



IS NARVA THE NEXT? THE INTRA-REGIONAL LIMITS OF RUSSIAN DIFFUSION IN ESTONIA

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to explore the limits of Russian diffusion in Estonia by elaborating on Ida-Viru country of Estonia closely. The article focuses on Russian/Soviet historical links to Ida-Viru country and those links' effect on current Russian diffusion potential in Estonia. The article concludes that Russian/Soviet historical links to Ida-Viru country should not automatically be classified as potential indicators of Russian dominance in Estonia.

Keywords: Narva, Ida-Viru Country, Estonia, Russian Diffusion.

Introduction

Narva is the third most populous city of Estonia, situated at the eastern extreme point of the state bordering Russia. Being part of the Ida-Viru country, Narva is also one of the easternmost points of the current European Union map. Throughout its long history Narva has gained enormous prominence as a fortress, a port, a market town and an industrial site (Lunden and Zalamans, 2002: 184). Narva port had enjoyed a pivotal position at the centre of the Russian-Western economic corridor for centuries. This geopolitically important city stayed in Russian hands starting from 1721 until the beginning of the 20th century. It was incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1944 and subjected to Soviet industrialization and migration which resulted in rapid changes both in the economic and demographic balance of the city in favour of Russians. The restoration of Estonian independence in 1991 precipitated a discussion on Russian historical presence in Narva which crystallized identity-based demarcation lines between Russians-speaking majority of the city and the ethnic Estonians.

After Russia's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014, much has been written about the similarities between Estonian northeast and Ukraine's south. However, the literature of international relations had hardly ever revealed the parallels between Narva and Crimea before this extreme transition. In this context, Viacheslav Pikhovshek's article titled "Will the Crimean Crisis Explode?" was a valuable exception (Pikhovshek, 1995: 39-66). In his 1995 article, Pikhovshek, argued that the minority separatism tendency of a newly formed post-Soviet state depended on several factors such as the behaviour of neighbouring states, country's domestic political situation and economic reform initiatives. Pikhovshek urged that despite the presence of varying circumstances, "double self-determination" (which meant that, should self-determination given to the country, the minority and majority ethnic groups could decide their status individually)¹ would become a general tendency in the post-Soviet geographical space. According to Pikhovshek, Narva in Estonia, together with Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan, Tuva and Chechnya in Russia, Trans-Dniestria in Moldova, and Abkhazia in Georgia would follow Crimean road to separatism (Pikhovshek, 1995: 39-40)².

Twenty years after Pikhovshek's work, Crimean annexation paved the way for an unusual scholarly and public debate on the subject. Some scholars, politicians, journalists and researchers argued that Estonia's Russian-speaking minority residing overwhelmingly around Narva would follow Crimea's path and seek integration with the Russian Federation. Others emphasized the presence of differing historical contexts that split Estonian destiny from that of Ukrainian³. This paper aims to give a meaningful answer to the validity

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¹ For further information about the concept of "double self-determination", see. (Kumar, 1999: 26; Pelt, 2003: 161).

² See also (Smith and Wilson, 1997: 845-864).

³ See. (Cook, 2014; Berman 2014; Balmforth, 2014; Ottens, 2014; Milne, 2014). See also, "Ethnic Russians in Narva Doubt Crimea Scenario Could Recur in Estonia", (2014). *news.err.ee*, 12 March, Available at: <http://news.err.ee/v/politics/4afb66f3-87d9-4f59-970c-49359ccd2193> (accessed 18.08.2014). "Estonia: the Developments in Crimea have Roused Fears that a Similar Scenario could Occur in Narva", (2014). *Baltic Review*, 20 March, Available at: <http://baltic-review.com/2014/03/estonia-the-developments-in-crimea-have-roused-fears-that-a-similar-scenario-could-occur-in-narva/> (accessed 18.08.2014). "Andres Herkel: Eesti Pole Ukraina, Ida-Virumaa Pole Krimm", (2014). *Vabaerakond*, Available at: <http://www.vabaerakond.ee/andres-herkel-estni-pole-ukraina-ida-virumaa-pole-krimm/>



question of two conflicting theses by focusing on intra-regional factors. In other words, this paper aims to identify the limits and opportunities of the Russian diffusion in Estonia analytically by emphasizing the Northeast Estonia's economy and identity. It scrutinizes the city of Narva closely, in order to set the preconditions of the Russian diffusion potential in Estonia. The extra-regional factors (such as European Union and NATO's regional policies) should also be classified as vital intervening variables; however they are considered to be beyond the scope of this article⁴.

1. Narva's Age-Old Ties to Russia

Narva's early history had interlocked with the history of the Danes. In the 13th century, the Danes conquered Narva as well as the whole Northern Estonia. Medieval crusaders of German origin also conquered the southern part of Estonia (Livonia) at the beginning of the 13th century (Sillaste, 1995: 119). In 1347 the Danish king sold Narva to the Livonian Order – a branch of the Teutonic Order (Huang, 2005: 70). After the establishment of the Ivangorod Castle by Russians at the opposite side of the Narva River in 1492, the Livonian Order reiterated with the Herman Castle. Since then, the Narva River has become one of the demarcation lines between the Eastern Orthodoxy and Western Christianity (Narva Museum Official Web Site; Burch and Smith, 2007: 921).

