Published in final edited form as:

Ethnicities. 2009 December 1; 9(4): . doi:10.1177/1468796809345433.

'Contexts of Exit in the Migration of Russian Speakers from the Baltic Countries to Ireland'

Sofya Aptekar

Princeton University

Abstract

Recently, Ireland has become a major destination for migrants from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Many of these migrants are members of Russian-speaking minorities leaving a context of restrictive citizenship and language laws and varying degrees of ethnic tension. This paper draws on interviews collected in Ireland to examine the role played by the contexts of exit in decisions to migrate among Russian-speaking minorities from the Baltics. The results suggest that Russian speakers from Estonia migrate because of their experiences as minorities, while those from Latvia and Lithuania migrate to escape low wages and irregular employment. This is so despite equally restrictive language and citizenship laws in Estonia and Latvia. I argue that the effect of state policy as a push factor for minority emigration is mediated by other contextual aspects, such as levels of contact, timbre of ethnic relations, and the degree of intersection between economic stratification and ethnicity.

Keywords

international migration; Ireland; Estonia; Latvia; Lithuania; minorities

As the European continent becomes increasingly integrated, countries of emigration become countries of immigration and new flows of people form and grow. The eastern European nations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania exemplify this trend, sending tens of thousands to one of the newest magnets for migrant labor, Ireland. This migration stream includes members of the large Russian-speaking minorities residing in the Baltics. Using interviews with these Russian speakers, I examine the role played by the contexts of exit on their decisions to migrate to Ireland. A full account of international migration from the Baltic countries to Ireland must consider the contexts of exit: the social, economic, and political situation of the minority populations and sending state policies toward these minorities. I find that for Russian-speaking migrants from Estonia, one of the primary motivations for emigrating is social stratification along ethnic lines and a sense of marginalization resulting from government policies and tense ethnic relations. For Russian speakers from Latvia, which is similar to Estonia in the restrictiveness of its citizenship and language policies but different in terms of the nature of ethnic relations and stratification, migration to Ireland is motivated primarily by economic factors. The same is true of Russian speakers from Lithuania, which shares some of the restrictive language policies with Estonia and Latvia but has more liberal citizenship policies and a smaller and more diverse minority population.

I start with an overview of the Baltic migration stream to Ireland, followed by a description of the contexts of exit for Russian-speaking minorities in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Although the interview data were collected in Ireland, this background is needed to fully understand migration decisions among this group.

Migration to Ireland

In the late 1990s, Ireland experienced tremendous economic growth after a decades-long period of stagnation (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2006). This economic growth has attracted large numbers of migrants from southern and eastern Europe and beyond, reversing the historically dominant direction of the migrant flow out of Ireland. By 2006, fifteen per cent of Ireland's four million residents were foreign-born, up from six per cent in 1991. Lithuania and Latvia are the fourth and fifth largest senders of migrants, respectively, despite their small populations, and Estonia is in the top fifteen (Central Statistics Office, Ireland, 2007).

Since the 2004 European Union expansion, citizens of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have unlimited access to Ireland's labor market. However, the large populations of non-citizen permanent residents found in Estonia and Latvia need to procure the increasingly rare work permits in order to obtain legal employment in Ireland (Quinn, 2006). Migrant workers from the Baltic states are recruited by Irish employment agencies as well as utilizing personal networks (interviews; Dundon et al, 2007). They are found primarily in the service, production, and construction sectors, where they sometimes face discriminatory practices and poor working conditions (Central Statistics Office, 2006; Dundon et al, 2007). Evidence suggests that ethnic communities of Russian-speaking migrants are relatively weak institutionally, with few organizations aside from newspapers and religious groups (interviews, media analysis).

From the perspective of the sending states, there is evidence that people from the Baltics are among the most likely in the European Union to plan emigration (Fouarge and Ester, 2007). No recent statistics are available for Estonia, but it is estimated that tens or even hundreds of thousands of Latvians and Lithuanians emigrated following European Union accession, many to Ireland (Indans et al, 2006; Statistics Lithuania, 2008; Woolfson, 2007). Studies of the Latvian migration stream indicate that Russian-speaking minorities had higher odds of planning to emigrate than Latvian speakers, controlling for other factors, and that ethnic Russians left Latvia at higher rates than ethnic Latvians (Central Statistical Bureau, Latvia, 2008; Ivlevs, 2008).

Context of Exit: Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania

The relative ease of migration and plentiful employment opportunities in Ireland serve as pull factors for migrants from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. But minority policies of sending countries and ethnic contexts may further contribute to migration decisions of Russian-speaking minorities.

After the Soviet Union annexed the Baltic countries during World War II, it deported tens of thousands of Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians and brought in hundreds of thousands of Soviet workers to operate its industrial projects (Mettam and Williams, 2001). They lived and continue to live in cities while rural areas remain predominantly composed of titular nationalities (Hogan-Brun et al, 2007). Most of these blue collar workers were ethnically Russian, with a much smaller number of Ukrainians, Belarussians, Tatars, and Jews. Since the non-Russian immigrants were overwhelmingly russified in language and culture, this paper will refer to them and ethnic Russians collectively as Russian-speakers, a common convention both in the literature and in practice (Hogan-Brun, 2007; Muisznick, 2006; Schmid, 2008; Vihalemm and Masso, 2007). As Soviet citizens, ethnic Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians were forced to learn Russian but the newcomers did not reciprocate, and the state of unilateral bilingualism remains today, albeit in a diminished form (Hogan-Brun et al, 2007; Laitin, 1998; Pavelson and Luuk, 2002).

