of a faith.

Some more examples follow. “The state [under conditions of industrialization],” Gellner asserts, “is charged with the maintenance and supervision of an enormous social infrastructure.” “In the industrial world high cultures prevail, but they need a

⁵ Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 61.

⁶ Gellner’s core argument, in what he refers to as the LSE debate on nationalism, in *Encounters with Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p. 61, is that the motivating factor in inducing nationalism is industrial society. In my judgment, especially when he considers sub-Saharan Africa, he uses fancy footwork to ignore disconfirming evidence. African nationalism clearly was not motivated by industrialization. So Gellner makes the dubious assertion that nationalism developed in Africa because Europeans there were intent on setting up an “eventually industrial type of society” Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 82. Intentions (such as they were) to set up an industrial society are quite a different matter from industrialization itself. This chapter is not concerned with the causes of nationalism, and I will not enter into the LSE debate. Rather, this chapter is concerned mainly with the elaboration of the mechanisms that translate the macro forces (whether they are from industrialization, modernity, or ideas) into micro incentives for people to assimilate into a cosmopolitan culture or to seek fulfillment as a member of a separate nation, built on cultural materials recognizable from their rural roots.

⁷ Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, pp. 140-42.

state not a church, and they need a state *each*,” we are told.” That is one way of summing up the emergence of the nationalist age.” And in his subtle and clever posthumous manuscript *Nationalism Observed*, Gellner retains his functionalist view of social causation. “Egalitarianism beats out stratification in industrial societies” he writes, “because it helps to reduce friction.” “In the second zone,” Gellner writes with his focus on Germany and Italy, “nationalism *could* be benign and liberal, it had no inherent need to go nasty (even if in the end it did).” Here “needs” could not explain fascism. But for Gellner, that is an anomaly. Usually, needs create fulfilling outcomes.⁸

Like many functionalist accounts, Gellner’s relies on a technique of reification, giving human attributes to unspecified globs of humanity or territory. “Mankind is irreversibly committed to industrial society,” Gellner preaches. How precisely one can feel, or see, or measure this commitment, or find precisely where it resides, is left to the readers’ imaginations. “Cultural minorities,” we are told, “refrain from developing an effective nationalism because they have no hope of success.” How do groups of people, most of whom don’t know each other, “refrain” from doing any; thing? Elsewhere: “advanced lands do not have any interest in sharing their prosperity with the ill-trained latest arrivals.” How can we attribute “interests” to lands?⁹

Reifications come from all corners of his work. In his chapter “What is a Nation?” in *Nations and Nationalism*, he affirms that “polities then will to extend their boundaries to the limits of their cultures”; that “nationalism uses the preexisting, historically inherited proliferation of cultures . . . and most often transforms them radically”; that “the cultures [nationalism] claims to defend and revive are often its own inventions”; that “societies worship themselves brazenly and openly . . . in a nationalist age”; that “nationalism has its own amnesias . . . which . . . can be profoundly distorting”; and that “modern . . . society . . . believes itself to be perpetuating . . . a folk culture.” And in his posthumous manuscript, he writes that in his second zone, that of Prussia and Italy, “A nation wanted its own state in addition to its own Main Poet.” In these snippets, polities, nationalism, and societies are personified and given intentions and goals. Revealing is his argument with Hroch. In it, Gellner points out that Hroch “faces one of the most persistent and deep issues in this field; is it nations, or is it classes, which are the real and principal actors in history?” Gellner never even suggests that it may be “people.”¹⁰

To be sure, actors are not entirely absent from Gellner’s writings. In his posthumous manuscript, *Nationalism Observed*, Gellner introduces more fully the goals and aspirations of the “nationalist,” thereby overcoming some of his functionalism and reification. But his view of nationalists is quite caricatured. Nationalists “are in [fact aware, with bitterness] that their nations did not always exist.”¹¹ Perhaps, though, some

⁸ See *ibid.*, p. 63, and pp. 72-73; and “Nationalism Observed,” unpublished book manuscript, 199S, p. 16.

⁹ See Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 39, and *Thought and Change*, pp. 174 and 167.

¹⁰ See Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, pp. 55, 56, 58, and *Encounters with Nationalism*, p. 194.

¹¹ Gellner, “Nationalism Observed,” p. 5.

were aware with a sense of irony, or maybe were not aware because of a self-imposed amnesia that their nation did not always exist.¹² And immediately [following, Gellner writes, “The nationalist squares the assumption of the universality of nationalism with its widespread absence ... by claiming that it was there ... but... asleep.” “Reawakening” is indeed a common trope by nationalists; but the presentation of this line hardly captures the complex set of reasons that motivates real nationalists. A caricatured vision of actors is an inadequate improvement upon [a functionalist logic that has no actors at all.

Gellner’s use of functionalism, relocation, and caricature, in my judgment, were for him a shorthand, to elide the issue of mechanisms, in order to get at the basic Structure of nationalism. In that regard – where nationalism is firmly placed into a social calculus – I am in thorough debt to Gellner’s work. From Chapter I of this book, through the exposition of the tipping model, I have tried to develop a more plausible micro component to the study of assimilation as a complement to – not as a contradiction of – Gellner’s macro theory.

One way to do this, as I have shown in both the tipping model and the ethnographies, is to assume that *people* are oftentimes the principal actors in history. Don’t misunderstand; I’m not a radical methodological individualist. By no means am I opposed to macro-theorizing in analyzing the structural effects of industrialization, of state construction, and of interstate conflicts of interest. My most-favored-lord model, presented in Chapter 3, is after all a macro theory heavily indebted to Gellner’s formulations. Rather, I believe that our macro stories must be made consistent with parallel stories told on a micro level. That is to say, the predictions of the macro and micro stories need to be calibrated. It may be the case, for example, from a macro perspective, that cultural minorities “refrain” from nationalism because they believe success unlikely. Nonetheless, a convincing theory would need to show that for all (or most) members of that set, there would be no *individual* interest in developing a nationalist program and insufficient resources to “sell” it to the putative members of that nation. To be sure, Gellner often reconciles the micro and macro stories, especially when writing about the role of the intelligentsia in the forging of nationalism.¹³ But his typical story fine has macrohistorical forces (industrialization and modernization) impelling unspecified actors (minorities, states, lands, classes) into nationalist movements. This requires revision.

I propose that we subordinate Gellner’s functionalist logic to a model that also takes real individual incentives – and not just the economic ones that Gellner concentrated his analysis on – into account. The data, once examined on a micro level, allow me to complement Gellner’s theory with a nonfunctionalist micro calculus, a calculus that does not require a pure job-mobility motivation that Geller knew to be inadequate.

¹² See, for example, Juan Díez Medrano, *Divided Nations: Class, Politics, and Nationalism in the Basque Country and Catalonia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), on Sabino de Arana in Basque country.

¹³ See Gellner, *Thought and Change*, pp. 169-70.

In this chapter, the spotlight will be on ordinary people, like the ones who were introduced in the ethnographic discussions in Part II of this book. In the wings, of course, there are the intellectuals, those people often referred to as the “ethnic entrepreneurs,” who have an interest in altering the payoffs for individual identity choices. These entrepreneurs will be introduced in the discourse analysis in Chapter 10, and they will be spotlighted in Chapter 12 when I consider the issue of interethnic violence. But ethnic entrepreneurs cannot create ethnic solidarities from nothing. They must, if they are to succeed, be attuned to the micro incentives that real people face.

National Revivals and the Tipping Game

It is now apt to reconsider Figure 1.2. It should be recalled that the x-axis represents the percentage of Russians who speak the titular language. (Alternatively, and as a much better indicator of assimilation, it could represent the percentage of Russian-speakers who send their children to titular-medium schools. The number of Russian parents who have done so is so low as of this writing that the model does not have much interest; however, it is possible that at a certain point along the, x-axis – say at around the 50 percent level – a second tipping game, one involving sending their children to a titular-medium school, will be triggered. Meanwhile, the y-axis portrays the average payoff (less learning costs) for a Russian-speaker in the population who acquires facility in the titular language (or who sends her child to a titular-medium school). The utility function RR represents the payoff for maintaining a monolingual Russian repertoire; and TT represents the payoff for developing a Russian/titular bilingual repertoire (in the medium-of-instruction tipping game, RR would represent Russian-language dominance and TT would represent titular-language dominance).

The structure of this game makes for a powerful story about language shift. For one, there are only two stable equilibria, at 0 percent speaking the titular language or 100 percent. Anywhere to the left of k , the tipping point, the average payoff for learning the titular language is less than maintaining monolingualism in Russian. Those who speak the titular language will have little incentive to maintain facility in it or to pass it on to their children. The long-term consequence of this situation is for the society to return to a 0 percent equilibrium. Anywhere to the right of k , however, the incentives are reversed. And any Russian speaker who is monolingual will anticipate a higher payoff for facility in the titular language. If all remaining Russian monolingual make the same calculation (which would be rational for all those facing more or less average costs and payoffs), the trend would be toward 100 percent facility in the titular language, the other stable equilibrium.

A second crucial element of the tipping-game plot is that the difference between the average payoff for R at 0 percent and the average payoff for T at 100 percent plays almost no role in individual choice. Suppose the average individual payoffs for Russian-speakers at 100 percent along the x-axis were much higher than the average individual payoffs for Russian-speakers at 0 percent along the x-axis. Here, we might say that there were strong macro (economic, political, or social) incentives for

assimilation. But if the status quo were at 0 percent, there would be no incentive for a particular individual to shift her language repertoire. In this case, and contra Gellner's functionalist formulations, the "needs" of the society would not be met by the actions of its members.

Each of the utility functions has an unusual shape, and this merits some comment about two assumptions hidden in those curves. My first assumption is that at 0 percent along the x-axis, there will be extremely high rewards for a few Russian-speaking individuals to serve as what Abram de Swaan calls "monopoly mediators" between the elites of the nationalizing state and the cultural minority.¹⁴ These mediators serve as translators of the laws and regulations of the polity to their community and as spokespersons to the state apparatus on behalf of members of their community who need special services from the state. If there are virtually no bilinguals, and if bilingual titulars abjure playing such a role (or are not trusted by the minority community), the returns for learning the titular language (for some Russians) would be great, raising the average payoff, making it come close to the payoff for RR at 0 percent on the x-axis. This is why TT drops at first before rising as more and more Russian-speakers become fluent in the titular language.

My second assumption is that as more and more of the once monolingual Russian-speakers (and their children) become fluent in the titular language, many people in that community will feel a sense of wistfulness that their culture is disappearing as a viable aspect of the society in which they live. (This is especially the case in the second game, in which the choice is whether to send your child to a Russian or titular medium-of-instruction school.) Yet despite a general nostalgia for the days when the culture of the immigrant community was intact, only a few individuals will have an incentive to maintain monolingualism in Russian. Those who do, especially those who can demonstrate that they have "pure" Russian roots, and under conditions when most other members of the Russian-speaking community have become either bilinguals or monolingual in the titular language, will become cultural heroes. They will pine for the day when interests change, and the payoffs favoring a Russian-language revival increase.¹⁵ These culture heroes would become the vanguard of such a revival. But with no revival in sight, they will get honor and respect from members of the assimilated community who remember their roots, and perhaps receive professorships in Russian culture in the national university, and their payoffs at RR will begin to rise as the society moves toward the right-hand equilibrium.

Economists (and Gellner, in some of his formulations) would have little trouble calculating the payoff functions RR and TT. They would be the expected economic returns for each language repertoire depending on how many other people of the

¹⁴ Abram de Swaan, *In Care of the State* (New York; Oxford University Press, 1988), chap. 3. Of course, the Russian-speaking titulars had long played the mediation role and could under this reversal of the tide continue to do so. But I assume here that with a reversal of the tide, people who consider themselves "pure" Russians will want mediators from their own group.

¹⁵ David Laitin, "Language Games," *Comparative Politics* 20, no. 3 (1988): 293.

Russian-speaking community had the same repertoire or a different one. If for example, Russian-speakers project that as the society moves toward its tipping point, it would be impossible to get a job as a sales clerk, as a customs official, as a production manager, or as a teacher unless one spoke the titular language, they would set their expected economic returns for speaking the titular language as significantly higher.

Utility functions for language-related issues, as should be quite apparent from the ethnographies, and from the matched-guise experiments, are not so simple. People will be reluctant to reposition (or better, re-present) themselves culturally – say by assimilating – if they know people who share their background will taunt or ostracize them or their children. They will be equally reluctant if they know that assimilation is like being an Alice on the Queen's chessboard. The closer they get, the more the fashion leaders of the high culture change their Styles in order to create a moving target. Gellner hinted at these factors but never specified them in his just-so stories.

In light of these considerations, and in line with the data collected for the matched-guise experiment, I postulated two other variables that help constitute the language-utility function, both of which have more to do with status than income.¹⁶ First, there is the value of in-group status. Suppose Russian-speakers who attempt to learn the titular language (through seeking social relations, or even relations of affection) suffer ridicule, ostracism, or even bodily harm from members of their own community. To the extent that vigilantes within the migrant society can impose costs on potential assimilators into the titular culture, the payoff for TT will be reduced. Second, there is the value of out-group acceptance. Suppose Russian-speakers who learn the titular language are easily identified by titulars and are barred from enjoying the fruits of assimilation. Titular clubs, social groups, and spouses remain out of bounds for assimilators, or nouveaux titulars. Under such conditions (even if they could get decent employment that requires knowing the titular language), the returns for TT, compared with RR, will be lowered.

A number of important questions relating to this model and its predictions will remain unanswered: first, how and with what weight are the three elements of the language-utility function to be combined; second, how are the opportunities and constraints set by the policies of the nationalizing state to be included in the model. It makes a big difference if the state subsidizes language instruction for its minorities, or whether the governments refuse even to sponsor the publication of text-books oriented to teaching the outside group how to speak the national language. There may be precious little "choice" involved if there are no opportunities to learn the titular language; third, there are a range of other realms in which assimilation can take place – in dress, in surnames, in diet. The relationship of language assimilation to these other forms, and how they play into one another, awaits specification. Despite these theoretical lacunae, the data from Chapters 7 and 8, reassembled in the section that

¹⁶ These considerations were raised in Chapter 2.1 am indebted to Roger Petersen, whose work on this three-pronged utility function informs mine. See Roger Petersen, "Rationality, Ethnicity and Military Enlistment," *Social Science Information* 28, no. 3 (1989): 563-98.

follows, demonstrate that expected economic returns cannot tell the whole story of assimilation, at least at the early stages of language rationalization in the newly nationalizing states of the former Soviet Union, but that concerns of in-and out-group status can be made part of a rational calculus in questions of assimilation and nationalism.

Russians in the Post-Soviet Diaspora

The 25 million Russians living in the now-independent states that were formerly union republics of the Soviet Union find themselves somewhat like “Bs” in Gellner’s just-so story of nationalism. The question of the fate of this “beached diaspora” remains a central concern of this book.

An economic interpretation would have us look at the relative modernization of the nationalizing state and Russia. According to this model, the diaspora will remain in the titular republics that are developmentally ahead of Russia (e.g., Estonia and Latvia) and leave those that are behind Russia (e.g. Kazakhstan) in search of the Better things in life associated with advanced modernization. In the former case, where the Russians remain, the theory demands that we look to social mobility prospects within the nationalizing state for Russians. If they are more or less equal to that of the titulars (and this would happen where the working class cannot easily distinguish titulars from Russians, for example in Ukraine), the theory predicts assimilation by Russian-speakers into the standard language of the titular republic. If the Russians face discrimination through easy detection (e.g., in Estonia or Latvia), the theory predicts a counter nationalism led by the Russian-speaking disaffected intelligentsia living in the titular republic.

To test these predictions – but with more of a focus on individual incentives than (Gellner’s formulations demand – I propose to consolidate the data analyzed from the large-*n* surveys and from the matched-guise experiments. The relevant data from the surveys, from the matched-guise tests, and from a few other sources of published data, are presented in Table 9.1. The dependent variable of consequence for a test of Gellner’s theory is the reaction of the diasporic population to the nationalizing projects of their new states in which they are now citizens. Consequently, I shall focus here on the openness of Russian-speakers to assimilation into titular society, an index that was described and analyzed in Chapter 7. As row 1 on Table 9.1 shows, on the dependent variable “openness to assimilation” Latvia’s Russians are by far the most open, followed by Estonia’s, then Ukraine’s, and finally Kazakhstan’s.

The tipping model, if presented as a monotonic process in which positive attitudes toward assimilation increase to the extent that other members of your group have already assimilated, requires some revision in light of these data. If the point *XL* the x-axis of the tipping model is coded based on the percentage of Russians who speak the titular language (row 2), one would expect Ukrainian Russians to be most open to assimilation, with Latvian Russians in second, Estonian Russians in most open to

assimilation, with Latvian Russians in second, Estonian Russians in third, and Kazakhstani Russians in fourth.