Narva's historical significance for Russia lies in the fact that Narva port had enjoyed a pivotal position at the centre of the Russian-Western economic corridor for centuries. Until 1494, Russian-Western trade relations were predominantly held through the medium of Hanseatic establishments in Novgorod. In 1494, Ivan III closed the era of Hanseatic dominance in Russian trade by the liquidation of *Peterhof* or *Kontor* – a Novgorod establishment in which the visiting merchants enjoyed special privileges. However, free and direct trade with Western merchants had not been achieved due to the disrupting activities of the Livonian Order. Ivan IV (the Terrible) tried to resolve this issue by the conquest of Narva – a Livonia transit port of business deal. The Russian conquest of Narva in 1558 disrupted the Livonians as middlemen in Russian trade (Esper, 1967: 196) and enabled Russia to have direct trade with Western merchants. In this vein, Ivan IV announced new measures like security guarantees and absence of tariffs in Narva to attract Western merchants. Narva had become a safe harbour for English, Dutch, Hanseatic and other merchants⁵ (Esper, 1967: 185) until 1581 when the Swedes conquered it from the Russians⁶. Thus, between the years 1558-1581 Swedes and Livonians became allies and imposed arms embargoes against the Russians in order to establish/re-establish themselves as middlemen in the Russian trade (Esper, 1967: 196).

Swedish Baltic barrier on the west of the Muscovite Russia retarded the process of Russian economic development in the first half of the 16th century. Furthermore, Sweden utilized the economic and political disarray of Muscovite Russia and expanded its influence in the Eastern shore of the Baltic Sea with the *Ingrian War* (1610-1617). In order to reverse this process, Russia attacked Sweden in 1656 (Kotilaine, 1998: 495-496). After two years of warfare, the Russian Tsar surrendered the Baltic provinces that had been occupied by Russian forces during the war with Sweden. Thus, Sweden emerged from the war as one of the largest states of Europe and resumed to hold the Narva port. The period of Swedish rule in Narva lasted less than a century. The end of the Swedish dominance in Narva was precipitated by the outbreak of the *Great Northern War* between King Charles XII of Sweden and Peter the Great of Russia in 1700. The Russian alacrity to wage war was not coincidental considering the Western vision of the Russian Tsar Peter the Great (Khodarkovsky, 2006: 531)⁷. The warfare was ended in 1721 with the *Treaty of Nystad* which signified the surrender of Estonian lands including Narva to the Russians (Sillaste, 1995, p. 120). Narva stayed in Russian hands until the beginning of the 20th century (See. Raun, 2001: 37-99), however German nobility⁸ sustained its tenacious privileged status thanks to her coalition with the Russian state bureaucracy.

Under the Russian rule, the socioeconomic contradiction between the Tsar – Baltic German aristocracy alliance and Estonian serfdom increased day by day (Sillaste, 1995: 120). Estonian peasants (labelled as *Undeutsche* together with Latvian peasants) (Blumbers, 2008: 37-38) were barred from entering

(accessed 18.08.2014). "Jaanus Villiko: Sümbol Nimega Narva", (2014). *Postimees*, 8 March, Available at: <http://www.postimees.ee/2787128/jaanus-villiko-sumbol-nimega-narva> (accessed 18.08.2014).

⁴ Accordingly, the author of this article emphasized extra-regional factors to the extent of their impact on Northeast Estonia's economy and identity.

⁵ As Yanov quotes from a German historian W. Kirschner, after the conquest of Narva in 1558, Russian influence in regional and world trade increased sharply. For further information see. (Yanov, 1981: 3).

⁶ See. (Esper, 1966: 458-474). For further information about this era see also. (Willan, 1953: 405-419).

⁷ Mark Bassin describes this process as the Europeanization of Russia's Imperial Image. See. (Bassin, 2006: 46).

⁸ Germans came to the Baltic region as traders (the Hansa merchants) and crusaders (Teutonic knights) starting from the thirteenth century (O'Connor, 2003: 35).



the urban professions and heavily oppressed (O'Connor, 2003: 35-36). As O'Connor states (O'Connor, 2003: 41), the condition of the Estonian peasantry was the worst among the Baltic provinces before the emancipation of Baltic serfs in 1816. Despite the negligible positive impacts of emancipation, the life of an ordinary Estonian peasant changed scarcely because of the on-going dominance of German nobility (Sillaste, 1995: 120)⁹.

2. Repercussions of Russian/Soviet Industrialization and Migration Policy

The 1850s witnessed fundamental changes in Narva's economy and social life. The Krenholm Textile Company which was established by a Moscow-aligned German industrialist Baron Ludwig Knoop in 1857 (Roolaht, 2006: 309)¹⁰ became the basic incentive of Narva's economy. As Lunden and Zalamans state, Knoop's company (with its 6000 workers) (Turin, 1968: 36) dominated the local economy in the early years of the 20th century. At the end of nineteenth century, Narva and its suburb Ivangorod started to develop into an industrial town of about 30.000 inhabitants (Lunden and Zalamans, 2002: 184).

Although industrialization of Narva and administrative Russification of Estonia was officially supported by the Russian Empire, the Tsarist rule never prompted a large-scale Russian immigration to Narva in order to change the city's demographic makeup. The two-fold increase in the number of Russian residents of Estonia from 1897 to 1920 was a result of the Treaty of Tartu (by which Estonia acquired eastern territories¹¹ populated largely by Russians) rather than an application of effective settlement policy (Raun, 2001: 130). According to the last census held in the interwar Estonia (1934 Census), 64.8 per cent of the city was Estonian¹². This statistical data indicates that Narva was a predominantly Estonian city until the Soviet era.

