

THE MAINTENANCE OF THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE IN THE POST-SOVIET STATES: THE ACTIVITIES OF RUSSIA



Doctoral (PhD) dissertation

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STATEMENT

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of Modern Philology and Social Sciences in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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THE MAINTENANCE OF THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE IN THE POST-SOVIET STATES: THE ACTIVITIES OF RUSSIA

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ABSTRACT

The study of language policy is one of the most dynamic fields of linguistics. As a political, social, and economical instrument, language policy is exposed to many external and internal factors that may influence the state's linguistic legislation speedily and change it dramatically in a short time. If such linguistic modifications may occur within one country so rapidly, what might be the scale of changes when 15 multinational Soviet states with the common political system and one dominant language in a short period of time became independent and re-established the language legislation?

The first part of the present study investigates the consequences of the collapse of the Soviet Union on the position of the Russian language and the Russian-speaking population living in the post-Soviet states. Following a historical-structural approach to Critical Language Policy studies (Tollefson, 2006), it aims at the up-to-date description and comparison of the language policy of the post-Soviet countries, non-recognized and partly recognized states established on their territories. The language management model of Spolsky (2009) was used as an instrument to determine the position of the Russian language in the studied region according to its domains.

The second part of the study investigates implementing the Russian foreign policy designed to maintain the Russian language in the post-Soviet states. The study focuses on the activity of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, its subordinate organizations: the Russkij Mir Foundation, Rossotrudnichestvo, and the semi-governmental organization of the Russian Orthodox Church. The theoretical framework of the study is based on the Constructivist approach to international relations.

As studies of language integration into the political sphere require a multidisciplinary approach, the thesis combines political and linguistic theoretical frameworks to shed light on the complexity of language policy and investigate it more comprehensively.

The study uses language legislation documents (laws on languages, constitutions, documents determining the foreign policy course of Russia, acts, charters of international and regional organizations, bilateral agreements), the news sources related to the language policy of the post-Soviet states, expert reports on the present linguistic situation, and population census results and estimates.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSTO	The Military alliance Collective Security Treaty Organization
DPR	Donetsk People’s Republics
EEU	Eurasian Economic Union
EU	European Union
GUAM	Organization for Democracy and Economic Development
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
L1	First language
L2	Second language
LMM	Language management model
LP	Language policy
LPR	Luhansk People’s Republics
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
R2P	Responsibility to protect
ROC	Russian Orthodox Church
RSFSR	Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic
SC	Security Council
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SSR	Soviet Socialist Republic
UN	United Nations
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations has 193 member states; however, this number does not reflect the full picture of the modern political map. Due to the presence of de facto states and a different level of their recognition, the number of states varies from 193 to more than 200. The heterogeneous nature of the political entities is supported by the clear contrast between the number of countries and the 7,164 languages documented in 2022 by Ethnologue, the world's largest language directory, which also notes that fewer than 500 languages are “developed to the point that they are used and sustained by institutions beyond the home and community”, and less than 200 have official or state status (Languages of the World, n.d.). In certain cases, one language may be official in multiple countries simultaneously, while speakers of most languages are not able to receive education, information, or address authorities in their mother tongue.

Furthermore, political borders are not always stable and become subject to changes due to internal and external factors throughout history. The only border that has remained unchanged since 1278 is that of Andorra—a microstate situated between France and Spain (Harts, 2021). Many other states have faced dramatic changes in size or even ceased to exist.

Since borders rarely align with the map of ethnic group boundaries, modifications in borders immediately affect the position of the languages spoken there. Granting official status to one language automatically provides all political and social rights to its speakers, but disadvantages others, contributing to tensions and conflicts. Cameroon serves as an example of such a case. In 1961, the country was divided into two mandates ruled by France and the UK, with French and English as the administrative languages, respectively. However, after gaining independence, a French-speaking elite came into power in 1972, promoting the French language and, at the same time, marginalizing English-speaking communities. This imbalance of values given to the languages led to socio-political tensions and called for greater linguistic and cultural recognition (Ngang, 2021; Atanga, 2020).

The twentieth century witnessed radical changes in borders and regimes, including the disintegration of the multinational Ottoman (1922), Russian (1917), Austro-Hungarian (1918), and German (1918) empires, and the emergence of new states of ethnically and linguistically heterogeneous nature: the Soviet Union (1922), the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (1918), and Czechoslovakia (1918). This geopolitical shift facilitated the emergence of new nation-states across Europe, Asia, and Africa, each grappling with defining their national

identities. However, at that time, democratic internationalism and communist ideology were prioritized over ethnic and linguistic identity (Brubaker, 2011).

The question of ethnic determination became pertinent again after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. It brought to the surface the problems of nationality and related ethnolinguistic issues.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, played a crucial role in emphasizing the right to self-determination. This legal framework provided rights to establish the sovereignty and governance of the newly independent states throughout the mid-20th century.

The parade of sovereignties that took place between 1988 and 1991 was followed by a radical change in the policies of 15 post-Soviet countries, which for several decades of the 20th century were united by a common political and economic system, ideology, and language.

The multilingual and multinational nature of the USSR as a whole and each individual Soviet republic determined the course of the implementation of language policy in newly formed states. The present work considers (1) the impact of the collapse of the Soviet Union had on the position of the Russian language in the new states; (2) the steps Russia as a kin-state is taking to support Russian speakers who have come under the jurisdiction of another state and to preserve the Russian language, securing the rights of nations to self-determination.

CHAPTER 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Historical background

2.1.1. The Tsarist era (1721-1917)

The language policy of Russia toward ethnic groups living on its territory dates back to the era of the Russian Empire (1721 - 1917). Initially, it was not unified, and different approaches were applied to the regions. In the 1720s, Tsar Peter the Great provided linguistic autonomy to the Baltic provinces (Latvia and Estonia), Finland, and the Kingdom of Poland (Western provinces, Lithuania, Belarus, right-bank Ukraine) officially introducing German, Swedish, and Polish respectively into the administrative and educational domains (Pavlenko, 2008a). The given policy was conditioned by the more developed social, legal, cultural, and economic system of the newly incorporated areas compared to the metropolis (Pavlenko, 2011). At the same time, less developed left-bank Ukraine, in contrast, was exposed to the processes of Russification.

Further language policy of the Russian empire was shaped by Romanticism, a movement that emerged in Europe after the French Revolution of 1789 and remained popular until the beginning of the twentieth century. One of the beliefs of this movement was the consideration of language unity as a power that could consolidate society (Akishin, 2016). However, Romanticism became the reason for not only the Russification of the empire but also the growth of national consciousness resulting in ethnic riots and movements in the European regions. In turn, the Russian empire ruled by Nicholas I (1825–1855) and Aleksandr II (1855–1881) intensified the Russification with the purpose to limit the power of local dominant groups and create a common identity based on one language which would maintain the multiethnic state integrity. As a result, previously officialized German, Polish, Lithuanian, and Moldavian were limited in use and substituted with the Russian language in administrative, jurisdictional, informational, and educational (primary, secondary, tertiary) spheres. An exception was made for Finland, which preserved political stability during the nineteenth century, creating no reason to pursue Russification policies there. As a result, Swedish and Finnish had strong rights in public domains, including school and higher education (Alpatov, 2020).

Russification also extended to the Baltic provinces. In 1867, the requirement for officials to master Russian was established. Russian became a language of paperwork and legal proceedings. However, Russification in the higher educational sphere faced resistance: the attempt to introduce a compulsory Russian language exam for obtaining university degrees was

not successful due to the financial independence of universities from the metropolis and the high level of literacy in the local languages (Pavlenko, 2011).

In the Western provinces of the Kingdom of Poland, the policy of intensive Russification was conducted as a reaction to the Polish Uprising of 1863-1864. The measures aimed at spreading the Russian language there included opening public schools with Russian as the language of instruction, Russian libraries, establishing Russian periodical journals, and introducing compulsory Russian language certification for administrative positions holders. The Polish language was replaced by Russian in official and cultural spheres (Alpatov, 2020).

Another reason behind the Russification in the given region had to do with the ethnic and religious composition of the Western provinces of the Kingdom. The majority consisted predominantly of Orthodox Ukrainians and Belarussians, who were considered by the Russian Empire's government speakers of dialects of Russian, not independent languages. The Russian Empire viewed Western European ideas as contradicting the Orthodox human values and considered the policy of Polonization and Catholicization in the Kingdom a violation of the rights of the Orthodox population living there (Sumarokova, 2016). Therefore, under the pretext of maintaining the language and religion of the Non-Catholic Slavs, Russian replaced the Polish language in the public domains: school education, local and central administration, and religion. Thus, the spiritual component was also incorporated into the policy of language maintenance (Khoruzhenko, 2019).

Due to the low level of national consciousness among ethnic groups residing in Central Asia and the Transcaucasus region (except for Georgia), the Russification policy applied to that region was not intensive and included two steps. At first, alphabets based on the Cyrillic script were created for unwritten languages, such as Kazakh and Kyrgyz, and introduced into schools as mediums of instruction in the second half of the nineteenth century (Akishin, 2016). The second stage was the transferring of the educational system to the dominant language. The authorities believed that the Cyrillic script as a base for the local languages would facilitate a smooth transition (Pavlenko, 2013).

A different approach was applied in Georgia. In the 1860s, Russian substituted the titular language in Georgian schools leaving it as an optional subject. However, taking into consideration the share of people who attended schools (1% of the total population), the spread of Russian in Georgia had little impact on the Georgian population (Pavlenko, 2008a). It might be concluded that the Russification policy was aimed not as much at spreading the dominant language over the multinational empire than at limiting the influence of the local elites by decreasing the status of their mother tongues.

The multilingual character of the state was documented in 1897 when the first comprehensive population census of the Russian Empire took place. The questionnaire was provided in Russian and translated into 20 other languages for the convenience of data collection. The list of 12 variables, however, did not include ethnicity, explained by the risk of receiving biased data since the population could misunderstand the question (Cadiot, 2005). Instead, such parameters as mother tongue, marital status, sex, level of literacy, education, place of birth, and religion were on the list and further interpreted by the statisticians (Moon, 1996). As a result, they counted 146 languages and dialects spoken in the territory of the Russian empire when the population constituted 125 million. Russian was recorded as the mother tongue of 66.8% of the total population. However, it is worthy of attention that the number also included *Great Russian* (44.31%), *Little Russian* (Ukrainian) (21%), and *Belarussian* (5.6%) also as they were considered dialects of Russian but not independent languages (Pervaya vseobshchaya perepis' naseleniya Rossiyskoy Imperii 1897, n/d) (Table 1). At the same time, despite belonging to the same language group and a relatively small share of speakers, Polish was allocated separately as it was the titular language of the predominantly Catholic Kingdom of Poland.

Table 1. Part of the results of the Russian Empire census of 1897.

Language		Speakers
Russian	Great Russian	55,667,469 (44.31%)
	Little Russian (Ukrainian)	22,380,551 (17.81%)
	Belarussian	5,885,547 (4.68%)
	Total	83,933,567 (66.8%)
Polish		7,931,307 (6.31%)

Source: https://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/rus_lan_97.php?reg=0

The census also revealed the religious composition of the state and the dominant position of Orthodox Christians which made up the biggest group of almost 70%. Among the other numerous groups, there were *Magometans* (Muslims) (11.1%), Roman Catholic (9.13%), and *Iudeii*(Jews) (4,15%) (Pervaya vseobshchaya perepis' naseleniya Rossiyskoy Imperii 1897 g.; n/d). As ethnicity was not reported in the census as a separate variable, data on the confessional affiliation of the population was used instead, despite not being an interchangeable factor. The following equivalents were used: Protestants and *Iudeii* would be counted as Germans and Jews accordingly, meanwhile, Orthodox Christians would stand for Russians (Cadiot, 2005).

In sum, the language policy of the multilingual Russian Empire can be described as imbalanced due to its focus on promoting Russian at the expense of other languages (Grenoble, 2003). Following the revolution of 1905, a more loyal language policy was introduced: non-Russian ethnic groups received autonomy in establishing languages of education and mass media, including languages of the European territories of the Empire previously suppressed and replaced with Russian from the public domains.

However, the Russian-centric language policy toward the multiethnic population as well as economic and social instability facilitated national movements around the state which, in turn, resulted in the revolution of 1917–1918, the collapse of the Empire, and the overthrowing of the monarchy. Following the revolution events, the European provinces (Finland, the Baltic States, and Poland) proclaimed their independence.

2.1.2. The Soviet period (1917-1991)

a) national policy

The Soviet Union (the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, USSR) was founded in 1922 as a socialist federation of multiethnic and multilingual states. Initially, it encompassed the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) established in 1917, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, and the Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic both formed in 1919. The Transcaucasian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, including Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia, was established in 1922 and later reorganized into three separate Soviet Republics in 1936. Between 1924 and 1936, the Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan were incorporated into the Soviet Union. The Baltic region (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) was occupied by the USSR in 1940, following the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact with Nazi Germany, becoming the Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republics. From 1940 to 1956, the Karelo-Finnish Soviet Socialist Republic was the sixteenth member of the USSR, further incorporated in the FSFSR (Hosking, 1993).

Coming to power in 1917, the Bolsheviks took the opposite of the Imperial approach toward national minorities and, as a result, attracted special support from ethnic groups. The Declaration of Rights of the Peoples of Russia ratified on November 2, 1917, included statements of equality, sovereignty of all nations, rights for self-determination, and abolition of national privileges.

At the level of society, a supra-national communist identity was to be formed instead of a national one (Grenoble, 2003). Therefore, the communists believed in the concept of nations

devoid of national feelings, prejudices, and historical memory. However, by granting different statuses to national territories and ignoring the importance of national consciousness the Soviet leaders created conditions that led the Union to its collapse in the 1990s and catalyzed local conflicts.

The Bolsheviks introduced a concept of the federation of Soviet National Republics with a unified political system and economic complex. However, establishing a national-territorial structure in a heterogeneous country meant drawing artificial borders between republics without considering that the boundaries would not match the ethnic maps. The administrative division of the Soviet Union included Union Republics (e.g., Armenian SSR, Ukrainian SSR), Autonomous Republics (Adjarian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic within Georgian SSR), and Autonomous Oblast (Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast within the Azerbaijan SSR). The formations had different levels of autonomy: while the Union Republic had the right to withdraw from the Soviet Union and form an independent state via referendum, Autonomous Republics and Oblasts were incorporated into Republics. Thus, the Soviet Union was not a nationalizing state (Brunner, 1995). The former Soviet party leadership sought to establish Russian dominance and expand the functions of the Russian language. The Communist Party of the USSR, under multinational leadership, promoted Russian as a means of social mobility. However, the country was always defined as a multi-ethnic, ethnically heterogeneous federal state, as enshrined in the constitution (Csernicsekó, 2013). For example, Article 70 of the 1977 constitution stated, “The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is a single union multinational state formed on the basis of the principle of socialist federalism.”