Table 9.1. Accounting for Russian assimilation

Variables	Kazakhstan	Estonia	Latvia	Ukraine
Dependent variable: openness to assimilation				
1. Index of openness to assimilation	.31	.53	.67	.49
Demographic background variables				
2. Percentage who speak titular language: 1989 census/survey (those who think in it or speak it freely; question C in Table 7.1)	.86 3.5	13.8 6.4	21 20.1	33.3 26.4
3. Religious distance of titulars from Orthodoxy	High	Medium	Medium	Low
4. Linguistic difference of titular language from Russian	High	High	Medium	Low
5. Percent of Russians in capital city: 1897/1970/1989	58/70/59	16/35/42	16/43/47	54/23/21
6. Percent of Russians in republic	37.8	30.3	34.0	22.1
Economic returns for assimilation				
7. Regression analysis: job status explained on basis of knowing titular language (B/SEB), from survey	-.0043/ .0588	.4313/ .0826	-.237/ .0988	.3456/ .0539
8. Economically useful to learn titular language (percent agreed from survey)	51.6	72.2	49.5	59.2
9. Mean quality of job for Russian in Russian guise less quality of job for Russian in titular guise (matched guise)	.225	-.349	.268	.949
10. Percentage of Russians in unskilled labor/ratio of percent of Russians in unskilled labor to percent of all respondents in survey	9.4/ 1.54	26.0/ 1.42	10.1/ 1.07	5.2/ 1.08
Status variables				
11. Loss of in-group status in friendship for speaking titular language	.37	.52	.43	.25
12. Loss of id-group status in respect for speaking titular language (matched guise)	.49	.41	.34	.35

13. Gain in out-group status in friendship for speaking titular language (matched guise)	-0.21	-0.28	-0.26	-0.33
14. Gain in out-group status in respect for speaking titular language (matched guise)	-0.45	-0.34	-0.29	-0.49
Titular accommodation to Russians				
15. Percent of titular respondents who fully accept internationality marriage of son/daughter (survey)	14.3/12.4	14.5/13.9	24.7/23.0	52.8/50.8
16. Citizen/job rights for Russian monolinguals	High/few limitations	Low/restricted	Low/restricted	High/high

Notes: Specifications of the survey and matched-guise test are provided in Chapters 7 and 8, as well as in the Methodological Appendix. The research team that made judgments for rows 3, 4, and 16 were the author (Estonia), Dominique Arel (Ukraine), Bhavna Dave (Kazakhstan), and Vello Pettai (Estonia and Latvia). The source for row 5 is Chauncy D. Harris, “The New Russian Minorities: A Statistical Overview” *Post-Soviet Geography* 34, no. 1 (1993): 18-19.

What then explains the point on the x-axis for each republic at the time of the survey, shortly after the Soviet collapse? From the data on Table 9.1, the answer seems dear: social distance. The proximity of religious doctrine (row 3) and language group (row 4) accounts for Ukraine’s Russians (with a Slavic language and Orthodox religion), who are on the point farthest toward assimilation, followed by Latvia (an Indo-European language and Christian in religion), then by Estonia (a non-Indo-European language but Christian), and finally Kazakhstan (a non-Indo-European language and Islamic). Furthermore, consider the 1989 figures, for percentage of Russians in the capital city (row 5) and in the entire republican population (row 6). The lower the number, a demographic perspective would assume, the higher the probability of language assimilation, as the probability of interacting with a non-Russian would be higher. Again, these data are nearly consistent with each republic’s point on the x-axis (with Estonia and Latvia reversed).

Does this mean that a choice model is not useful for studying assimilation? If cultural distance and demographics can explain placement on the x-axis, where do calculations about economic returns and social status come into play? The answer is that under Soviet rule, the payoffs in status and economic returns for speaking the titular language for Russians hovered around zero; those who learned it did so passively, and the closer you are to native speakers (in terms of cultural or geographic distance), the more likely you will pick up the language at virtually no cost.

In the post-Soviet period, because the language policies of the nationalizing states have raised the expected returns for speaking the titular language, Russian-speakers need to calculate more consciously the potential payoffs for learning the titular language. Therefore, while a choice model would not have explained bilingual repertoires among Russians living in titular republics during the Soviet era (although it

would have explained Russian-learning behavior among titulars!), such a model has a great deal of explanatory power in the present era. In fact, the ordering of the four republics in terms of where they stand on the x-axis and where they stand regarding openness to assimilation in the survey suggest that the incentives to learn the titular language have changed in the post-Soviet era. For Russians in the Soviet successor states, as demonstrated by the different rankings on the x-axis and on the openness to assimilation variable, there is a new prospective market in language learning; that is to say, it is now a long-term human capital investment worthy of consideration. Let us now examine the utility functions of Russians in their new states (based on survey data) to tease out criteria of their early decisions.

If the tipping model relied solely on expected economic returns and probabilities for occupational mobility, these data present an insurmountable challenge. The data show that the economic returns for speaking the titular language are highest in Estonia, second highest in Ukraine, neutral in Kazakhstan, and negative in Latvia. Job prospects and occupational mobility cannot therefore be the principal motor for assimilation. In the four surveys, I regressed job status of respondent on his/her knowing of the titular language (row 7). In Estonia, for each level of increase in knowledge of Estonian, Russian respondents’ job status category went up nearly a half; in Ukraine, it went up by about a third; in Kazakhstan it was neutral; but in Latvia, it went down by nearly a quarter level! This is reflected in respondent attitudes (row! 8); over 70 percent of Russians in Estonia agreed that it was economically useful to learn the titular language; 59 percent of Ukrainian Russians similarly agreed; and again Latvian Russians, of the four republics, agreed in lowest numbers.

The same results are partially confirmed in the matched-guise test (row 9). To be sure, only in Estonia was the job attributed to the Russian-speaker in her titular guise higher in status than in her Russian guise. In the other three republics, the job status of the Russian-speaker in her titular guise was lower than in her Russian guise. But the relative standing is what is of interest. Here respondents in Ukraine had the highest bias in favor of the Russian in her Russian guise. Students in Ukraine envisioned the Russian voice speaking the titular language as having a far worse job than that same person speaking Russian. Latvia and Kazakhstan stand in the middle, where the Russian-speaker in her Russian guise is clearly seen to have a better job, but not overwhelmingly so. Finally, an examination of respondents’ actual jobs (row 10) – with the notion that a high percentage in unskilled labor would give the greatest incentive to assimilate, as clerical jobs are the next step up for the children of unskilled laborers – suggests that opportunities for social mobility through learning the titular language should be highest in Estonia, which comes in second in openness to assimilation. Openness to assimilation, *face* the predictions of a pure job-mobility theory, cannot be explained by jobs associated with speaking the titular language and the opportunities in the titular republics for occupational mobility.

The status variables, however, can help account for variations in openness to assimilation that are missed by models, such as Gellner’s, that rely primarily on

expected economic returns. To be sure, Gellner's writings do not ignore status. In his preface to *Encounters with Nationalism*, he writes:¹⁷

Modern man enjoys, or surfers from, no ... rigid and reinforced ascribed status. He *makes* his own position, not by a single contract, but by a vast multiplicity of minor contracts with his fellows. In order to negotiate and articulate these con-tracts, he must speak in the same idiom as his numerous partners. A large, anonymous and mobile mass of individuals, negotiating countless contracts with each other, is obliged to share a culture. They must learn to follow the same rules in articulating their terms. Cultural nuance no longer symbolizes status, for the status is no longer given: but a shared, standardized culture indicates the eligibility and ability of participants to take part in this open market of negotiable, specific statuses, to be effective members of the same collectivity.

But for Gellner, in modern society there is no value in sharing, for its own sake, out-side the requirements of the macro-economy, a set of customs, or a language. In contrast to this view, the status variables that I elucidated in the discussion of the tipping game, which are captured by the matched-guise test, stand independently from economic rewards or occupational standing. And they play some role in individual decisions about whether assimilation is desirable.

In-group status – the degree to which respondents of the minority group accept its friends those conationals seeking to assimilate – is coded here by the relative scores on friendship and respect measures given to the Russian-speaker in her Russian and her titular guises. The higher the former score in relationship to the latter, the lower the value of in-group respect for potential assimilators. In all four republics, the mean score (for both Russian and titular respondents) for the Russian-speaker in her Russian guise was more positive (on both friendship and respect dimensions) than for the Russian-speaker in her titular guise. None of the speakers gained points for speaking the titular language for the Russian students making their evaluations. Yet the relative status loss was different in each republic. As Table 9.1 shows (row u), the Russian-speaker in Ukraine lost least on the friendship dimension in her titular guise; the Russian-speaker in Estonia lost most. On the respect dimension (row 12), the Russian-speaker in Latvia lost least in her titular guise, while the Russian-speaker in Kazakhstan lost most. The Russian-speaker in Ukraine had the lowest cumulative loss, followed by the Russian-speaker in Latvia. The Russian-speaker in Kazakhstan had the third lowest cumulative loss, and in Estonia the fourth.

As for out-group status – measured here by the degree to which respondents in the titular group accept in friendship and respect members of the Russian-speaking community who seek to assimilate – I have coded that based on the differential score for titular respondents between the Russian-speaker in her Russian guise and in her titular guise. It is curious – and this was analyzed in Chapter 8 – that in all four republics, Russian-speakers suffered a status *loss* among titulars for speaking in their titular guise!

The question here, as with in-group status, is that of relative losses between republics. On the friendship dimension (row 13), the Russian-speaker in Kazakhstan lost least in her titular guise; the Russian-speaker in Ukraine lost most. On the respect dimension (row 14), the Russian-speaker in Latvia lost least and the Russian-speaker in Ukraine lost most. On the cumulative score, the Russian-speaker in Latvia lost least, the one in Estonia second least, the one in Kazakhstan third least, and the one in Ukraine lost most. The relative contempt Ukrainian respondents showed for the Russian-speaker in her Ukrainian guise reflects the hostile face of Ukrainian nationalism I discussed in Chapter 4. This helps explain why Ukrainian Russians, so far along the x-axis in 1991, have the next-to-lowest score for openness to assimilation.

Two other measures of out-group acceptance supplement the data from the matched-guise test. From material in the survey, but also in actual political life, I sought data on whether Russians were accepted as potentially equal to titulars in the social and political domains. The more accepted, the higher the “out-group status” score, the greater the likelihood of assimilation. First, in the survey, we asked respondents what they thought of a marriage of their son (and then their daughter) to a person of another nationality.¹⁸ Of the titular group who responded to this question (row 15), Ukrainian respondents were most willing to accept non-Ukrainians as members of their family, while Kazakh respondents were least willing to do so, with the Estonian respondents quite close to the Kazakhs. Second, in an examination of citizenship and language laws (row 16), I sought to rank the four republics based on the degree to which Russians were accepted immediately and without question as citizens and as eligible for sensitive government jobs (these jobs I consider measures of status, and not so much for expected income). These would be tests of the degree to which there were restrictions put on Russian-speaking permanent residents of the republics in the immediate post-Soviet period. The greater the restrictions, the lower the out-group status. As Table 9.1 indicates, Ukraine was the most accommodating of the four republics; Latvia second (it is far in front of Kazakhstan on the first and weakly behind in the second), Kazakhstan third, and Estonia fourth. In an average on the four indicators of out-group acceptance, Ukrainians are most accommodating, Latvians a close second, Kazakhs third, and Estonians last.

How best to understand the layout of the dependent variable, openness to assimilation? The high assimilationist attitudes of Russians in Latvia (despite low economic returns) and the low assimilationist attitudes of Russians in Estonia (despite high economic returns) are worthy of special comment. Russians in Latvia, based on calculations of economic returns for learning Latvian, should all remain monolingual and have little interest in assimilating. Yet in our survey they show a greater willingness than respondents in the other four republics for doing so. An examination of status returns provides a clue. While in no cases were there positive status incentives for

¹⁸ Note well that this question is a component of the index of openness to assimilation for Russian respondents. Here the answers from titular respondents form part of the explanation. I am not, then, using information on the dependent variable as one of the independent variables.

¹⁷ See Gellner, *Encounters with Nationalism*, pp. vii – viii.

assimilating, as I pointed out in Chapter 8, in Latvia the status disincentives were far lower than in Estonia. The matched-guise data show that Russians in Latvia do not scorn fellow Russians who are seen to be speaking Latvian as much as Russians in two of the other republics, coming quite close to Ukraine's score; and that Latvians do not scorn assimilationist efforts by Russian-speakers as much as the titulars in all three other republics. Concern for friendship and respect, of one's own in-group, and a sense of acceptance of assimilationist moves by members of the out-group, irrespective of occupational returns, play an important role in calculations about assimilation. Similarly, Estonia's high score for economic returns for assimilating is counteracted by the low (in-group and out-group) status scores received by Russians who speak Estonian. This helps explain why Estonia's score was lower than Latvia's on the dependent variable.

These findings fit in with data differentiating the two republics that have never been adequately analyzed. The long periods of political cooperation between Russians and Latvians may help explain the feelings of mutual respect shown in the matched guise. In the 1890s there were "new currents" (known in Latvian as the "jaunā strāva") that challenged nationalist ideas. Some of these were Marxists or other forms of socialists. The 1905 revolution brought strikes and violence in Riga instigated by the Latvian Social Democratic Workers Party, mostly against Baltic German landowner power. By 1897, some 115,000 Latvians had taken up residence within the empire outside the Baltic provinces, mostly in European Russia. By World War I, the figure was about 220,000, about 12 percent of all Latvians, mostly as factory workers. Some went to Russia for higher education. In the first and second dumas, six and then seven Latvian delegates were Kadets. This included Jānis Čakste, who would become the first president of independent Latvia. These Latvians were not anti-Russian; rather they sought reforms within Russia. As World War I broke out, many in the Latvian intelligentsia supported the Russians. Estonians do not have a similar history of mutual cooperation.

More recently, the greater neighborhood mixing of Russians in Riga, as compared to Russians in Tallinn, mostly because of the relative size of the groups, has also brought Russians and Latvians closer than Russians and Estonians. This is clearly reflected in the higher rates of Russian-titular intermarriage in Riga than in Tallinn. In 1988, 33.1 percent of the married Russian population in Riga were married to someone of a different nationality; in Tallinn the figure was 16.1 percent. That Russians who speak Latvian in public lose less status among titulars than Russians in Estonia do is not entirely surprising, given these factors, even if speaking it is not a sign of economic success.¹⁹

¹⁹ Terry Martin, in a personal communication, suggested to me the importance of the prerevolutionary connections between Latvians and Russians. The material on the "new currents" and subsequent alliances is from Andrejs Plakans, *The Latvians* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1995), chap. 6. Vello Pettai has noted to me the greater neighborhood mixing of Russians in Riga. See also Jerry E. Hough, "Data on Ethnic Intermarriages," *Journal of Soviet Nationalities* 1, no. 2a (1990): 160-71, for the data on internationality marriages in the capital

Historic connections between Latvians and Russia have not all been cut. Consider Viktors Alksnis. He was born in Siberia but with nationality roots in Latvia, and was a Soviet military officer and pro-Soviet Interfront leader in Latvia. He left Latvia in 1996 and emigrated to Russia. He then became deputy chairman of the Russian All-Peoples Union. His dream, he told the Latvian press in an interview, is a reincorporation of Latvia into the Russian Federation.²⁰

Further research, applying the model to cases that were not used to fine tune the theory, is obviously necessary to work out the precise weighting of the components of the tipping model. But it should be clear already that status concerns, by both ingroup and out-group, motivate orientations to assimilate or to sustain cultural difference. And while a simple occupational mobility calculus is clearly inadequate, a theory of nationalism based on calculations of economic and status concerns does not do injustice to social reality. The ethnographic materials in Chapters 4-6 give added support to the social reality of language calculations.

Exit as a Strategy

Consistent with the tipping model, but ignored in my earlier formulations of actor utility functions, are calculations concerning the possibility of return to one's homeland through emigration. Here the data help make further sense of why Ukrainian Russians are far less open to assimilation than the position on the x-axis would have predicted.²¹ It also helps make sense of why Estonian Russians, who are closer to Kazakhstan's Russians on the x-axis, and rebuffed strongly by Estonian policies, are more open to assimilation than are Ukraine's Russians. As can be seen from Table 9.2, in the 1991-93 period, a lower percentage of Russians from Ukraine migrated to Russia than in any of the other three republics included in this study. Yet of the four republics in between the two cataclysms, more Russians in western Ukraine claimed they wanted to migrate, and more claimed they thought it likely they would migrate than those from the other republics.

What this suggests is that Russians in (western) Ukraine in the Soviet period were passively picking up Ukrainian, without giving it much political or economic significance. Once Ukraine became independent, they feared that assimilation would be at the expense of their Russianness and developed anti-assimilationist attitudes. Few have left because there has been little pressure on them to ukrainize; but they know it will be easy (compared with other republics) to emigrate if necessary. The high expectation along with the low realization of migration suggests a community that will

cities of the union republics. He analyzes those data in chap. 6 of his *Democratization and Revolution* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1997).

²⁰ See the interview with Alksnis published in *Panorama Latvii*, March 8, 1997.

²¹ Perhaps it is not the perceived ease of exit but rather the quasi-Utopian belief in an eventual *Anschluss* that weakens these Russians' incentive to learn Ukrainian. This possibility was drawn to my attention by Valeri Khmelko, whose data show the strength of desire for reunion with Russia among Russians in eastern Ukraine.

resist coercive assimilation (which has not been attempted, but only suggested, despite the ultranationalist rhetoric) by emigrating. Data show that since 1992 there has been significant emigration of Russians from western Ukraine to the eastern and southern oblasts of Ukraine (where the ultranationalists are weaker), but not so much to Russia.²²

Table 9.2. Russian emigration to Russian Federation, 1989-1993

Emigrants	Kazakhstan	Estonia	Latvia	Ukraine
1989				
Number	95,084	4,877	7,362	147,343
Percent of Russian population	1.5	1.0	0.8	1.3
1990				
Number	97,325	5,316*	9,398†	136,445
Percent of Russian population	1.6	1.1	1.0	1.2
1991				
Number	84,063	4,924	10,415	112,284
Percent of Russian population	1.3	1.0	1.1	0.9
1992				
Number	132,529	20,685	22,507	124,645
Percent of Russian population	3.1	4.4	2.5	1.1
1993				
Number	144,837	8,276*	11,840†	119,341
Percent of Russian population	2.3	1.7	1.3	1.1
1989-93				
Number	614,838	44,082	61,522	640,058
Percent of Russian population	9.9	9.2	6.8	5.6
Percent of Russians desiring to emigrate to Russia in 1990	20	23	16	26‡
Percent of Russians expecting to emigrate to Russia	24	28	31	41‡

Sources: V. Tishkov, *Migratsii i novye diaspori* (Moscow: Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, (1996), pp. 72, 114, 203. The items marked * come from the *Statistical Yearbook of Estonia, 1996* (Tallinn: Statistical Office of Estonia, 1996), p. 78. These data are listed for all migrants to Russia, and to make them commensurate with the Tishkov data (done through interpolation based on years with common data), I reduced the figure by a factor of .723. The items marked † come from the *Reference Book of Population Statistics, 1995* (Tallinn – Statistical Office of Estonia, 1995), p. 61. These data reflect all external migrants. To make them commensurate with the Tishkov series, I multiplied these figures by .370. The data on Russians desiring and expecting (those who answer “likely” or “fairly likely”) to emigrate is from a 1990 survey conducted by *Moscow News* and reported in RFE/RL, November 15, 1991. The items marked ‡ indicate that the Ukrainian data of this survey are from only the western oblasts.