The Treaty of Tartu lasted only 20 years until Stalin annexed Estonian lands including Narva. Ivangorod and a strip of territory to the east of the Narva River were also incorporated into the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (Smith, 2002: 89). On 6 and 7 March 1944, the Soviet Army heavily bombarded Narva¹³, destroyed the old baroque architectural system and in the 1950s the Soviet leaders remodelled the city convenient to the Soviet architectural style (Kattago, 2008: 432). Over time Narva became one of the leading textiles, furniture and metal industry centres of the Union. The local textile industry improved depending on the cotton produced in the Central Asian regions of the Soviet Union. The oil-shale mining became another flourishing sector of the Estonian economy. Two-thirds of its oil-shale production was exported to other sites in the Soviet Union (Cook, 2001: 340). Two oil-shale fired thermal power plants¹⁴ were established in Narva in order to exploit large oil-shale deposits of northeast Estonia. The availability of uranium in the shale deposits also prompted the construction of a rare metals refining industry in the Estonian northeast (Miljan, 2004: 260) The first uranium production plant in Estonia was built in Narva (known as Cloth Dyeing Factory). Together with the Sillamäe plant, the Estonian uranium industry became the leading factor in the Soviet Cold War strategic calculations (Lippmaa and Maremäe, 1998: 5). As is understood, the Soviet era heralded rapid industrialization in Narva; however the city's industrial infrastructure remained of a high percentage dependent upon Soviet all-union economy for its markets, supply of raw materials (Smith, 2002: 91) and know-how.

Rapid industrial developments were accompanied by several demographic interventions with considerable implications on the union republic. Massive evacuation of ethnic Estonians and indigenous Russians (Melvin, 1995: 48) was followed by inflow of ethnic Russians and other ethnic groups from the Soviet Union (Lunden and Zalamans, 2002: 184) (Melvin defines these people as *Sovietized Russian-speaking migrants*) (Melvin, 1995: 48). In addition to the Soviet military members, workers and collective farmers were

⁹ The dominance of the German nobility should be clearly seen in the process of receiving surnames following the serf emancipation. As Raun states, in practice the German nobility simply assigned German surnames to the Estonian peasants after emancipation. For further information, see. (Raun, 2012: 98).

¹⁰ Knoop had strong ties with Russian entrepreneurial families such as the Medved'evs-Mamontovs and the Russian political elite. In 1877 the Russian state conferred the title of "Russian Baron" upon Knoop. See. (Dahlmann, 2006: 19-20).

¹¹ The east bank of the Narva River from the Gulf of Finland to Lake Peipsi, the area around Petseri and present day Pechory. See. "Integrating Estonia's Non-Citizen Minority", (1993). *Helsinki Watch*, V. 5, N. 4, October, p. 5.

¹² Russians constituted 29,7 per cent of the Narva's population according to 1934 Census results (Raun, 2001: 131). Neil Melvin (Melvin, 1995: 48) argues that before 1940, Estonians reached to 79.1 % of the district's population.

¹³ The city had previously been heavily damaged in the German invasion of 1941. Although Alfred Rosenberg - Nazi Party's chief racial theorist and Reich Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories - classified Estonians as Aryans, Germany did not strive to gain serious support amongst the local Estonian population. The Nazi invasion also caused large-scale Estonian immigration particularly to Sweden. For further information, see. (Taylor, 2014: 23-24).

¹⁴ The Balti Power Plant and the Eesti Power Plant.



predominantly recruited through an organized system called *orgnabor*¹⁵ (Rannut, 2008: 151). Large number of workers contended mercilessly in order to take part in this mechanism (Fitzpatrick, 1994: 98) because of its advantageous nature. The basic advantage of *orgnabor* was its guarantee on accommodation. As Kuddo notes, migrant workers of the *orgnabor* system were able to get housing free of charge faster than the local workers (Kuddo, 1996: 159). Consequently, as Kattago notes (2008: 432), thanks to Soviet settlement policy; Narva was forcibly transformed into an overwhelmingly Russian-speaking town. The share of Russians in Narva increased from 29.7 per cent before 1940 to 85 per cent in 1989 (Melvin, 1995: 48). Sectoral bifurcation of the population along ethnic lines also complicated the identity-based issues in Narva. Since the Russian-speaking workers were almost exclusively nominated in the modernistic heavy industry sites, hitherto Estonian working class quickly disappeared and/or settled for its primacy in the service sector in other Estonian cities. The result was the emergence of two mutually excluding ethnic/linguistic/class communities with few interactions across the divide (Miljan, 2004: 261; Vetik and Helemae, 2011: 15).