The criteria for assigning different statuses to territories were inconsistent. For example, a million Estonians were granted the status of a Union Republic, while eight million Tatars were only given an autonomous status. The Adjarian Autonomous Republic, established within the Georgian SSR, differed from the Republic it was part of only in terms of the religion practiced by its population. In contrast, the Nakhichevan ASSR was incorporated into the Azerbaijan SSR despite not sharing a common border with it (Sikevich, 2017). Similarly, Nagorno-Karabakh, predominantly populated by Armenians, was designated as an autonomous region within Azerbaijan for ideological reasons: local Bolsheviks in Azerbaijan had consolidated power, while the Nationalist Party was supported by the population in Armenia.

Initially, Donbas, Kharkiv, and Dnepropetrovsk announced the creation of the Donetsk-Kryvyi Rih Soviet Republic to become a part of the RSFSR. However, without Donbas, Ukraine would have become an agrarian republic with a minimal percentage of the “working class,” which was undesirable for Marxist-Leninist ideas. Therefore, in 1919, Soviet Ukraine was

expanded to include Donbas, Odesa, Kherson, and Nikolaev regions. In 1954, Crimea, which had previously been part of the RSFSR, was also incorporated into the Ukrainian SSR, justified by economic commonality and territorial proximity. These historical facts were referenced in Putin's speeches regarding the referendums for union with Russia held in Crimea (2014) and the Donbas Republics (2022) (Address by President of the Russian Federation, 2014; Signing of treaties on accession of Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics and Zaporozhye and Kherson regions to Russia, 2022).

b) Language policy

In contrast to the Russification policy implemented in Tsarist Russia, the post-revolutionary government pursued a policy of *Korenizatsiya* (“nativization, indigenization”), which aimed to replace Russian with local languages and encourage representatives of ethnic groups to participate in regional administration (Xianzhong, 2014). This policy was intended to strengthen local groups' loyalty to the regime and facilitate the creation of a common Soviet identity.

The Soviet leaders adopted the principle of linguistic pluralism and the equality of all languages spoken by the Soviet population. The Constitution of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (1918) and subsequent Constitutions of the USSR deliberately avoided establishing any language as the state or official language. De jure, Russian was given the same importance as the other languages within the Union (Arutunova, 2012).

The State Emblem of the Soviet Union also symbolized the equality and importance of the languages of the Republics. The Emblem featured Soviet symbols of labor – a sickle and a hammer – against the backdrop of the globe. Around the center, there was a ribbon with the inscription “*Пролетарии всех стран, соединяйтесь* (Eng. Proletarians of all countries, unite!)”.

The version of 1923 had this phrase written in six languages, corresponding to the number of Soviet Republics at the time: Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Georgian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani. By 1936, with the incorporation of the Central Asian Republics, the emblem featured the motto in eleven languages, including the original six and adding Turkmen, Uzbek, Tajik, Kazakh, and Kyrgyz.

Further changes to the Emblem reflected the inclusion of the Baltic republics and the Karelo-Finnish SSR, leading to the phrase being written in sixteen languages. After the incorporation of the Karelo-Finnish SSR into the RSFSR, the number of languages on the Emblem was reduced to fifteen accordingly (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The Emblem of the Soviet Union of 1923 and 1956.



Source: Platoff (2020: 41).

Similarly to the USSR emblem, Soviet banknotes also reflected the multilingualism of society. For instance, the 1 ruble note from 1961 displayed the value in fifteen languages of the Soviet Republics, with Russian given the central place and largest font (Csernicskó & Beregszászi, 2019).

Together with establishing multilingualism, from 1918 to 1938, Soviet language policymakers put significant effort into the codification and standardization of the local languages: new alphabets based on the Latin and Cyrillic scripts were created for forty-six unwritten languages spoken by the ethnic groups residing in the Transcaucasus region (Chechen, Abkhazian, Ingush), Siberia, the North, the Volga region, and the Far East (Pavlenko, 2013; Xianzhong, 2014). At the same time, Turkic languages based on the Arabic script (Azeri, Uzbek, Tatar, Kazakh, Turkmen, Kyrgyz) were recodified and underwent Latinization (Ataov, 1992; Daudov & Mamysheva, 2011).

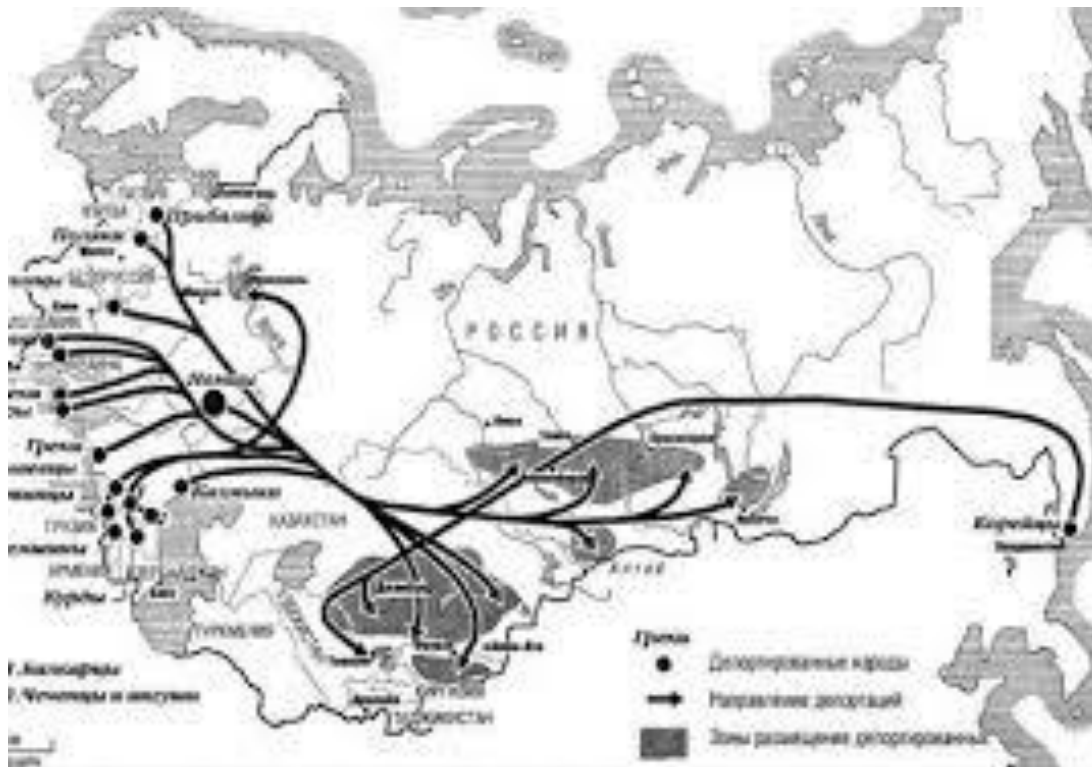
The standardized languages were actively implemented into the educational sphere. As the vast majority of the Soviet population was illiterate, the regime undertook *Likbez*, or *Likvidatsia bezgramotnosti* (Eng. Eradication of illiteracy). Compulsory education was introduced for everyone aged 8 to 50 years with the right to choose the medium of instruction: the mother tongue or the Russian language. By 1938, primary education was available in seventy languages (Pavlenko, 2013). The Korenizatsiya policy implementation resulted in a sharp rise in the level of literacy among the Soviet population from 21% (the population census result of the Russian

Empire, 1897) to 81% (1939) (Grenoble, 2003; Kireenko, 2020). Yet, literacy rates varied across the regions: the shortage of qualified teachers in the Central Asian states prevented the dramatic rise that occurred in the other Soviet Republics with developed literacy before the Soviet Era (e.g., Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine).

Titular languages of the Soviet states were also introduced to other public domains: administration, documentation, judiciary, industry, and mass media. Moreover, world literature and Russian classical literature were translated into the languages of ethnic groups living in the USSR (Solovieva, 2017). Literature in non-Russian languages written by authors with various backgrounds was actively promoted particularly in the regions of ethnic populations.

However, in the 1930s, a different linguistic course was taken. The government found it financially impossible to run the administration in almost two hundred languages (Antonuk, 2021). Due to the need to centralize political, administrative, and economic systems, a Russification process in status planning took place (Pavlenko, 2013). Stalin considered a unified language policy a powerful tool for enhancing the power of the Soviet government (Spolsky, 2004). While Russian was promoted as a language of industrialization, political, and economic systems, non-Russian ethnic groups faced suppression, in some cases also deportation, and forced assimilation into the newly introduced Soviet identity. For instance, between the 1930s and 1950s, Germans, Koreans, Crimean Tatars, Poles, and other ethnic groups residing in the Transcaucasus region and Ukraine were deported to Central Asia and Siberia as “hostile elements” and potential espionage threats (Figure 2). In total, around one million people were affected by the policy (Sikevich, 2017).

Figure 2. Map of deportation of nations throughout the late 1930s – early 1940s.



Source: <https://encyclopaedia-russia.ru/article/deportaciya-narodov-v-sssr/>

In 1939–1940, the Soviet language policy also extended to the regions that were integrated into the USSR as a consequence of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact: the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), portions of Romania (Bessarabia and northern Bukovina), Poland (Western Ukraine and Belarus), and Finland (Karelia) (King, 1994).

Despite the Soviet leaders initially considered the Latin alphabet for languages as a symbol of internationalization, and the Cyrillic alphabet as a reminder of the Tsarist regime, the use of different alphabets for the local languages, which included from 40 to 129 Latin letters, complicated learning of the dominant Russian language (Kireenko, 2020). Thus, in 1939–1940, previously Latinized Turkic (Azeri, Uzbek, Turkmen, Kyrgyz, Kazakh, Tatar), Mongolian (Kalmyk, Buryat), Finno-Ugric (Karelian, Komi), and Caucasus (Abkhaz, Chechen, Ingush) languages were transferred to the Cyrillic alphabet (Ataov, 1992).

The new linguistic legislation also affected acquisition planning: in 1938, Russian became a compulsory subject in non-Russian schools. Titular languages of the Soviet republics, in contrast, were excluded from the list of mandatory subjects in 1959 (Pavlenko, 2008a). In 1961, the Russian language obtained the status of a language of international communication (Pavlenko, 2013). As a result of these reforms, despite the right to receive education in the national languages, local ethnic groups opted for Russian-medium schools. Thus, a top-down

decision in the language policy resulted in strengthening the prestige of the Russian language. For instance, in Belarus in 1959, the share of school students with the titular and Russian languages of instruction constituted 78% and 21%, respectively. By 1989, Russian became the dominant language replacing the titular one: 79.2% of students received education in Russian. A similar tendency was also observed in Ukraine, where the proportion of Russian-medium students increased twofold from 26.3% (1959) to 51.8% (1989). The increase was also notable in Moldova with the share increased from 33% to 40.9%, in Estonia (from 22% to 36.5%), and in Latvia (from 33% to 47.6%). To a lesser extent, the percentage rose in Lithuania (from 11% to 15.8%), Georgia (from 20% to 23.6%), and Armenia (from 9% to 15.1%). However, the strengthening of the position of Russian in the educational sphere did not take place in all Soviet republics. Due to the high level of nationalist consciousness and low quality of teaching Russian in the Central Asian countries, the share of Russian medium students decreased since 1959, remaining significant only in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in 1989 (67.4% and 35.7%, respectively) (Pavlenko, 2013).

Another factor facilitating the widespread use of the Russian language was the mass migration of ethnic groups across the Soviet Union driven by industrialization, urbanization, and the distribution of specialists aimed to overcome the shortage of qualified employees in the rapidly growing cities. At its peak in the 1960s, demographic mobility had a predominantly centrifugal character – from the center to the peripheries (Zaionchkovskaya, 2000). As a result, Russia experienced negative net migration, with the population of the state decreasing by more than 1 million. The main recipient states were Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan with demographic growth of 517, 431, and 257 thousand, respectively (table 2).

Table 2

Population growth resulting from migration in the CIS and the Baltic states in the second half of the 20th century (thousands of people)

Country	60-s	70-s	80-s	90-s
Russia	-1,119.9	530.5	1,709.3	3,093.5 (1991-1998)
Ukraine	517.8	188.8	240.2	34 (1991-1997)
Belarus	-163.2	-92.0	-18.0	110 (1991-1997)
Moldova	66.9	-60.8	-86.6	-140 (1991-1997)
Transcaucasus				
Azerbaijan	-100.2	-104.3	396.2	-321 (1991-1997)
Armenia	140.7	79.7	-274.5	-5 (1991-1997)

Georgia	-89.1	-164.1	-96.7	-124 (1991, 1992, 1996, 1997)
Central Asia				
Kyrgyzstan	125.9	-102.2	-182.4	-322 (1991-1997)
Tajikistan	70.7	-41.4	-158.5	-247 (1991-1997)
Turkmenistan	3.6	-23.9	-81.4	-54 (1991-1994, 1997)
Uzbekistan	257.7	32.8	-683.9	-547 (1991-1997)
Kazakhstan	431.3	-675.0	-884.8	-1,553 (1991-1997)
Baltic States				
Latvia	148.0	103.1	76.7	-105 (1991-1994)
Lithuania	48.3	68.0	97.4	-43 (1991-1994)
Estonia	91.2	60.4	45.9	-48 (1991-1993)

Source: reprinted from Zaionchkovskaya, 2000: 12.

By the end of the Soviet era, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan had the biggest Russian diaspora among the republics which made up 11, 6.2, and 1.6 million respectively. Totally, during the Soviet Era, the share of Russians (ethnic Russians and assimilated groups) residing in the Soviet republics tripled: from 7.6 million (1917) to 25 million (1989) (table 3).

Table 3

Number of Russians in the Soviet Republics (thousands of people)

	1917	1926	1939	1959	1989	1989/1917 rate
Eastern Europe	5,212	3,410	5,595	8,044	13,260	2.54
Belarus	1,460	485	536	660	1,342	0.92
Moldova	132	218	173	293	562	4.3
Ukraine	3,620	2,707	4,886	7,091	11,355	3.1
Transcaucasus	442	337	888	965	784	1.8
Armenia	29	21	51	56	51.5	1.8
Azerbaijan	224	220	528	501	392	1.75
Georgia	189	96	309	408	341	1.8

Central Asia	1,548	1,721	3,862	6,214	9,520	6.1
Kyrgyzstan	92	116	303	624	916	10.0
Tajikistan	45	6	135	263	388	8.6
Turkmenistan	40	75	233	263	334	8.5
Uzbekistan	90	244	744	1092	1653	18.4
Kazakhstan	1,281	1,280	2,447	3,972	6,227	4.9
Baltic States	450	299	336	1,027	1,725	3.8
Latvia	228	194	187	556	905	4.0
Lithuania	175	67	101	231	344	2.0
Estonia	47	38	48	240	474	10.0
Total	7,652	5,767	10,681	16,250	25,289	3.3

Source: reprinted from Zaionchkovskaya (2000: 12).