With considerable support from their Russian-speaking residents, the Baltic states regained independence in the early 1990s (Kolsto, 1995). Russian speakers became minorities, losing the power and prestige they held in the Soviet era (Arutyunyan, 2003; Pavelson and Luuk, 2002). The Russian Federation established a right of return to protect this new diaspora, but only around a tenth of the Russian-speaking population left the relatively prosperous Baltic countries (Arutyunyan, 2003). After a daunting post-independence transition during which Soviet-era economies had to be drastically restructured and rebuilt and radical free market reforms were conducted, there was rapid economic growth as well as rapidly-growing inequality. The changes brought an end to job security for a large sector of the population and de-regularization and informalization of employment in general (Woolfson, 2007).

There is a large body of literature on the identity and future of the Russian-speaking minorities in the Baltic region, with some scholars projecting assimilation to titular nationalities (Laitin, 2003), others predicting integration without assimilation (Antane and Tsilevich, 1999; Pisarenko, 2006), escalation of ethnic conflict (Kolsto 1995), or development of a new, Europe-centered identity (Laitin, 1998, 2003; Vihalemm and Masso, 2007). At the present, these Russian-speaking populations are far from assimilating and remain among the largest minority populations in the European Union, with the non-titular share ranging from 8 per cent in Lithuania to a staggering 40 per cent in Latvia (Hughes, 2005, see Table 1). Russian-speaking communities in Latvia and Estonia are internally fragmented, with no unified body to represent their interests within each country (Laitin, 2003). Below is a more detailed treatment of each Baltic country and its Russian-speaking population.

Estonia

Estonia is a small nation with a large predominantly Russian and Russian-speaking minority that comprises a third of the total population. Upon independence, Estonia asserted state continuation from pre-Soviet era, granting citizenship to those who were citizens in the inter-war Estonia state or their descendants. The 97 per cent of Russian speakers whose families migrated post-WWII were left in the position of foreigners at best and occupiers or colonizers at worst (Hogan-Brun et al, 2007; Hughes, 2005). Estonia's Central Decolonization Initiative included negotiations with Canada and Argentina to accept the Russian-speaking minority population as immigrants (Laitin, 1998). A naturalization process with daunting language, income, and residency requirements was established, and 40 per cent of the predominantly Russian-speaking non-titulars acquired Estonian citizenship by 2000 (Statistics Estonia, 2000, see Table 1). Despite intervention by the European Union that eased the naturalization process somewhat in the late 1990s, only about 38,000 additional people became citizens from 2000 to early 2008 (Citizenship and Migration Board of Estonia, 2008). The lives of the Russian speakers post-independence were characterized by uncertainty: the periodically mandated renewal of their residency permits was not guaranteed, and requirements for naturalization were in constant flux (Galbreath, 2003). To stem this uncertainty, over 80,000 people accepted Russia's offer of citizenship (Hogan-Brun et al, 2007). In 2000, 20 per cent of non-titulars in Estonia were citizens of Russia (mostly those over age 40). In addition, stateless people, many of whom were born in Estonia, comprised around 40 per cent of the non-titular population (Statistics Estonia, 2000, see Table 1).

The majority of Russian speakers in Estonia do not hold Estonian citizenship and thus their political, social, and economic rights are limited when it comes to voting and holding office, employment, property ownership, and residential movement (Hughes, 2005; Van Meurs, 2003). Although Estonia does allow non-citizens to participate in local elections, which Latvia and Lithuania do not do, ethnic Russian parties in Estonia are largely excluded from power (Hogan-Brun et al, 2007; Vihalemm, 2007).

Along with citizenship, a major issue in ethnic relations in Estonia is language, which served to delineate group boundaries during the Soviet period and continues to do so now. Proficiency in Estonian is required for holding local office and obtaining government and some private sector jobs (Hogan-Brun et al, 2007). The Soviet system of separate schools continues to exist, with only 5 per cent of children whose first language is not Estonian attending Estonian language schools (Leping and Toomet, 2007). Despite a growing demand for Estonian-language instruction among Russian speakers, most graduates of Russian language schools finish with poor Estonian skills (Hogan-Brun et al, 2007). Funding for language instruction in general is inadequate and those living in Russian enclaves have limited learning possibilities (Hughes, 2005; Laitin, 1998; Saar and Kaziulia, 2007). Since Estonia's accession to the European Union in 2004, many Russian speakers there place more importance on learning English than Estonian, and there is evidence that they are forming more West-oriented identities (Vihalemm, 2002; 2007). Along with low levels of ethnic contact, intermarriage rates between ethnic Estonians and other groups are low (Arutyunyan, 2003). In a multi-national study of attitudes toward minority rights in Eastern Europe, Evans and Need (2002) found that Estonia had the highest levels of ethnic polarization on these attitudes in Eastern Europe.

Estonia is the most economically prosperous of the Baltic countries and one of the most prosperous nations in Central Europe (Simonian, 2003; Van Meurs, 2003). Economic disadvantage is concentrated among the Russian speakers, who were hit the hardest during the economic transformation of the 1990s (Galbreath, 2003; Mettam and Williams, 2001; Pavelson and Luuk, 2002; Saar and Kaziulia, 2007; Van Meurs, 2003). Unemployment rates among minorities were twice as high as among ethnic Estonians in 2003, and the growing wage gap of 15 per cent was higher than the ethnic wage gaps in Latvia and Lithuania (Hazans, 2005; Leping and Toomet, 2007). The wage gap could not be statically explained by other factors, including language skills and occupation, and is likely due to entry barriers to employment and segregation. Both young and older non-Estonian workers are faring poorly (Leping and Toomet, 2007). Estonia is characterized by geographically uneven development, with heavily Russian areas in the northeast experiencing extremely high unemployment rates following the collapse of Soviet industry. The same region is also culturally and socially segregated from the rest of Estonia, with limited opportunities for interethnic contact (Saar and Kazjulja, 2007; Van Meurs, 2003).

To summarize, the situation of Russian speakers in Estonia is characterized by restrictive citizenship and language laws, low levels of contact and intermarriage, interethnic tension, and socioeconomic stratification by ethnicity.