3. Russians/Russian speakers in Narva: Facilitators of Russian Diffusion or Not?

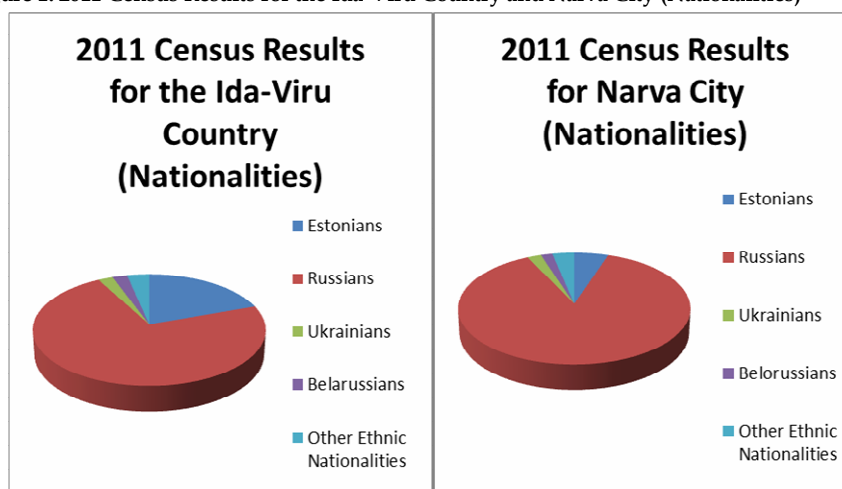
The statistics given in Table 1 and 2 highlight the numerical supremacy of ethnic Russians/Russian-speakers in Russian-frontier Estonian territories. As Table 1 and Figure 1 clearly indicate, according to 2011 Estonian Census results, ethnic Russians constitute absolute majority in both Ida-Viru country (72,54 per cent) and Narva city (87,68 per cent). Correspondingly, ethnic Estonians comprise below 20 per cent of the population in Ida-Viru and nearly 5 per cent in Narva. Statistics about language is even more remarkable. As presented in Table 2 and Figure 2, despite the official language status of Estonian, Russian is the dominant language in the Ida-Viru country (81,58 per cent) and Narva city (95,69 per cent). The Russian speakers drastically exceed ethnic Russians in both Ida-Viru country (9,04 per cent) and Narva city (8,01 per cent). Aidarov and Drechsler (2013, p. 103) indicate that, the on-going assimilation of non-Russian immigrants of the Estonian SSR into Russian culture guarantees the current superiority of Russian language in Estonian northeast¹⁶.

Table 1: 2011 Census Results for the Ida-Viru Country and Narva City (Nationalities)

NATIONALITY	IDA-VIRU COUNTRY		NARVA CITY	
	Total Number	Percentage	Total Number	Percentage
Estonians	29131	19,53	3031	5,17
Russians	108208	72,54	51434	87,68
Ukrainians	3378	2,26	1219	2,07
Belarussians	3410	2,28	1034	1,77
Other Ethnic Nationalities	5045	3,39	1945	3,31
Toplam	149172	100	58663	100

Source: Population, 31. December 2011 by Age Group, Place of Residence, Sex and Ethnic Nationality. Eesti Statistika, Available at: <http://pub.stat.ee/px-web.2001/Dialog/Saveshow.asp> (accessed 28.08.2014.).

Figure 1: 2011 Census Results for the Ida-Viru Country and Narva City (Nationalities)



¹⁵ For further information on *orgnabor* system see also. (Fitzpatrick, 1994: 97-100).

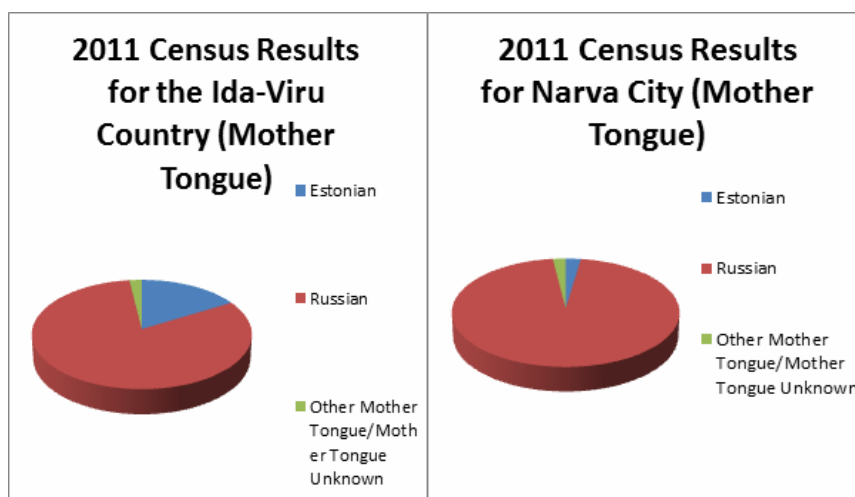
¹⁶ According to Aidarov and Drechsler, the ongoing Russification in Estonia is "a decidedly unintentional consequence of ethnic minority policy by the Estonian government". (See. Aidarov and Drechsler, 2013: 105).

Table 2. 2011 Census Results for the Ida-Viru Country and Narva City (Mother Tongue)

Mother Tongue	IDA-VIRU COUNTRY		NARVA CITY	
	Total Number	Percentage	Total Number	Percentage
Estonian	24492	16,42	1371	2,34
Russian	121680	81,58	56132	95,69
Other Mother Tongue	3000	2,00	1160	1,97
Toplam	149172	100	58663	100

Source: Population, 31. December 2011 by Place of Residence, Sex and Mother Tongue. Eesti Statistika, Available at: <http://pub.stat.ee/px-web.2001/Dialog/Saaveshow.asp> (accessed 28.08.2014.).