The impossibility of quick language retraining in the new place of residence made immigrating ethnic groups shift to the most widely spoken language. Thus, the Russian language began to strengthen its status as a lingua franca (Arutunova, 2012). At the same time, Russians as native speakers of the dominant language could remain monolingual in performing jobs and in everyday communication, when non-Russian ethnic groups had to possess Russian as a second or third language (Pavlenko, 2008a). The demographic data of 1989 revealed that the share of Russians speaking the titular language in each state was lower than the percentage of the titular ethnic groups speaking Russian. To a greater extent, the given tendency was traced in the Central Asian states: the titular languages were spoken by less than 5% of Russians, while 64% of Kazakhs, 37% of Kyrgyz, and 30% of Tajiks were fluent in the dominant language (table 4).

Table 4

Population census result of the Soviet Republics, 1989: number and share of ethnic Russians, native speakers of Russian, fluency in Russian and the titular languages (self-report; fluency data includes Russian and titular languages as L1 and L2)

	Ethnic Russians	L1 Russian speakers	Russians fluent in the titular languages (L1 and as L2)	Titulars fluent in Russian (L1 and as L2)
Belarus	1,342,099	3,243,179	358,518	6,335,952
	<i>13.22%</i>	<i>31.94%</i>	<i>26.71%</i>	<i>80.15%</i>

Moldova	562,069 <i>13%</i>	1,003,563 <i>23.14%</i>	66,466 <i>1.18%</i>	1,609,233 <i>57.58%</i>
Ukraine	11,355,582 <i>22.07%</i>	16,898,273 <i>32.8%</i>	3,899,247 <i>34.3%</i>	26,837,304 <i>71.7%</i>
Armenia	51,555 <i>1.56%</i>	66,700 <i>2%</i>	17,315 <i>33.58%</i>	1,374,580 <i>44.57%</i>
Azerbaijan	392,304 <i>5.58%</i>	528,762 <i>7.53%</i>	56,687 <i>14.44%</i>	1,863,712 <i>32.1%</i>
Georgia	341,172 <i>6.32%</i>	479,561 <i>8.88%</i>	80,898 <i>23.71%</i>	1,212,665 <i>32%</i>
Kazakhstan	6,227,549 <i>37.82%</i>	7,797,278 <i>47%</i>	54,063 <i>0.86%</i>	4,195,221 <i>64.2%</i>
Kyrgyzstan	916,558 <i>21.52%</i>	1,090,667 <i>25.61%</i>	11,196 <i>1.22%</i>	830,720 <i>37.25%</i>
Tajikistan	388,481 <i>7.62%</i>	495,180 <i>9.72%</i>	13,763 <i>3.54%</i>	968,726 <i>30.53%</i>
Turkmenistan	333,892 <i>9.5%</i>	421,015 <i>12%</i>	8500 <i>2.54%</i>	716,819 <i>28.25%</i>
Uzbekistan	1,653,478 <i>8.3%</i>	2,151,634 <i>10.86%</i>	75,937 <i>4.6%</i>	3,215,908 <i>22.7%</i>
Estonia	474834 <i>30.32%</i>	544,933 <i>34.8%</i>	71,208 <i>15%</i>	333,426 <i>34.61%</i>
Latvia	905,515 <i>34%</i>	1,122,076 <i>42.07%</i>	201,669 <i>22.27%</i>	947,797 <i>68.3%</i>
Lithuania	344,455 <i>9.37%</i>	429,257 <i>11.68%</i>	129,255 <i>37.52%</i>	1,100,113 <i>37.62%</i>

Source: http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng_nac_lan_89.php

The situation changed fundamentally in the 1990s with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Accumulated language tensions in the republics caused by the inconsistent and controversial Soviet language policy catalyzed reconsideration of the importance of the Russian language (Zamyatin, 2015). The Parade of Sovereignties which took place in 1988-1991, when the Soviet Republics proclaimed their independence from the USSR, became a turning point for their linguistic legislation. The newly formed countries took a political course for de-Sovietization,

a distancing from the Soviet past (Pavlenko, 2006). As a part of the given policy, processes of de-Russification took place. The states strengthened the status of the titular languages and introduced them into the public domains: administrative, educational, informational, and economic spheres displacing or reducing the use of Russian.

The newly formed states refused to officialize the Russian language and proclaimed monolingualism despite the presence of the sizable Russian diaspora. Overall, after the Soviet Union's collapse, 25.3 million people, or 18.5% of Russians living in the USSR (in 1989) became ethnic and linguistic minorities in nationally driven post-Soviet states regardless of their significant size. For instance, in Kazakhstan, the proportion of Russians was as big as the titular population, 37.8% and 39.7%, respectively (Popova & de Bot, 2020). Moreover, the share of Russian native speakers was higher than that of ethnic Russians due to the great number of Russified titulars and minorities (Table 3).

At the same time, Russian diasporas residing in the post-Soviet states were perceived as a reminder of the Soviet occupation era (Best, 2013). The language policy of the post-Soviet states regarding Russians took the form of linguistic deterrence (Popova & de Bot, 2017). The main mechanisms of pressure on Russians were restrictions on civil and political rights, narrowing the scope of the use of the Russian language, ousting of non-titulars from high-ranking positions, and entrepreneurial activity with the titular language requirements.

Ethnic discrimination, violations of human rights, and armed conflicts in the Central Asian and Transcaucasus states caused mass emigration of Russians from the post-Soviet states during the first decade after the collapse of the USSR. The net migration to Russia made up 3 million people (table 3). The share of Russians decreased by 50% in Armenia and Tajikistan, 40% in Azerbaijan and Georgia, 25% in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan, and between 13% and 14% in the Baltic states (Zaionchkovskaya, 2000).

2.2. Theoretical framework

Due to the complexity of minority matters and the need for an interdisciplinary approach, there is no all-encompassing theory in language policy studies. The studies on language policy adopt various approaches depending on the subject of investigation.

The present study aims to describe (1) the language policy of the post-Soviet states regarding the Russian language, and (2) the activity of Russia aimed at the support of Russian language maintenance in the studied region.

With these purposes in mind, the first part of the present dissertation describes the language policy of the post-Soviet states toward the Russian language and provides its historical background starting from the Tsarist Era (1721-1922).

The study follows Spolsky's Language Management Model (2009) which distinguishes between three interrelated components: the actual language practice, language belief (ideology) regarding the language the community speaks, and language management, including the efforts to modify practices and beliefs, and encompasses the following domains of language policy such as public space, school, media, workplace, and government.

The dissertation adopts a historical-structural approach to Critical Language Policy studies (Tollefson, 2006), which views linguistic legislation as a complex result of social, historical, ideological, political, and economic factors including but not limited to demographic changes, nature of intergovernmental relations, conditions of states formation, and involvement of the state into a local or global conflict.

The critical theory investigates language policy as an ideologically explained system of inequality and exploitation (Ruiz, 1984; Tollefson, 1991, 2006). Based on the given approach, the dissertation examines the status of the Russian language in the post-Soviet states in terms of power, institutional support, and processes creating and maintaining the system of inequality. The principal attention within critical studies is paid to the imbalance of power aimed at subordinating minority groups on the one hand and attempts taken by the suppressed groups to protect their interests on the other hand.

As a multidisciplinary field of studies, language policy shall be able to explain, on one hand, the necessity to maintain the mother tongue of ethnic minorities without denying the presence of the political dimension of a language, but at the same time, consider internal and external factors shaping the choice of political decision-makers. Moreover, as the second part of the study encompasses the foreign policy of Russia designed to the maintenance of the Russian language in the investigated regions, the study requires the involvement of political theory. Therefore, the research enriches the Tollefson model (2006) with the constructivist paradigm widely used in political science.

Thus, the theoretical novelty lies in combining the political and linguistic approaches in language policy studies. Combining methods from different fields of study makes it possible to find a better understanding of the subject of research and avoid possible bias.

Constructivism emerges at the intersection of several studies including but not limited to structural linguistics, cultural studies, postmodern political theory, literary criticism, and media

studies. Due to its multidisciplinary nature, this approach lends itself well to collaboration across different fields of science in one study.

Constructivism was founded and developed by Wendt (1992, 1994, 1995) and Hopf (1998, 2000) as an alternative to the mainstream studies of international relations through the realism paradigm. In contrast to realism advocated by Waltz (1979), it offers an alternative approach to the topics of power, the definition of actors in international relations, and their identity. The concept emphasizes that power is a central theoretical element in international relations. However, unlike realism and liberalism, it considers not only military and economic influence but also discursive power (e.g. knowledge, culture, language) which, in turn, shapes the identity and conduct of states. Thus, constructivism generates an understanding of how ethnicity, religion, race, and language determine politics. Based on the given paradigm, Wilson (2013) compares the usage of the promotion of ideas and values in the foreign policy course of Russia and China.

Constructivism is used in studies of debatable territories and boundaries: Khawrin & Jabarkhil (2023) apply the constructivist approach in the discussion on the Durand Line – an artificially made border between Afghanistan and Pakistan which does not reflect the ethnic map of the Pashtun tribe located on either side of the line, and therefore, causes a dispute. Similarly, O'Shea (2012) studies the territorial disputes of Japan with Russia, China Taiwan, and South Korea. The study underlines the importance of using the constructivist approach, which guides the study toward the roots of conflicts and leads to understanding the position of the sides instead of focusing on the conflict itself.

While linguistic studies do not raise the question of including de facto countries in the field of investigation, for political science this issue is fundamental. Constructivism encompasses not only the states as actors of international relations, but also non-state actors of growing importance in scientific and practical fields: de facto states, international organizations, and diaspora. Expanding analysis beyond a state-centric paradigm and including de facto states provides a more complete overview of the linguistic situation and should be considered as a stepping stone toward a comprehensive understanding of the sensitivity of linguistic issues on the domestic and international levels.

The following subsection will shed light on the characteristics of new actors and instruments that the constructivist approach offers.

2.2.1. De facto states

Despite the fact that sovereign states remain influential, their primacy in international relations is challenged by the growing importance of political entities including those claiming legal independence – de facto states (Florea, 2014; Lakhany, 2006; Stengel & Baumann, 2017).

It should be noted that the norms of international law in the field of recognition of states are not codified. To date, there are no universal criteria for statehood recognition. De facto states make up the so-called “grey zone” of international law due to the contradiction between the right of nations to self-determination and the principle of territorial integrity and inviolability of existing borders (Silaeva, 2011).

De facto states have their own political symbols (anthems, flags, and currency), but due to their status, they are hardly able to conduct international affairs or receive recognition of their passport abroad (de Waal, 2018). Breakaway territories may receive full recognition and receive membership of the United Nations (e.g. Eritrea) or become partially recognized by one state (e.g. Turkish Republic of North Cyprus), a group of states (Kosovo is recognized by 116 states) or establish mutual recognition with other de facto states (e.g. Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria).

De facto states challenge the international community, which encounters a fundamental problem in establishing relations with them. On the one hand, most states uniformly condemn actions of separatism. Interaction with the self-proclaimed government is viewed as a manifestation of the recognition and approval of the action of de facto states (Ker-Lindsay & Berg, 2018). On the other hand, political isolation will hardly lead to the reintegration into the state they de jure belong to. Instead, ostracized de facto states will deepen relations with a patron state, which will undermine their legitimacy and hinder the efforts of the international community to come to a decision (Dubowy, 2020).

The constructivist approach claims that establishing a dialogue with de facto states is necessary for expecting higher predictability of the world order and reducing uncertainty (Hopf, 1998).

Non-recognized states appear as a result of unsolved regional conflicts and remain in existence as a temporary solution. In most cases, a conflict results from the suppression or limitation of citizens' socio-political rights, particularly on a national or ethnic basis. When the group faces the impossibility of self-expression, eventually the contradiction escalates into an open armed conflict.

The conflicts in the post-Soviet space are the result of the Soviet unbalanced national policy causing ethno-national movements for self-determination. Attempts to create Soviet identity failed with the dissolution of the USSR. Its place was largely replaced by an ethnic self-identification of the individual, and, consequently, loyalty to class was replaced by loyalty to one's nation. Conflicts intensified due to the struggle for leadership within political elites, leading to the use of ethnic and linguistic factors to ensure their dominant position (Gribanova, 2015).

The present study discusses the following breakaway territories that emerged on the territory of Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh Republic), Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia), Moldova (Transnistria), and Ukraine (Donetsk People's Republic, Luhansk People's Republic, the Crimean Peninsula). The inclusion of de facto states into the examination provides an opportunity to arrive at a fuller picture of language policy in the post-Soviet space and compare the status of the Russian language in de facto states and countries they separated from. Generally, the inclusion of de facto states into the analysis opens new opportunities for political, ethnic, and conflict studies.

2.2.2. Diaspora

The phenomenon of diaspora is of particular importance for political decision-making processes as actors of domestic and, at the same time, international affairs in general, and for the present discussion in particular.

As a paradigm that encompasses non-state actors in the system of international relations and takes into consideration the identities and preferences of the actors and the historical context of their creation, constructivism provides a deeper understanding of diasporic activity in the studies of language policy. At the same time, the paradigm underlines the political nature of diasporas (Stjepanović, 2015).

Diasporas are the result of population movements and migrations present throughout history. Referring to the Greek roots of the word *dia spora* meaning 'splitting the seed', Shain & Barth (2023: 352) define diaspora as "a people with a common origin who reside, more or less on a permanent basis, outside the borders of their ethnic or religious homeland— whether that homeland is real or symbolic, independent or under foreign control".

Antanovich (2023) argues that constructivism interprets the role of diaspora as an ethnocultural community able to act at the international level despite the lack of common political or physical boundaries.

Brubaker (1993) investigates a diaspora as an element of triadic connection which includes the national minority itself, the kin-state it ethnically belongs to, and the nationalizing state where the ethnic group resides. According to the author, the three elements have to be analyzed not as fixed items but in the context of the dynamic and unpredictable system they build. In his study, Brubaker(1993) describes and compares the kin-state policy of Russia and Hungary. A similar opinion is shared by Kantor (2014), who considers the diaspora as an institutionalized element balancing in relations with its nationalizing state and kin-state, yet following its own interests.

The role of diasporas in the context of globalization is increasing, despite its contradictory and uneven nature. Diasporas are becoming politicized, forming networks, establishing social movements, non-governmental organizations, and religious, educational, and informational entities (Ogden, 2008).

On the one hand, diasporas can develop partnerships and cooperation among the states, and stimulate transnational collaboration, acting as a bridge between the homeland they reside in and the kin-state they feel affiliation to (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2016). In this way, Garayeva (2022) investigates the role of the Azerbaijani diaspora in developing a dialog and deepening bilateral relations between Azerbaijan as a kin-state and Russia as a state they reside. The organizations that the Azerbaijani diaspora creates (Azerbaijani Civil Assembly, Azerbaijan Youth Association Club, etc.) assist the members to integrate into Russian society, and at the same time, promote their cultural and historical heritage. The author underlines that the diaspora runs its activities in accordance with the legislation of Russia. At the same time, Russian law provides a framework for the activities of ethnic groups fixed in the Federal Law “On National and Cultural Autonomy” of 1996.

Yet, on the other hand, diasporas can symbolize the creation of a permanent expression of identity which establishes new kinds of autonomy within states (Koinova, 2017; Shain & Barth, 2003). In this matter, diasporas defy the traditional meaning of state boundaries. Thus, activities or merely the presence of diaspora on the territory of a state can be viewed as a source of instability and irredentism – efforts of the kin-state to re-establish the borders of the territories populated by its compatriots. In this discourse, the issue of minorities is closely related to the security policy of the host states (Dubinsky & Starr 2022).