Estonia, on the other hand, has had relatively the highest emigration of Russian-speakers, along with the second highest score for Russians wanting to emigrate.

²² S. S. Savoskul, “Ukraina i Belorussii,” in M. Iu. Martynova, ed., *Novye slavianskie diaspori* (Moscow: Institut etnologii i antropologii, RAN, 1996), p. 129.

This suggests that the Russians who remained were those most accepting of Estonian society. Even though in the 1989 census less than a quarter as many Russians in Estonia than Russians in Ukraine claimed to speak the titular language – in the survey the figure was less than a half as many, suggesting that most of those who left were those who knew no Estonian – Russian respondents in Estonia on the dependent variable of this study were more open to assimilation than those in Ukraine. Not only the economic returns help explain the closing of the incentive gap, but the possibilities and actualities of exit also played an important role.

More work needs to be done in conceptualizing the role of exit for assimilation. On the one hand, high levels of exit might lower incentives for assimilation. Because foreign residents can say that if things get tough, they can always leave, the possibility of exit should lower the incentive to assimilate. On the other hand, high levels of exit might indicate that the antititulars are all leaving, with only those willing to assimilate remaining. With a lower percentage of Russians in the republic, because of high exit, it might also make the chances for a binational republic (the Belgian model) seem more remote, thus adding incentives to assimilate. This is why I have not yet included emigration figures, or the cost of emigration, into the tip-ping calculus. But the three variables – economic returns, in-group status, and out-group acceptance – have given us an excellent first cut into the issue of the possibilities for A-&-B national states in the former republics of the Soviet Union.

The true test of the tipping model, at least in these four republics, will not be available for many years. The model predicts that in cases where the expected returns for assimilation begin to appear positive for a few social or demographic groups of Russians in the post-Soviet republics, this will alter the payoffs for closely-related social or demographic groups. There should then be a slow but steady growth of potential assimilators. But at some point in this process, there should be a rapid acceleration, when all Russians come to believe that assimilation is inevitable. As we near the tipping point, the incentives for Russian political entrepreneurs, whose status is based on representing the Russian-speaking population as Russians, would be strong to attempt to induce fellow Russians to resist assimilation, and to return to “their” culture. In republics where growth is slow and few Russians expect positive returns for assimilation, the model predicts stagnation or negative growth intergenerationally in assimilators. In this case, Russian political entrepreneurs will maintain their representative monopolies to speak for the Russian-speaking population, and they will probably bargain for regional autonomy, as the Flemish nationalists have done in Belgium. Obviously, the data in the early moments of nationality politics in the Soviet successor states, which provide only a snapshot, cannot pick up these trends. But future research can and should.

MEGALOMANIANS become Ruritanians. And the process can be analyzed with considerable power from a game-theoretic perspective. But as is dear from the ethnographies in Chapters 4-6 and the survey and matched-guise data summarized in

this chapter, the reversal of assimilationist tides is not a simple process on the micro or game-theoretic level. It is clear that reasonably high expected economic returns for linguistic assimilation is not in itself powerful enough to induce Megalomanians to a tip toward Ruritanian fluency, which would be a significant step in the road toward Ruritanian assimilation. It is also clear that language status – standing independently of economic returns – plays an important role in assimilationist calculations. Methodologically, incorporating status variables into a rational-choice framework will enrich that framework, enabling researchers to theorize more realistically about social and cultural change. Substantively, the finding that the likelihood of a linguistic tip in Kazakhstan is nil will surprise few readers. But that Russians (at least intergenerationally) are moving toward an assimilationist tip in the Baltics, while their compatriots are at the same time resisting such a tip in Ukraine, is important news. And the future of interethnic relations, as well as the future of the national components of the post-Soviet states will be in large part a function of the assimilationist trends uncovered in this chapter.

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9

The Russian-Speaking Nationality in Formation

David D. Laitin

Extending Hirschman's categorization of individual opportunities under conditions of organizational decline (in Chapter 6), I examined the strategies of loyalty, exit, voice, and arms. One possibility that Hirschman did not consider, a point I discussed at the end of Chapter 6, was *redefinition of identity*. Strategic re-definition of identity makes possible not only assimilation (identification with the dominant group) but becoming part of a conglomerate identity (joining forces with other nondominant identity groups) as well.

Historically, redefinition into a conglomerate identity is quite common. In benign form, we see it with Hispanics and Asian-Americans in the United States. Another well-known case is that of the *peïds noirs* in Algeria, who were made up of French, Greeks, Portuguese, Italians, and Jews, all of whom assumed a common colonial identity. In far less benign form, we see it with Palestinians in the Middle East, which in a generation turned from a population category that was defined almost solely by reference to a political catastrophe (the creation of Israel and the evacuation of the diverse non-Jewish populations from it into resettlement camps during the 1947-48 war) to a nationality that has tenaciously – and at enormous cost for all parties involved – claimed a right to its own state.

Without getting into the issue of whether it is benign or not, this chapter will address the emergence of a conglomerate identity category in formation (though in different ways) in all four republics under consideration. This identity category is that of the “Russian-speaking population.” Identification as a member of this population is in some way an alternative to assimilation (as titulars), and mobilization (as Russians). While our findings demonstrate the emergence of a rather unconscious – and certainly not manipulated – identity category, ethnic entrepreneurs play a far greater role in defining the discourse categories here than they did in my portrayal of the tipping game. The ethnic entrepreneurs who engaged in the discourse described here had no easy task. If it was nearly impossible in the late Soviet period, as Roman Szporluk has observed, for Russian nationalists in Russia to find commonly agreed symbols to stand behind,¹ it was much more difficult for Russians in the near abroad. The data do not show a fully worked out identity project – which would mean the infusion of symbols into a shared collective memory – but the early makings of a new category, built from the detritus of

the collapsed Soviet identity, that form only the raw materials for a future social identity.²

Nonetheless, in the few years since the double cataclysm, “Russian-speaking population,” a term basically invented in 1989, has already become a cliché, though one used less often now than in the years immediately following the first – the language – cataclysm.³ The term “Russian-speaking population,” has dearer boundaries and is a more powerful identification in the Baltic states than it is in Ukraine or Kazakhstan. In the former cases, it could well evolve into a new form of national identification, in competition with assimilation. In the latter cases, it is more likely to emerge, as will be emphasized more fully in Chapter 12, as a fulcrum for intratitular conflict. In all four republics, however, the term has become deeply interwoven in the fabric of identity discourse.

The Choice Set of Identity Categories

Before 1989, it was rare to see any public identification of Russians living in the union republics outside the Russian Federation. The Soviet Union, according to the official line, had solved its nationality problem and become a “family” of nations. To be sure, Russians were sometimes described as the “elder brothers” of this family, but Lenin's exhortation of “Great Russian chauvinism” made that term politically incorrect. Among the titular populations, many of whom resented the presence of outsiders in “their” republics, the diverse set of postwar immigrants and soldiers were called “Russians,” and these Russians were called many things besides “elder brother” by angry titulars eager to see them return to their homelands.* Nationality “talk,” to the extent that it was permissible, existed within the confines of the vocabulary on the fifth line of the Soviet passport.

During the period of publicity (*glasnost*), nationality talk mushroomed, though most of it concerned titular rights, in which the Stalinesque categorization of identity categories was completely accepted. But with the double cataclysm, a new form of discourse arose – one that tried to categorize, or stigmatize, the beached diaspora of the Soviet Union.

Simply calling the diaspora “Russians” had great appeal, especially for the titulars. From the point of view of nationalist-minded Estonians, Latvians, and Kazakhs the subtle differences between Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusans, and Jews were not very

² See John Gillis, *The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), and Mustafa Emirbayer and Jeff Goodwin, “Network Analysis, Culture, and the Problem of Agency” *American Journal of Sociology* 99, no. 6 (1994): 1411-54, for fuller statements on what is required culturally and structurally for a cogent national identity project. The “Russian-speaking” identity elucidated in this chapter shows at best only the early markings of such a project.

³ I do not claim that there was no social foundation for this invention. Data from the Soviet period show high rates of Russian, Belarusian, and Ukrainian intermarriage in the non-Russian republics. See O. D. Komarova, “Ethnically Mixed Marriages in the Soviet Union,” *GeoJournal*, Supplementary Issue 1 (1980): 31-34.

¹ Roman Szporluk, “Dilemmas of Russian Nationalism,” *Problems of Communism* 38 (1989): 27.

important. They were all Soviet agents and the Soviet Union was – in their mind – just another euphemism for the Russian empire. Of all the terms that referred to the diaspora, only “Russian” (*russkii*) could serve as an adjective modifying “nationality” (*natsiia* or *natsional’nost’*).

But “Russian” was an uncomfortable label for many participating in nationalist discourse in the wake of the double cataclysm. The terms used in the Russian-language press both from Russia and the republics to describe the diaspora as an identity category were diverse. In coding these terms, I broke them down into the following categories:

1. *Russian-speaking population* (*russkoiazychnoe naselenie*). There are many variations on this theme. At first, it was common to use “the Russian-speaking part of the population.” Later, the “part” was dropped in most uses of the term. Before “Russian-speaking population” became the cliché, there were other circumlocutions, such as “those for whom Russian is their native language” (“tekh, dlia kotorykh russkii iazyk iavliaetsia rodnym”) or “the population whose native language is the language of internationality communication” (“naselenie rodnym iazykom kotorogo iavliaetsia iazyk mezhnatsional’nogo obshcheniia”) or “those who think in Russian” (“te kto dumaet na russkom iazyke”). *Russkoiazychnoe* (literally “Russian-tongued” in the sense of “languaged”) indeed became the preferred usage, but *russkogovoriaschie* (also to be glossed as “Russian-speaking” but coming from the verb *govorit*, “to speak,” “to say”) is still used as a synonym. The “Russian-speakers” are often referred to as persons (*liudi*) or as a community (*obshchestvo*), but they are never, as suggested above, referred to as a nationality (*natsional’nost’*), and very rarely as a people (*narod*). To the extent that I have identified a new identity formation around the concept of Russian-speakingness, it should be underlined that the designations of “population” (*naselenie*), “persons” (*liudi*), and “community” (*obshchestvo*) suggest that the term “Russian-speakingness” does not now refer to a national project.

2. *Negations*. After the double cataclysm, the characteristic most widely shared among the diaspora was that they were not titular. They were categorized in a variety of ways in terms of what they were not. They were called “the unrooted” (*nekorennyye*), “people without a country” (*apatridy*), “foreigners” (*inorodtsy* or *inostrantsy*), “foreign speakers” (*inoiazychni*), “the denationalized groups” (*denatsionalizirovannyye gruppy*), “noncitizens” (*negrazhdane* or *nepoddanstvo*), “people with undefined citizenship” (*neopredelivshiesia c grazhdanstvom*), “nontitulars” (*netitul’noe naselenie*), “not-from-Russia Russians” (*nerossiiskie russkie*), “illegals” (*nelegal’nye emigranty*), “residents of other nationalities” (*zhiteli drugikh natsional’nostei*), “nonspeakers of the titular language” (e.g., “grazhdane Estonii, ne vladeiushchie Estonskim iazykom”), nonnatives (*inozemtsy*), “unwanted residents” (*nezhelatelnye zhiteli*) “those without rights” (*bezpravnyye*), and “Voiceless” (*bezgolosie*).

3. *Slavs*. To the extent that the diaspora could be differentiated from Asians (in Kazakhstan) or Europeans (in the Baltics), a unifying aspect of the diasporic population was that they were Slavs.

4. *Members of the Russian state* (*rossiiskii* or *rossiiane*). In Russian, there is a clear differentiation between Russian as an ethnic category (*russkie*) and Russian as a political category (*rossiiskii* or *rossiiane*). It was perfectly understandable in the context of post-Soviet politics to refer to a range of nationality groups of the diaspora as *rossiiskii* or *rossiiane* to demonstrate their political identification with the Russian Federation. This is especially the case in reference to members of the Russian army or veterans, and they were referred to as “Rossiiskie voennye,” indicating loyalty to Russia rather than ethnic identification as Russians.

5. *Colonists or occupiers*. References to the diaspora as either colonial settlers (*kolanisty*) or the occupying forces of the Soviet state (*okkupanty*) became so common in the early nationalist rebirth of the 1980s that Russians would commonly refer to themselves in this manner, although sarcastically.

6. *Co-fatherlanders or compatriots* (*sootestvenniki*). This term leaves ambiguous the identity of the fatherland, whether it is Russia or the Soviet Union. In either case, identification as a co-fatherlander suggests a close identity link between the diaspora and the dominant identity group of the Russian Federation, however that is defined. In fact, the State Duma of the Russian Federation has a Committee for CIS [Community of Independent States] and Links to Compatriots.⁵ A reference to *Kazakhstanskie soplemenniki* (“fellow countryman” in this context of Russians in Kazakhstan) is analogous to co-fatherlanders. Also similar is “co-citizens” (*sograzhdane*), those who are Russian citizens living in countries not of their will but as “a result of the liquidation of their country.”⁶

7. *Soviets*. “Soviet” had become a protonationality in Soviet official discourse by the 1950s, with the hope that the nationalities would merge. Designating a population as “Soviet” referred to this identity project. Sometimes the word is used in a more neutral way, as in “citizens of the former Soviet Union” (*grazhdane byvshego SSSR*), or the humorous *eks-grazhdan SSSR* (ex-Soviet citizens). In Crimea, Soviets are referred to as those who carry “sickled” (*serpastye*) passports.

8. *Migrants*. There is a range of distinctions for migrants. *Migranti* is the most common term, but “movers” (*pereselentsy*) and “leavers” (*vykhodtsy*) are synonyms. Sometimes “fresh” (*svezhie*), “fresh migrant” (*svezhi migrant*), or “newcomers” (*priezshchie*) are used to differentiate Soviet-era newcomers from the pre-Soviet Russians (*starorusskie*). Those who came under stress, especially after the war, are sometimes referred to as refugees (*bezhenetsy*) or “postwar people” (*poslevoennye*). Those who came to the titular republics under state supervision are called “transfers” (*peremesbennyye litsa*). Finally, those who are preparing to return or who have already returned are called “repatriates” (*repatrianty*).

9. *Residents*. The diaspora is often thought of as “residing” in the republic without really belonging to it. “Permanent residents” (*postoiannye zhiteli*) is a way of describing

⁵ E. I. Filippova, “Novaia russkaia diaspora,” *Novy slavianskie diaspori* (Moscow: RAN, 1996), p. 58

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

the social fact of the group's existence without legitimating them as members of the emerging national society in the titular republic.

10. *Minorities*. The diaspora (or particular national subsets of it) is often referred to as a “national minority” (*natsional'noe men'shinstvo*).

11. *Cossacks*. Cossacks were historically an ethnically and racially mixed set of frontiersmen who entered state service in defense of the Russian borderlands. They have taken on a kind of separate nationality, and Yeltsin has formally recognized them as a *kul'turno-etnicheskaia obschest'* (cultural-ethnic social formation). In fact, one of the leaders of the Cossack Union declared, “We are the only national group in Russia that does not want to break off from Russia. We stand strongly for the territorial integrity of Russia.”⁷ In the near abroad, “Cossack” is now a term to refer to a subset of the population that are descendents of the Cossack armies, which in Ukraine includes titulars but in Kazakhstan tends to exclude them. In the Baltics, there was no Cossack tradition at all. But “Cossack” picked up added semantic baggage after the double cataclysm and often refers to those who have an interest in the restoration of the Soviet Union.

12. *Epithets*. A range of expressions that are less than cordial pepper nationalist discourse in the near abroad. In the perestroika period, a combination of *pokupat'* (to buy) and *okkupant* (occupier) produced *pokupant* to refer to Russians who came into the Baltics merely to buy goods. In Ukraine, Russians are often called *moskali* (Muscovites), but in a sense of being from the filthy political center. There is an occasional reference to the hibernating foreign force that will one day arise to confront the new titular nation, the “Bear” (*medved*). In Estonia, these foreigners were referred to as “envoys” of Russia, Belarus', Ukraine, and other Soviet republics (*poslantsyev Rossii*, etc.). One Estonian correspondent referred to those envoys ironically as the “guardians of the peace” (*strazhi mira*). Occasionally they were referred to merely as “enemies” (*vragi*). In the Baltics, nontitulars sometimes ironically describe themselves – making gallows humor out of the state classifications of nontitulars – as “citizens of the second sort” (*grazhdane vtorogo sorta*), or up to the tenth sort. The Russian term *chuzhaki* (aliens) is a typical epithet. Less typical is “Ivan i Petr” to refer to Russians as imperialists all. In Latvia, a bitter joke in the editorial office of *Emigratsiia* shortened “noncitizen” (*negrabhdanin*) to *negr* (which the English-speaking staff pronounced as “nigger”). This term caught on as a popular epithet. Russians used the term sardonically, as in “belye negry,” calling themselves the “white niggers” of the near abroad.⁸ Newspapers now use street expressions such as “damned Russians” (*prokliatye russkie*) and “Russian shit” (*Russkoe govno*).

⁷ Barbara Skinner, “Identity Formation in the Russian Cossack Revival,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 4.6, no. 6 (1994): 1017-37.

⁸ Dominique Arel, an authority on Ukrainian nationalism with a deep knowledge of Quebec, informs me that this rhetorical move has antecedents in Canada. See Pierre Vallières, *Nègres blancs d'Amérique* (Montréal: Parti Pris, 1968).