Figure 2: 2011 Census Results for the Ida-Viru Country and Narva City (Mother Tongue)



The numerical data given above, at first glance, may appear to be sufficient to indicate the dominance of the Russian Federation in Estonia's northeast. However, according to some views (Smith, 2002: 91; Melvin, 2000: 137; Saunders, 2005: 181; Spires, 2007), Baltic Russians have reconstructed a distinct identity (rooted in a territorially-based loyalty) from their ethno-cultural kin; Russians. This self-identification process became a factor in the creation of new fault lines within Russianness. Additionally, as Smith and Wilson suggest, collective labelling examples such as "Russians in Ukraine", (or "Russians in Estonia") ignore the multiple and fragmented nature of diasporic identities (Smith and Wilson, 1997: 845). As Katja Koort rightfully asserts, "the Russian speaking community of Estonia is not as homogenous as it was at the start of the 1990s" (Koort, 2014: 68). That is to say, ethnic and linguistic identities in Narva do not always intersect with political and/or social ones.

"Integration Monitoring 2011 Report", which was requested by Estonian Ministry of Culture and carried out by Praxis Center for Policy Studies, TNS Emor and researchers of the University of Tartu clearly underlines the heterogeneity of Russian-speakers in Estonia¹⁷. According to Koort's interpretation of the report, 21 per cent of non-ethnic Estonians (most of them are also Estonian citizens) have successfully integrated into the Estonian identity, 16 per cent consider Estonia to be their original homeland but their economic problems prevented their full integration, 13 per cent name another country including Russia as their homeland, know Estonian but oppose assimilation. Remaining 51 per cent, who are mostly the residents of the Ida-Viru country, are either little integrated or unintegrated part of the society (Koort, 2014: 68-69). As a result, Ida-Viru country seems to be the most unintegrated region of Estonia. However, this peculiarity of the region should not automatically prove either the presence of a unique, homogeneous Russian national identity in this region or the usage of Russian-speakers in Estonia as Russia's fifth-column.

¹⁷ See. Lauristin M. et al., "Estonian Integration Monitoring 2011 - Summary", Republic of Estonia Ministry of Culture, Available at: http://www.kul.ee/sites/default/files/integratsiooni_monitooring_2011_eng_lyhiversioon.pdf (accessed 29.08.2014). "Integration Monitoring 2011: Estrangement Among the Russian-speaking Population has Begun to Decrease", Republic of Estonia Ministry of Culture, Available at: <http://www.kul.ee/en/news/integration-monitoring-2011-estrangement-among-russian-speaking-population-has-begun-decrease> (accessed 26.08.2014).

This means, although census results give us some insights about identity sphere, vast generalizations in reference to census results are never accurate.

4. Should Citizenship Rates be Classified Automatically as Indicators of Russia's Dominance?

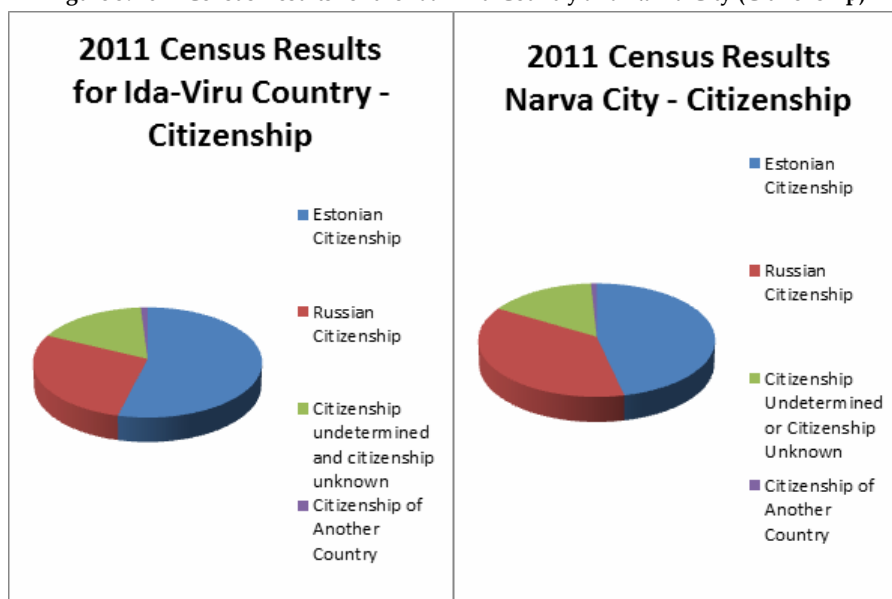
As Table 3 and Figure 3 indicate, nearly half of the residents in the Ida-Viru country and Narva city is either stateless or have a Russian citizenship. Considering that the vast majority of ethnic Estonians residing in the Ida-Viru country and Narva city have Estonian citizenship, the percentage of Estonian citizens among Russians/Russian-speakers of the region decreases further. According to some views, one of the basic reasons of the low levels of citizenship applications in the region is the conscious choice of Russians. As Sokolova states, many residents of the Ida Viru country in general and Narva in particular decided not to apply for citizenship for a variety of reasons (Sokolova, 2011: 34).

Table 3: 2011 Census Results for the Ida-Viru Country and Narva City (Citizenship)

Citizenship	IDA-VIRU COUNTRY		NARVA CITY	
	Total Number	Percentage	Total Number	Percentage
Estonian Citizenship	80470	53,95	27259	46,47
Russian Citizenship	42135	28,24	21771	37,11
Citizenship Undetermined	25042	16,79	9145	15,59
Citizenship of Another Country	1525	1,02	488	0,83
Toplam	149172	100	58663	100

Source: Population, 31. December 2011 by Ethnic Nationality, Country, Citizenship, Sex and Age Group, Eesti Statistika, Available at: <http://pub.stat.ee/px-web.2001/Dialog/Saveshow.asp> (accessed 28.08.2014.).