Latvia

There are strong parallels between the situation of Russian speakers in Estonia and Latvia. Latvia also has extremely restrictive citizenship and language policies, granting citizenship to inter-war citizens and their descendants and excluding the vast majority of Russian speakers (Leyshkalne, 2005; Schmid, 2008). The naturalization process in Latvia did not start until the mid 1990s (Hogan-Brun et al, 2007), but the post-independence uncertainty did not lead to mass uptake of Russian citizenship as it did in Estonia. Since 1995, citizenship is more explicitly based on ethnicity, and ethnic Latvians simply register to acquire citizenship, even if not descended from inter-war citizens (Kolsto, 1999). Latvia has the largest share of minority population of the three Baltic countries: out of 2.3 million, 41 per cent are not ethnic Latvians and half of the latter are not citizens (Naturalization Board of the Republic of Latvia, 2006, see Table 1).

Those who lack citizenship do not have the right to vote in local elections as in Estonia. Nor are there any special rules for the use of the Russian language in heavily Russian areas, as in

Estonia and Lithuania (Antane and Tsilevich, 1999). At the same time, however, Russian political parties in Latvia are far more viable than they are in Estonia (Vihalemm, 2007). One of the most visible sources of tension in Latvia has been the introduction of more Latvian instruction into Russian-language schools (Hogan-Brun et al 2007; Hughes, 2005; Laitin, 1998). However, this conflict over schools is said to be inflated by the more extreme organized interest groups in the Russian language community. Most Russian speakers are not mobilizing around nationalistic themes and Russian-speaking parents vote with their feet: a third of Russian-speaking children in Latvia were voluntarily attending Latvian-language schools in 2003 (Dorodnova, 2003; Hogan-Brun et al 2007). Russian speakers are improving their Latvian skills at a faster rate than Russian speakers in Estonia but some asymmetrical bilingualism continues, with ethnic Latvians switching to Russian when speaking with Russian speakers (Hogan-Brun et al, 2007; Schmid, 2008).

Russian speakers in Latvia report that their interpersonal relationships with ethnic Latvians are positive. There are similarities in lifestyles and desire by both sides to maintain friendly relations, with a focus on economic issues and the environment, rather than ethnic tensions, as the main problems facing society (Schmid, 2008, Tabuns, 2006, Zepa and Supule, 2006; Zepa et al, 2007). Levels of residential segregation in Latvia are lower than in Estonia at the neighborhood and county levels (Apine, 2006; Kronenfeld, 2005; Laitin 1998). The intermarriage rate is extremely high and growing post-independence: a full quarter of Russian women living in Latvia marry Latvian men today (Alpine, 2006; Leyshkalne, 2005; Monden and Smits, 2005). Nevertheless, there are disagreements along ethnic lines concerning educational reforms, interpretation of history, and the acceptability of making Russian a second official language, with ethnic Latvians taking a less rosy view of ethnic relations than Russian speakers (Zepa et al, 2007).

Latvia was the poorest new member of the European Union in 2004. Like Estonia, Latvia has a heavily Russian region, now economically moribund. Unlike in Estonia, however, there is a long history of Russians living in Latvia, and economic inequality is perceived in geographical rather than ethnic terms (Monden and Smits, 2005; Van Meurs, 2003). Ethnic differentials in unemployment rates are lower than in Estonia and the earnings gap between non-Latvians and ethnic Latvians was around 10 per cent in 2002 - similar to Lithuania and lower than in Estonia (Hazans, 2005). Survey data from 2004 and 2005 showed only modest or statistically non-significant differences in income (Aasland, 2006; Zepa et al 2005). There is little evidence of employment discrimination (Pabriks, 2002). Non-Latvian minorities benefit from living predominantly in cities, where wages are higher than in the countryside (Hazans, 2005). This is in contrast to Estonia, where Russian speakers also tend to live in cities but do not get a boost in wages that ethnic Estonians do (Leping and Toomet, 2007).

In summary, like Estonia, Latvia has restrictive citizenship and language laws. In comparison with Estonia, however, Latvia has higher levels of contact and intermarriage, generally more positive ethnic relations (with the exception of resentment toward the government among Russian speakers), and lower levels of stratification along ethnic lines.

Lithuania

Lithuania is unlike its Baltic neighbors in that it has a much smaller Russian-speaking population and extended citizenship to all residents upon independence (Kasatkina, 2004; Van Meurs, 2003). It has a long history of being a powerful independent nation and was able to retain relative ethnic homogeneity during the Soviet era (Budryte, 2003; Hogan-Brun et al 2007; Simonian, 2003). Altogether, Russian speakers comprise only eight per cent of the total population (Statistics Lithuania, 2008). The largest ethnic minority group in Lithuania is the Poles, at 6.7 per cent (Hogan-Brun et al 2007; Statistics Lithuania, 2008). It is ethnic tensions with the Poles, rather than Soviet-era immigrants, which are most obvious in

Lithuania, with a long history of animosity between the groups and disputes over regional autonomy in the 1990s (Kolsto, 1995).

Members of the Russian-speaking minority in Lithuania are more evenly distributed across rural and urban areas than they are in Estonia and Latvia (Kasatkina, 2004). They are more evenly distributed across economic sectors as well, although ethnic Lithuanians do earn more than other ethnic groups, with an earnings differential slightly lower than in Latvia at 9 per cent in 2000 (Hazans, 2005; Van Meurs, 2003). On the other hand, a survey of six Lithuanian cities conducted in 2001 and 2002 found that family incomes of Russians and Lithuanians were similar (Kasatkina, 2004).

Like in other Baltic countries, fluency in the dominant language is problematic for Russian-speakers in Lithuania and leads to some degree of social and economic instability for this group (Kasatkina, 2004). Lithuania was the first of the Baltic countries to implement strict language restrictions on employment, although these restrictions do not extend beyond the public sector. As in the other Baltic countries, Lithuania has a regulating body to enforce its language laws. Unlike Latvia and Estonia, however, Lithuania has not implemented educational reforms. With declining birth rates among Russian speakers and high proportions of students from Russian-speaking families (24 per cent) attending mainstream schools, the relevance of Russian schools is decreasing without interventions (Hogan-Brun et al, 2007).