13. *Mixed categories*. Interlocutors in nationalist discourse were not imprisoned by these categories, and often mixed them up within a single paragraph. Previously unknown combinations took on new meaning. One common expression was *etnicheskie rossiane*, which is a contradiction in terms, but easily understood.⁹ Often there were interesting mixes with one category serving as adjective, the other as noun. Already mentioned are “illegal immigrant” (a negation and a migrant) and *nezhelatelnye zhiteli* (unwanted residents), but there were others: *nekorennye russkie* (unrooted Russians), *russkoiazychnye negrabhdane* (Russian-tongued noncitizens), *inostrantsy negrabhdane* (foreign noncitizens), and *moskal' velikoross* (Muscovite Great Russian). The choice set for describing the beached diaspora had almost no boundaries.

Discourse Analysis in the Russian-Language Press

In order to demonstrate the range of identity terms used to describe the beached Soviet diaspora, and to evaluate the claim that the “Russian-speaking population” is an emergent nationality category, I conducted a “discourse analysis” on a large collection of Russian-language newspaper articles, provided by a Moscow-based dipping service, on issues of inter-nationality relations.¹⁰ My first concern was to get a raw sense of how often the different identity terms were used. This is often called content analysis. Then I studied how they were used in context.¹¹

Content Analysis

Table 10.1 provides a ready outline of the overall sample. There were from 73 (Ukraine) to 88 (Estonia) articles from each country, with a total of 2,197 identity terms coded, with a low of 376 in Ukraine and a high of 711 in Estonia. I tried to get one half of the articles from the press based in the Russian Federation and one half from newspapers published in the republics, but this proved impossible. Because the sample (and my ability to code reliably) included only Russian-language press, the “voices” of the titulars were not fully heard. Nonetheless, because I used either quotations from titulars, articles by titulars translated into the Russian press, or articles by titulars in Russian, from 19 percent (in Kazakhstan) to 29 percent (in Ukraine) of the coded voices (of only the first ten uses in each article) were those of titulars. It would be imprudent to claim that these articles were truly representative of anything; yet it would

⁹ Neil Melvin, *Russians beyond Russia* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1995), p. 16, and p. 144 n. 49, explains: “This term [which he glosses as “ethnically citizens of Russia”] means more than simply ethnic Russians. Slavs and heavily Russified ethnic groups within the settler populations are also considered to be *etnicheskie Rossiane*. Abdullah Mikitaev [*Rossiskie Vesti*, August 16, 1994], the head of the Presidential Committee on Citizenship, has identified more than 30 million *etnicheskie Rossiane*, 25 million of whom are ethnic Russians.”

¹⁰ Details about the criteria of article selection for this discourse analysis are in the appendix.

¹¹ For a justification of this combination of approaches, see David D. Laitin and Guadalupe Rodriguez, “Language, Ideology and the Press in Catalonia” *American Anthropologist* 94, no. 1 (1992): 9-30.

be reasonable to judge that the selection casts a wide net on nationalist discourse in the post-Soviet republics.

Table 10.1. Discourse analysis of identity terms in the press: Nature of the sample

Attribute	Kazakhstan	Estonia	Latvia	Ukraine
Total number of identity terms	417	711	693	376
Total number of articles	77	88	80	73
Articles in RF press	48	30	34	35
Liberal	27	19	20	18
Old guard	21	11	13	17
Not classified	0	0	1	0
Articles in republican press	29	58	46	38
Russian slant	5	53	33	9
Titular slant	1	5	9	7
Not classified	23	0	4	22
Voices in first 10 uses	375	566	550	324
Russian voices				
Number	281	436	390	216
Percent of total voices	75	77	71	67
Journalists	220	275	261	152
Officials	44	151	113	58
Ordinary people quoted or in letters to editor	17	10	16	6
Titular voices				
Number	70	127	129	94
Percent of total voices	19	22	23	29
Journalists	12	38	43	47
Officials	39	88	74	28
Ordinary people quoted or in letters to editor	19	1	12	19

In discussions about the nationality question in the near abroad, the overwhelming referent is to “Russians.” Of the 1,815 coded references to identity categories, 719 (40 percent) referred to Russians as an ethnic category (see Table 10.2). Coming in second, with about half that number of references, are the myriad expressions of negation. But third, in a category that did not exist a decade ago, “Russian-speaking population” garnered 314, or 17 percent, of the references. The variants of “Russian-speaking population” had nearly four times as many uses as “Russian-political” the next most frequent category. “Slavs” and “Soviets,” two categories that have long traditions in nationality discourse in Russia and the Soviet Union, were comparatively scarce in contemporary nationality discussions.

Another way that I assessed the prevalence of the term “Russian-speaking population” was by creating a ratio of all uses in an article of “Russian-speaking population” to the total number of identity terms used in that article, with as many uses

of categories as the article had. The all-republic mean is .1829, which reveals that the term is used on average about one-fifth of the time for all 308 articles. The republican means, shown in Figure 10.1 range from .1459 in Ukraine to .2452 in Estonia.

Figure 10.1. Mean use of “Russian-speaking population” and negations in the four republics

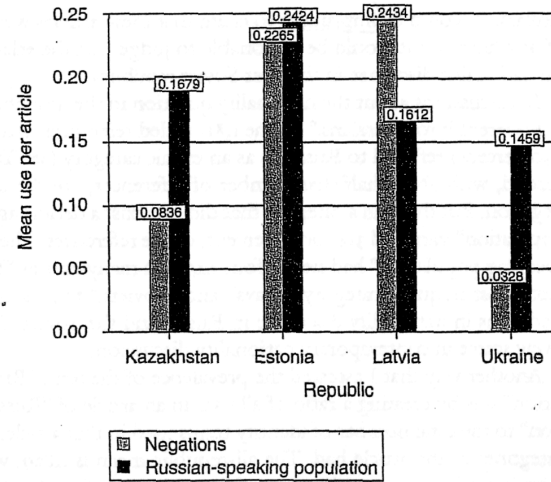


Table 10.2. Content analysis of terms to identify the diaspora (for first ten uses in all articles)

Term	Number of uses	Percent
Russian-ethnic	719	40
Negations	362	20
Russian-speaking population	314	17
Russian-political	84	5
Migrants	56	3
Slavs	49	3
Colonists and occupiers	40	2
Residents	37	2
Cossacks	25	1
Soviets	21	1
Co-fatherlanders	19	1
Minorities	12	1
Other (including epithets)	67	4

The term “Russian-speaking population” and its variants were used (as can be seen in Table 10.3) by Russians and titulars alike, though slightly more frequently by Russians. The data show that 73 percent of the coded identity terms were terms used by Russians, 81 percent (200 out of 247) of the uses of “Russian-speaking population” were by Russians themselves; however, the emotional valence of the term was quite different. In all four republics, Russians used the term in a positive way, whereas Russians in Russia, like the titulars in the republics, use it as a pejorative.

Table 10.3. Valence in use of “Russian-speaking population”

Speaker	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Sum (+less-)
All Russians	134	7	59	
Percent of total	67	3	30	+64
All titulars	12	19	16	
Percent of total	26	40	34	-14
Kazakhstan				
Russians	21	1	18	+20
Titulars	2	2	6	0
Estonia				
Russians	69	3	22	+66
Titulars	6	5	6	1
Latvia				
Russians	34	2	22	+32
Titulars	2	2	6	0
Ukraine				
Russians	10	1	6	9
Titulars	2	10	1	-8

Note: Valence for the all-republic sample is the percentage positive less the percentage negative. For each republic (where numbers are insufficiently high to use percentages), the valence is the absolute positive less the absolute negative.

“Russian-speaking population” appeared in newspapers of all types, as can be seen from Table 10.4. Perhaps most interesting in this table is the high incidence of the term in the newspapers that I have coded as “Russian-liberal” a category that includes *Nezavisimaja gazeta*, *Argumenty i fakty*, and *Segodnia*, offspring of the glasnost era, as well as *Izvestiia* and *Literaturnaia gazeta*, older papers that have taken a reformist bent. Although reported in an old-guard Russian newspaper (*Krasnaia zvezda* June 26, 1993), Russian president Boris Yeltsin used the term freely in his critique of Estonia’s policies. “The leadership of Russia,” he declared, “will take all necessary measures to defend our national interests and to protect the Russian-speaking population from political, social and police arbitrariness.” His forcefulness was old guard; but the use of “Russian-speaking population” made it seem more liberal, less chauvinist, than if he had sought to defend only “Russians.” My explanation for the liberal penchant for “Russian-speaking population” – though I haven’t tested the accuracy of this assertion

– is that Russian-liberals in Russia are strongly antinationalist. Therefore, their spokesmen do not wish to overemphasize the ethnic frictions in the near abroad. Thus they refer to a population category (Russian-speakers) rather than a nationality (Russians) in order to reduce the neoimperialist connotations of expressions of solidarity with their conationals in the near abroad. In second place, among newspaper types in the use of “Russian-speaking population,” after the Russian-liberal press, comes the republican newspapers with a Russian bent. Here, the purpose is most likely not to tone down nationalism, but to find a meaningful term to refer to their natural readership, that set of people most affected by the double cataclysm.

Use of “Russian-speaking” has declined since the cataclysms (though the null hypothesis that there has been no secular decline cannot be rejected), as I show in table 10.5. When all attention was on the language laws of 1989, the Russian-speakingness of the Russian population was of considerable importance. Now that the problems of adjusting economically and socially to life in postsocialist nationalizing states have come to the fore, the focus on the diaspora as a linguistic community under stress has weakened. If the term is used less often, it has taken on more of a cliché quality, as the subsequent discussion will make dear.

Table 10.4. Mean use of “Russian-speaking population,” by newspaper type

Newspaper type	All	Kazakhstan	Estonia	Latvia	Ukraine
Titular					
Russian dominant	.1914	.1000	.2209	.1639	.1250
Republican emphasis	.1856	.3000	.2600	.1759	.1286
Other	.1504	.2233	–	.0417	.0913
Russian Federation					
Liberal	.2134	.1792	.2592	.1539	.2846
Old guard	.1548	.1029	.3013	.1975	.0915
Other	.0909	–	–	.0909	–

Note: Each article represents a distinct observation. I took for each observation the ratio or uses of “Russian-speaking population” to all identity terms. The figures represent the mean of the ratios of all observations.

Comparing the four republics, as in Figures 10.1 and 10.2 (and here using only the first ten uses for each article), we again see (as I first proposed in Chapter 2) a marked difference between the Baltic states and Ukraine and Kazakhstan. In the Baltics, the mean use of negations approaches one-fourth of all identity category usages, compared to negligible use of such terms in Kazakhstan and Ukraine. This is largely because in the Baltics, the diaspora was denied citizenship because they lacked historical roots in those republics. Their lack of legal rights became central to their identifications. In Ukraine and Kazakhstan, the diaspora lost no legal rights after independence, and so they had no brief to refer to themselves as negations. Meanwhile “Russian” was used twice as often in Kazakhstan and Ukraine as in Estonia and Latvia, and “Slav” was used over 6 percent of the time in Kazakhstan and Ukraine, but almost never in Estonia or Latvia.

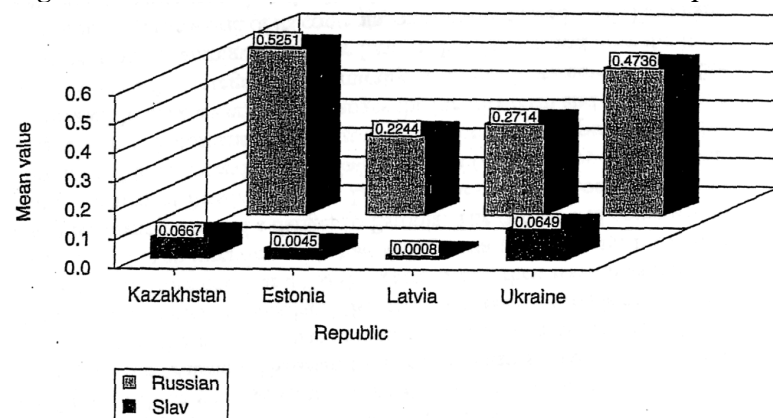
In Kazakhstan, “Slav” was a way to identify Russians and Ukrainians as a common category, clearly excluding all Kazakhs. Russian-speakingness, as we shall see, did not necessarily exclude Kazakhs and was therefore not useful to those authors who wanted to draw clear lines between Europeans and Asians. In Ukraine, “Slav” was used mainly to show the historic unity between the titulars and the Russians and was usually used by Russians who wished to delegitimize the Ukrainian national project that sought to differentiate Ukrainians and Russians as entirely separate nations.

Table 10.5. Mean use of “Russian-speaking population” 1990-1996

Republic	1990-1992	1993	1994-1996
All republics	.2178	.1840	.1416
Kazakhstan	.2273	.1544	.1302
Estonia	.3225	.2471	.1608
Latvia	.1921	.1560	.1159
Ukraine	.1475	.1452	.1782

Note: Because of the low number of cases in 1990, 1991, 1995, and 1996, I collapsed the sample into three categories for this table. In a regression analysis, the years were not collapsed. The regression equation: mean use of RSP = $f(\text{year})$ yielded a $b = -.025562$, $SE(b) = .014497$, with $p = .0788$.

Figure 10.2. Mean use of “Russian” and “Slav” in the four republics



Only the category “Russian-speaking” fails to fit into a Baltic versus Kazakhstan/Ukraine bifurcation. In Estonia, it is used the most, and Ukraine the least, but in Latvia and Kazakhstan its mean appearance is about the same. Among the four republics, the between-republic analysis of variance is not statistically significant ($F =$

2.1912; $p < .0891$). While there are major interrepublican differences in other identity terms in use to describe the population affected most by the double cataclysm in the near abroad, the term “Russian-speaking” has taken root in all four republics, and while losing ground to other terms over time, it has been the third most used category in nationality discourse to identify that social group that was left stranded by the Soviet Union in the countries of the near abroad.

Context Analysis

Now that we have a sense of its categories and the prevalence of those categories in the discourse, we can put identity discourse into context. Each republic has its own story in regard to identity categories.¹²

Estonia

The term “Russian-speaking population” appears with greatest frequency in Estonia. To be sure, the mean use of the term per article declined from .3225 in 1990-92 to .1608 in 1994-96, while the use of “Russian” increased in that same period, from .1719 to .3547. Yet in the entire sample of identity terms in Estonia, “Russian-speaking population” is the most frequently used. Its mean use per article is .241, higher than that of the conglomerate of negations (.226) and “Russian” (.224). An examination of the context of its use in newspaper writing demonstrates a powerful confluence of interests – involving Russians, titulars, and members of other nationalities – to reify the category of “Russian-speakingness.” And so, by sort of a rhetorical consensus, a “Russian-speaking” social identity is in an early stage of formation in post-Soviet Estonia.

Despite a free rhetorical market in post-Soviet Estonia, Russian nationalist symbology is not being liberally produced. Residents in Estonia tracing their roots to Russia almost never rely on symbols of Russia’s historical past. To be sure, veterans and schoolteachers refer regularly to the “Great Fatherland War” (World War II), but the fatherland referred to is Soviet not Russian. In a systematic review of the Russian-language press in Estonia (but mostly Narva) from 1988-94, I came across practically no examples of Russian chauvinism. When the Estonian government passed the “law on foreigners” L. Shlimonov, a correspondent for the *Narvskaja gazeta*, (January 14, 1993), wrote a philosophical essay on the “greatness” of “the Russian people,” who were “humbled” to be called “foreigners.” But this symbolism is mixed, as Shlimonov refers to Russians inhabiting a variety of republics in “the common *Soviet* [my emphasis] home.” This is similar to the view expressed by N. Kulikov (see Chapter 6) in the wake of the October 1993 events in Moscow. In that passage, Kulikov both identifies himself with Russia (*my* historical homeland) and separates himself from

¹² The data base for this contextual analysis comes not only from those articles used in the content analysis but from my perusal of the entire set of articles from which the data were sampled, along with articles collected by me and my research team as part of our fieldwork.

Russians (my soul hurts for *them*).¹³ One schoolteacher emphasized to me in an interview (May 11, 1994) the depth and richness of her Russian culture. This, however, was more of a wistful memory of teaching great literature during the Soviet era than it was a current category of national membership. But even vague references like this to a period of Russian cultural greatness are quite rare among Estonian Russians. Thus, of the four republics, the very term “Russian” is least used to identify the diaspora.

This cannot be explained by the raw figures of national diversity. In the 1989 census, Russians constituted 30 percent of the population in the Estonian Republic, with Ukrainians 3 percent, Belarusians 2 percent, and others, including Poles, Jews, and Finns, 3 percent. This is somewhat less diverse than Kazakhstan, for example, where Russians constitute 38 percent of the population to 5 percent for Ukrainians.¹⁴ Yet there is a firm perception among nontitulars of the diversity of the nontitular population. An article in *Molodezh' Estonii* (March 1, 1994) called “Who Are These Other Peoples and Why Do They Fight Each Other?” complains about infighting among organizations seeking monopoly rights to represent “the un-rooted”, “the noncitizens,” the “Russian diaspora” who make up the “non-Estonian part of the population.” The author sadly concedes that the battles between these organizations are caused by the “Babel-like diversity of local Russians” (“*babilinskiĭ*” *sostav mestnykh russkikh*) and adds that the only hope is for the creation of a single organization capable of representing all the “Russian-speaking” structures. The perception of diversity, and the lack of coordination among nontitular groups, was the impetus for the invention of a “Russian-speaking” society.

The route toward a clear alternative to “Russian” to encompass the not quite Russian identity has not been smooth, however, and nontitulars from Estonia have experimented with a variety of terms. From the Estonian sample nontitulars were referred to (in *Rossiiskie vesti*, September 19, 1992) as *bezgoloye* (without voice) and envoys [*poslantsy*] of Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, and other Soviet Republics.” An organization in Narva (reported in *Estoniia*, May 4, 1993) appropriated the Estonian word *taotleja*, (applicants) as its name, with its purpose to help those nontitulars who were seeking legal, recognition of their Estonianness.