Figure 3: 2011 Census Results for the Ida-Viru Country and Narva City (Citizenship)



Although some researchers classify the citizenship status as an indicator in assessing the level of Russian dominance, it is not always the case. Because Estonian citizenship law, which is based on the principle of *jus sanguinis*¹⁸, leaves a little room for acquiring Estonian citizenship for most of the Russian speakers in the Ida-Viru country. According to the law, the citizenship is principally granted to residents and their descendants who were Estonian citizens before the Soviet occupation (Vetik and Helemae, 2011: 15). Since the great majority of Narva Russians were post-World War II migrants, they were automatically excluded from the process. Naturalization was formulated as an exceptional method to acquire citizenship (Estonian language and duration of residence requirements are the prerequisites of naturalization) (Malksoo, 2010). However, their low levels of official state language knowledge¹⁹, rather than their conscious rejection, inhibited large-scale citizenship application of Russian-speakers (Smith and Wilson, 1997: 851). In this vein,

¹⁸ A rule that a child's citizenship is determined by his/her parents' citizenship.

¹⁹ According to the 1989 population census, only 15 per cent of Russians in Estonia considered themselves fluent in Estonian. By 2000, a census showed that about 40 per cent of Russians in Estonia were able to speak Estonian. See. (Lindemann and Kogan, 2013: 109).



exclusionist citizenship policy (as well as education policy; see. Lindemann and Saar, 2012: 1974-1998) of the Estonian state, contributes to the construction of a defensive minority identity or a highly political Russian identity among Russian-speaking groups of Estonia. Estonian official authorities only issued “grey passports” to those stateless residents in 1994 which did not in practice grant noteworthy rights (Manni, 2011).

The Russian Federation moves in and exploits and/or deepens aforementioned unrest at this stage. Koort urges that the Russian Federation has advised the Russian diaspora not to accept the host country’s citizenship through required procedures for a long time (Koort, 2014, p. 72). In this vein, Russia took some important steps to fix the number of stateless residents of Estonia. For instance, in 2008 Russia accepted visa-exemptions for grey passport holders of Estonia. This gave those grey passport holders with relatives in Russia no reason to apply for Estonian citizenship (Manni, 2011).

Regardless of Koort’s thesis’s validity, Russia’s strategy has been to bring the citizenship issue to the attention of international community and discredit Estonian state in front of international organizations (Koort, 2014: 72). Russian authorities several times voiced their concerns about the citizenship issue and labelled this issue as a clear inducement of discriminatory state policy. They mainly tried to justify their thesis through the paradigm of “minority rights” (Russia Against..., 2013) and “pan-European values” (Lavrov Raps..., 2011). The selection of “minority rights” and “pan-European values” paradigm as the legitimation rationale (See. Russia to Draw..., 2011) necessitated a constructive dialogue with the European-centred international organizations such as the European Union, Council of Europe and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). For example, Russia has called the European Union to put pressure on Estonian government on the issue of minority rights (EU Structures should..., 2013;), asked the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights to take a more active role in the issue of non-citizenship (Russia has Questions..., 2013), and complained to OSCE about the citizenship-based human right abuses in Estonia (Lavrov Urges OSCE..., 2012). Even Russia’s criticism about European institutions’ double-standards in reviewing the minority right issues in Estonia (Lavrov Blasts..., 2012; Moscow Accusing..., 2010) proves ironically Russian devotion to European cooperation mechanisms.

5. Soviet Legacy in Narva’s Industry: a Tool of Russia’s Dominance or Not?

After the demise of the Soviet Union, the Baltic States including Estonia were the forerunners of the market-based reforms in post-Soviet geographic space (Feldmann, 2003: 537). Early introduction of national currency (*kroon*), aggressive structural reforms such as elimination of price controls and subsidies, a tight control of central bank over the money supply, creation of an attractive environment for foreign investment and governmental support for large-scale privatizations made Estonia the leader of post-communist transformation. Nevertheless, this ‘shock-therapy’ was painful for much of Estonia’s population. Real wages had dropped drastically, income inequality and unemployment rates increased (Raun, 2001: 30-31).

Ida-Viru country remained the worst affected area of Estonia by this rapid economic transformation. Previously known as one of the regional centres of heavy industry, Ida-Viru became gradually the economically collapsed region of Estonia. For example according to 2005 statistics, GDP per capita in Ida-Viru country was only 66 per cent of the Estonian average (Smallbone, Welter and Xheneti, 2012: 14). According to 2011 statistics, the rate of unemployment in Ida-Viru was 9 per cent higher than Estonian average unemployment rate (26 per cent) (Golunov, 2013: 50). Despite the noteworthy decrease in the rates between the years 2011 and 2013 (average rate of unemployment in Ida-Viru was 15-17 per cent), Ida-Viru certainly remains the leader of Estonian unemployment statistics (Statistical Yearbook of..., 2014: 19)²⁰.