United by the common language, a diaspora constitutes a minority group in the country of residence. The following subsection discusses the problem of its definition.

2.2.3. Minority

Defining a language minority is an essential element of language policy planning and crucial in understanding the linguistic rights of non-titular ethnic groups. “Language [diversity] is not a problem unless it is used as a basis for discrimination” (Haugen, 1973: 40, as cited in Hornberger, 2006: 5). However, language policy is not a purely linguistic category, but also a political instrument.

The given point of view is supported by the fact that to date, there is no consensus among the researchers on what the term “minority” means. Hamel (1997) underlines that the absence of the universal concept is explained not with the complexity of the minority matters but with the intention of ruling elites to adjust the definition to political objectives. As a result, it may lead to establishing language diversity on the one hand and a policy of deterrence of certain ethnic groups on the other hand (Jarve, 2003).

Brubaker (1993: 10) discusses minorities as a "dynamic political stance" or "a family of related yet competing stances" with three primary characteristics. First, they publicly identify as members of a nation distinct from the dominant nation within the state. They also demand state recognition of their unique ethnocultural nationality. Lastly, they seek specific collective, cultural, linguistic, and political rights rooted in their ethnocultural identity.

Scholars, states, and international organizations focus on various aspects of the term “minority.” Georgia adopts a regional approach to linguistic minority protection: the constitution of the country guarantees a state status to the Abkhazian language but limits its use to the territory of Abkhazia (art. 2.3). The Law on State Language Policy in Ukraine, which was in power from 2012 to 2014, followed a numerical approach in defining a linguistic minority: a minority language could be institutionalized in the regions where the share of its speakers constituted at least 10%.

The UN mandate under the Commission on Human Rights also takes a quantitative approach in defining the language minority as “any group of persons which constitutes less than half of the population in the entire territory of a State” (General Assembly, 2019:18).

The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities lists criteria that minorities should possess, such as culture, religion, traditions, and language (Council of Europe, 1994). Fishman (1977) states that apart from the distinctive linguistic and cultural traits, we should also consider the self-determination of the ethnic group and their common origin. The definition offered by Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1994) includes all the characteristics mentioned above and encompasses immigrant languages. The scholars argue

that the definition of minority should not depend on recognition from the state where the ethnic groups live.

Additionally, Best (2013: 33) includes in the characteristics of the minority “a sense of solidarity with each other, motivated, if only implicitly, by a collective will to survive and whose aim is to achieve equality with the majority in fact and in law”.

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages of the Council of Europe defines minority languages as those “that are traditionally used within a given territory of a state by nationals of that state who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the state’s population and [are] different from the official language(s) of that state” (Council of Europe, 1992, as cited in Cenoz & Gorter, 2012: 185). Thus, according to the definition above, only indigenous groups should be considered minorities (Council of Europe, 1992).

However, Pavlenko (2008a: 304) underlines that since “all settlements are products of migration”, the given perspective remains unclear on what period of time migrated ethnic groups should live in the state to be considered Indigenous and get legal protection from the state they live in.

Nelde (1996) and May (2006) make a distinction between majority and minority languages not on the share of their speakers but on the power and status these languages possess in the states.

The latter approach provides a clearer understanding of the position of Russian and its speakers in the post-Soviet states. Despite the considerable number of Russian speakers, the countries officialized only the titular languages. Russian was displaced and became a minority language regarding power and the value given to it.

Ehala (2013) defines the Russian minority as those who speak Russian as their mother tongue and underlines that those involve not only ethnic Russians but also Ukrainians, Belarussians, and representatives of other ethnic groups WHO shifted to Russian. According to Ehala, the peculiarity of Russian speakers living outside Russia is their collective identities are shaped by such factors as demographic data (proportion, size, distribution) and attitude, which in turn influence language choice.

2.3. Soft Power. Cultural diplomacy

Constructivism as a theoretical perspective emphasizes the role of ideas, norms, and identities in shaping international relations and considers religion, culture, education, and language as means of policy. The paradigm examines how shared values and cultural exchanges assist in

building relationships, shaping international perceptions, and contributing to a state's influence and attractiveness. The above-mentioned instruments are reflected in the “soft” power concept.

Despite being a relatively new concept, soft power has quickly gone from being purely scientific to a widely used instrument. The classic interpretation of the definition of “soft power” is the concept by Nye (1990, 2004). According to the author of the concept, there are three forms of political influence: (1) threat, (2) coercion, and (3) inducement or attraction. The application of the latter is called soft power. Nye coined the term “soft” as an antonym to “hard” power – “the ability to affect others by attraction and persuasion rather than just coercion and payment” (2017: 2). In contrast to hard power associated with using military and economic forces or threat of force, soft power is considered the ability to achieve goals through the voluntary participation of allies (Iudina, 2018). It implies the ability to influence others by the use of national culture, values, lifestyle, religion, and media to create an attractive image of the state abroad, strengthen international cooperation, and determine the other’s preferences. As a result, the state achieves its foreign policy goals and strengthens its authority in international relations without resorting to violence or pressure (Nye, 2023).

It is important to underline that soft power is linked to public and cultural diplomacy, therefore, the target audience of the concept is not the government of another state but its citizens. Cultural diplomacy is to promote mutual understanding between nations, creating a positive environment for implementing political and economic goals through the exchange of ideas, information, and culture. The instruments of cultural diplomacy include music, art, exhibitions, literature, scientific exchange, and educational programs promoted by educational, cultural, and religious organizations. As a result, the state achieves its foreign policy goals and strengthens its authority in international relations without resorting to violence or pressure (Nye, 2023).

Despite being an abstract concept, the soft power of countries is a subject of evaluation and comparison. The first index, the Monocle Soft Power Index, was introduced in 2010 by the Institute for Government. Annual studies include between 10 to 40 states which are assessed by such objective indicators as management, culture, diplomacy, education, and business. Each variable, in turn, includes a sub-group of indicators. For instance, diplomacy is evaluated by the presence of a visa-free regime, the number of cultural missions, the number of foreign embassies in the country, and the state’s embassies abroad, as well as the number of international organizations where the state is a member/participant. An important part of the cultural variable in the index is the influence of the titular language. Besides, the study encompasses subjective indicators such as expert opinions on the quality of national foods and

beverages, the attractiveness of mass culture idols, the quality of national airlines and airports, and the popularity of national commercial brands. The USA, Canada, France, Germany, the UK, and Japan lead the annual ratings. The position of Russia on the list varied from 26th to 40th between 2010 and 2014. Since the beginning of the Russian–Ukrainian conflict, Russia has not been evaluated as a soft power state (Gallarotti, 2020).

In the years 2015–2019, the British Agency “Portland” published the index “The Soft Power 30”. The analysis is based on six objective factors: the development of digital technologies, country management (e.g. Human Development and Gender Equality Index), culture (the popularity of music, films, and touristic destinations), entrepreneurship, involvement in international activity, and the presence of foreign students in local universities. A subjective variable is formed by the results of polls of more than ten thousand participants depending on the number of countries evaluated (500 citizens of each studied country are involved). The survey form included questions about the attractiveness of cuisine, culture, music, tourist destinations of the country, and trust in the country’s activity on the international level) (The Soft Power 30, 2019). The UK, Germany, the USA, France, and Canada stably entered the top of the chart. Russia was included on the list in 2016 and in further years held positions between 26 to 30. According to the objective criteria used by the index, *digital technologies* and *involvement* were assessed highly and got 8th–14th places, but *Country government* and *entrepreneurship* received the lowest marks. Additionally, according to polls, Russia was viewed negatively as a result of “systematic efforts to de-legitimate democratic institutions in defense of their own interests” (Soft Power 30: A Global Ranking of Soft Power 2018, as cited in Gomelauri, 2020: 157).

The Global Soft Power Index of 2020 is a newly introduced index analyzing the attractiveness of the 193 member states of the United Nations, which provides graphs and tables of the countries’ ratings. The data collection goes via polls: 50% of the participants are the general public from over 100 states, and another 50% are influencers, business leaders, politicians, decision-makers, analysts, and experts. Measuring the effectiveness of countries’ activity includes fourteen variables with the main three, characterizing *familiarity*, *influence*, and *reputation* of the state. Other factors are similar to the ones in the previous models with additional elements (*COVID-19 response* – in 2020–2021 –, *sustainable future*, *nominal Gross Domestic Product*, and *media & communication*). The terminology of the analyses purposely does not include the terms *state or country*. Instead, the report’s author refers to *a nation*, underlying such common elements of communities as culture, language, and religion which act as tools of soft power. The reports make it possible to analyze the soft power of each *nation*,

trace tendencies over several years, and compare with each other. The results of 2020-2024 reveal the stable leadership of the USA and the following peers: France, Germany, the UK, Canada, Japan, China, and Switzerland traced by the previous models as well.

The results also show how the soft power rate of Russia is changing after the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian crisis in 2022. “While Russia’s Familiarity and Influence have gone up because of the impact that its decision to go to war has had on lives the world over, the nation’s Reputation has been severely damaged” (Russia Has Lost Soft Power War, 2023). Figure 3 shows that, in 2023, Russia faced a dramatic decrease of 82 points in the *Reputation* pillar and an even bigger one in *People & Values* (86). Moreover, it affected most factors of the model: business and trade, cultural heritage, influence, governance, education, and science (Figure 3). At the same time, Ukraine had a significant gain in *Influence*(+26) and *Familiarity* (+32), making the *Global Soft Power index climb* in rate from 51st (2022) to 32nd (2023) place. Thus, the chart shows the negative attitude of the world toward military intervention and underlines the necessity of peaceful conflict solutions for states practicing soft power.

Figure 3. Rating of Russia’s soft power according to The Global Soft Power Index.



Source: <https://brandirectory.com/softpower/nation?country=149>

Gallarotti (2020) argues that existing models of measuring soft power are far from being comprehensive. The author suggests including the “true attraction” of states which lies in whether participants actually want to take such actions, not whether they are able to do so. For

instance, Gallarotti suggests not counting the number of foreign students in the country, but measuring how many foreign students would study in the state if there were no limitations in quotas and scholarships.

In Russia, soft power was first identified as a means of achieving foreign policy goals in the Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation of 12 February 2013 and was defined as “a comprehensive toolkit for solving foreign policy problems based on the capabilities of civil society, information, and communication, humanitarian and other alternatives to the classical diplomacy methods and technologies” (art. 20). At the same time, the still ongoing conceptualization of soft power is based on a perception of it, on the one hand, as a tool of destabilization, manipulation of societal opinion, and interference to sovereign states used by the Western actors, but on the other hand, as an effective tool serving the foreign interests of Russia.

Further versions of the strategic document consider soft power as the primary tool of international relations and set the following goals for foreign policy implementation: to promote the Russian language and culture; to encourage learning the Russian language; to facilitate the preservation of the Russian diaspora's identity; to support Russian mass media and communication tools; to protect the rights of compatriots living abroad (The Concept of the Foreign Policy of May 31, 2023). The concept sets objectives to deepen the strategic engagement, enhance cooperation with the CIS states in humanitarian, scientific, educational, and cultural spheres, and support compatriots living abroad (art. 49). The document also defines the geopolitical interests of Russia: the members and associate members of the Commonwealth of the Independent States (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Ukraine) as well as Georgia, which withdrew from the organization, are considered the priorities of Russia in foreign policy course.

Gerasimova (2018) argues that while Russian soft power possesses effective instruments for implementation, it lacks unifying values that could rally CIS countries to follow. Another critical issue is the governmental origin of the soft power institutes. As the main body of soft power is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its subordinate structures but not NGOs, it acquires negative connotations before the target society. Furthermore, the Russian-centric orientation is another disadvantage: the exported culture reflects Russian traditions; however, Russia is a multinational state, and enriching its soft power potential with cultures of nations living there would deepen the dialog with foreign countries. Kamusella (2022, 2023) attributes this focus on Russian culture to historical trends dating back to the Soviet era when ethnic minority literature could only be published after translation into Russian and approval by the Soviet

government. He criticizes this policy as "Rashism" and calls for a broader representation of cultures, urging translations of literature from languages of other ethnicities residing within Russia (Tatar, Buryat, Chechen, Sakha, Tuvan, Udmurt, etc.) to enrich international cultural exchanges.

Despite the fact that the term "soft power" term appeared in the Russian discourse relatively recently, Russia has used the tool of soft power throughout its history in countless cases, long before the concept was defined (Mitrovics, 2023).

2.3.1. Church

Religion is another domain of policy of not the least importance and sensitivity. Its role in politics still requires deeper investigation. Shah claims that "religion has become one of the most influential factors in world affairs in the last generation but remains one of the least examined factors in the professional study and the practice of the world" (2012: 3).

Religion is included in the soft power concept of Nye (1990) and reflected in the language policy analysis of Spolsky (2004, 2009). Despite the former barely focusing on the religious component, it does not deny it as an additional tool of influence without using hard power alongside culture, education, and language.

The notion of religious soft power in achieving foreign policy goals was enriched by Haynes (2008) and Mandaville (2018), who study how religious actors affect the course of foreign policy and how state and non-state actors in foreign policy use religion for geopolitical purposes. Modongal (2023: 6) assumes the following functions of religion in a political context: building national identity, ability to influence political processes and shape public opinion, and "legitimizing an action that has been done for some other purpose".

Regardless of the secularization of the political domain at the end of the twentieth century, the re-emerged concept of religious soft power underlined that the role of the church in policy had never diminished (Ozturk, 2023).

2.3.2. Education

The education domain is another sphere encompassed by language policy. It is included in different models studying language vitality. The Ethnolinguistic Vitality Model (Giles & Johnson, 1977) comprises status, demography, and institutional support as factors. The educational sphere is allocated to the latter domain alongside culture, religion, mass media, governmental services, and industry.

The above-mentioned fields of language use are also included in the Graded Inter-Generational Disruption Scale (GIDS) (Fishman, 1991), which assesses the chances of minority languages being transferred to another generation based on their presence and use in public domains. The scale distinguishes between the position of a language as a means of instruction and as a subject.

Kloss (1967) identifies six levels of language position depending on the status (official, state, regional language, or dialect) and presence in public domains controlled and uncontrolled by the government, including education, alongside such variables as mass media, and cultural sphere into the latter one. Education in private entities is, in contrast, allocated to the latter group.

Baker (2001; 2003) differentiates between weak and strong positions of the minority language based on its presence in the educational process. The author provides four combinations of minority and majority languages used in the educational sphere: no minority language teaching at all (weak position); a minority language is a subject, and a dominant language is a medium of instruction; both minority and majority languages are mediums of instruction; a minority language is language instruction, and a dominant language is a subject (strong position).

Education is considered one of the primary means of revitalizing minority languages. In case a minority language is not present in an educational system, there is less chance for its revitalization.