The attitudes of Russian speakers toward Lithuanian society and language are positive (Hogan-Brun et al, 2007). In the years immediately following independence, Kolsto (1995) observed that Russian minorities in Lithuania seemed particularly well integrated and had the highest levels of titular language skills out of the former Soviet republics. And while both Russian Estonian and Russian Latvian press are often alarmist and histrionic in their coverage of minority rights, Russian Lithuanian media is primarily concerned with practical aspects of integration into society (Kolsto, 1995).

In all, Lithuania's language laws are similarly restrictive to its neighbors but its citizenship laws are liberal, with high levels of contact and low stratification along ethnic lines.

Thus, we see that the situations of Russian-speaking minorities in the Baltic countries exhibit some similarities and differences. Government policies in the Baltic countries limit the rights of Russian-speaking minorities with respect to language in all three countries and with respect to citizenship in Estonia and Latvia. In economic terms, the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia seems to be more disadvantaged than the minorities in Latvia and Lithuania. Residential segregation is highest in Estonia and lowest in Lithuania. Children from Russian-speaking families in Latvia are the most likely to attend titular language schools, closely followed by Lithuania. Russian speakers in Estonia have been acquiring titular language skills at the slowest pace and have the lowest levels of interethnic contact. Their attitudes toward Estonian language and culture can be negative, with their identities geared most toward Europe. Russian speakers in Lithuania, on the other hand, seem to have the most positive attitude towards majority language and society. Those in Latvia have positive attitudes on the interpersonal level but are resentful of the state. Despite similarities in the legislative regimes of Latvia and Estonia, there is a stronger perception of stratification by ethnicity and/or language in Estonia.

In scholarly discussions of what is to become of the Russian speakers in the Baltic countries, the exit option has until recently been dismissed because only the Russian Federation was considered as a possible destination. After the accession of the Baltic countries to the European Union, it became clear that Russian speakers are much more likely to migrate to Western Europe than to Russia. In a recent paper, Hughes (2005) predicted that given the

discriminatory regimes in Estonia and Latvia, there is potential for massive emigration of Russian speakers. There is some evidence that Russian-speaking minorities in Latvia are emigrating westward at higher rates than titular nationalities (Ivlevs, 2008; Rumpite, 2007).

In what follows, I focus on the experiences of Russian-speaking migrants from the Baltic countries who are living in Ireland to examine the factors influencing their migration. How does their position as ethnic minorities in the sending countries influence Russian speakers' decisions to migrate to Ireland?

Migration of Ethnic Minority Groups

Migration of Russian speakers from the Baltic countries to Ireland provides an opportunity to revisit theories of migration with an eye to fleshing out the role played by contexts of exit. A range of factors have been shown to drive immigration in general, among them wage and employment differentials, failure of various markets in the sending country, capitalist penetration into the developing world, and segmented labor markets that serve as pull factors. Once started, migration tends to continue as social networks form and strengthen across borders. Receiving and sending governments play a role as well, although this has received less attention in the literature (Massey et al., 1998). In this paper, I focus on sending state policies and on the contexts of exit more generally.

While no longer directly promoting emigration of Russian-speaking minorities, government policies of the Baltic countries may make emigration a more attractive option for these minorities. At the same time, the impact of these government policies is qualified by the state of ethnic relations in general. If we expect discrimination to increase with the size of the minority, then Latvia should give its minorities the most compelling reason to leave, especially given nationalist ideology that justifies the restrictive citizenship and language regime as natural and inevitable (Blalock, 1967). On the other hand, restrictive laws are combined with high levels of contact and intermarriage and more amicable ethnic relations, which seems to lead to an attenuated sense of being the 'other' (Allport, 1954). We can expect that economic factors and social networks predominate as rationale for emigration for members of the Russian-speaking minorities in Latvia and Lithuania, while it is the Russian-speaking migrants from Estonia who will be most likely to emigrate due to a sense of marginalization and real or perceived experience of discrimination.

Social stratification along ethnic lines is another aspect of the process. If social stratification occurs along ethnic boundaries – and the perception of this may be exacerbated by low levels of contact and geographical isolation – members of the minority group will be more likely to frame their emigration decisions as exit from a discriminatory regime. On the other hand, social stratification that is less coterminous with ethnic divisions – or perceived to be less so – may lead to emphasis on economic and other motivations for emigration. Thus, again, we would expect that Russian speakers from Estonia are more likely to refer to discrimination as a reason for coming to Ireland than Russian speakers from Latvia and Lithuania, where socioeconomic differences between ethnic groups are smaller and people tend to see socioeconomic stratification as crosscutting ethnic boundaries. Table 2 presents these relationships.

Data and Methods

This paper draws on 26 semi-structured interviews conducted with Russian-speaking respondents from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania living in Dublin and surrounding areas in the summer of 2006. Respondents were asked to describe their migration decisions and experiences and to reflect on their identities and impressions of Ireland. The interviews ranged from twenty minutes to three hours in length and were recorded when permission

was obtained. All names have been changed. Respondents were recruited through advertisements in ethnic newspapers and stores as well as through snowball methods. The focus on Russian-speaking migrants rather than a more balanced comparison between this group and titular nationalities serves to minimize a selection limitation of the dataset. The study was conducted and advertised in Russian and English, not Estonian, Latvian, or Lithuanian, and thus, attracted a highly unrepresentative group of titular migrants.