Estonian rapid economic transformation had also prompted unprecedented contradictory impacts over Russian regional dominance. For example, Krenholm Textile Company, which had been a symbol of Russian/Soviet industrialization and economic dominance in Narva, was privatized in 1994 to the Swedish company Boras Wafweri AB (OECD Economic..., 2001: 35). The handover of the firm in 1994 caused an export diversification effect and diminished the regional dependence to Russia because; through the sales subsidiaries in Sweden, Germany and United Kingdom, the export of Krenholm had been diverted more to the European countries and to the United States (Vissak, 2013: 152). However, starting from 2006 the company made losses and decided mass layoffs (OECD Economic..., 2001: 35). The company which had employed almost 12.000 employees during the Soviet era (Bridge over..., 2009), held only 5 per cent of its workforce when it declared bankruptcy in 2010 (Narva Factory..., 2010). Considering that almost the entire

²⁰ The unemployment rates in Narva City have almost always exceeded that of Ida-Viru Country. For example according to 2012 statistics, the unemployment rate for Narva City was 22,4 per cent for Narva City and 18,1 per cent for Ida-Viru Country (Census Shows..., 2012).



workforce in Krenholm was Russian speakers, those layoffs sharpened the perception of poverty and wealth differences across ethnic groups in Narva. In other words, if the necessary measures including the compensations (See. Narva Factory..., 2010) are not taken²¹ by the Estonian authorities, the unemployment protests of Krenholm workers will be easily transferred to identity realm and become a factor in increasing Russian regional power.

Oil-shale fired power plants of Estonia were another Soviet legacy. Despite their environmental damages (oil-shale remains the carbon-richest fuel in Europe); those power plants have practically handled nearly all energy needs of Estonia since independence and made Estonia self-sufficient in energy (Pommereau, 2014). For example, in 2012, 70 per cent of Estonia's total primary energy supply came from oil-shale. Over 85 per cent of the Estonia's mined oil shale was used to produce electricity and heat generation; the rest was turned into shale oil, gas and other valuable chemicals (Estonia is Cleansing..., 2014). Estonia's oil shale industry also created an abundance of export opportunities. Estonia exports three quarters of its energy production mostly to European countries (Tetrault-Farber, 2013). This means, Estonia's Soviet heritage oil-shale industry in Ida-Viru country ironically became a factor of diminishing Russian dominance in the region by guaranteeing Estonia's energy security. On the other hand, the oil-shale industry created significant job opportunities for the predominantly Russian region and avoided any potential social uprising to be exploited by the Russian Federation (Pommereau, 2014).

Uranium industry was another Soviet legacy. However, before the collapse of the Union, in December 1989, Soviet authorities shut down the uranium production lines in Estonia's northeast due to the social discontent in the Baltic States (Lippmaa and Maremäe, 1998: 6). This means, production of rare earths and metals which was introduced in the 1970s became the only uranium-related sector in the post-Soviet Estonian industry (Kaasik, 1998: 21). The rare earths facility (*Silmet*) was privatized in 1997. In 2005, a Swedish company Zimal SA acquired majority holding in Silmet (Minerals Yearbook..., 2008: 4.2). Since 2011, it has been owned by the United States mining group, Molycorp and became one of only two centres in Europe in the rare earths sector (Suttaford, 2013). Considering the strategic significance of rare earths for electronics and the owners of the facilities, this Soviet legacy became another factor in extending Estonia's export opportunities and diminishing the regional influence of Russia.

6. Narva Residents' Economic Links to Russia: a Russian Card or not?

The first economic link that connects Narva residents with Russia is the job opportunities in Ivangorod - a Russian city which is located just opposite to Narva. For example, a supplier for the South Korean automotive company Hyundai had recruited grey passport holders and Russian citizens of Narva to work in its new electrical components plant in Ivangorod in 2010 (Hyundai Supplier..., 2010). This factory's recruitment policy caused a small but noticeable decrease in Narva's unemployment rates in the years 2011 and 2012 (Venemaa Leevendab..., 2012).

However, the numbers of Narvans working in Ivangorod decreased day by day. Starting from 2013, Russia made it harder to employ Narva residents without Russian passports. Related to this decision, nearly 300 grey passport holders lost their jobs (Jobs in Russia..., 2014). Similarly, in March 2013, Russia made a procedural change in her passport regime. According to this new regime, Russian border guards have been prohibited from stamping passport inserts. As a result of this change, frequent travellers, such as Narvans working in Ivangorod, filled up their passports within a few weeks. Repetitious bureaucratic difficulties and costs in passport book renewals decreased Narva residents' incentive to work in Ivangorod (Отмена вкладышей..., 2013). As a result of those two recent difficulties, the number of Narvans working in Ivangorod decreased sharply. For example, the aforementioned company currently employs only 130 people from Narva - who are all Russian citizens (Jobs in Russia..., 2014).

The second link is simply the shuttle trade and/or smuggling of cigarettes, alcohol and petrol. The increase in the volume of shuttle trade/smuggling was a direct result of the Estonia's accession process to the European Union. To join the European Union, Estonia was obliged to harmonize taxes on imported goods. The harmonization process caused shocking increases in the prices of those goods within a relatively short period of time. Many consumers looked for alternative supplies and they found it on the shuttle trade and/or black market (Dean, Fahsing and Gottschalk, 2010: 38).

It is estimated that in 2012 about 1000 residents of Narva (grey or Russian passport holders) visited Ivangorod and brought back cheap cigarettes to Estonia for sale everyday (Russia Eases..., 2012). Likewise, cheap Russian alcohol became another source of income for some Narva residents. Even a pipeline was built

²¹ Some charity organizations also collected foods for unemployed Krenholm workers. See. (Pärnu Residents..., 2010).



to guarantee alcohol smuggling. In 2008 Estonian authorities discovered a two km long underwater “vodka pipeline” across Russian-Estonian frontier (Vodka Pipeline..., 2008; Smugglers Built..., 2008). Fuel trade between Narva and Ivanograd became another income source for some Narva residents. Since petrol is almost two times cheaper in Russia than in Estonia, some owners of “grey passports” exploited this opportunity and bought cheap fuel from Ivangorod and sold in Narva (Life’s a gas..., 2010).