Scientists and world organizations highlight the importance of receiving an education in the mother tongue. In 2022, the UNESCO Report "Born to Learn" revealed that 40% of the world's children do not have access to education in their mother tongue (UN news, 2023). The report underlines that receiving an education in a language that students do not know the best results in poor performance and undermines the establishment of social relations.

Csernicsekó and Kontra (2022) correlate the possibility of receiving education in the first language with the ethnic identity of the students. The results show that the vast majority of the Hungarian and Romanian groups (95% and 91%, respectively) who live in Ukraine and receive education in their mother tongue define their identity as Hungarians and Romanians, respectively. And on the opposite, Greeks and Jews studying in a non-native language do not correlate their identity with their first language.

Keeping in mind the political nature of the language policy, Pennycook (2002) argues that in some cases, education conducted in a minority language may be a factor in maintaining the

system of inequality since minority groups will not be able to master the titular language and, therefore, will be limited in career or further education choice.

From this point of view, introducing a monolingual educational system aims to unify society, eliminate segregation, facilitate learning the state languages, and promote equality in access to career opportunities and higher education, which is available mainly in the state languages (Frolov, 2023; Kunitsõn et al., 2022). However, Ehala (2013) provides the opposite cause-and-effect relationship: efforts by the states to linguistically unify society at the cost of minority languages and, therefore, equalize citizens in rights; on the contrary, result in even more resistance from the minority group. Language restrictions generate a sense of deprivation and hostility among the diaspora toward the imposed language policy and act as an antipode to motivation in mastering the state language. Therefore, the author concludes that introducing the monolingual educational system is a vicious circle: the more disintegrated the multilingual society is, the more states pressure minorities to shift to the state language, and the more resistance it faces from the minority ethnic groups.

At the same time, education is a field of cultural diplomacy. Aimed at creating a positive image abroad, states establish educational centers and cooperate with local universities, museums, and libraries. The mission of such organizations correlates with the foreign policy objectives of the country they represent. For instance, in the 1990s, within the Amerikan Suomen Lainan Apurahat ASLA-Fulbright program, the USA provided its textbooks for libraries in Finland, which resulted in increasing public interest in American policy and values and strengthening the partnership between the states (Mariano & Varheim, 2021).

Among the most well-known organizations with a long history of implementing cultural policy abroad is the British Council, established in 1934. The British Council carries out various educational programs, including internships and student exchanges, organizes advanced training courses, provides scholarships for studying in the UK, and conducts English language exams. The activities of the British Council include tasks on reforming education in Russia, for example, a project related to promoting democratic values through primary and secondary general education. The activities of the British Center cover the entire range of tasks corresponding to the state's foreign policy.

Another organization active in cultural policy implementation via education is the Nordic Council of Ministers, established in 1971. This multi-directional organization represents not just one state but a group of Scandinavian countries: Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Finland, Sweden, the Faroe Islands, Åland, and Greenland. In the educational domain, the organization coordinates scholarship programs, conducts seminars and courses, develops cooperation in

science, culture, and art, and supports research projects and initiatives for studying and popularizing Scandinavian languages (Bogolyubova & Nikolaeva, 2008).

The strategy to support education in Russian abroad is spelled out in the Concept "Russian School Abroad" of November 4, 2015. The document considers the Russian-speaking diaspora of 17 million people living in the CIS countries as one of the program's target audiences, which faces the problem of obtaining education in Russian.

The Concept sets tasks aimed at supporting Russian education for compatriots and solving foreign policy interests, such as forming a positive attitude towards modern Russia and increasing interest in Russian education (Article 6, 8).

To support Russian schools abroad, Russia provides informational, methodological, and material assistance and organizes vocational and advanced training opportunities for employees of Russian schools abroad.

The main entities carrying out practical activities to implement this Concept are the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a coordinating center (art. 20), the Russian Ministry of Education and Science as a methodological support provider (art. 21), and Rossotrudnichestvo as an agency responsible for program implementation (art. 22).

2.3.3. Language

Language is a tool that each individual uses for self-expression and communication. At the same time, its functions go beyond merely social interaction. Additionally, it is inextricably linked to the culture and identity of individuals and groups who use that language (Jarve, 2004).

Alpatov (2020) argues that language use is connected to two essential elements: the need for identity and mutual understanding. The former lies in the fact that a language acquired in childhood, which in most cases acts as a marker of ethnicity, is preferable for the speaker. Besides, speaking a native language is also a convenient way of communication due to the lack of necessity to master a second or third language. Holding a conversation in a mother tongue facilitates the latter element – mutual understanding. For speakers of the same L1, such communication runs clear and unchallenged. However, at the level of society, it can be possible only in a completely monolingual setting. Nevertheless, due to processes of immigration and the spread of international and local languages, monolingual societies can hardly be found nowadays even in *de jure* homogeneous states.

In practice, communication involves *lingua franca* which is either a second language for both interlocutors (e.g. French and Swedish speakers choose English as a means of communication)

or for one interlocutor (monolingual American and bilingual French speakers hold the conversation in English). In the latter case, the needs for identity and mutual understanding are not fulfilled without contradictions and inequality since one side may remain monolingual and satisfy the need for identity, while the other must speak a language other than his/her mother tongue and is forced to sacrifice his/her identity. Switching to other languages than L1 may be connected to a "sense of ethnic, cultural, and, often, social inferiority" (Alpatov, 2020: 116).

As language problems in such cases are closely related to national ones, it can cause conflict which language policy should address. At the personal level, language policy takes the form of language choice depending on the linguistic context, most often unconsciously. But at the level of society, the main actor of language policy is the government. Even if there is no direct government control over language use, then language policy can be initiated through the education system, business, the media, human contacts, etc. Overall, language is not an apolitical tool but a means of the nation-building process and self-determination (Popova & de Bot, 2017).

Jarve (2003) claims that there is a direct connection between language and the political development of the state shaped by the goals and ambitions of the elites and decision-makers. Once language policy is introduced, it shapes a new hierarchy of languages and their speakers.

The complex relations of language policy and the factors affecting it are better explained by Ferguson (1977, as cited in Spolsky, 2004: 15): "All language planning activities take place in particular sociolinguistic settings, and the nature and scope of the planning can only be fully understood in relation to the settings."

Shohamy (2004: 5) explains the nature of language policy as follows: "While language is dynamic, personal, free and energetic, with no defined boundaries, there have always been those groups and individuals who want to control and manipulate it in order to promote political, social, economic and personal ideologies".

Spolsky (2004: 8) identifies "efforts to manipulate the linguistic situation" as a language intervention (management). Language management may include the legislative branch of power, the government. In later studies, the author includes more variables: groups of people of individuals who desire to influence the linguistic legislation course (language advocates or managers) or family members choosing one language of communication over the others (Spolsky, 2012, 2023).

It is to be noted that social and political factors shape not only language choice at different levels but also what is to be considered a language. Cenoz & Gorter (2012: 193) argue that the difference between a language and a dialect "lies not in beliefs about measuring linguistic

distance (or mutual intelligibility) or in ideas about codification (in grammar or dictionaries), but it is political and depends on the authorities in power”. The statement has particular importance in the context of the Tsarist era when two Slavic languages (Ukrainian and Belarussian) were considered dialects of Russian to underline their common roots and shape common identity as parishioners of the Orthodox Church. The dichotomy “language vs. dialect” was not based on the linguistic distance, but it was to underline the difference between Russian from Polish Catholic identity.

Constructivism involves the study of language as a tool of foreign policy (Hopf, 1998). Within this framework, language is seen as a crucial medium through which states and actors construct and convey meanings, shape perceptions, and influence behavior in the international arena. Constructivist scholars are interested in how language contributes to the construction and dissemination of ideas, values, and norms that guide foreign policy decisions. Depending on the goals of the state and demographic factors, language policy can be a means of various political directions such as maintenance of ethnic and linguistic variety on the one hand, and national-state construction strategy and ethnic deterrence policy on the other hand (Jarve, 2004).

The objectives and areas of activity of the Russian Federation aimed to support and promote the Russian language abroad are reflected in the Concept of State Support and Promotion of the Russian Language Abroad of November 3, 2015.

According to the concept, the demand and prevalence of a language abroad are the most important indicators of the state’s influence in the world and contribute to the formation of a positive attitude towards it (Article 4), which means that the Russian language is one of the main tools for promoting and implementing the strategic foreign policy interests of the Russian Federation. Accordingly, supporting the Russian language abroad is an important part of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation. The document emphasizes the importance of using all instruments of soft power to strengthen Russia’s position in the international arena, including the promotion of the Russian language (Article 12, 13).

At the same time, the Russian language is defined not only as an instrument of foreign policy but also as a means of interethnic communication in the Commonwealth of Independent States, as well as the self-identification of compatriots living abroad. Therefore, the document introduces a set of measures aimed at supporting and strengthening the position of the Russian language in the world, assisting compatriots living abroad in preserving their ethnocultural and linguistic identity, and gaining access to Russian education and culture. Goals include strengthening the role of the Russian language, supporting the teaching of Russian as a native and foreign language, providing educational, methodological, and human resources, advanced

training, and professional retraining of foreign teachers of the Russian language and literature, as well as assistance in the training of such teachers (Article 15).

In October 2023, the International Organization for the Russian Language was created on the basis of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The initiative to establish the intergovernmental structure aimed at popularizing the Russian language in the world was made by the President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev (Kudryavtseva, 2023). The leader of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko also supported the establishment of an international organization for the Russian language, emphasizing that the Russian language is not a language of Russia, but a common heritage that the CIS states have to maintain:

We developed this Russian language together. There is a part of Azerbaijanis, Uzbeks, Tajiks and so on. Not only Russians and Belarusians. Therefore, why are we losing the Russian language? [...] We, unlike them, do not want our youth to communicate, as I already said, with each other through an interpreter or only in English. (Lukashenko at CIS summit, 2023)

Besides the objectives to develop and strengthen the comprehensive cooperation among the CIS states, and encompass mutual understanding, the organization is primarily aimed at the promotion, popularizing, and maintenance of Russian as a language of international communication.

In achieving this aim, the organization sets the goal of increasing the quality of education in the Russian language and literature and facilitating the training of specialists in the field of Russian philology.

In cooperation with local educational, cultural, and scientific organizations, and public associations of the countries, the organization is to conduct examinations of Russian language and literature textbooks and hold book exhibitions and scientific conferences. The organization's plans also include the translation of classic and modern Russian literature into the titular languages of the CIS states and vice versa: from the languages of CIS states into Russian.

The leaders of the Commonwealth affirm their commitment to use the Russian language in international cooperation among the CIS states on the platforms of international organizations and summits. The commitment was enshrined in the Statement on the support and promotion of the Russian language as a language of interethnic communication.

The implementation of the program lies with the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Rossotrudnichestvo, and the Russkij Mir Foundation.

2.4. Legal framework

2.4.1. Linguistic rights

Historically, linguistic rights have evolved through stages of development. Their evolution can be traced back to the sixteenth century when a narrative “one nation, one state, one language” was disadvantaging non-titular languages and led to language extinction as they were considered an obstacle to state unification and integrity. As minority languages were not officially protected and their speakers were distrusted, dominated languages were not introduced into the public domains alongside the titular ones (Cenoz & Gorter, 2012). Moreover, in colonies, the language of the metropolis was promoted at the cost of the local languages which were stigmatized as dialects or deprived of value.

Between the First and Second World Wars (1918-1939), the next stage of language rights development took place. Under the auspices of the League of Nations, progressive international and bilateral agreements containing clauses on linguistic minority protections were ratified. The states assumed responsibility for granting facilities for ethnic groups to receive primary education in their mother tongue if it differs from the titular one. The agreements also imposed no restrictions on minority language use in private and public life (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1995).

The Fundamental document which enumerates human rights is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on December 10, 1948. As after the Second World War, the member-states were aimed at preventing the human rights violations and discrimination perpetrated by fascism, the very basic human rights necessary for establishing the social order were enshrined.

Article 2 of the Declaration proclaims the following:

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Despite the wide scope of the rights, the Declaration does not include a clause for minority language protection and language use (Cserniczkó, 2022).

The issue of minority protection became more actual after the dissolution of two multiethnic states - the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. Further documents promoting and protecting linguistic rights in the European context were compiled based on the Council of Europe where former Soviet republics received membership (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia (excluded in 2022), Ukraine, Moldova) and ratified the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995). However, among the post-Soviet states only Armenia and Ukraine ratified the European Charter for Regional and minority languages of 1992.

Protection of human dignity, civil rights, and minority rights are parts of the Copenhagen criteria which are evaluated by the European Commission as a part of preparation for the EU membership. One of the requirements conditioning the admission to Estonia and Latvia to the European Union became a significant decrease in the number of stateless residents by simplifying the process of naturalization (Brhlíková, 2022). However, the requirement has not been met fully. Simplifying the naturalization process, in fact, included only the cancellation of the written part of the titular language knowledge test for applicants over 65 years old. However, the oral language test as well as constitution and history knowledge remain conditions for passport application. Furthermore, despite slight simplification of the naturalization and updated regulations granting citizenship to all children born in the territory of Estonia and Latvia, the number of non-citizens remains significant: 169 and 64 thousand residing in Latvia in Estonia respectively (Komori, 2022).

At the same time, the documents have a recommendatory nature and set a low level of states' obligation through vague formulations such as "to favor", "to encourage", and "to facilitate", therefore, establish only symbolic protection without defining the degree of necessary protection. Additionally, the states retain the right to guarantee protection only to indigenous languages, excluding languages of those minorities formed as a result of immigration. Ambiguous wording was one of the reasons why the Russian minority residing in the Baltic states did not receive regional status or governmental protection even though Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania ratified the Framework Convention and became members of the European Union (Popova & de Bot, 2017).

2.4.2. Kin-state

The term "kin-state" is a concept referred to in academic and political discourse as a country holding ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and historical ties and cooperating with the diaspora living abroad. The term has a multidisciplinary nature and has become a subject of academic research in the fields of migration studies, international relations, and cultural, public, and ethnic politics. Kin-state activity refers to measures undertaken by the state aimed at supporting and protecting its cultural and linguistic diaspora living on the territory of another sovereign state.

Waterbury (2020:1) defines a kin-state as „a state that represents the majority nation of a transborder ethnic group whose members reside in neighboring territories”. The author underlines the complexity of the kin-state phenomenon which encompasses international, regional, and domestic levels. Regardless of the great academic interest, the scientist believes that such studies require further investigation into the perception of the kin-state policy toward its diaspora from the home state’s point of view. The issue is that the extra-territorial activity of the kin-state aimed at supporting language, culture, and compatriots living abroad can be viewed as a challenge to state security, a risk of irredentism, or external intervention.

Using the example of Macedonia, Wiener (1971) presents a model for understanding the complex relations between ethnic minorities, the geopolitical goals of the kin-state and home state, and the involvement of neighboring states, great powers, and international organizations. Smith (2002) places the kin-state diaspora relations in the international context and enriches the triadic nexus by Brubaker with the fourth dimension – the perception of the kin-state activity by the international and regional organizations. The reason for complementing the approach with a new domain is a need for transnational bodies to build a legal framework for the activities of the kin-states regarding compatriots. Moreover, kin-state activity encompasses not only the rights of minorities and the kin-states but also the rights of host-states. Therefore, the concept requires a complex interrelationship of human rights, minority rights, and principles of international law, creating a multidimensional framework.