Sample characteristics

Respondents ranged in age from 18 to 58 years, with a median age of 27, and were almost evenly split in gender. Most migrants arrived after their countries joined the European Union in 2004; however, some migrated as long as six years ago. Four respondents were unemployed and two were homemakers. One respondent was a single mother receiving welfare benefits. Consistent with the context of reception in the labor market, the majority of the 19 who held jobs worked in the service industry (wait staff, cleaners), construction, and manufacturing (furniture, pharmaceuticals). The rest had a variety of relatively low-paid white collar jobs. Despite the youth of the sample, fifteen respondents progressed beyond secondary school in education, with the majority of these completing some years of college. This is consistent with quantitative research showing that migrants from Eastern Europe have higher educational attainment than Irish nationals (Hughes and Quinn, 2004).

Half of the respondents did not speak the official languages of their sending countries, a quarter was fluent, and the remaining quarter described their proficiency as average. All considered Russian to be their native language. Not all were ethnically Russian, however: one respondent was Ukrainian, one was Tatar, and one was half Tatar and half Polish. For all three, Russian was their mother tongue. Finally, there was a respondent who had a Latvian father and a Belorussian mother but considered herself Russian and favored Russian in conversation. Three quarters of the respondents were born in the Baltic countries and many of these had parents who were also born there. Five respondents were born in Russia or Ukraine and were brought to the Baltic republics by their parents at very young ages. Only one respondent moved to the Baltic region as a young adult.

Results and Discussion

In explaining their decisions to migrate, Russian-speaking respondents from the Baltic countries cited many economic reasons that are in line with both neoclassical economic theory and new economics of migration theory: higher wages, better chances of employment, high costs of university education at home, seasonal unemployment, and saving for a specific goal, such as starting a business (Massey et al., 1998). Respondents who had been in Ireland for longer periods of time (three to six years) had often been brought over by recruitment agencies. However, it seems that informal social networks have since taken over from for-profit agencies and most people in the sample knew someone already in Ireland who helped them with initial arrangements. Respondents often described a situation in their home communities where many people they knew had either worked abroad or were abroad at the time. Thus, these migrants could utilize a range of social ties and were immersed in a culture of migration that could be compared to that existing in some communities in Mexico (Kandel and Massey, 2002). This is similar to the prevalence of social networks and growth of the culture of migration found among ethnic Latvians migrating to Ireland (Indans et al, 2006).

The ease of migrating to Ireland before and after European Union expansion was cited as a reason for migrating there, both in terms of ease of entry and employment and geographical distance. In contrast to findings of Indans et al (2006), who surveyed ethnic Latvian migrants in Dublin, most of the Russian-speaking respondents in my sample were not

planning to return home. Moreover, many thought of Ireland as the first step in a migration trajectory that would eventually land them in a more desirable destination, such as other European countries, Australia, or Canada. Younger respondents also cited desire to travel and see the world as part of their decision to come to Ireland.

Wanting higher wages or youthful wanderlust does not make Russian-speaking migrants particularly distinct from most other migrants who come to Ireland, particularly from Eastern Europe. In fact, my findings thus far closely parallel recent studies of ethnic Latvians (Indans et al, 2006) and of migrants from Poland (Kropiewiec and King-O'Riain, 2006). What may distinguish the Russian-speaking migrants from the Baltic states is that many also cite their situation as minorities in the sending countries as a major reason for leaving.

The government and its minority policies were mentioned as push factors for migration by Russian-speaking respondents from Estonia and Latvia. In particular, language policies mandating mastery of Estonian and Latvian for employment were described as problematic for socioeconomic wellbeing: 'What brought me here.... is opportunity to make money. To sell my labor. In Baltic countries, for Russian-speakers it's problematic to find work' ('Rashid', 40, Tatar Latvian).

The limited employment opportunities available to Russian speakers in Estonia were tied to the segregated school system:

So it was hard to find work [in Estonia]? – Yes, because of the language. It's difficult to learn. I went to a good school - although it was Russian... but that diploma means little in Estonia... If I go somewhere with this diploma and I don't speak Estonian, they are going to say, so alright, you finished school, alright, you have good grades, and what are you going to do now? And if you look for work in Russian - you can't imagine what type of work offered for Russians! Why do I need that? When here [in Ireland], I can be marketing manager. ('Ira', 21, Russian Estonian)

Respondents from Lithuania did not refer to state policies on language – which are similarly restrictive – as a reason for migration. Instead, they seemed to be primarily motivated by economic considerations, although the range of employment available to those among them who do not speak Lithuanian is likely to have been limited.

State-funded higher education opportunities in the Baltic states are only available in titular languages. Several younger respondents from Latvia and Estonia said that they came to Ireland because they wanted to pursue higher education there or to save enough money for private Russian-language universities at home: 'In Estonia you don't have an opportunity to get higher education in Russian. And learning in Estonian, which is spoken by about one million people is absolutely crazy' ('Denis', 22, Russian Estonian).

All of my respondents were citizens and they did not connect restrictive citizenship policies to their decision to leave. However, Russian speakers from Estonia and Latvia did talk about citizenship policies that have resulted in many mixed-status families as an aspect of a harsh state context. Russian speakers from Lithuania, on the other hand, went to lengths to point to the benevolence of the Lithuanian government:

Of course, [I have] Lithuanian citizenship because in 1991, when Lithuania seceded from the Soviet Union, we got citizenship - it was good for everyone, there were no political things, there are none in Lithuania at all. Because voluntarily, everyone who wanted it got it. Everyone who was living there at the time, in 1992, in Lithuania...It was not like Latvia. Everything was alright.

(‘Larisa’, 37, Russian Lithuanian)

This is despite the fact that language policies in Lithuania are not very different from those in Latvia and Estonia. These attitudes among the respondents are in line with existing research documenting a more positive stance toward Lithuanian society among Russian speakers there compared to their counterparts in Estonia and Latvia. This positive stance is likely connected to the liberal citizenship regime enacted after independence (Musznieks, 2006).