Yet “Russian-speakingness” quickly began to emerge as the normal referent. An early formulation was in a response to the draft of the Estonian Republic’s language law in late 1988, and what this would mean for the “Russian-speaking part of the population” (*russkoiazychnoi chasti naseleniia*) (Iu. Mishin, *Narvskaiia gazeta*, November 17, 1988). Later on, as I noted earlier, the “part” was dropped. As the data show, in the early independence years, it became the predominant form of reference.

¹³ A content analysis of the Russian-language press in ‘the 1970s and 1980s in Russia proper that was quite similar in method to the approach taken in this chapter found that Russians in Russia were referred to as “we,” but that Russians in the former Union republics were referred to as “they?” See Iu. V. Arutiunian, *Russkie: Etno-sotsiologicheskie ocherki* (Moscow: Nauka, 1992), p. 389.

¹⁴ That is, in Estonia the ratio of Russians to Ukrainians is 10:1; in Kazakhstan it is 7.6:1.

Still, the rhetorical value of referring to the Soviet diaspora as Russians remains high, especially for Estonian politicians seeking to link this population to Soviet totalitarian rule. In a symposium on the future of “Non-Estonians in Estonia” (*Molodezh' Estonii*, February 17, 1994), the single Russian interlocutor wrote that we should not expect the “Russians [Russian-tongued, Russian-speakers] to leave the country.” Meanwhile, the two Estonians relied on terms such as “migrants” and “non-Estonians” and of course “Russian.” “Russian” in these contexts is often a synonym for “occupier,” “foreigner,” and “KGB.” Peter Olesk, then serving as minister of nationalities, said in an interview with *Narvskaiia gazeta*. (February 19, 1994) that “I never said Russians presented a danger to Estonia. The danger will come with a much greater quantity of Russian citizens. Let it be one-third of those who live in Estonia, not more.” In an interview in *Molodezh' Estonii* (April 21, 1994), Olesk was asked if it is true that “Estonians don’t want to invite the Russian-speaking inhabitants to integrate.” In his answer, Olesk changes the identity term and speaks about the desire of “Russians” to integrate economically. In an ironic statement to the Estonian parliament on the ambiguities of the Law on Foreigners, and how the Russians had misinformed the world of its contents, one deputy mused: “We Estonians don’t know how to write laws, but the Russians don’t know how to read them” (*Den' za dnem*, July 1, 1993).

The Estonian fear that the Russian-speaking population might become a Russian-speaking *nationality* is shared by some Russians. One Russian from Estonia (writing in the RF newspaper *Narodnaia pravda*, March 28, 1993) refers to himself as “Russian by family,” and derisively refers to potential Estonian assimilants as “Russian-speaking ‘juniper-Estonians” (*russkoiazychnye mozgzhevelovye Estontsy*). In a rare example of a chauvinistic nationalist expression, a correspondent for *Estoniia*, (February 2, 1993) reported that during the effort to mobilize activists for the Representative Assembly of Russian-speakers, flyers were hung on mailboxes one evening urging “genuine Russians” (*istimnye russkie*) to attend this meeting to assure themselves that “Zionists . . . who are ready to plunge a knife into the bade of the Russian people [*russkii narod*]” will not hold sway.

Despite the variety of names attached to this new identity and the attempts to stigmatize (or promote) all noncitizens as “Russians” the prevalence of *russkoiazychnoe naselenie* (Russian-speaking population) among every sector of Estonian political life cannot be denied. Its popularity is due to the reality that however unfortunate the category is for many people in Estonia, it has its conveniences for actors at all points on the Estonian political spectrum. Russian politicians in the former Soviet republics may be the only remaining fervent Soviet internationalists in the world. They see themselves as historically beyond attachment to nationality (*natsional'nost'*). Many therefore bristle at the idea of organizing themselves as “Russians.” But there is no doubt among the internationalist Russian-speakers, even if they are not a nationality but merely a population, that they have a grievance in Estonia. Organizing their aggrieved members (as a conglomerate Russian-speaking population) to stand against the policies of what they see as a linguistically discriminatory state has no chauvinistic overtones. In the

analysis of Nelli Kuznetsova, spokesperson for the United People's Party of Estonia, Russian nationalism only serves the interests of the (Estonian) "national-radicals," who have already "brought so many troubles to the unrooted population." She refers to her group as "Russian-speaking" to eliminate any implication that "we" (the Russians) are as chauvinistic as they (the Estonians).

Meanwhile, Estonian leaders, who face international criticism for policies that look too nationalistic, have an interest in showing that they have nothing against Russians *qua* Russians. Their laws, they insist, put pressures only on illegal immigrants and those Russian-speakers who have not yet adjusted to the language requirements of the state. For Estonian nationalists, then, using the term "Russian-speaking population" allows them to set de facto national criteria for membership in the society without naming a particular nation.

In regard to the non-Russian minorities, there are cross pressures. For those Estonian authorities engaged in internal politics and not external legitimization there is an interest in dividing the Russian-speaking population into its constituent parts, so that there will be no unified minority of non-Estonians. Thus with its Law on Cultural Minorities, the state finances the development of small nationality groups. As for these minority groups themselves – the Ukrainians, Belarusians, Poles, and Jews, all of them minuscule in numbers, and all Russian-speaking – their members have an interest in uniting with Russians to farther their language and citizenship goals. One purpose of the law was to prevent the emergence of a united nontitular front on the Estonian political stage. As the author of the law, Ants-Enno Lõhmus, told the press (reported in *Estonia*, January 10, 1993), the adoption of the law will demonstrate that the term "Russian-speaking nationality" is inadequate – "really just an updated version of *Homo sovieticus*." The Estonian government has given the non-Russian members of the Russian-speaking population resources to develop organizations representing their own ethnic groups. But because they are few in number and fully integrated into the world of the Russians, they are not very interested in establishing national organizations. Thus their leaders, for the most part, have claimed to be representing parts of the "Russian-speaking population," which includes them along with Russians. Thus Nikolai Aksinin, a Ukrainian, and a spokesman for the Union of Estonian Veterans, objects (in *Estonia*, January 22, 1993) to the notion of a "Russian community" in Estonia as a "simplified notion." "Ethnic principles," he insists, "do not play a role. The Russian-speaking population," he writes, "these are the Ukrainians, and Belarusians, and Jews, and Tatars." "We all," he concludes, "Russian-speakers . . . have been put into the same politico-social circumstances."

In light of a confluence of interests in using "Russian-speaking" as if it were a social category, it has become a cliché in Estonian popular speech and writing. I have recorded its use by the Estonian State Minister in Charge of Negotiations with the Russian Federation, J. Luik (Protocol, Narva City Council, June 30, 1993, p. 2); a leading politician of Isaama coalition, I. Hallaste (Protocol, Narva City Council, April 14, 1992); the leader of Estonia's first Popular Front Government, E. Savisaar (*Narvskii*

rabochii, June 30, 1990); the Secretary of the Estonian Community Party, M. Titma (*Narvskii rabochii*, June 6, 1989); the leader of the Center Coalition and twice prime minister of Estonia, T. Vähi (*Narvskaiia gazeta*, September 14, 1991); and many others. There is even a reference by the then prime minister, Mart Laar, to his electoral tactics in regard to the "Russian-speaking" voters (interview in *Molodezh' Estonii*, November 4, 1993).

Of vital importance on this issue is the creation of an assembly of those noncitizens who were not represented in the Estonian parliament. The leaders of the various organizations that met to form such an assembly recognized that the term "Russian" was too exclusionary, since there were many non-Russians who were sinking politically in the same boat. An assembly of "noncitizens" would not do either. This label implicitly accepted as a fact a status category that many of the leaders sought to contest – they believed that they were rightfully citizens of the Estonian Republic as they had been citizens of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic. Eventually, leaders agreed on calling themselves the "Representative Assembly of the Russian-Speaking Population of Estonia."

Legally, this is a social organization called merely the Representative Assembly. It was formally registered with state authorities on July 6, 1993. It could not be registered as a party, because noncitizens are not legally permitted to join political parties in Estonia. And the tag-on "Russian-speaking population" was deleted from official registration documents, since the organizers doubted that the Estonian government would permit a legal organization that named itself after an aggrieved and potentially revolutionary segment of the population.

Despite legal niceties, this organization is connected in the public mind with an inchoate group called the "Russian-speaking population." In the Estonian press in its Russian-language and Estonian-language variants (see *Estonia*, September 18, 1993, with translations from the Estonian press), as well as in everyday references to the organization, the Representative Assembly is seen as representing the "Russian-speaking population" of Estonia. For example, A. Semionov, a leading figure in the Representative Assembly, gave an interview to the Estonian-language press (reported in *Narvskaiia gazeta*, April 23, 1994) in which he spoke movingly about the psychological problems faced by the Russians, who had not been fully prepared for Estonia's sudden independence. In his attempt to downplay the significance of the more ethnically based Russki Sobor, he emphasized to the press that mobilizing politically based on national criteria was alien for this "Russian-speaking population." He therefore claimed that his leadership in the Representative Assembly has allayed some of the fears faced by Russian-speakers and helped keep nationality politics off of the streets.

The term goes beyond those Russians seeking to integrate themselves into Estonian political structures. In December 1995, the First Congress of Russian Citizens living in Estonia met in Tallinn with 190 delegates. Its deputy chairman Petr Rozhok (an official in Vladimir Zhirinovskii's Liberal Democratic Party in Russia) told the press (and

reported through die Baltic News Service, December 12, 1995) that the goal of the newly formed Estonian Republican Union of Russian Citizens was to “indicate to Russian-speakers in Estonia which candidates they should vote for in [Russian] elections.” Even a leader of the most “Russian” of organizations in Estonia found himself referring to his constituency as “Russian-speakers.”

To be sure, the validity of this term is occasionally questioned. L. Vahre, a deputy of the Estonian State Assembly, referred to non-Estonians as members of the “Russian-speaking nationality” when addressing a scientific seminar. A leader of the Jewish Society of Estonia questioned him on this term, and Vahre, a bit defensive, said that the expression went back to “Soviet times” and that since Russian-speakers use it themselves, he felt that he could without offending anyone.¹⁵ Earlier I had asked my principal collaborator in Estonia about the citizenship situation for the “Russian-speaking population.” Livid, he responded to me that there was no such category and, therefore, there could be no official figures on it.¹⁶ Be that as it may, the term has become so widely accepted, from such a wide range of ideological and institutional positions, that it has become a tradition.¹⁷ In Estonia, then, a “Russian-speaking” identity has become, in Durkheim’s phrase, a “social fact.”

Latvia

Non-Letts in independent Latvia are referred to by a variety of euphemisms and unflattering terms. The content analysis reveals that negations are used more regularly (a mean of .3222 per article) than in the other republics, far more often than Russian” (.2032), with “Russian-speaking” coming in a distant third (.1539). Nonetheless, the context analysis will show why the term has become such a powerful descriptive category – and perhaps even an emergent national one – in Latvia. The range of negations to identify non-Letts is great. They have been referred to as “people born in Latvia whose parents did not have Latvian citizenship” and “un-wanted residents” in a single article (*Izvestiia*, November 16, 1993); and the “denationalized group” (*Kommersant*, December 3, 1990). A correspondent for *Izvestiia*. (August 28, 1993), in criticizing Latvian policies, relied on Latvian identity categories. “Already twice this century,” he wrote, “Latvia has lost its most entrepreneurial and hardworking citizens among the nonindigenous nationalities [*nekorennye natsional’nosti*] in 1939 50,000 Germans left who still haven’t returned to Latvia; and during the German occupation a genocide of Latvian Jews took place.” The author fears for the “Russian-speakers” today, whom he also refers to as nonindigenous. In a witty ideological spin, Nikolai

¹⁵ Friedrich Naumann-Stiftung, “Kodanikud ja Mittekodanikud-Õiguslikud ja Sotsioloogiliset ProbleemidTaastuvus Eesti Rahvusriigis,” May 31, 1994.

¹⁶ Thus, in an interview Kirch gave to the pro-Russian newspaper *Molodezh’ Estonii* (July 7, 1993), all his references to nontitulars were negatives: “non-Estonian minority,” “illegal immigrants,” etc.

¹⁷ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge???)

Gudanets, in a letter to *SM-Segodnia* (December 28, 1993), pleads to be legally identified as a noncitizen (*negrazhdaniri*). He promises that if the present “psychological pressure” that noncitizens now live under is removed, he will carry the title of “Latvian noncitizen with honor.” Perhaps totally imbued in the spirit of Latvian discourse, a U.S. Department of State statement on the nationality situation pointed out that although Latvia’s constitution guarantees that all of its residents are equal before the law, “non-ethnic Letts [*neetnicheskie latviisty*] cannot participate in civic life.”

Latvian political discourse is noted for its lack of directness. A Latvian law dealing with a housing shortage was tided “On the temporary residence of those people finding themselves in Latvia due to the temporary dislocation of the Russian Armed Forces in Latvia” (reported in *Diena* April 23, 1993). In a *Komsomol’skaia pravda* (February 10, 1994) report, the leader of one Latvian party invented the term *vol’nostrantsy* (self-made foreigners) to attack a group he seemed to be incapable of naming any other way.

In this mode, Latvian nationalists try to differentiate the bad non-Letts from the good ones by referring to the former as “newcomers” and the latter as “historical minorities.” In *Diena* (November 1, 1993) an article contrasts Jews, Estonians, and Gypsies, which are “historical minorities” with the high percentage of Latvian citizens from Ukraine and Russia, who are considered “occupiers” or “new arrivals.” Russians in Latvia, bothered by this sort of rhetoric, have fought back. A pamphlet “Russians in Latvia: History and Present” builds up a case that Russians and Latvians had dose personal and territorial relations going back to the twelfth century. One chapter of the pamphlet doses with the assertion that “Russians inhabited and settled the territory of Latvia and lived in peace with the indigenous [*keorennoe*] population, the Latvians. Over the course of 700 years, they [the Russians] were a loyal minority.”¹⁸

The notion of “rootedness” comes up constantly in articles concerning ethnic relations. An article in *Pravda* (November 5, 1993) recounts tales of woe for “non-Letts” in Latvia. One group of retired women sought official help for housing repair. Seeing that they had filled out the application in Russian, the official “rebuked the retirees for their nonindigenous origins and communist past.” Another story is of a Russian journalist born in Latvia who was upbraided by the president-elect for referring to Latvia as his homeland (*rodina*). “Why do you think you have the right to call Latvia your homeland just because you were born here? For that, he says, you need to have deep hereditary roots [*korni*] in the country? In an article in *Rossiiskaia gazeta* (November 3, 1993), there is a report on the radical nationalist Movement for National Independence in Latvia and its new citizenship bill (wittily called by its opponents the “Law of Eternal Refusal”). Here the newspaper refers to those affected by the law as the “nonindigenous residents” (and in another context, as the “Russian-speakers”). To a great extent accepting the Latvian nationalist view that Russians haven’t sunk roots in Latvia, a group of Russians in Latvia who intend to return to Russia actually calls itself “Roots” (*Korni*). In an interview with the *Baltiiskoe vremia* (Riga) (September 1992), its leader Viacheslav Tikhomirov admits that while the Latvian

¹⁸ *Russkie v Latii: Istorii i sovremennost’* (Riga: LAD, 1992), p. 38.

government seems enthusiastic about the project, it hasn't provided any funding; however, he has received some support from former Russian vice-president Aleksandr Rutskoi.

"Nonrooted" seems to be all the explanation the Latvian government needs for refusing to grant automatic citizenship to its "newcomers," and this negation has taken on the properties of an identity in Latvian discourse. Even though 39.1 percent of Russian nationals in Latvia were automatically granted citizenship, the term "noncitizens" (*negazhdane*) is often used as a generic reference to non-Letts. A related term that is commonly used in the same context is "stateless" (*apatridy*). Many Latvians wish the Russians living within their border were indeed wards of the international community. Nationalist Latvian politicians delayed passage of the naturalization law as long as possible in hopes of creating a de facto zero quota. In one sardonic article in *Emigratsiia* (January 3, 1994), noted earlier, Vladimir Steshenko editor of *SM* and director of the Nationalities Question in the first Latvian Popular Front government, related that in his newsroom, noncitizens (*negrazhdane*) are called by the first four letters, suggesting that among Latvians they are thought of as "niggers." The article's title refers to Latvia's "soft ethnic cleansing." This "joke" got so well circulated that a serious jurisprudential column in *Panorama Latvii* (May 17, 1995) was headlined "Legalized Niggers" (*Negry zakone*). Russians have organized politically around this issue. There is a Noncitizens' League (reported in *Diena*, March 9, 1994, and also in *Literaturnaia gazeta*, January 26, 1994) that works to remedy some of the inequities that noncitizens face in Latvia (in taxation, in ownership of property, in rights to vote in local elections). *Literaturnaia gazeta*, in the same article, suggested that Latvian nationalists consider this Noncitizens' League a security threat.

Latvians use the term "Russian" without hesitation. In an article in *Diena* (January 14, 1994) titled "Unemployed Russians in Latvia," the author insists that because they are newcomers (*priezshbie*), all unemployed Russians are potential supporters of Zhirinovskii and can easily become tools of neoimperialist Russian chauvinists in Russia. Not only does this author use the notion of "newcomer" to differentiate "Russians" from "historical minorities," he uses the term "Russian" as a catch-all to refer to Ukrainians, Poles, and Belarusians as well as Russians. In *Novoe vremia*. (1992, no. 29) an article titled "Russians without Russia" treats a similar theme from the opposite point of view. The author complains that the very Latvians who once stood as democrats against Soviet power are now treating the Russian people (*russkie ljudi*) who are newcomers (*priezshbie*) and immigrants (*migranty*) as second-class people. The post-Soviet film *Russian Exodus*, directed by Andrei Nikishin, portrays Russians coping with Latvian nationalist hostility by taking refuge in unrealizable escapist fantasies of flight abroad and drinking. Nikishin uses *Russian* stereotypes to portray Russians and non-Russians alike. In these examples, especially in the headlines, we see how normal it still is to label the non-Latvian population merely as "Russians."