However, Heraclides (1990) considers kin-state in the context of secessionist movements and highlights the role of external involvement. Using historical cases of conflict that resulted in the proclaiming independence of Bangladesh (1971) and Eritrea (1993) the author provides several internal factors (national consciousness of the group, linguistic limitations imposed by the nationalizing state), and external powers (financial aid from the third-party state or organization, diplomatic recognition of the secessionist state, complexity of international law) shaping the outcome of the conflict.

Davis & Moore (1997) claim that irredentism is not a dominant concept in modern international relations due to its high risks, requirement for extreme amounts of financial, and military involvement as well as the reaction of the international community that will follow any attempt to change the borderlines. Waterbury (2020: 3) continues this concept, highlighting that irredentism is less likely to become an instrument in the foreign policy of even “historically aggressive states like Hungary”, referring to the historical grief of the country which lost parts of its territory due to the Trianon Treaty of 1920.

In the European context, the issue was catalyzed by the Status Law of Hungary of 2001 officially known as the "Act on Hungarians Living in Neighboring Countries" which caused diplomatic tensions with Slovakia and Romania. The governments of these states considered the Hungarian Law discriminative toward their citizens of non-Hungarian origin (Popovski & Turder, 2013). The law provides support to ethnic Hungarians residing in the neighboring Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Yugoslavia, and Ukraine aimed at preserving the identity, language, and culture of co-ethnics, giving them access to social and economic benefits, and fostering ties between the diaspora and the kin-state (Tomiuc, 2001). It also covers the educational sphere: quotas to study in universities in Hungary and free courses for Hungarian teachers were provided. As in the year of the law's adoption, none of the above-mentioned states were members of the EU and the Schengen zone, and mobility of citizens was possible only with visas, Hungary simplified the application procedure for long-term multiple-entry visas, making it easier for co-ethnics to travel to and from Hungary for different purposes including but not limited to work, cultural, and educational ones. After Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Romania joined the Schengen zone, Hungary retained a simplified visa application procedure for citizens of Ukraine and Serbia (Waterbury, 2009).

However, the activity of Hungary aimed at the diaspora support is not limited by the border of the state. It covers the establishment and financial support of schools, universities, and cultural centers with the Hungarian language of instruction on the territories of the neighboring states. One of the agencies providing financial aid to the Hungarian community outside the borders is the Bethlen Gábor Fund established in 2011 (Kántor, 2014). The fund works with a wide range of initiatives, including cultural events aimed at preserving the Hungarian identity, providing methodological support, and organizing educational programs from kindergarten to high school with the Hungarian language of instruction.

Similarly, Russia also conducts in activity in the kin-minority support. As a result of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, 25 million Russians found themselves outside the kin-state and became ethnic minorities in the newly formed post-Soviet states. At the same time, language

policies of the former Soviet republics, aimed at distancing from the Soviet past and strengthening the titular languages, were one of the reasons for the emigration of Russians to the kin-state. Therefore, there was a need to support the kin-minorities either in the countries of their residence or in terms of immigration rules, simplifying the process of relocation to Russia.

In 1994, Russia started shaping its kin policy aimed at the protection of compatriots. The policy was reflected in the Decree of August 11, 1994 “On the Main Directions of State Policy of the Russian Federation in relation to compatriots living abroad”. The document listed measures necessary to support of compatriots in the CIS and Baltic states and established the Governmental Commission for the Affairs of Compatriots living abroad. The Commission’s responsibilities included coordination of steps taken by the state bodies, public, and religious organizations, monitoring the situation with the rights and freedoms of compatriots in each encompassed state, and providing financial aid to diasporic organizations abroad. Understanding the complex nature of transborder activity, Russia also focused on developing a legislative framework for relations with its compatriots. Russia also expanded diplomatic contacts with the Baltic and the CIS countries by preparing and signing bilateral and international treaties and agreements (Shapovalova, 2011).

In 1999, specific measures supporting the diaspora were reflected in the decree “State Policy of the Russian Federation with Respect to Compatriots Abroad”. The document entitled Compatriots to receive support in political, social, cultural, and economic domains to preserve their distinctive identity. Other legislative acts of that period were connected to the migration domain (Law “On Forced Migrants” of 1995, “On Refugees” of 1997). The migration issue was of particularly pertinent as the policies of the newly independent states resulted in the migration outflow of Russians to the Russian Federation throughout the post-Soviet space. Table 2 reveals that Russia accepted more than 3 million people within a few years after the USSR collapsed. At the same time, negative migration growth was observed in all Caucasus, Baltic, and Central Asian states with a peak of 1.5 million in Kazakhstan.

After years of improving the compatriot policy and addressing its shortcomings, such as overlapping of structures and bureaucracy, in 2008, the Russian government consolidated the bodies into one organization - The activity of Federal Agency for the Affairs of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation (Rossotrudnichestvo). The activity of Rossotrudnichestvo covers educational, cultural, scientific, and legal fields.

However, the kin-state policy raises a dilemma in international law. On the one hand, the UN Charter sets the principle of sovereignty as a cornerstone of international law, guaranteeing the rights of states for exclusive control of their territory and prohibits intervention in domestic affairs and borders (Art. 2.7). However, on the other hand, the activities of kin-state by default involve certain interaction with domestic affairs of host-states. Therefore, transborder activities aimed at the diaspora support require further legal regulation.

In this regard, the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) of 1975 and the Venice Commission Report on the Preferential Treatment of National Minorities by Their Kin-State of 2001 emphasize respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including those of persons belonging to national minorities. The documents also confirm the rights of the kin-state to support its diaspora in the educational and cultural fields. At the same time, the documents impose restrictions on the transborder activities of kin-states in the form of multilateral and bilateral treaties between the states involved in the process and underline the importance of respecting the sovereignty, internal affairs of other states, and other principles of the UN Charter.

The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) 1995, adopted by the Council of Europe in 1995, includes a statement about state obligations regarding minority rights living on their territory. The document justifies kin-states' supportive actions abroad, which in turn, respect the sovereignty of the host state.

Another challenge of international law is defining the limit for the activity of a kin-state designed for the protection of its ethnic minority from threats.

2.4.3. Responsibility to protect (R2P) doctrine

The willingness of a kin-state to support its minorities in neighboring countries can encompass not only educational and cultural spheres but also ensuring their security. Such cases can be crucial under circumstances of armed conflict or the threat of genocide. Therefore, an appropriate legal framework is required to mark the rights and responsibilities of the states involved.

After the atrocities in Yugoslavia and Rwanda in the 1990s, the international community addressed the issue of collective actions toward ethnic conflict prevention and solutions. In 2005, the summit was held as part of the 60th anniversary session of the UN General Assembly in New York. With more than 170 states attending, it became the largest summit in the UN history. As a part of reforming the UN and strengthening cooperation in the field of security

and human rights, the Summit adopted a final document that established an important global principle - Responsibility to protect (R2P). The doctrine entails the responsibility to protect the population from four dangers - genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing (What is R2P?, n/d).

In this context, the role of the kin state in this principle must be clarified. As there can be a direct interest of the kin-state to aid its minority in danger, such actions can be perceived by the host state as interference or a destabilizing act.

Thus, the document is to solve the dilemma between the state's rights for sovereignty and the need to act robustly to halt atrocity. Thus, the R2P principle places primary responsibility for internal affairs with the host state. It includes supporting minorities in preventing discrimination and forced assimilation. Instead, the country is to preserve minorities' identities, promote their integration and equality, and guarantee the presence of minorities in public domains. In times of tension, it is also the responsibility of the host state to react and prevent danger for the vulnerable group. Only in case of the inability or unwillingness of the host state to take appropriate actions, external support including intervention can be considered legal. Yet, the protocol transfers the responsibility not solely to the kin-state, but to the international community, where the kin-state can act as one of the actors, and in cooperation with the state where the conflict occurs. Thus, the document underlines that measures taken toward the host state should have a coercive nature and be approved by the Security Council of the United Nations (Popovski & Turner, 2013).

However, the doctrine does not constitute a codified norm of international law, entailing the compulsory execution and responsibility for its violation. The process of recognizing the necessity for R2P also remains unclear. Reid (2022) states that the doctrine does not clarify how to prove the inability of the host states to protect their minorities and what R2P actions a kin state should take if the Security Council fails to authorize intervention. The denial of an SC resolution can take place due to the veto power of the five permanent Security Council members, even with the council majority's support. These structural weaknesses leave room for interpreting the norms in different ways, forming so-called "grey zones" of international law. Legal ambiguities, in turn, can challenge the idea of state sovereignty, especially, if a minority seeking security, aims at proclaiming its independence on the grounds of the self-determination principle.

Kleczkowska (2019) acknowledges the presence of so-called "grey zones" in public international law, formed by its contradictory principles: the principle of state integrity and the principle of self-determination of peoples. The latter statement creates the possibility of

proclaiming the independence of the territory from the mother state unilaterally despite the principle of state integrity.

The presence of grey zones and duality of international law, coupled with the unclear doctrine of R2P, have caused political and academic debates regarding the legality of Russia's activity in Georgia in 2008, and in Ukraine (2014 and 2022) as well as the following proclamation of independence of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Donbas republics, and a referendum held in Crimea.

In 2008, Russia was condemned for interfering in the domestic affairs of Georgia and sending troops to two regions of the state – Abkhazia and South Ossetia without any previous decision approved by the UN Security Council or Georgia itself (Shapovalova, 2011). At the same time, Russia justified its R2P actions with the necessity to protect its citizens in the regions from ethnic discrimination and military aggression (The Georgia-Russia Crisis, 2008).

The referendum held in Crimea in March 2014, resulting in the peninsula's de facto integration into Russia, remains contentious in scientific and political discourse. It is recognized as illegitimate by Ukraine, and most UN member-states and gets referred to in the literature as „annexation”, „secession”, „occupation”, and „violation of international law” (Biersack & O'lear, 2014; Salushev, 2014; Slomanson, 2015; Teper, 2016; Tsybulenko & Kelichavyi, 2018; Özçelik, 2020), Cohen (2014). However, another group of authors (Allan, et al, 2021) challenges the mainstream narrative and calls for a more nuanced investigation including security reasons for Russia, geopolitical context, the historical division of Ukraine into two parts with different identities, political orientations, and strong ties of the Eastern regions of Ukraine with the kin-state. Kleczkowska (2019) argues that as Crimea used the “grey zone” in its secessionism policy; a legal assessment of Russia's activity in Crimea is not impossible, however, controversial due to the grey zones of international law.

The Kremlin claims that the decision of Crimea was based on the first article of the United Nations Charter granting rights for self-determination of peoples. In his speech on March 18, 2014, Putin referred to the fact that the same right was used by the Soviet Ukraine:

As it declared independence and decided to hold a referendum, the Supreme Council of Crimea referred to the United Nations Charter, which speaks of the right of nations to self-determination. Incidentally, I would like to remind you that when Ukraine seceded from the SSR it did exactly the same thing, almost word for word. Ukraine used this right, yet the residents of Crimea are denied it. Why is that? (Address by President of the Russian Federation, 2014).

In 2022, as a result of referendums, the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics, as well as the Zaporozhye and Kherson regions were de facto incorporated in Russia. In a speech on September 30, 2022, Putin again referred to the rights of nations to self-determination enshrined in the first article of the UN Charter and underlined the readiness of Russia to protect its compatriots: “We will defend our land with all the forces and means at our disposal, and we will do everything to ensure the safe life of our people. This is the great liberation mission of our people” (Demina, 2022).

In all three cases (2008, 2014, and 2022) the Kremlin refers to the Kosovo case of 1999 when NATO held its military operation in Serbia without approval from the United Nations Security Council, as the R2P principle states, followed by the recognition of Kosovo as an independent state. The head of Russia also emphasizes that Kosovo unilaterally proclaimed its independence from Serbia in 2008. He quotes the UN International Court comment of July 22, 2010: “No general prohibition may be inferred from the practice of the Security Council with regard to declarations of independence,” and “General international law contains no prohibition on declarations of independence” (Address by President of the Russian Federation, 2014). Justifying the incorporation of Crimea into Russia with the need to protect the rights of compatriots has led to increased political and academic attention on the Russian diaspora residing in other post-Soviet states, particularly in countries where it forms a significant portion of the population.

Reid (2022) believes that migration across the Soviet Union was not merely a distribution of specialists but also a plan to increase its influence in the republics. The author believes the USSR dissolution supports the interests of the Kremlin to spread its influence in a hidden way via the presence of compatriots.

Persson (2014) names the compatriots’ policy of Russia “a tool of destabilization” in the Baltic states of the same influential power as energy policy, economic relations, and soft power instruments. He claims that the objective of the Kremlin to support the Russian diaspora abroad is more than the care of the compatriots, and it also hides the need to strengthen its presence in the region and put political pressure on the states.

In this context, Trimbach & O’Lear (2015: 493) consider Narva (a region of Estonia with a significant Russian-speaking share) a possible target of the Kremlin and discuss the possibility of the region becoming „the next Crimea”. The situation is complicated by the problem of statelessness among the Russian-speakers which remains acute in the country and keeps holders of grey passports away from maintaining political loyalty to Estonia.

Coolican (2021: 1) admits that the Russian diaspora faces linguistic discrimination from the nationally-driven Baltic states, however, it should not be considered a “Trojan horse” or a danger to the state’s integrity as the Baltic countries are members of the EU and NATO. Moreover, the author highlights that the identity of Russians in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania differs from their peers in the kin-state, and there is no risk for irredentism and further unification with Russia.

2.5. Literature Review

The first group of sources, which the present research refers to, is the literature providing a historical overview of the language policy of Russia toward the post-Soviet states.

Pavlenko (2008a, 2011, 2013) describes the language policy of Russia starting from the era of the Russian Empire (1721-1917) to gain a deeper understanding of factors that influenced the linguistic course of the Soviet republics after regaining independence. Besides the status of Russian, the author covers its presence in the educational, informational, and governmental spheres, revealing how the share of Russians was changing during the first decade of independence of the states. The articles discuss the difficulties in defining the Russian-speaking population's status in the studied region.

Arutyunova (2012) traces how the Russian language status was changing during the Soviet era (1917-1991) and after the collapse of the USSR. The study leads to a more profound understanding of not only the top-down policy regarding enhancing the status of Russian but also the bottom-up willingness of the titular population to learn it as the language of prestige and social mobility. The manuscript describes the language shift process in the post-Soviet states, including self-proclaimed states established in their territories. The author emphasizes the political nature of language planning in domestic affairs and in relations with other states or groups of states.

Grenoble (2003: vii) describes the language policy of the Soviet Union as “marked by contradictions, illogical decisions, and inconsistencies”, yet as “the most deliberate of any nation-state” due to its strong focus on the Russian language as a tool to unite the population.