In addition to unfavorable state policies toward minorities, societal polarization along ethnic lines can also serve as a push factor for migration. Russian-speaking Estonians, for instance, immediately launched into stories of what it was like to be a Russian speaker in Estonia when simply asked to talk of their migration decisions in general: ‘But I think first of all, what attracts is the salary. But also, in Estonia, the treatment of Russians is such - they don’t like Russians. They despise them... So it’s just uncomfortable for a Russian in Estonia’ (‘Ilya’, 20, Russian Estonian). And: ‘I decided to stay here [in Ireland]. Absolutely for certain. Because Estonia is a country where I am not needed with the name like Ivanov. Especially with a name like that’ (‘Denis’, 22, Russian Estonian).

As an example of their discomfort, many Russian speakers from Estonia recounted instances of ethnic Estonians demanding that they speak Estonian. Notably, Russian speakers from Latvia and Lithuania never mentioned this and instead explained that members of the majority always spoke Russian to them, even when they made efforts to speak the titular languages. However, even the few respondents who had a good command of Estonian spoke of ethnic tensions as a reason for migrating:

I was called an occupant even though I am part Estonian and I speak flawless Estonian. Doesn’t matter, Russian last name - goodbye... Many times it has been proven to me that here [in Ireland], our rights are respected. And at home you never had that. (‘Liza’, 25, Russian Estonian)

The tense interethnic context described by Russian-speaking migrants from Estonia as a push factor in their migration trajectory is largely absent from the discourse of Russian-speakers from Latvia and Lithuania. On occasion that the latter did talk of ethnic tensions, they did not connect them to their decisions to migrate and often had to be prompted to reflect on their experiences as minorities. My interviews confirmed numerous studies done in Latvia that show that Russian speaking minorities resent the government while feeling friendly or neutral toward their Latvian neighbors:

It’s made worse and emphasized very much on purpose, especially around elections. But in reality, me, personally, when I go to all the agencies, in Russian, I don’t see it.... In general, you know, all the groups are separate but to such an extent as the newspapers tell it, there is not at the level of the people. Because people suffer the same way without money. Everyone’s children leave – citizens and noncitizens. They are outlawing holidays and such, and you can’t celebrate May 1. But again, they are all celebrated and no one does anything. So some [tension] exists but most of it is created by them [politicians and newspapers], they inflame it. (‘Alina’, 26, half Latvian, half Russian, identifies as Russian)

Thus, ethnic tensions are not a reason that Russian speakers from Latvia move to Ireland, aside from their aforementioned resentment of language policies. This is also the case with respondents from Lithuania. The interviewees did not feel that there was much ethnic tension in Lithuania, and it was certainly not a push factor for migration:

In Lithuania, we don’t have those kinds of problems, with discrimination, that we are Russian or something. We never had that at all... Lots of friends, on the street,

in the stores... I don't know how it is in Latvia, lots of scandals. But in Lithuania we don't have that. ('Tolya', 32, Russian Lithuanian)

Overall, the data indicate that Russian speakers from the Baltic states are motivated to migrate to Ireland by common economic factors, such as seeking higher wages and better employment conditions. In addition, however, Russian-speaking migrants from Estonia and Latvia migrate to escape the restrictive language policies of their governments. This is far more salient in migration decisions of Russian speakers from Estonia than from Latvia; Russian-speaking migrants from Latvia are more similar to those from Lithuania in that they emphasize economic reasons for migration. Resentment of government policies extends to ethnic relations in general for Russian speakers from Estonia. They often say that they have left Estonia due to the sharp ethnic divisions manifested in hostility, disrespect, and even oppression in their daily lives at the hands of the ethnic Estonians. Thus, restrictive citizenship and language policies interact with the low levels of contact and high economic stratification along ethnic lines to create a situation where minorities are motivated to emigrate by their status as minorities rather than simply seeking higher wages or more stable employment. The latter is the case in places where the effects of restrictive laws are attenuated through higher levels of contact between ethnic groups and lower economic differentials between minority and majority groups (see Table 2).

Conclusion

As the European Union expands eastward, new migration streams establish themselves, posing new puzzles for social scientists and policy makers. Thus, a new country of immigration, Ireland, has become a magnet for new countries of emigration, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. What complicates the situation is the presence of large minority populations in these three Baltic nations. This paper uses interview data with Russian-speaking minority migrants living in Ireland to examine the role that contexts of exit play in their migration. I find that in the case of Estonia, minorities migrate because of their experiences as minorities, while in the cases of Latvia and Lithuania, they migrate primarily to escape low wages and irregular employment. This finding is novel in that it breaks up the customary dichotomy of Estonia and Latvia, on the one hand – with their restrictive legislation and huge minority populations – and Lithuania on the other – with its liberal legislation and small minority population. I argue that in addition to government policy, we must consider other factors in the context of ethnic relations, such as levels of contact and intermarriage and the intersection of socioeconomic stratification and ethnicity. It is the relative absence of ethnic tensions on the interpersonal level, high levels of contact and intermarriage, and low overlap between stratification and ethnicity that move Latvia closer to Lithuania despite what some term draconian language and citizenship laws.

Migration following European Union expansion has provided a fresh opportunity for researchers concerned with the future of the Russian diaspora in the former republics of the Soviet Union. This paper adds a new facet to the growing body of literature on the fate of these populations. In addition, it points to the importance of addressing the differences between the three Baltic countries that are often considered only as a unit in European migration literature, as well as the internal variation in the migration stream from each country. More generally, consideration of the contexts of exit for ethnic minorities will help researchers explain and predict migration of such groups as the Turks in the newest European Union member, Bulgaria, and minority populations of Albanians, Serbs, and Kurds if and when the European Union opens itself to the former Yugoslavia and Turkey. Likewise, my findings have implications for research on migration of minority groups across the world, be they the Maya from Mexico or Palestinians from Israel.