Negations (however prevalent) rarely stick as identity categories.¹⁹ And, for reasons made clear in the Estonia section, "Russian" is not fully satisfactory to Russian political entrepreneurs because it excludes people whom they want to include, and because it

¹⁹ The word for "German" in Russian, *nemets*, is a negative: one who cannot speak. I do not believe, though, that Germans refer to themselves in this ???

marks them as "national chauvinists," a charge they prefer to see leveled against the titulars, not themselves. Thus the reliance, albeit less prominently than in Estonia, on the notion of "Russian-speakers," a term that can serve most interests. The first reference to this term I found in a Latvian-related context is in a summary of the 1989 political scene in Latvia by Iu. G. Prichozhaev, who writes, in reference to the Popular Front, "One of the sharpest and nerve-wracking problems in Latvian political life appears to be the granting of citizenship to the Russian-speaking part of the population."

The "part" was dropped in the course of regular reference to this part of the population as a natural group. An article by William Schmidt for the *New York Times* (translated in *Diena*, March 9, 1994) describes the interethnic scene in great detail, dividing the population between Latvians and the "Russian-speaking minority" or merely the "Russian-speakers." In the black-humored article about "niggers" re-reported earlier, the newspaper *Emigratsiia* in a routine way tells the reader the article is about the "Russian-speaking residents" of the Baltics. In an article in *Moskovskie novosti* (October 4, 1992), Uldis Augstkalns, the deputy chair of the Latvian National Liberation Movement (LNNK), promises a fair citizenship law. His idea of fair sounds ominous to those who will be affected by the law. "Those Russian-speakers who wish to take Latvian citizenship and pass the language exam will become citizens," he assures the reader. "The rest can expect a normal, civilized departure." In a touching letter to *Pravda* (March 2, 1994) a woman who describes herself as a "Russian-speaking citizen of Latvia" tells of her visa problems, because she has a sister in Belarus' and another in Russia. Her anger is directed mostly against the Russian government; but her self-description demonstrates that the conglomerate identity "Russian-speaking" has become normalized in everyday speech. In an ominous political commentary "There Is No Time to Lose!" (*Vremia ne terpit!*, *Diena*, February 20, 1991), Vladimir Lukashuk writes that "the number of convulsively created societies that supposedly could unite three Russians, are already close to ten. . . . They wouldn't be created if the Russian-speaking Latvians felt that they were common citizens of a common democratic republic." To be sure, as in Estonia, some Russians express doubts about the term. For example, Vladimir Sorochin, general secretary of the Russian Citizens of Latvia Party, told an interviewer (*SM-Segodnia*, April 29, 1995) that his party is "currently emphasizing the word 'Russian' in 'Russian-speaking,' because for a Russian [in-Latvia] to be [just] a *Russian-speaker* is no good at all." But, as in all the other republics, Russians rarely criticize the notion of "Russian-speaking" as an identity category.

The situation for Letts is quite different, although they also use the term routinely. In *Vek* (December 17, 1993), the Latvian Consul to Russia was quoted as saying that "Russian-speakers do not take seriously the law on languages and have not started to study Latvian." Somewhat more sympathetic, K. Bikshe, the director of Latvian-language courses, told an interviewer from *SM-Segodnia* (November 10, 1993) that "you cannot request that Russian-speakers immediately speak Latvian without any mistakes." Another Lett, Visvaldis Latsis of the Latvian Committee, wrote (in *SM-Segodnia*, September 11, 1991) that the "Russian people" should rec-

ognize that the Russian empire subjugated many nations, and that is why all nations (e.g. Tatars, Bashkirs) “try to separate from the Russians.” The idea of a unified nontitular identity that is not dominated by Russians is looked upon with great skepticism. Indeed, the Riga-based correspondent for the RF newspaper *Trud* (November 3, 1993) understood clearly the pragmatics of “Russian-speakingness” for most Letts. “It is not rare for Russians to be identified with Communists,” he reported. “The term ‘Russian-speakers’ is widely used as a designation of a mass hostile to the Latvian mass.”

A major reason for the focus on the “Russian-speaking” aspect of their identity for Russians is that in principle, a person’s lack of fluency in Latvian (and very few Russians have such fluency) exposes him or her to severe material hardships, including the loss of job. While there are only a few examples of people actually claiming to have lost a job because of the activities of the so-called language police, what is taking place is the gradual destruction of the Russian-speaking milieu in which non-Letts lived for fifty years. Fewer and fewer Letts now study Russian; more now study English. Russian is gradually losing its position as the language of inter-nationality communication in Latvia.²⁰

Meanwhile, Latvian is being systematically promoted and its use in a broad variety of settings is encouraged, or even required by law. To be a Russian-speaker in today’s Latvia marks one as the member of an out-group. In a fascinating sociological survey of readers of *JM* (November 3-5, 9-12, 1993) a team of sociologists (Natal’ia Sevidova, Larisa Persikova, and Iuliia Aleksandrova) tried to find out “why Russian-speakers [*russkogovoriashchie*] up to this time have not become Latvian-speakers en masse.” While the articles focus on many of the difficult administrative problems in learning Latvian, they capture how Latvia’s Russian-speaking population feels about Latvian attitudes. The respondents intuit that Latvians feel that “if they [the Russian-speakers] don’t speak it [Latvian], they don’t respect us.” While this belief is not supported by the findings of the matched-guise test, it is perfectly plausible that Letts criticize publicly people who do not use Latvian and despise privately those who do. In any event, each time Russian-speakers open their mouths in front of Latvians, they now feel humiliated, a complete reversal in status since 1988.

A particularly good example of the power of status reversal is in the government’s insistence that science teachers in Russian-medium schools pass the Latvian-language exam. Some teachers complained, and asked why a biology teacher needs to know Latvian. The official answer was that “teachers represent the intelligentsia . . . they are not only specialists in their subject but educators in the broadest sense.”²¹ No one is to be esteemed as an intellectual, or so they seem to be implying, without fluency in Latvian.²² Given such

²⁰ On this point, see Angelita Kamenska, “The State Language in Latvia: Achievements, Prob???”

²¹ Ibid.

²² This reasoning hits hard for people brought up in a Russian tradition, where intellectuals are???

pressures, it becomes clear how non-Letts can coalesce around an identity that reflects their common linguistic plight.

Indeed, the category “Russian-speakers” has already had practical implications. An article in *Izvestiia* (November 16, 1993) tells of the deportation of Igor Zaretskii to Russia from Latvia, a place he considered his homeland. He told a reporter, “My father is Belarusian, and my mother also has no connection with Russia. Are they sending me to Russia because I speak Russian?” The journalist remarks that the Latvian Department of Citizenship and Immigration, by performing these deportations in a routine way, makes Latvia “the only country in the former USSR which continues to recognize, in a fashion, the existence of the now-disappeared state.”

In Latvia, the “Russian-speaking population” is a term in common use among foreigners observing the ethnic scene, among nationalist Latvians (who see nonnatives as a homologous mass), and Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians (who see the language law as one of the great threats to their future in Latvia, and feel that they all suffer from this common fate). The term is far less frequently used than a set of garden-variety negations and epithets, and less used than “Russian” as well. But negations and “Russians” won’t serve in the long term, while “Russian-speaking” is valued by Russians and useful for Letts – despite its decline.

Kazakhstan

The notion of a Russian ethnos is alive and well in Kazakhstan’s nationalist discourse. Indeed, the mean use of “Russian” is greater than half, and the highest of the four republics for this study. One major reason for this is the fact that in Kazakhstan, people who are both non-Muslim and non-Kazakh have rapidly assimilated a “Russian” social identity. When “Russian” is used in many contexts in Kazakhstan, what is usually meant is “Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Jews.” In popular speech in Kazakhstan, “Russian” casts even a wider net. A respondent revealed to an interviewer that “in our class there are three Russians: Volodia, Vania, and Kim.” Although Kim is an ethnic Korean, this reference to her as a “Russian” makes perfect sense in Almaty.²³ Another reason for the prevalence of the term “Russian” in Kazakhstani political discourse is the massive in- and out-migration of Russians to and from northern Kazakhstan. In 1993, for instance, 250,000 Russians emigrated from, while from 100,000 to 150,000 migrated to, Kazakhstan. There is hardly any other way to refer to these migrants than as Russians (*russkie*). This issue gets preeminence in RF press concerning Kazakhstan, and the mean use of “Russian” is .5618 in RF press stories about Kazakhstan. In one article (in *Emigratsiia* March, 1994), for example, even the Ukrainians who were visiting or returning from, or leaving to their homeland were referred to as Russians! And in a typical letter to the press, here to the newspaper *Sel’skaia zhizn’* (January 18, 1994), a forty three-year-old farmer wrote that the “Russians [*russkie*] in Kazakhstan are at fault

²³ Olga Vasil’eva, “Novaia natsiia? Russkie v SSSR kak natsional’noe men’shinstvo,” *XX vek i mir*, no. 7 (1991): 15-19, cited in Pål Kolstø et al., “Integration and Nation-Building in Bifurcated Post Soviet Societies: The Cases of Latvia and Kazakhstan” (unpublished manuscript, 1996 draft).

simply for not knowing Kazakh.” He concluded that there is no future here for their children, since Kazakhstan doesn’t want or need Russians. There is some evidence to support him in the RF press. An extremist Kazakh nationalist was reported in *Rossiiskaia gazeta* (August 5, 1992) to be chanting at the capital center, “Go to Russia! If you do not go, we will beat all Russians.”

Meanwhile the mean use of “Russian” in the Kazakhstan Republican press on inter-nationality issues is only .4656. But this figure is still very high. For example, in an interview in *Kazakhstanskaia pravda* (November 24, 1992), Iurii Bunakov, leader of the *Russkaia Obshchina Kazakhstana*, said his “group plans to create national Russian schools on the foundation of the Russian *gymnasia*, to organize a Russian, not Russian-speaking, university” and to achieve dual citizenship. And to open the category “Russian” to all comers, N. Svetova in *Russkii vestnik* (August 5, 1992) reports that “any human being who considers himself a Russian can be a member of the Russian Community of Kazakhstan.”

As with Ukraine, in Kazakhstan the notion of a Slav identity holds some rhetorical advantages over Russian. This category would include the 6,255,983 Russians as well as the 823,156 Ukrainians residing in Kazakhstan at the time of the 1989 census, who face a common fate in regard to the nationalizing state policies. But unlike in Ukraine, in Kazakhstan a Slav identity excludes those Russian-speakers who are members of the titular nationality. Thus Slavism in Kazakhstan has a civilizational – or perhaps racial – intonation missing from Ukrainian discourse. Nonetheless, Slavic self-identifications cross the political spectrum among non-Kazakhs. On the one hand there are those who wish, to create a permanent Slav presence. For example, Viktor Mikhailov, as is reported in *Kazakhstanskaia pravda* (March 5, 1994), leads a movement called Lad (Harmony), which by May 1993 had sixteen regional organizations and more than 8,000 activists. “Unfortunately,” he told a reporter, “the collapse of the USSR shook the confidence of Kazakh Slavs in living a life with full rights in this land. . . . We will try to open a Slavic university in Kazakhstan.” On the other hand there are those who see the handwriting on the wall for Slavs. A Russian living in Kazakhstan wrote to *Vek* (January 28, 1994) that “we can confirm that the Slavic population [*slavianskoe naselenie*] is leaving and the process is speeding up. All classes of society have ‘suitcase fever.’ “A survey reports that 3.2 million, 3.4 percent, of the “Russian-speaking population” intend to leave. The majority of those leaving are Ukrainian and Belarusian.

This last reference mixes the Slavic imagery with the category of a Russian-speaking nationality, which is far more common than “Slavic” in Kazakhstan’s political discourse. As with the case of “Slavic,” the “Russian-speaking” category is most often used to unite Russians and Ukrainians against Kazakhs.²⁴ The alliance between Russians and Ukrainians in the context of Kazakhstan has historically been seen as

²⁴ As of this writing, I have found only one reference to a Russian-speaking population in which the referent was non-Kazakh and non-Russian. *Pravda*. (March 1994) writes that “the most important question for millions of Russians [*russkijye*] and Russian-speakers [*russkoiazvychnye*] in Kazakhstan is citizenship.”

natural, with nearly all Ukrainians becoming Russian-speaking monolinguals. Yet in today’s nationalist environment, Ukrainians don’t easily fit into the category “Russian.” When Nazarbaev visited Moscow in March 1994, the Kazakh embassy, reported in *Moskovskii komsomolets* (March 29, 1994) was surrounded by pickers from a group calling itself “Russian Societies and Cossack Communes” (*Russkii obshchiny i kazach’ye zemliachestvo*), somewhat of a cumbersome title for an alliance. That same month, in *Izvestiia*. (no date indicated), there was an announcement of the founding of a union of “Russia’s and Kazakhstan’s Siberian Cossacks” to defend the citizenship rights of the Russian-speaking population living in Kazakhstan.” “Russian-speaking” was a convenient way to refer to Russians, Ukrainians, and Cossacks without making a long list. Within Kazakhstan as well, *Kazakhstanskaia pravda* (January 15, 1994) reports on a meeting of the “Conference of the Society for Agreement and Assistance” to discuss issues concerning the “Russian-speaking population.”

President Nazarbaev has sought to dampen the threat of a united Russian-speaking population standing against Kazakhs. In an interview with *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, (January 15, 1994) he was asked whether Kazakhstan would respect the rights of the Russian-speakers. He responded testily:

First of all, I don’t use the term “Russian-speaking nationality:” In Kazakhstan, practically all the residents are Russian-speaking, including, of course, Kazakhs. Only rarely do you find a person who does not command Russian. . . . Regarding nationality issues . . . I think that before a politician . . . seizes upon this delicate theme, he should first carefully consider whether he possesses all of the necessary arguments. Even after this, he should consider seven times over whether such a theme will incite the formation of a people [*narod*], and bring tension to society.

In short, too much talk about a threat to a population (*naselenie*) can turn it into a people (*narod*).

The official line in Nazarbaev-led Kazakhstan is that Kazakhstan is the home for many separate nationalities, with Kazakhs being the first among equals. Rhetorically, this ideology leads to the listing of all relevant nationalities, without any conglomerates. In a Forum of the Nations of Kazakhstan (reported in *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, December 15, 1992), chairman of the Kazakhstan parliament Serikbolsyn Abeldin declared, “We all should create our future – Kazakhs, Russians, Ukrainians, Germans, Uzbeks – the representatives of many nationalities.” President Nazarbaev followed: “Many Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, and Polish settlers came to Kazakhstan due to Stolypin’s reforms.”

Keeping with official ideology, in an article in *Iuzhnyi Kazakhstan* (December 15, 1992), which starts off in a cosmopolitan way (“we internationalists”), the nationalities are listed separately, as the author reports that he met with “Russians, Kazakhs, Germans, Tatars, Ukrainians, Jews, Belarusians, and Azerbaijanis.” In his native village, he nostalgically mentions, all these groups “lived as a happy family:” In *Rabochaia tribuna*. (May 17, 1994) Valerii Kuklin, the correspondent in Kazakhstan, writes that non-Kazakhs (*litsa nekazakhskoi natsional’nosti*) cannot have a successful army career now in Kazakhstan, “and therefore, young Ukrainians are moving to Ukraine, Russians to Russia, Belarusians to

Belarus', and even Tatars to Tatarstan." In an article in *Sovety Kazakhstana* (April 22, 1993) the demographer Makash Tatimov reports on family size. The categories are Stalinist in precision: "The demographic situation of the Ukrainians, Germans, Belarusians, Polish, Mordvinians, and Jews" he concludes, "are similar to the demographic situation of the Russians." The Russian paper *Emigratsiia*, has adopted the Kazakh practice of enumerating nationality groups individually: "Many Russians, Kazakhs, Germans, Ukrainians, Letts, and representatives of other nations have been living in Kazakhstan" in a story that appeared March 1, 1994). Even the leader of the Russian Society (Russkaia Obshchina) in Almaty, Iurii Bunakov, repeats, like a mantra, the list of nationalities in Kazakhstan, and the special suffering of Russians. "We feel bitter and offended" he complained to an interviewer for *Rossiiskaia gazeta* (January 12, 1993).

In Almaty there are the Korean community, the Chinese community, the Jewish community, the Greek community, the German community, the Uighur community – all but a Russian community. And each of them receives support from their countries. But it's as if we don't exist for Russia. . . . We are Russian people who can help Russia here. . . . If we create . . . a Russian bank, if Russia gives us privileged credits, we'll be able to guarantee the observance of the interests of the Russian population in Kazakhstan.

Because of nationality enumeration as standard practice in Kazakhstani nationalist discourse, the prevalence of "Russian" in the content analysis is widespread.²⁵

Despite efforts by President Nazarbaev and his acolytes, both the Kazakh and Russian governments collude in reifying the "Russian-speaking" population category. In an article from *Novoe vremia*. (March 1994), a correspondent writes that "Moscow has conveyed the idea that the only republics of the former USSR that can count on economic support from Moscow are those which recognize the rights of the Russian-speaking population on an equal level with the indigenous population." The article goes on to quote a leader of a Russian society, who said that "only fear, which is sitting in the genes of the Russian-speakers in Kazakhstan . . . is saving Nazarbaev from the enormous displeasure of the people in northern Kazakhstan." Correspondingly, an article in *Pravda* (March 1994) mentions that Nazarbaev, in a speech to the Russian society of Petropavlovsk, tried to allay fears of the "Russian-speaking population" that a massive emigration from Kazakhstan is taking place. Lumping Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians into a simple "Russian-speaking population" is a standard post-Soviet reference in Kazakhstan. To demonstrate its cliché quality, consider this letter from a Russian woman living in Kazakhstan, sent to the RF newspaper *Rabochaia tribuna* (December 28, 1993). In it, she complains how Russians are now treated by Kazakhs. She says that "the largest part of the populace is, as it is now fashionable to say [*seichas*

²⁵ Melvin, *Russians Beyond Russia*, p. 116, reports in Kazakhstan a "weaker development of a Ukrainian ethnic identity, though this generally merges into the overall settler identity:" The first conference of Ukrainians in Kazakhstan took place in May 1993, but it is not considered an impor-???

prinято govorit' Russian-speaking. . . . Yes, we no longer have a nationality; we are merely the Russian-speaking population."