Sikevich (2017) critically examines the language and national policy of the USSR. The author discusses the controversial ideas of the Bolsheviks to create a common Soviet supranational identity on the one hand and establish a national-territorial structure of the state on the other hand. As borders between the Soviet republics did not consider the ethnic map and had an artificial and symbolic nature, it created conditions for not only the collapse of the USSR,

but also the Ukrainian crisis, the Georgian-Abkhaz, and Nagorno-Karabakh conflicts. Among the other issues, the author mentions the political hierarchy of nations built by the Bolsheviks, forced immigration, and assimilation of ethnic groups.

Solovieva (2017) describes the history of establishing the Central Asian states during the Soviet era. The article has particular importance in understanding the political, historical, and demographic background of further changes in language policy that occurred after the proclamation of independence of the states.

Several studies cover the policy of *Korenizatsiya*, the codification of languages, and the *Likbez*, or *Likvidatsia bezgramotnosti* (Eng. Eradication of illiteracy).

Xianzhong (2014) discusses the advantages and disadvantages of *Korenizatsiya*: among the former ones, he mentions an increase in literacy level, the introduction of languages into the public domains, and the providing local ethnic groups the opportunity to work in high-rank positions. However, the author mentions disadvantages such as neglecting the interests of the non-indigenous population (including Russians residing in the Soviet republics).

Kireenko (2020) gives a historical overview of the “linguistic building” that took place in the first decades of the Soviet era. The study covers the policy of *Korenizatsiya*, codification of languages, their introduction into the public domains, initial Latinization, and following Cyrillization of alphabets. The author concludes that the main reason for shifting previously Latinized languages to the Cyrillic base was the assumption that using the non-Cyrillic alphabet prevents nations from learning the dominant Cyrillic-based Russian language.

Daudov & Mamysheva (2011) believe that the reason for the recodification of the Latin-based languages into the Cyrillic system was the exceptional diversity and linguistic mosaicity of the Soviet Union. The belonging of languages to the different families (Uralic, Slavic, Turkic, Mongolian) prevented their alphabetic unification.

Ataov (1992) focuses on the development of the Turkic languages of the Soviet Union and covers the history of their Latinization and further Cyrillization.

The attempt to Latinize the Russian language is described by Antonuk (2021). The article “Alphabet Revolution: How the USSR Wanted to Change the Russian Alphabet to the Latin Alphabet” explains the ideological importance of Latinization: Soviet leaders considered the Latin base a symbol of internationalization, and the Cyrillic alphabet as a reminder of the Tsarist regime. However, due to financial reasons, the campaign was suspended, and the Russian language remained Cyrillic-based.

Another group of studies addresses the topic of the influence of internal and external factors on the position of the Russian language within the studied region. Studies by Chernyavsky

(2015) and Lavrenov & Ushurelu (2020) conclude that the status of the Russian language and its presence in the public domain within Eastern European countries (Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova) depends on each state's political orientation. As pro-Western Ukraine and Moldova aim to integrate into Europe and distance themselves from Russia, the policy that aims to eliminate the Russian language occurs in those countries. In contrast, the official pro-Russian stance of Belarus, an official major ally of Russia, is a crucial factor in the dominant position the Russian language still occupies within that country (Artymyshyn & Polovyi, 2022; Kharitonov, 2020; Pilipenko, 2020).

Shulga (2020) examines the position of Russians in the post-Soviet Central Asian states from a geopolitical perspective. The study discusses how the states' political orientation and Russia's geopolitical interests in Central Asia affected the emigration of Russians from the region.

Mustajoki et al. (2019) and Pavlenko (2008a) conclude that the different positions taken toward the Russian language in two post-Soviet states with Slavic titular languages, namely Ukraine and Belarus, can be explained historically: Belarus belonged to the Russian Empire for a longer period and, consequently, was subjected to Russification to a greater extent than Ukraine was.

Aside from history, several studies have revealed external determining factors in language policy formation.

Arutyunova (2012), Snezhkova (2021), and Terzyan (2019) claim that the governments of Post-Soviet Armenia and Ukraine view the Russian language as a means of influence used by the Kremlin and, therefore, have removed it from the public domain, refusing to establish official bilingualism. A similar reason for de-Russification, which also took place in the Baltic states, is revealed by Best (2013), Popova & de Bot (2017): the self-distancing from the Soviet past undertaken by Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania has caused language restrictions toward Russian.

National consciousness and high proficiency levels in the titular languages of the Baltic and Transcaucasus states are additional factors that led to de-Russification in the post-Soviet era (Avakyan, 2020; Gusejnli, 2020). Moreover, in contrast to the Central Asian countries, the Transcaucasian states have sufficiently developed their own titular languages to assume the role of communication in all public domains (Pavlenko, 2008a, 2013).

In addition to the reasons mentioned above, Yu (2020) believes that the economic dependence of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan on cooperation with Russia underlies their necessity to maintain the Russian language. Kazarian (2013) argues that the shrinking use of the Russian language in the post-Soviet republics is a logical consequence of the mass emigration of

Russians, which resulted in a dramatic decline in the share of Russian speakers. Zaionchkovskaya (2000) believes in the opposite causal relationship: she claims that de-Russification processes and ethnic discrimination in the independent republics caused the emigration of Russians.

Several studies investigate the language policy of Eastern European states and find the interconnection between the political course of each country and the legal status of Russian. Chernyavsky (2015), Lavrenov & Ushurelu (2020) conclude that the policy of Derussification held in Ukraine and Moldova is defined primarily by the pro-Western orientation of the governments. At the same time, pro-Russian Belarus maintains the language of its main ally (Pilipenko, 2020; Kharitonov, 2020). Snezhkova (2021) studied the current position of Russian in Ukraine. The paper also covers the language policy of the self-proclaimed Luhansk and Donetsk republics, which later became de facto political unit of Russia as well as Crimea (de jure regions of Ukraine with significant Russian-speaking diaspora, which proclaimed their independence after the revolution of 2014).

A number of scientists working on the topic of the Crimean, Donbas, and Transnistrian conflicts, challenge the applicability of the fundamental thesis of Huntington & Jervis (1997) “The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order” to post-Soviet studies. The theory divides the world into civilizations (Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American, and African) each with its own language, culture, religion, history, and identity. The thesis claims that in the post-Cold War era, the conflict will be caused by differences in cultural and religious identities and take place at the fault lines between the civilizations. The authors (Chigirova, 2023; Rogstad, 2018; Shulga, 2023; Sitnova, 2023, Ukielski, 2023) find similarities among the present conflicts: they have occurred on the territory of the states (Ukraine, Moldova) located on the fault line between the Orthodox and Western civilizations (Russia and the European Union). These conflicts also feature a pro-Western orientation and a distancing from the Soviet past, while the successionist regions have the opposite preference. However, the fundamental work does not consider such dynamic variables as geopolitical interests of states, current political orientations of elites, and interethnic differences.

Zhurzhenko (2014) takes a closer look at the identity of Ukrainians and argues that the roots of the conflict are related to the opposite orientations of the population residing in the East and West. She uses the term “borderland” to describe the eastern part of Ukraine (Kharkiv, Donetsk, and Luhansk), which has strong cultural and ethnic ties with Russia and exhibits an Orthodox, pro-Russian, or Soviet identity. In contrast, the western regions of the state lean toward the EU

and base their national idea on Europeanization, which fails to accommodate the preferences of the East.

The article by Melikyan et al. (2018) has special importance since it investigates the political and social conditions of the Soviet era, which led to national movements and resulted in regional ethnic conflicts in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. Dum-Tragut (2013) provides a historical overview of language policy development in Armenia from the nineteenth century to the post-Soviet era. The research was based on the Cooper (1989) model of language planning.

Studies of Matevosyan (2018) and Avakyan (2020) are dedicated to the language policy of Armenia in the education sphere. Popova (2016) discusses the influence of intergovernmental relations with Russia on the position of the Russian language in Georgia. Gusejnli (2020) applies a quantitative approach to reveal numerical data on the state of Russian in the educational and informational sphere of Azerbaijan.

A study by Popova & de Bot (2017) describes and compares the position of the Russian language in the Baltic States according to the domains of the ethnolinguistic vitality model of Giles (1987): status, demography, and institutional support factors. The paper also reveals the limitations of the civil rights of Russian speakers who do not possess titular languages. Solopenko (2021) addresses the problem of statelessness in Latvia and Estonia and non-citizens' suffrage.

Ozolins (1994) justifies the legislation that has led to the problem of statelessness with the necessity of the Baltic countries to rebuild the national states and strengthen national consciousness.

Also, different interpretations of the position of the Russian population in Lithuania are found in the literature. Balshaityte (2011; 2012) believes that the lack of status of the Russian language and compulsory subjects conducted in the titular language in the minority schools are challenges that the Russian minority faces in the country. Ehala & Zabrodskaya (2013) consider the lack of Russian political parties in Lithuania as the inability of the Russian diaspora to influence the political course of the state and protect their linguistic rights. However, Best (2013) concludes that Russians living in Lithuania are well-integrated into society. Their level of titular language knowledge is high, and they do not find it necessary to establish political parties to protect their linguistic and civil rights.

Another group of sources focuses on the political activity of Russia in the post-Soviet space and discusses its legal framework. Persson (2014) claims that Russia uses the Russian diaspora abroad to justify its presence in the region and political pressure used over other states. Investigating the documents reflecting the foreign policy course of Russia, he concludes that

Russia aims its policy not only to protect compatriots' rights but also to strengthen its geopolitical role in the post-Soviet states. The author draws parallels with the events of 2014 when, as a result of the referendum, the Ukrainian peninsula Crimea was incorporated by Russia: the need to protect the Russian population and their rights to speak their mother tongue becomes a reason for the accession of a geopolitically important region of Ukraine.

The Russian government refers to the norms of international law to provide the legal basis for the referendum. In the address by the President of the Russian Federation, Putin (2014) pointed at the norm of the UN Charter, which guarantees the rights of nations to self-determination.

Khan (2021) describes the role of the Russian language in the post-Soviet states and the activity of Russian actors aimed at the maintenance of the Russian language: the Russkij Mir Foundation and Rossotrudnichestvo. He considers the Russian language as "a vehicle in spreading the influence of Russia abroad."

Based on the soft power concept, Artemieva & Chernoperov (2017), Molodov (2017) describe the activity of the agency "Rossotrudnichestvo" in the post-Soviet countries and its role in the foreign policy course of Russia. At the same time, the authors reveal the fact that there is no clear distribution of responsibilities between the agency and other actors in Russian language maintenance: the Russkij Mir Foundation and, the Ministry of Education. Another difficulty in implementing the foreign language policy, according to the authors, is the orientation for rapid results instead of long-term planning.

The article by Iudina & Seliverstova (2020) is of particular interest in soft power studies. It investigates the external language policy of the modern Great Powers: the United Kingdom, the People's Republic of China, the United States of America, and the Russian Federation. The study offers a classification of the policy based on the number of actors (one-divisional and multidivisional), the way of promoting the language learning (direct - via teaching the language, and indirect - via showing opportunities which the language offers), and overt (clearly declared) and covert. The Russian policy is defined as overt, predominantly direct, and multidivisional. However, the authors find its implementation yet complicated and bureaucratized due to the fact that among the four states, Russia has adopted the concept of soft power more recently and it is still at the stage of formation and improvement.

Another group of literature studies the role of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) in the maintenance of the Russian language and compatriots yet underlines the political nature of its activity. Blitt (2021: 5) concludes that despite the active participation of the ROC in supporting the Russian compatriots, it should be primarily considered as "a chief soft power exporter of

the Kremlin's foreign policy priorities" and "a seemingly neutral channel for actively informing and influencing global opinion on Russia." In this regard, Massavetas (2019) names the ROC a supranational organization.

Persson (2014) defines the Russian Orthodox Church as a semi-governmental organization. Alongside Shafiee & Fallahi (2018), he believes the ROC facilitates shaping positive public opinion abroad on the activity of Russia by creating spiritual affiliation of the Russian diaspora to the motherland.

Lunkin (2018) takes a similar position in the discussion on the considerable activity of the Russian Orthodox Church in the foreign policy course, however, the author underlines that the ROC is not a puppet of the Kremlin: despite the deep cooperation with Russian authorities, the ROC holds an independent political course. This is especially evident in the position of the church regarding the recognition of de facto states in Georgia (Hudson, 2019). In contrast to the establishment of political relations with Abkhazia and South Ossetia by the government of Russia, the ROC refused to do so, considering them the canonic territory of the Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia.

Curanovic (2018) and Batishchev & Ivanov (2019) describe the missions that the ROC undertakes abroad: to spread Orthodox values and integrate the post-Soviet space following the principle of the Canonic territory of the ROC (most of the post-Soviet states which match the geopolitical interest of Russia).

Solik & Baar (2019) disclose the topic of the canonic territory of the ROC. Orthodox Churches of Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, Azerbaijan, the states of Central Asia, and the Baltic region are jurisdictionally subordinate to the Russian Orthodox Church, thus, the latter has the ability to influence the subordinates ideologically and, disseminate the traditional values, therefore, maintain strong influence of Russia. The authors argue that the tendency to use the spiritual component in values protection can be also traced back to the era of the Russian empire: when integrating the Western provinces of the Kingdom of Poland (modern territory of part of Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania), the state ran the campaign of de-Polonization and following Russification as it viewed Western Catholic values contradicting the Orthodox ideas.

Another instrument of the foreign policy of Russia, according to the author, is the 20-million diaspora residing near abroad. The given point of view is shared with Blitt (2021) who believes that the Kremlin expands its political influence abroad through building bridges with its diaspora. Schulze, J. L. (2020) investigates the implementation of the Russian soft power in Latvia, considering the Russian diaspora as an instrument of intervention via mass media, and education, raising the problem of non-citizenship.

Wilson (2013) examines the role of soft power in the foreign policy course of China and Russia. For both states, the soft power is a new means of foreign policy. The author concludes that the states are interested in „providing a bulwark against persistent Western efforts at ideological penetration”, and at the same time, to strengthen and improve their international image of cultural hegemon when „the Western media unfairly demonizes them” (Wilson, 2013: 24-25).

2.6. Data collection

The present study incorporates not only the scientific literature but also the legal, media, and data sources. As stated above, the language policy is constantly changing domain. The study in the present field requires the latest data available. Moreover, it is crucial to address the primary source of data where possible since secondary sources related to current language regulations may be biased by the authors' interpretation.

The following groups of sources were incorporated in the present research:

1) Legal documents that reflect the language policy of the post-Soviet states: the Constitutions, Laws on Languages, Acts, Regulation of language use in educational, governmental, informational, and other public domains, linguistic requirements for the state servants, and high-ranking positions.

2) Bilateral treaties and agreements between the Russian Federation and the post-Soviet states stipulate the mutual legal protection of national minorities and the languages they speak, creating conditions for studying and maintaining minority languages.

3) Charters and Treaties of the regional and international organizations established in the Post-Soviet space, which proclaim the Russian language as the working or official language of the organizations: The Charter of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) of 1993, Treaty of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) of 2014, Charter of the Union State of Russia and Belarus; Charter of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) of 2002; the Charter of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) of 2001; Charter of the Community for Democracy and Rights of Nations of 2007.