However, Estonian authorities took important measures (including a restrictive revision in the tax law) in order to prevent illegal trade between Russia and Estonia. According to the 2013 amendments to the Estonian tax law, alcohol and fuel should be brought from outside the European Union only during the first arrival, and tobacco products on the first and second arrival. Heavy fines were also imposed on violators of the customs regime. The result of the amendments was a rapid reduction in the amount of smuggling of these commodities. (Amount of..., 2014). On the other hand, an Estonian private company; Elva made an attempt to decrease the dependency of Narva’s workforce on Ivangorod’s industrial complexes by recruiting about 100 workers from Ida-Viru country (Elva Firm..., 2010).

The third economic link that connects Narva residents to Russia is the Russian investments in Ida-Viru country. For example, in 2013 Russian company *Aquafor* built a filter plant in Narva, which provided jobs for more than 300 workers (В Нарве строят..., 2013; Российская компания..., 2014). Another Russian company opened a hotel in Narva-Jõesuu in 2014 that employs more than 100 people, mostly from northeast Estonia (Influx of..., 2014). However, in connection with the Ukraine crisis, some of the Russian investors - who sought to produce plastics, metal and electronic products in Narva for Russian market - froze their investment plans in Narva for fear of new trade sanctions of the European Union to the Russian Federation (Предприятия Нарвского..., 2014).

Consequently, it should be noted that, the economic relations between Russia and the Narvans have been relatively weak. Additionally, Estonian (and sometimes Russian) government took important steps to prevent the cultivation of economic relations. The low levels of economic interdependence between the Russian Federation and Narva became an impediment for Russian dominance in the region. Russian Federation only worked for exploiting the isolated status of Narvans in order to gain advantage in her relations with the West.

7. Conclusion

For Russians in Estonia, the post-Soviet transition should be described as a move from being privileged national ethnic group within a large empire to an ethnic minority within a small nation-state (Lindemann and Saar, 2012: 1975). Simultaneously, the new Estonian state, as a nationalizing state in Rogers Brubaker’s terms, acted to strengthen the core nation (ethnic Estonians), promoted its language, culture, demography, economic welfare and political hegemony (See. Yapıcı, 2009). According to some scholars, the result for Estonia was a “divided society”; (Reilly, 2001: 132; Berg and Oras, 2000; Evans, 2001; Vöörmann and Helemae, 2003) a societal split by which ethnic differences became markers of political identities (Choudhry, 2007: 573).

Under those circumstances, Russia’s annexation of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 increased the debates over separatism fears in Estonia. Some scholars, politicians, journalists and researchers argued that, Estonia’s Russian-speaking minority residing overwhelmingly around Narva would follow Crimea’s path and seek integration with the Russian Federation. Narva’s age-old ties to Russia, Russian/Soviet industrialization and migration policy, the demographic dominance of Russians/Russian speakers in Narva, the citizenship rates of Narvans, Soviet legacy in Narva’s industry, and Narva residents’ economic links to Russia were all given as proofs of Russian dominance in the Estonian northeast. Contrary to the literature, this study found no one-way causality running from Russian/Soviet legacy in Ida-Viru country to Russian level of diffusion in the region. The article concludes that, the factors that have mostly been presented as the proofs of Russian dominance are in fact complex and multi-faceted.

Firstly, beyond controversy industrialization of Narva and Russification of Estonia starting from the 1850s altered Narva’s economy, social life, demographic make-up, and language preferences fundamentally. The results of those changes should be clearly seen in the census results. However, as “Integration Monitoring 2011 Report” clearly indicates, ethnic and linguistic dominance of Russians/Russian speakers in the Ida-Viru country did not bring about a unique Russian national identity in the region. In other words, ethnic and linguistic identities in Estonia’s northeast do not always intersect with political and/or social ones.

Secondly, as seen in 2011 census results, nearly half of the residents in the Ida-Viru country and Narva city is either stateless or have a Russian citizenship. Although some researchers classify the



citizenship status as an indicator in assessing the level of Russian dominance, the article concludes that Russians' and/or Russian speakers' low levels of official state language knowledge, rather than their conscious rejection inhibited large-scale citizenship application of Russian-speakers.

Thirdly, the article concludes that Soviet legacy in Narva's industry should not automatically prove Russian dominance in the region; because post-Soviet Estonian economic transformation prompted unprecedented contradictory impacts over Russian regional dominance. For example, the privatization of Krenholm Textile Company to the Swedish company Boras Wafweri AB caused an export diversification effect and diminished the regional dependence to Russia. Likewise, oil-shale fired power plants as Soviet legacies ironically became factors of diminishing Russian dominance in the region by guaranteeing Estonia's energy security. Another Soviet legacy; rare earths and metals industry also became an additional factor in extending Estonia's export opportunities and diminishing the regional influence of Russia.

The last conclusion of the article is about the economic links of Narva residents to Russia. The decreasing number of Narvans working in Ivanograd, the decrease in shuttle trade and/or smuggling of cigarettes, alcohol and petrol, and the small size of Russian investments in Ida-Viru country indicate the relatively weak economic relations between Russia and Estonian northeast. Low levels of economic linkages between Russia and the Estonian northeast becomes another factor in preventing Russian regional influence.

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