The principal challenge to the notion of a Russian-speaking population consisting of Russians and Ukrainians against the titular Kazakhs is that of a Russian-speaking population that includes Russians, Ukrainians, and russified Kazakhs. Of the sixty-five uses of "Russian-speaking population" in the Kazakhstan data set, seven clearly included russified Kazakhs, and in two, only the russified Kazakhs were the referent. These russified Kazakhs, as we saw in Chapter 5, are often referred to as *mankurty*. "*Mankurt*," writes Bhavna Dave, "has become an apt metaphor for the 'modernized' members of uprooted nomadic cultures, forced to part with their cultural roots in the process of adaptation and survival."²⁶ Although in the 1989 census 97 percent of Kazakh nationals reported that Kazakh is their native or first language – making the idea of forgetting your "own" language seem beside the point – it is widely believed that this claim was wildly inflated, and was more of a symbolic gesture rather than an accurate representation of their language history. The number of *mankurty* is surely higher than the 2.2 percent of urban Kazakhs who report Russian to be their first language, as reported by Robert Kaiser. Indeed, referring to Brian Silver's work, Kaiser admits this: "Clearly," Kaiser points out, "the designation of first language in the censuses was not necessarily a choice made on the basis of fluency level alone, and also reflected attitudes toward the native and Russian languages."²⁷

The widespread existence of *mankurtism* in Kazakhstan is palpable in everyday urban life. (It is no coincidence that the cities of Kazakhstan were all initially populated as cities by Russians.) Virtually all government meetings, public announcements, and directives throughout the Soviet era in Kazakhstan were in Russian. Popular stereotypes in Central Asia further suggest that the Kazakhs have massively underreported their linguistic assimilation. Dave reports an popular refrain in Uzbekistan: "If you want to become a Russian, first become a Kazakh."²⁸ This view has some official recognition, as Kazakh ambassador to Russia, Tair Mansurov, told a *Pravda* correspondent (March 26, 1994) that "in Kazakhstan, the whole population is Russian-speaking" ("V Kazakhstane vse naselenie russkoiazychnoe"). In 1989, 62.8 percent of Kazakhs reported speaking Russian as a second language, the second highest (next to Latvians) of reported Russian proficiency

²⁶ Bhavna Dave, "Becoming *Mankurty*: Russification, Progress, and Social Mobility among Urban Kazakhs" (paper prepared for the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, New York, 1994), p. 2.

²⁷ See Robert J. Kaiser, *The Geography of Nationalism in Russia and the USSR* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), table 6.4. He is referring to Brian Silver's articles "Language Policy and the Linguistic Russification of Soviet Nationalities," in Jeremy Azrael, ed., *Soviet Nationality Policies and Practices* (New York: Praeger, 1978), pp. 250-306, and "The Ethnic and Language Dimensions in Russian and Soviet Censuses," in Ralph Clem, ed., *Research Guide to the Russian and Soviet Census*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), pp. 79-97, the quotation from Kaiser Kaiser is from p. 283.

²⁸ Dave, "Becoming *Mankurty*" pp. 18-19.

among titulars of the former union republics.²⁹ The percentage of *mankurty* falls somewhere between 2.2 and 62.8 percent, but it is significantly closer to the higher figure than the census; reports would lead us to believe.

The key question for national identity formation in Kazakhstan is whether Kazakh nationalists will be able – as their L'viv counterparts have already begun – to forestall a conglomerate identity that conjoins all the Russian-speaking populations, including the *mankurty*. In the newspaper *Kuranty* (February 18, 1994), Mikhail Schipanov points out that not only many Russians, but “some Kazakhs” aim to receive dual citizenship. This is a subtle message that the *mankurty*, like the cosmopolitan Algerians, are planning their resettlement into Russia if nationalists get too powerful at “home.” In an article in *Delovoi mir* (February 17, 1995) there was reference to a letter written by ten well-known Kazakh businessmen who encouraged Russians to remain in the country. The article reports on a Kazakh group called Azat that has organized a demonstration in order to “stigmatize” these “apostates,” presumably referring to Russian-speaking Kazakhs. Apostasy and betrayal are the charges nationalists will make against those Kazakhs who see themselves as part of a Russian-speaking population. While “Russian” far outpaces “Russian-speaking” in the nationalist discourse of Kazakhstan, social reality helps keep the “Russian-speaking” identity category alive; its vague boundaries help keep that identity category contested.

Ukraine

Ukraine, of the four cases, has the lowest mean use of the identity term “Russian-speaking population,” yet it is the only republic where the use of the term has increased over time, so that its mean use in 1994-96 became the highest of the four republics in the sample. And to a greater extent than any of the four republics, largely because nearly all eastern, southern, and central ethnic Ukrainians (constituting 86.8 percent of the entire ethnic Ukrainian population living in Ukraine) are themselves conversant in Russian, the meaning of the term is the most highly varied.³⁰ Of the forty-one uses of “Russian-speaking population” in the Ukrainian data set, only ten were references only to nontitulars; twenty-four included Russian-speaking titulars along with other Russian-speakers; and seven excluded Russian altogether from membership in the Russian-speaking category. Identity talk of Russians and Slavs (but almost no negations) is normal in Ukrainian nationalist discourse; but as with the other three republics, in Ukraine the category of “Russian-speaking population” has become a new and powerful social reality.

The notion of a Russian ethnos whose members live as a new minority remains a vibrant discourse in Ukraine, with a mean use of .4736, second only to Kazakhstan. A sharp distinction between “Russians” and “Ukrainians” serves many interests, though for different reasons. Radical Ukrainian nationalists, especially from western Ukraine, seek to purify Ukrainian from

all traces of Russian influence. One ultranationalist organization, Derzhavna Samostiinist' Ukrainy (DSU, State Independence of Ukraine), sends out propaganda in support of a pure Ukrainian nation, and this propaganda is filled with anti-Russian invective (*Den'*, June 26, 1993). As one deputy in the Crimean Supreme Soviet put it to a correspondent, “I can't turn on my radio without a shower of humiliations against Russians on every program: Russians are imperialists, Russians are chauvinists, Russians made the Ukraine so unhappy . . .” (*Pravda Ukrainy* September 4, 1992). Indeed, at a meeting in Crimea led by the mayor of L'viv and the son of a famous figure in the OUN, a prominent sign was held up: “Kravchuk, leave the CIS, and don't step in shit” (*Svobodnyi Krym*, July, 1992).

Ukrainian moderates take a line closer to Nazarbaev's, in trying to picture Ukraine as a home for all (separate) nations, with Ukrainians having a somewhat special role. In his inaugural address of 1991, quoted earlier, the newly elected president, Leonid Kravchuk, a centrist ukrainophone who had been ideological secretary of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party, set a very moderate tone. The well-known Ukrainian writer Ivan Drach had taken a similar line (in *Literaturnaia gazeta*, April 11, 1990), mocking the radical nationalists. The term *moskal' velikoros* (Muscovite Great Russian, here transliterated in Ukrainian), he analyzed, shows anger not only with the *moskali* but with the implication that Ukrainians are *malorosy* (Little Russians). This vocabulary, he maintained, takes on a life of its own. The Ukrainian knitted shirt became known in Ukraine as the *anti-semka* (anti-Semite) and has become associated with the Ukrainians as *malorosy*. Drach ended his piece with the hope that all “nations,” including Jews, Russians, and Poles, would freely embrace Ukraine as their fatherland [*rodinai*]³¹

Russians in Ukraine – especially those Russians in Crimea and Galicia, neither of which was part of Ukraine before the Second World War – have responded to Ukrainian nationalism with a vibrant self-identification as Russians. Sometimes the reactions are benign and open to compromise. An article in *Svobodnyi Krym* (July 1992) reports on a L'viv demonstration condemning Crimean “chauvinism,” with the mayor reported as saying that these chauvinists seek to ruin Ukraine. The author of the article objects, and says that the “simple Russian people [*prostye russkie ljudi*] in Crimea consider that it is better to live in rich Ukraine than in starving Russia.” More often, however, the tone is defensive. A Russian author in L'viv writing for *Rossia* (June 2, 1992) was angered by Ukrainian attacks on the premises of the Pushkin Society, making life, he confessed, “for Russians safer in Russia than in Ukraine.” And in counterattack, he accuses Ukrainian nationalists of bringing the word *zhyd* (Yid) back into service as well as *kosoglasye* (slant-eyed) and the derogatory *moskali* for Russians. In *Vybor* (June 8, 1991) Sergei Grigor'ev excoriates Ukrainians for “trying to foster animosity toward the *moskali-okkupanty*” In waxing eloquent about Kievan Rus' as “the second part of their Ukrainian souls” he insists that “Great Russians within the Union's diaspora [*Velikorosy vnutrisoiuznoi diaspory*] will never abandon Ukrainian Rus'.”

But Russian self-expressions of Russianness are not only reactive. Nationalist rhetoric in the name of Russianness is a powerful independent force in Ukraine. In Crimea, a “Russian

²⁹ Kaiser, *Geography of Nationalism*, table 6.8.

³⁰ This figure, derived from the 1989 Soviet census, counts only Galicia (L'viv, Ivano-Frankiv'sk, and Ternopil' oblasts) as “western” Ukraine. A more liberal accounting that includes Rivne, Volyn', Zakarpattia, and Chernivtsi would bring the figure down to 76.8 percent. Dominique Arel kindly supplied me with these data.

³¹ This is the pre-independence “Dr. Jekyll” face of Drach. An example of his later, “Mr. Hyde” side is in Chapter 4.

Society” is quite active (see, e.g., *Pronto Ukrainy*, September 16, 1992, and *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, January 12, 1993). Its goal is to “unite the Russian people [*russkikh liudei*] in a foundational social organization ... reflecting the Russian idea [*russkaia ideia*].” Its leader A. Los’, was questioned by a reporter from *Nezavisimaia gazeta* about the role of the “non-Russian nationalities” in Crimea. He answered that “we are all Russians, we all speak Russian freely ... producing a new ethnos, the Rossians [*rossiiskii narod*].”³² In *Russkaia pravda Shuvainikova* (the publication of the Russian Party of Crimea, on September 10, 1994) there is an appeal by V. Katorgin of the organization “Rus” to create a “Russian revival,” and in the meantime, to discredit any attempt to make the boundaries between the national groups ambiguous. “Only if we revive Russian cultural and historical traditions and realize ourselves as a Russian nation, as Russian people,” he insisted, “will we be able to defend ourselves, our families, and our future, not only in the Crimea, but in all the lands that belonged to Russia, where Russians turned out to be foreigners, second-class citizens, and a faceless, Russian-speaking population [*bezlikoe russkoizychnoe naseleniie*].”

Even those people who have an apparent interest in blurring ethnic boundaries get caught up into the Russian/Ukrainian boundary project. A well-known professor of history at Kiev University told a newspaper reporter that Russians should either love Ukraine or leave it. He then revealed, “By blood, I’m Russian [*ia russkii*] and of course I wish good fortune to my native people [*rodnomu narodu*]” (interview with Igor Losev, *Ostrov Krym*, no. II, n.d.).

If it weren’t for the devastating conflict between (to outsiders) indistinguishable cultural groups such as Serbs and Croats, the heroic attempts to mark boundaries between Russians and Ukrainians in Ukraine would seem comical. Much of it has to do with the question of who is more impure. In the newspaper *Put’* (August 31, 1991), a Ukrainian writer, in a well-known Ukrainian, nationalist move, denies any common Slavic identity.³³ He refers to “Russian despotism,” “Russian cruelty,” and “Russian chauvinism” and this can only be explained by the fact that the Muscovite elite descended from the Tatars. This battle has a linguistic element. In *Donetskii Kriazh* (June 18, 1993), a Russian ideologue pointed to the common Slavic roots of Russian and Ukrainian, but then points out that the latter is different because it has incorporated Turkish words, including *rukub* (“movement” and the name of the Ukrainian independence movement of the 1980s). A few days later, the DSU in one of its luscious outpourings of bile, derisively pointed to Pushkin’s notion of “the great and mighty Russian language,” and reveals to its readers that it “is really the ‘Mongol-Tatar’ language” (*Den’*, June 26, 1993). Language purity issues are seized upon for great satirical effect. In one humorous but factual report, Ukrainian nationalists were humiliated that they could not find the Ukrainian word to describe the color blue on the Ukrainian flag and had to rely on “Russian-speaking sources” for the term (*Izvestiia*, September 14, 1991).

³² The notion of an eastern Slavic identity, going back to Kievan Rus’, is the best gloss on this

³³ This is the claim of Mikhail Hrushevsky in the nationalist bible, *History of Ukraine-Rus’*. An abridged English-language version is available: *A History of the Ukraine* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941).

A clear alternative to “Russian” as a category of identification (suggested by the use of “Rossian”) and one that would build a closer union between Russians and Ukrainians, is “Slavic.” Indeed this rhetorical move is common in nationality discourse in Ukraine. In a typical article in the Russian-language press in Ukraine, the author reveals that he took Russian citizenship but plans to remain working in Ukraine. To resolve this apparent contradiction, he seeks the “integration of all Slavs” and perhaps other peoples as well (*Pravda Ukrainy*). In a similar tone, *Pravda Ukrainy* (May 26, 1993) printed a letter from Crimea in which the author emphasized the Slavic (*slavianskaia*) identity of the peninsula that unites Russians and Ukrainians. Indeed, *the Rossiiskaia gazeta* (November 11, 1993) reported a new Party of Slavic Unity, as a counter to the anti-Rossian (*anti-rossiiskii*) propaganda in the western oblasts. V. Parenko, party leader, said that he “mourned” the collapse of the Soviet Union, which harmed the “spiritual” culture of the Slavs. I. Komov, the leader of Democratic Crimea, in an interview (*Izvestiia* October 16, 1991), wistfully noted that already there is an “intra-Slavic” (*mezkslavianskii*) conflict. Ukrainians, too, have appealed to this common Slavic bond. An officer in the Ukrainian army wrote to *Pravda Ukrainy* (September 15, 1992) very understandingly about Russians, pointing out that Iurii Meshkov (the secessionist leader in Crimea) isn’t a typical Russian, and shouldn’t be seen that way. The correspondent concluded by saying that he did not want anything to come between the “Slavic” nations.

Mixed Russian-Ukrainians would have the greatest interest in promoting a Slavic identity. The noted poet Borys Oleinik (whose father was a passport Russian, his mother a Ukrainian) has written extensively on the theme of a “Slavic core” (*Slavianskoe iadro*). He writes (citation not available) of a common basis of Russian identity in Ukraine’s history – “up till now we called ourselves just Russian – children from a single pre-Mongolian Russian womb, with similar rights of inheritance,” and is appalled that Russian is being “driven out” of the parliament. This, he says, shows disregard for the “Russian-speaking population.” Here we see that Oleinik moves to the less incendiary, more comfortable label – “Russian-speaking population” – to give boundaries to the group that is suffering from what he considers to be an unnatural Ukrainian nationalism.

But the “Slavic” card faces constraints reflected in its limited use. For one, during the Soviet period, “Slavic” wasn’t an official category, and it has no institutions that speak for its population. The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was first intended as a union of Slavic states, that is before President Nursultan Nazarbaev of Kazakhstan insisted on being included. There was hardly a way to exclude him, since neither Yeltsin nor his liberal comrades were willing to reveal publicly the reality of an exclusionary (and racist) “Slavic” bond. Partly for this reason, the rhetorical space of “Slavism” has been occupied by extremists, and even fascists. The leader of the Slavic Union in Kiev was arrested for selling newspapers in a metro underpass. In an interview with a correspondent from *Russkii vestnik* (no. 1, 1993), he could not hold himself back from gratuitous anti-Semitic remarks, such as pointing out that three of the members of the Slavic Union were mysteriously attacked on the Jewish holiday of Purim. Probably for these reasons, in the data set, the term “Slav” occurs only 6.5 percent of the time.

“Slavic” is therefore far outpaced by “Russian-speaking” as an identity category. The notion of a Russian-speaking population as a social/cultural category in Ukraine has several distinct – and somewhat contradictory – bases. First, it is a common category for those who wish to unite the 11.4 million ethnic Russians with an even larger group of self-identifying Ukrainians mainly from the east and the south who do not normally speak Ukrainian (but rather Russian) at home. Of the forty-one uses of “Russian-speaking” in the data set, twenty-four referred to that set of people (Russian and Ukrainian) who were most comfortable speaking in Russian. To the extent that they form a united bloc, the major cultural division in Ukraine would suddenly be erased, to be replaced by a geographic, east/west division. Indeed, this set of Russian-speakers is the electoral bloc that overwhelmingly supported presidential candidate Leonid Kuchma (a russophone Ukrainian) over incumbent Kravchuk in the 1994 election. In that election, as Arel demonstrates, a “Russian-speaking population” voting bloc was clearly evident in the eastern and southern oblasts.³⁴ Many eastern Ukrainians identify closely with the Russian language and see themselves as part of a greater Russian-speaking world. In *Emigratsiia* (March 1993), a Ukrainian correspondent evoked the name of Vladimir Korolenko, a writer who wrote about the Ukrainian countryside in Russian. The article raised concerns that the diminishing of the teaching of Russian would deprive “Russian-speakers” (including Ukrainians) of the ability to read his great works.