I make these claims with caution because the findings rely on an unrepresentative sample of migrants. It is likely, for instance, that I undersampled migrants with less leisure time, which could disproportionately include those who work in blue collar occupations. Since the interviews were conducted in Dublin and the surrounding areas, there is a possibility that migrants living elsewhere in Ireland differ in their motivations to migrate. Nevertheless, the degree to which respondents from Estonia stood out in their emphasis on minority conditions as a reason to come to Ireland provides sufficient support for the trends observed in my findings. Future research on Baltic immigrants in Ireland should explicitly compare Russian speakers to titular nationalities to explore differences in migration decisions and future trajectories.

Acknowledgments

Research for this paper was funded by a grant from the Global Network on Inequality. Special thanks to the staff of *Nasha Gazeta* in Dublin, Dorren McMahon, Douglas Massey, Sharon Bzostek, Cristina Mora, Pierre Kremp, Tom Ivlevs, and the participants of the Student Colloquium at the Center for Migration and Development at Princeton.

References

- Aasland, A. Russians and the Economy. In: Muiznieks, N., editor. *Latvian-Russian Relations: Domestic and International Dimensions*. LU Akademiskais apgads; 2006.
- Allport, G. *The Nature of Prejudice*. Cambridge: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co.; 1954.
- Antane, A.; Tsilevich, B. Nation-building and Ethnic Integration in Latvia. In: Kolsto, P., editor. *Nation-building and Ethnic Integration in Post-Soviet Societies: An Investigation of Latvia and Kazakhstan*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press; 1999.
- Apine I. Changing Identity of Russians in Contemporary Latvia. *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia*. 2006; (10):65–70.
- Arutyunyan, Yu. Ethnosociology. Russians in the Near Abroad. *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia*. 2003; (11):31–40.
- Blalock, H. *Toward A Theory of Minority-Group Relations*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.; 1967.
- Budryte, D. Today's Politics and Yesterday's Embitterments: Ethnic Restructuring and Its Aftermath in the Baltic states. In: Munz, R.; Ohlinger, R., editors. *Diasporas and Ethnic Migrants: Germany, Israel and Post-Soviet Successor States in Comparative Perspective*. London: Frank Cass; 2003.
- Central Statistical Bureau. Latvia. Table 4:43 External long-term migration by ethnicity. 2008. [<http://www.csb.gov.lv/>].
- Central Statistics Office. *Quarterly National Household Survey, Quarter 1 2006*. Dublin: CSO; 2006. Ireland.
- Central Statistics Office. *Census 2006. Principal Demographic Results*. Dublin: CSO; 2007. Ireland.
- Citizenship and Migration Board of Estonia. *Statistics: Naturalization*. 2008. [<http://www.mig.ee/index.php/mg/eng/statistics>]
- Dorodnova, J. The Russian-Speaking Identity under the Latvian Language Policy. In: Munz, R.; Ohliger, R., editors. *Diasporas and Ethnic Migrants: Germany, Israel and Post-Soviet Successor States in Comparative Perspective*. London: Frank Cass; 2003.
- Dundon T, Gonzalez-Perez M, McDonough T. Bitten by the Celtic Tiger: Immigrant Workers and Industrial Relations in the New "Glocalized" Ireland. *Economic and Industrial Democracy*. 2007; 28(4):501–522.
- Evans G, Need A. Explaining Ethnic Polarization over Attitudes toward Minority Rights in Eastern Europe: A Multilevel Analysis. *Social Science Research*. 2002; 31(2002):653–680.
- Fouarge, D.; Ester, P. *Factors Determining International and Regional Migration in Europe*. Dublin: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions; 2007.
- Galbreath D. The Politics of European Integration and Minority Rights in Estonia and Latvia. *Perspective on European Politics and Society*. 2003; 4(1):35–53.

- Hazans M. Unemployment and the Earnings Structure in Latvia. World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 3504. 2005
- Hogan-Brun G, et al. Language Politics and Practices in the Baltic States. *Current Issues in Language Planning*. 2007; 8(4):469–631.
- Hughes J. “Exit” in Deeply Divided Society: Regimes of Discrimination in Estonia and Latvia and the Potential for Russophone Migration. *Journal of Common Market Studies*. 2005; 43(4):739–762.
- Hughes, J.; Quinn, E. The Impact of Immigration on Europe’s Societies: Ireland. European Migration Network; 2004.
- Indans, I., et al. Latvia and Free Labor Mobility: The Example of Ireland. Commission of Strategic Analysis. 2006. [http://www.president.lv/images/modules/items/PDF/item_489_Irijas_piemers_zinojums.pdf]
- Ivlevs, A. GEP Research Paper 11/08. University of Nottingham; 2008. Are Ethnic Minorities More Likely to Emigrate? Evidence from Latvia.
- Kandel W, Massey D. The Culture of Mexican Migration: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis. *Social Forces*. 2002; 80(3):981–1004.
- Kasatkina N. Characteristics of Adaptation of Ethnic Groups in Contemporary Lithuania. *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia*. 2004; (5):46–54.
- Kolsto, P. Russians in the Former Soviet Republics. London: Hurst & Company; 1995.
- Kolsto, P., editor. Nation-building and Ethnic Integration in Post-Soviet Societies: An Investigation of Latvia and Kazakhstan. Boulder, CO: Westview Press; 1999.
- Kronenfeld D. The Effects of Interethnic Contact on Ethnic Identity: Evidence from Latvia. *Post-Soviet Affairs*. 2005; 21(3):247–277.
- Kropiewiec, K.; King-O’Riain, R. National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism. The Community Profile Series; 2006. Polish Migrant Workers in Ireland.
- Laitin, D. Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad. Ithaca: Cornell University Press; 1998.
- Laitin D. Three Models of Integration and the Estonian/Russian Reality. *Journal of Baltic Studies*. 2003; 34(2):197–222.
- Leping, K.; Toomet, O. Ethnic Wage Gap and Political Break Ups: Estonia during Political and Economic Transition. Tartu, Estonia: Tartu University Press; 2007.
- Leyshkalne G. Ethnosociology. Russian-speaking Population of Latvia: Problems of Integration into Society. *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia*. 2005; (9):86–90.
- Massey, D., et al. *Worlds in Motion: Understanding International Migration at the End of the Millenium*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 1998.
- Mettam C, Williams S. A Colonial Perspective on Population Migration in Soviet Estonia. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. 2001; 27(1):133–150.
- Monden C, Smits J. Ethnic Intermarriage in Times of Social Change: The Case of Latvia. *Demography*. 2005; 42(2):323–345. [PubMed: 15986989]
- Muiznieks, N. Introduction. In: Muiznieks, N., editor. *Latvian-Russian Relations: Domestic and International Dimensions*. LU Akademiskais apgads; 2006.
- Facts and Statistics on Residents. Riga: Board of Citizenship and Migration Affairs; 2006. Naturalization Board of the Republic of Latvia, The. [http://www.np.gov.lv/index.php?en=fakti_en&saite=residents.htm]
- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. OECD Economic Surveys: Ireland. *OECD Economic Surveys*. 2006; 2006(3):1–154.
- Pabriks, A. Occupational Representation and Ethnic Discrimination in Latvia. The Soros Foundation Latvia. 2002. [www.policy.lv]
- Pavelson, M.; Luuk, M. Lauristin, M.; Heidmets, M. The Challenge of the Russian Minority. Tartu: Tartu University Press; 2002. Non-Estonians on the Labour Market: A Change in the Economic Model and Differences in Social Capital.
- Pisarenko O. The Acculturation Modes of Russian Speaking Adolescents in Latvia: Perceived Discrimination and Knowledge of the Latvian Language. *Europe-Asia Studies*. 2006; 58(5):751–773.