In Crimea, this notion of a Russian-speaking population consisting of Russians and russophone Ukrainians is common, in this case with the intent of maintaining cultural/political solidarity in the face of Tatar claims to ownership of the peninsula. The Tatars, returning to their home area after a generation of exile, are still few; yet their claim to be the sole nationality rooted in Crimea threatens the Russians and Ukrainians, who constitute an overwhelming majority of the peninsula’s residents. To be sure, the Russian press often refers to the non-Tatars merely as “Russians.” The Institute of National Problems in Education, in a report summarized in *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, (date obscured), referred to the Russian population of Crimea (“Russkoe naselenie Kryma”) as having been in formation for two centuries. *Literaturnaia Rossiia*. (June 25, 1993) described Sevastopol’ as a Russian city (*russkii gorod*) within a Russian Crimea (*russkogo Kryma*).

But categories are in flux in Crimea. *Pravda* (January 28, 1993) routinely cited that among Crimeans “85 percent are Russian-speakers.” In 1993, a Russian-Speaking Movement (*Russkoiazychnoe dvizhenie Kryma*) organized to push for closer ties with Russia (reported in *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, April 2, 1993). This strong potential alliance was not lost on the Tatars. In *Krymskie izvestiia*, (September 9, 1992) a Tatar, complaining about the slow pace of restitution of property, wrote “At this time, there are many who are called the Russian-speakers (by the way, I up till now did not know there was such a nationality [*natsiia*]), who have two, or even three, dwellings.” In Crimea the term “Russian-speakers” serves not only the interests of Russians who want a united Crimea, in the face of the Ukrainian nationalizing state; it serves as well the interests of Tatars, to expose a united

³⁴ Dominique Arel and Valeri Khmelko, “The Russian Factor and Territorial Polarization in Ukraine,” *Harriman Review* 9, no. 1-2 (1996): 81-91.

threat against their interests. The term, therefore, appears widely in discussions of nationality issues in Crimea.

In the rest of Ukraine, however, the “Russian-speaking population” is more often used to refer specifically to Russian-speaking Ukrainians in the east and south, as distinct from Russians. S. S. Savoskul claims that the Russian-speaking Ukrainian culture (*russkoiazychnoi Ukraïnskoï kul'tury*) was produced by ambitious titular parents who wanted to maximize their children’s opportunities during the Soviet era.³⁵ In my newspaper sample, seven of the uses of “Russian-speaking population” in Ukraine used the term in this way. In *Russkii vestnik* (April 29, 1992), in a critique of Ukrainian nationalism, one author complains that “when the Russians and Russian-speaking people say the slightest word in their own defense, the champions of the great and indivisible Ukraine immediately become very angry.” In a story in *Moskovskie novosti* (November 20, 1991), Vladimir Grinev, the deputy chairman of the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet, was described as “popular among his Russian and Russian-speaking co-citizens.” In a letter from a Donetsk mining collective to a fascist paper in the Russian Federation (*Den*, June 20-26, 1993), the writers complain that “in Ukraine live 12 million Russians [*russkiki*] and 2-3 million Russian-speaking people [*russkoiazychnykh narodov*], and in the government of Ukraine there isn’t a single Russian [*russkogo*]. Is this not discrimination?!” In a letter from the Odessa organization Rus’ printed in *Vecherniaia Odessa* (September 18, 1992), officials complain of a “humiliating” division of the “people of Ukraine” (*naroda Ukraini*) into natives (*korennaiia natsiia*) and national minorities (*natsional'nye men'shinstva*). They agree that many in the south and east feel personal ties with the motherland (*Rodina-mat'*) let, they argue, half of the people in this zone are nonrussified Russian-speakers (*russkoiazychnye ne russifitsirovanye*) who are still natives (*korennye zhiteli*). The Russian weekly *Argumenty I fakty* (December 1991) reported on a survey of 5,000 Kievans, more than 80 percent of whom had never encountered discrimination against Russians (*russkie*) or against the Russian-speaking population (*russkoiazychnoe naselenie*) at work or in everyday activities. In these examples, Russian-speakers are that set of Ukrainians who normally speak Russian, not the set of ethnic Russians who live in Ukraine.

Ukrainian nationalists pick up on this notion of a Ukrainian Russian-speaking population and speak of these people as potential fifth columnists who haven’t yet been weaned from imperial subjugation. As Arel points out:

Ukrainian nationalists . . . treat Russophone Ukrainians as “victims” of Russian-Soviet policy at best. Increasingly, however, the Russophone Ukrainians are being referred to as “denationalized” beings who do not know who they are, or as “Little Russians” (the pre-revolutionary name for Ukrainians) who like to defer to and be dominated by the “elder brother” the Great Russians. Nationalists are convinced that their “Russified” brethren will “re-acquire” their national consciousness only through the Ukrainian language.³⁶

³⁵ S. S. Savoskul, “Russkie v slavianskoi srede: Ukraina i Belorussiia,” in M. Iu. Martynova, ed., *Novye slavianskie diaspori* (Moscow: RAN, 1996), p. 95.

³⁶ Dominique Arel, “Ukraine: The Temptation of the Nationalizing State” in Vladimir Tismaneanu, ed., *Political Culture and CM Society in the Former Soviet Union* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1998), pp. 157-88.

In an incendiary article in *Iug* (January, 1993), a pro-Ukrainian candidate in science accused the Russian-speakers of Ukraine of intimidating the population at large, pushing Ukrainians toward bloodshed, which would destroy Ukraine. These were the activities, he suggested, of fifth columnists. In an even more incendiary polemic in *Holos Ukrainy* (Kiev, date obscured) an eastern Ukrainian sarcastically describes a rally in Simferopol, where protesters demanded, “Stop the peasant Ukrainians [*kebokhby*] who deprive the Russian-speaking population of its native language.” Here the colloquial epithet for untutored Ukrainians implies those from the west who are pushing a radical nationalist program. The writer sees this so-called Russian-speaking population as a threat to the continued ukrainization of Ukraine. For Ukrainian nationalists, especially from Galicia (and those from Galicia who serve in Kiev ministries), the threat of the Russian-speaking Ukrainians is the principal threat to the nationalizing project. “Russian-speakers,” for them, is a code word for denationalized, threatening, yet potentially recoverable, conationals.

In Ukraine, the category of “Russian-speaking population,” as we have seen, serves multifaceted interests. Authorities from the Russian Federation and Russian ethnics in Ukraine can refer to this population without obvious national chauvinist overtones. Ethnic Russians, furthermore, can use the term to build an alliance with Russian-speaking Ukrainians, who themselves use the term because it suggests that they may speak Russian but they are still Ukrainians. Tatars and Ukrainian nationalists use the term to point to a potential threat to their national projects.

There is some evidence that the Russian-speaking label has very little power to frame identities in Ukraine.³⁷ In response to an earlier formulation of my thesis, Lowell Barrington shows that on an index of love for the Ukrainian homeland, Ukrainians are distinct from Russians, with the implication that a Russian-speaking identity is no different from a Russian one. Second, he shows that the Russian members of the Russian-speaking population are distinct from non-Russian members of the Russian-speaking population, and from that he argues that there is no evidence of a conglomerate Russian-speaking identity. While these are important findings, Barrington incorrectly derived from my model (which included Estonia and Bashkortostan, but claimed that there would be similar formations in all republics) the thesis that the Russian-speaking population would have the same group boundaries in all republics. For him, “Russian-speaking” includes all nontitulars who rely principally on Russian. My present formulation, however, explicitly encourages the inclusion of Ukrainian Russian-speakers in the Russian-speaking population, as popularly conceived, and the exclusion of groups such as Romanians and Hungarians, who are not considered members of the Russian-speaking population in Ukrainian popular discourse. Barrington might have found – confirming Dominique Arel and Valeri Khmelko – that the divide between the population that normally uses Russian at home and

37 Lowell Barrington, “Russians in the Near Abroad: Identity, Loyalty, and Homeland” (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, Washington, D.C., 1995). Barrington was reacting to my formulation of a Russian-speaking population in a prepublication version of my “Identity in Formation,” *Archives européennes de sociologie* 36 (1995): 281-316.

those who do not is a principal political cleavage in Ukraine.³⁸ With this notion of a Russian-speaking population in Ukraine, my thesis should receive stronger support from Barrington’s data.

But I reiterate that the notion of a Russian-speaking population that includes all those Russians and Ukrainians who rely principally on Russian is only one of a set of possible configurations of this identity group. Because it is an identity still in formation, which interest in Ukraine will capture the term as theirs remains uncertain.

Toward a Russian-Speaking *Nationality*?

The data from Estonia, Latvia, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine show only that the Russian-speaking population is a commonly used identity category in the post-Soviet republics. Furthermore, as the data clearly show, the category has different content in the various republics, making the formation of a transrepublican “Russian-speaking population of the near abroad” highly unlikely at best. Adding to this diversity, in the Russian Federation itself, the “Russian-speaking population” has become a code to identify non-Russians who are living illegally in Russia, and it is a term of derision. This use of the term is well understood among the Russian speaking populations in the near abroad, and it does not give any pride to the term.³⁹

For a Russian-speaking population to transmogrify into a Russian-speaking *nationality* would require far more than the trends shown in this chapter. Ronald Suny claims that for such a development there have to be emergent claims to group autonomy, to cultural nationhood, and eventually to the right of statehood. Perhaps the Russian-speaking identity is part of a longing, he suggests, for the “lost transnational cosmopolitan space in which they lived,” being able to move easily between Moscow center professionally and their republic culturally. The Russian-speakers, he pointed out, may want symbolically to preserve this cosmopolitan identity. While these feelings may be strong, he concludes, this is only one identity that is competing for people’s imaginings. And because it lacks claims for ultimate statehood, it is not likely to emerge as a bona fide national identity.⁴⁰

Alternatively, the Russian-speakers might well be considered not as a vague transnational diaspora but rather as a standard interest group. Under quasi-democratic conditions, in which the government has passed language and citizenship laws that put hardships in the way of certain segments of the population, it is perfectly reasonable for those segments to coalesce into a movement that seeks to alter those laws, or to ameliorate the difficulties that the target population faces because of them. Once these issues move off of the political agenda, we should expect other groups to form, with the Russian-speaking

38 Arel and Khmelko, “Russian Factor.”

39 E. I. Filippova, “Latvia, Estonia” in V. Tishkov, ed., *Migratsii i novye diaspory v postsovetskikh gosudarstvakh* (Moscow: Institut etimologii i antropologii, 1996), p. 118.

40 These comments were delivered at the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, Washington, D.C., October 26, 1995.

coalition breaking up into other political formations. Why, it can be asked of my perspective, should an interest group formation be considered an emergent nationality?⁴¹

As I emphasized in Chapter 1, simply naming the Russian-speaking population as a diaspora, or an interest group, or a conglomerate identity, or an emergent nationality serves no analytic purpose. The question at hand is whether those who now represent themselves as Russian-speakers will sharpen the boundaries that separate them from others, and make claims for political/territorial autonomy based on the cultural distinctiveness of the group within those boundaries. There is no evidence that such efforts are now taking place, but there are reasons for holding that the groundwork has been laid for such a project.

A primary consideration here is that the Russian-speaking population, like the Palestinians a half century ago, was formed amidst a political cataclysm. The shock of national independence of the titular republics for Russians was sudden. Many young men were serving in the Soviet army, and suddenly found – to their utter disbelief – that they and their officers were suddenly from different countries. They returned to their homes in what they incorrectly considered their homelands. Workers in Ail-Union factories, facing unemployment and loss of the safety net they assumed would carry them for life, were astonished that Moscow had no obligation to hear their claims. These cataclysmic shocks created a new form of diaspora that could not easily accept that they were living “abroad.” Standard forms of diasporic analysis therefore do not fully apply to this case.

Closely related to this point is the intensity of the nationalist rhetoric in the titular republics that accompanied the breakup of the Soviet Union. This rhetoric went even further toward convincing Russian-speakers that they would likely be de-ported, or lose all rights to pensions and medical care. They were called, especially by the loudest voices, “occupiers” and “colonizers.” The cataclysmic, breakup and the salience of the nationalizing rhetoric both worked to increase the salience of the category into which nontitulars were lumped. Russian-speakingness became a central component of this population’s imaginings. High salience of the category as an identity marker, I am assuming, gives it greater meaning than merely an ephemeral interest group.⁴²

A third consideration is that significant numbers of the Russian-speaking populations in the near abroad received property rights in the Soviet period that give them meaningful ties to the land. There is more here than squatter’s rights to Soviet apartments in large industrial cities. Many Russian-speakers, as part of their compensation packages at work, received plots of land, on which they constructed dachas. On this property, vast numbers of Soviet citizens planted potatoes, apple trees, and vegetables that feed their families throughout the year. Their psychological attachment to these properties gives the Russian-speaking property owners a sense of rootedness in territory that is a core component to the organization of nationalist claims. That is to say, these communities of

41 This was the principal criticism that an earlier version of this paper faced at a seminar organized by Robert Price at the University of California, Berkeley, November 13, 1995.

42 I owe this point to a line of questioning from Donal Cruise O’Brien, who kindly invited me to deliver an earlier version of this chapter to his seminar at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, December 1, 1995.

property owners are areas for which young men will fight to defend what is historically theirs; here we see the possibility of the territorialization of cultural identities, a core element of nationality formation.⁴³

A final consideration is that although the term “Soviet” has been discredited by history (as can be seen by its appearance in only 1 percent of the observations in the data set) – the Russian-speaking populations in the near abroad share many Soviet symbols – the songs, the holidays, the memory of the Great Fatherland War in which fascism was defeated, the jokes, and the sense that they were part of a truly internationalist society. Thus there are more symbolic threads than merely language-sharing that can form the basis of a national imagining. Surely it will take a great deal of imaginative effort – in a process Levi-Strauss has called “bricolage”⁴⁴ – to turn a population category into a nationality group, but some of the raw materials are there.

IN a judicious treatment of the issue of the identities of Russians in the near abroad, Neil Melvin is emphatic that “there was no ‘objective’ Russian diaspora simply waiting to be recognized by Russian politicians” but that an identity had to be constructed. From his examination of the rhetoric, quite contrary to the thesis advanced here, he finds that, “the eventual redefinition of the settler communities as a Russian diaspora [*Rossiiskaia diaspora*] marked a victory for the political ideas of one particular elite.” The precise identity of this elite is not specified, but it is implied that it was the project of Russian state builders after the Soviet collapse.

Despite this claim of victory, Melvin is hardly consistent about which term became dominant. He writes, for example, that “from the beginning of 1993, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other government departments . . . began to employ the terms *sootchestvenniki* (co-fatherlanders) . . . , *Rossiiane* (Russians by citizenship) . . . , *etnicheskie Rossiiane* (ethnically citizens of Russia), and *nykobodtsy* (emigrants).” Meanwhile, in many places in the book, Melvin uses “Russian-speaking” as the easiest way to describe his subject group, as he says, it serves a “neutral” purpose. For example, he writes that, “the Russian-speaking populations of the Baltics were ill prepared for the dissolution of the USSR.” And elsewhere: “The Russian-speaking activists within the Popular Fronts were quickly marginalized and support for Russian cultural organizations ceased.” Once again: “As in the Baltic states of Estonia and Latvia, the Russian-speaking settler community became central to the development of Moldova from the late 1980s.” And later on, Melvin writes that in the settler communities “Russian ethnicity has begun to be viewed primarily in cultural-linguistic (Russian-speaking) rather than simply genealogical terms.”

Yet in his conclusions, he reinforces his unsubstantiated thesis. “At least in part through the efforts of politicians and activists in Russia,” he judges, “Russians Russian-speakers and others with some link to Russia or Russian civilization have been bound together conceptually and linked by Russian foreign policy to form the ‘Russian diaspora.’ As a result,

⁴³ I owe this point to a suggestion by Lee Schwartz, made at the meetings of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, Washington, D.C., October 26, 1995.

⁴⁴ Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966).

large sections of the Russian-speaking settler communities have, for the first time, begun to think of themselves as members of the Russian nation and of the Russian Federation as their homeland.” The quantitative data in my analysis show, however, that the “diaspora” project was less successful than Melvin suggests; and that his term of convenience, “Russian-speaking” is actually the more accurate term for the social reality he was studying.⁴⁵

For the wider purposes of this book, it should be reiterated that the construction of a conglomerate identity is clearly an alternative strategy to that of assimilation (to the titular nationality), voice (to protect the rights and preserve the privileges of Russians), violent confrontation, and exit (to return to one’s putative homeland) In this chapter, I have dissected one arena of nationalist discourse to explore the role that the conglomerate identity referred to as the “Russian-speaking population” has played in the nationality issue. I found that the data do not demonstrate that this conglomerate identity has replaced that of “Russian” as the core identity of the so-called beached diaspora; in fact, the data show that after playing a large role in consolidating those who suffered most poignantly from the double cataclysm the term is less often invoked today. Yet the data also show that a “Russian-speaking” identity is far more prevalent than some identities available from the historical past, such as “Slav” and “Soviet.” It is far more prevalent than “diaspora” as well. Although less prevalent than a catchall category of negations, unlike negations (except in the ironic tone discussed earlier) the “Russian-speaking population” is a more positive portrayal that an activist can stand behind. That is to say, it has nonnegligible mobilizational potential. It is not now, in any of the republics, a banner for nationalist claims, but its very use does help lay the rhetorical foundation for such claims in the future.

In: Laitin, David D. *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad*. Cornell University Press, 1998. 263-299

⁴⁵ Melvin, *Russians beyond Russia*, pp. 15-16, 22-24, 37, 76, 126-27. I should emphasize that although I use the term “diaspora” throughout my analysis, and it is common in the analyses of expert commentators both in Russian and in the West, it is a term that had virtually no resonance in the discourse analysis itself.