- Quinn, E. Policy Analysis Report on Asylum and Migration: Ireland Mid-2004 to 2005. Dublin: European Migration Network; 2006.
- Rumpite, D. On Population Long-Term Migration in 2006. Riga: Latvian Republic Central Statistical Bureau; 2007.
- Saar E, Kaziulia M. Individual Planning or Adaptation: Personal Destinies of Non-Estonians in the Period of Socio-economic Reforms of the 1990s in Estonia. *Qualitative Sociology Review*. 2007; 3(2):144–170.
- Schmid C. Ethnicity and Language Tensions in Latvia. *Language Policy*. 2008; 2008(7):3–19.
- Simonian R. Baltic Countries: Ethnosocial Characteristics and General Qualities. *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia*. 2003; (1):59–67.
- Statistics Estonia. Population Census. 2000. [<http://www.stat.ee/>]
- Statistics Lithuania. Population and Social Statistics. 2008. [<http://www.stat.gov.lt>]
- Tabuns, A. Attitudes Towards the State and Latvian Foreign Policy. In: Muiznieks, N., editor. *Latvian-Russian Relations: Domestic and International Dimensions*. LU Akademiskais apgads; 2006.
- Van Meurs, W. Social Citizenship and Non-migration: the Immobility of the Russian Diaspora in the Baltics. In: Munz, R.; Ohliger, R., editors. *Diasporas and Ethnic Migrants: Germany, Israel and Post-Soviet Successor States in Comparative Perspective*. London: Frank Cass; 2003.
- Vihalemm, T. Usage of Language as a Source of Societal Trust. In: Lauristin, M.; Heidmets, M., editors. *The Challenge of the Russian Minority*. Tartu: Tartu University Press; 2002.
- Vihalemm. Crystallizing and Emancipating Identities in Post-Communist Estonia. *Nationalities Papers*. 2007; 35(3):477–502.
- Vihalemm T, Masso A. (Re)Construction of Collective Identities after the Dissolution of the Soviet Union: The Case of Estonia. *Nationalities Papers*. 2007; 35(1):71–91.
- Woolfson C. Labour Standards and Migration in the New Europe: Post-communist Legacies and Perspectives. *European Journal of Industrial Relations*. 2007; 13(2):199–218.
- Zepa, B., et al. Baltic Institute of Social Sciences report. Riga, Latvia: 2005. *Ethnopolitical Tension in Latvia: Looking for the Conflict Solution*.
- Zepa, B.; Supule, I. Ethnopolitical Tensions in Latvia: Factors Facilitating and Impeding Ethnic Accord. In: Muiznieks, N., editor. *Latvian-Russian Relations: Domestic and International Dimensions*. LU Akademiskais apgads; 2006.

Table 1

Size and citizenship status of minority populations in the Baltic countries.

	Estonia	Latvia (% of total)	Lithuania
Total population	1.4 million (100%)	2.3 million (100%)	3.4 million (100%)
Non-titular* ethnicity	440,000 (34%)	939,000 (41%)	521,000 (15%)
Non-titulars who are citizens of country of residence	173,000 (13%)	486,000 (21%)	3,370,000 (99.5%)
Non-titulars who are NOT citizens of country of residence	266,000 (21%)	453,000 (20%)	24,000 (0.7%)
Non-titulars who not citizens of any country (stateless)	165,000 (13%)	416,000 (18%)	8,600 (0.3%)

* Non-titular=those not belonging to the indigenous ethnic group of the country that gives the country its name, includes ethnic Russians, Ukrainians, Belarussians, Tatars, Jews, and others Sources: Statistics Estonia, Population Census 2000, [www.stat.ee]; The Naturalization Board of the Republic of Latvia 2006, [www.np.gov.lv]; Statistics Lithuania, Residents' Registrar database January 1, 2007, [www.stat.gov.lt]

Table 2

	Context of Exit			Outcome	
	Restrictive laws		Contact and intermarriage	Stratification along ethnic lines	Migration motivated by minority status, marginalization
	citizenship	language			
Estonia	yes	yes	Low	high	yes
Latvia	yes	yes	med/high	med/low	no
Lithuania	no	yes	med/high	med/low	no