4) Legal Acts determining the foreign policy course of the Russian Federation: The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation of 2023, describes the main objectives, goals, and methods of the foreign policy of Russia. The present paper focuses on goals of the Concept related to the language policy: “to ensure comprehensive, effective protection of the rights and legitimate interests of Russian citizens and compatriots residing abroad” (art. 3.h), to “promote

and consolidate the position of the Russian language in the world” (art. 3.i)” and to provide Russian and Russian-language media with the government support” (art. 45). The concept also defines the method which is applied in the foreign policy of Russia. “Soft power” which includes “various methods and technologies – from information and communication to humanitarian and other types” is considered the main means of achieving foreign policy objectives (art. 9).

The state concept of the Russian Federation "Russian School Abroad" of November 4, 2015, underlines the need to maintain Russian-language schools in countries with a high concentration of Russian speakers or Russian compatriots, provides the goals, objectives, and mechanisms for implementing state support for Russian schools abroad. The concept defines the position of the Russian language in other countries and is aimed at supporting and promoting the Russian language there. The document provides the goals, objectives, and the description of mechanisms for implementation of the objectives.

"Ethnic Russians Abroad” State policy of May 24, 1999, is aimed to support the Russian compatriots in the field of fundamental rights and freedoms, in educational, cultural, and informational fields as well as in the field of language. The state policy "Ethnic Russians Abroad also assists “voluntary resettlement of compatriots living abroad in the Russian Federation” (art. 13).

5) Documents reflecting the objectives of the organizations aimed at the Russian language maintenance: Decrees of the President of the Russian Federation “On the establishment of the Russkij Mir Foundation” of June 21, 2007, and "On some issues of public administration in the field of international cooperation" of September 6, 2008. Annual reports of the Russkij Mir Foundation and agency “Rossotrudnichestvo” for 2012-2023 describe the actual implementation of the policy aimed at maintaining and disseminating the Russian language abroad.

6) The Charter of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) of 2000. The document defines the Canonic Territory and sets the legal framework of its activity.

7) Statistical data presented by the latest population census results and estimates of the Russian Empire (1897), the Soviet Union (1989), and independent post-Soviet states. The scientific importance of the former source lies not only in the numeric data collected but also in the approach applied in determining the ethnic composition using data on religions and languages. The data retrieved from “The All-Union Census of the Soviet Union: National Composition of the Population” of 1989 reveals the share of the Russian-speaking population

who turned out to be national minorities in the newly independent Republics and were affected by the newly introduced language regulations of the independent states.

The latest population census results of the post-Soviet countries provide information on the current share of the Russian-speaking population living in the states and make it possible to compare the data with the results of 1989 to investigate how the share of Russians has changed. The data also includes the proportion of non-citizens (most of whom are ethnic Russians) who remain in the Baltic states. Besides the share of Russians residing in each state, the census also shows the density of the Russian-speaking population. The given data makes it possible to investigate whether the Russian language was officialized at the regional level of the states.

8) Information provided by the internet news sources Lenta, BBC, Sputnik, Ria, Tass, and Delfi covering the state of the Russian language, changes in the language policy of the studied region, the obstacles which the Russian speakers and organizations face in the post-Soviet states. Despite the media sources are not scientifically based and have a higher possibility of being politically biased, they provide the latest information and describe the situations which have not yet become the subject of scientific research.

2.7. Research design

Based on the previous studies and the sources described above, the present paper aims to reveal in which public domains of Spolsky's Language Management Model (2009) the Russian foreign policy toward the post-Soviet states contributes to the maintenance of the Russian language and protection of the rights of the Russian speakers.

The purpose of the study addresses the following objectives:

1) to provide an analysis of the position of Russian in all the former Soviet countries and the de facto states located in their territories

2) to analyze the activity of Russia in maintaining the Russian language and protecting the linguistic rights of compatriots living in the post-Soviet states.

The present study adopts qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches to reveal different aspects of the language policy of the post-Soviet states regarding the Russian language and the activity of Russia aimed at the maintenance of the Russian language.

The qualitative method aims to describe linguistic legislation of the post-Soviet states (status, historical background, presence of Russian in the public domains), the activity of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Russkij Mir Foundation Rossotrudnichestvo, and the Russian Orthodox Church.

The quantitative method compares the current share of Russian speakers with the Soviet era and provides a description of quantifiable numerical data on the presence of the Russian sector in the public spheres and measures taken by the Russian government to preserve the Russian language in the studied region.

The countries are divided into a few regions: the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), Eastern European states (Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova), Transcaucasus states (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan), Central Asian states (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan). The division into regions was used in the articles of Pavlenko (2008a, 2008b, 2013) to reveal common characteristics of language policy of the states of each subgroup and peculiarities of the individual states.

The structure of the dissertation corresponds to the objectives of the study. It is presented with the introduction, historical background, literature review, methodology, further chapters describing the position of the Russian language in the post-Soviet states, the activity of Russia aimed at the maintenance of the Russian language in the post-Soviet states, perception of the policy of Russia, discussion and conclusion, and a list of used sources and literature.

CHAPTER 3. THE POSITION OF THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE IN THE POST-SOVIET STATES

3.1. Position of the Russian language in the world

Yudina & Melnichuk (2020: 68) describe Russian as a mega language – one which has a status of international and regional language and is “traditionally studied as L2”. Kadyrova (2023) defines Russian as a global or world language, underlying its widespread and strong position in the world as a language of international organizations, tourism, literature, and a lingua franca.

Russian is one of the official and working languages of international organizations where all the post-Soviet countries are the member-states: the United Nations and its subordinate organizations, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (Rossotrudnichestvo, n/d).

Additionally, the Russian language serves as the working language of the regional organizations and unions in the post-Soviet space. It is the sole working language of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) that integrated the Post-Soviet Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan after the dissolution of the Soviet Union (Charter of CIS of 1993, art. 35).

The Military alliance Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) united Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan (Charter of CSTO of 2002, art 28), and the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), where Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan are members also have Russian as a sole official language (Treaty of the EEU of 2014, art. 110). Russian is the working language of the integrational Union State of Russia and its closest ally in the post-Soviet space – Belarus (Treaty of 1999, art. 11).

Chinese and Russian are the working languages of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which brought together 8 Asian countries, including post-Soviet states: Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan (SCO Charter of 2001, art. 20).

Russian is also an official language of the organizations to which Russia itself does not belong. Non-recognized states of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transnistria, where Russian has official status, founded a Community for Democracy and Rights of Nations and established Russian as the only working language of the organization (Charter of the Community of 2007, art. 30). Similarly, Russian was an official language of the union of Europe-oriented states of

Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova (GUAM) created in 2001. However, after the Maidan Revolution of 2014, the official language became English (Radio Liberty, 2014).

Molodov (2017) claims that there is a clear correlation between the integration level of the post-Soviet states with Russia within the regional organizations and the status of the Russian language in these countries. The author traces the tendency in the following way: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus are members of the CIS, EEU, OSCE, and CSTO; also the two Central Asian states cooperate with Russia within the SCO; Belarus collaborates with Russia within the Union State; and at the same time, Russian has the status of officially used (Kazakhstan), official (Kyrgyzstan), and state language (Belarus) in contrast to the other post-Soviet states where Russian is not officialized.

The further subchapters describe the position of the Russian language in the post-Soviet states in terms of status, demographic data (share of speakers), and presence of the language in the public domains. The countries are divided into 4 geographical regions: Eastern Europe, the Baltic region, Central Asia, and the Caucasus.

3.2. Eastern Europe: Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova

The position of the Russian language in Belarus is unique. Belarus is the only state in the former Soviet world (except for Russia) that awarded the Russian language with the status of being a state language alongside Belarusian. The decision to officialize the Russian language was taken in a referendum in 1995. Even though ethnic Russians made up only 13% of the Belarusian population (1989), Russian was the mother tongue of a third of the total population and was fluently spoken as L2 by 80% of the titular nation. Therefore, as a widely spoken language, Russian received the support of 83.3% of the state population at the referendum (Pilipenko, 2020). It has remained the most spoken language after 30 years: census results of 2019 revealed that although most of its population has a Belarusian identity (84.9%) and claim that Belarusian is their mother tongue (61.2%), the language they use at home is Russian for 70% of the population. Thus, the titular language in Belarus acts as a “badge of ethnicity” (Crystal, 2000, as cited in Pavlenko, 2008b: 61) rather than as a means of communication (table 5).

Belarusian also plays a symbolic role in the public domain and appears in official documents, on stamps, road signs, banknotes, and toponymy (Kharitonov, 2020; Pilipenko, 2020). De facto, Russian is the dominant language: it is the language of office and paperwork in most public institutions. Russian language maintenance in Belarus can be attributed to the pro-Russian political orientation of the country, which promotes “the idea of historical,

political, and economic unity with Russia” (Pavlenko, 2008b: 64). In the Belarussian scientific literature, Russian is viewed as a guarantee of Belarussian ethnicity, statehood preservation, and protection against exposure to Western values (Artymyshyn & Polovyi, 2022). Measures taken for the sake of Belarussian language maintenance are believed to affect the position of the Russian language and this, in turn, aggravates relations with Belarus’s main ally (Kharitonov, 2020). Moreover, in the political domain, Belarussian is considered the language of pro-Western opposition since most opposition slogans and posters are written in Belarussian.

Most mass media (TV, radio, printed, and electronic sources) feature Russian: 13 out of the most popular 15 journals are in Russian. In addition, 3 out of 11 TV channels broadcast in Russian: seven channels use both state languages, and only one channel broadcasts in Belarussian exclusively (Pilipenko, 2020).

Russian and Belarussian are compulsory subjects in school and are the main languages of secondary education, where Russian predominates. In 2018/2019, 88% of students attended Russian middle schools, and only 11% studied in Belarussian. University programs are also offered mostly in Russian: in 2018/2019, 59.8% of university students received instruction in Russian, 39.3% were being educated in both languages, and only 0.1% studied in Belarussian (Azheronok & Denischik, 2020).

Post-Soviet Ukraine takes a different approach to the Russian language and aims its language policy at de-Russification and de-Sovietization (Pavlenko, 2006). The Ukrainian language acts as an antipode to Russian (Pisano, 2022). The first step toward Ukrainization was taken in 1996 when the Constitution declared Ukrainian the sole state language (Snezhkova, 2021). Although Russian was the mother tongue for 33.2% of the entire population (1989), officially, it was considered a minority language and was granted a regional status. In the country’s political units, where the share of Russian speakers exceeded 10% (the Southeastern part of Ukraine), Russian was officially used in local state bodies, courts, and the educational sphere alongside Ukrainian (Pavlenko, 2008a). Officialization of Russian at the state level was viewed as a danger to the titular language’s position (Pavlenko, 2011, as cited in Csernicsekó & Kontra 2022).

The revolution of 2014 was a turning point in Ukraine’s language policy: the newly formed government intensified de-Russification and Ukrainization. Proficiency in Ukrainian became compulsory for authorities, deputies, judges, lawyers, notaries, medical workers, and teachers. The legal norm that had granted regional status to Russian, was canceled despite the ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in 2003 (Csernicsekó & Kontra,

2022). As a result, Russian and other non-titular languages became foreign languages, although Russians made up 17% of the population.

The right to speak the native language became one of the official reasons for mass riots in the separatist regions with significant proportions of Russian speakers (the Donetsk region: 38%; the Luhansk region: 39%; the Autonomous Republic of Crimea: 58%) (About number and composition, 2001). As a result of the referendum held in Crimea in 2014, the peninsula de facto became a political unit within Russia. It declared Russian, Ukrainian, and Crimean Tatar the state languages (art. 10 of the Constitution). The referendum was not recognized as legitimate by Ukraine itself and by most member-states of the United Nations (Gunawan et al., 2020, Marxsen; 2014). Eight years later, the Luhansk (LPR) and Donetsk People's Republics (DPR) also received diplomatic recognition from the Kremlin and were incorporated into the Russian Federation (Pelliconi, 2023; Potočňák & Mareš, 2022). This act was considered by most countries as a gross violation of international law and an invasion to the sovereign state by Russia (Pelliconi, 2023; Potočňák & Mareš, 2022). The self-declared Donbas republics initially granted official status to both Russian and Ukrainian; however, as a reaction to the de-Russification policy of Kyiv, they deprived Ukrainian of its official status (art. 10 of the Constitution of LND; art. 10 of the Constitution of DPR). In the government-controlled territories of Ukraine, the use of the state language became widespread; it symbolized self-determination and autonomy from Russia (Pisano, 2022). Sanctions on Russian mass media were imposed due to one-sided news coverage and propaganda. In 2019, the Ukrainian government passed a law '[o]n ensuring the functioning of the Ukrainian language as the state language', which broadened the sphere of Ukrainian language usage: it translated commercial, medical, and service industries into the state language. Furthermore, according to law, cultural events were to be held in Ukrainian or accompanied by translation (art. 23). Using "languages other than the state one" may become a reason for financial penalty: in 2022, the mayor of Kharkiv Ihor Terekhov got fined in the amount of 3400 UAH (around 90 dollars) over public use of Russian (Kharkiv mayor comments on commissioner's decision, 2022; Sharma, 2023).

The law also affected the information sphere. Print media disseminated in non-state languages was either to be translated into Ukrainian or be released in a bilingual edition. A translation into Ukrainian must accompany TV programs and films broadcast in foreign languages (including Russian). The total duration of foreign-language TV and radio programs can be at most 10% of the daily broadcasting for national channels and 20% for regional channels.

The primary medium of instruction in Ukraine is the state language: 92% of students are instructed in Ukrainian. In minority schools, Ukrainian is a compulsory subject. The number of Russian schools dramatically decreased from 4.5 thousand (1989) to 55 (2021) (Melnyk, 2023).

Despite the condemnation of the Venice Commission, the Law on Education adopted in 2017 converted the language of instruction in minority schools into Ukrainian (Csernicskó, 2022). Exception was made only for the indigenous peoples of Ukraine (e.g., Crimean Tatars), who may receive their complete schooling in their mother tongues. The other minority schools may conduct classes in their languages only in grades 1 – 4. 80% of classes beginning in 5th grade must have Ukrainian as their language of instruction. Different approaches were applied toward EU and non-EU languages of instruction: schools with non-European languages of instruction (primarily Russian) had to switch 80% of their classes to the state language by September 2020. Only Russian language and literature lessons are allowed to be held in Russian. On the other hand, schools with EU languages as the means of instruction (e.g. Romanian, Hungarian) were allowed gradually to switch to Ukrainian, starting with 20% in 2020 and reaching 80% by 2023 (Csernicskó & Kontra, 2022).

Ukrainian is a compulsory entrance examination to higher educational institutions. Besides Ukrainian, EU languages and English, can also be a means of instruction at the universities. The Russian language, however, is absent in higher education.

Oriented to the West, Moldova also aimed its language policy at de-Russification and strengthening the position of the titular language (Pavlenko, 2008b). Thus, despite significant shares of Ukrainians (14%) and Russians (13%) among the Moldovan population and the fact that Russian was the mother tongue of 23% of the population in 1989, Moldova adopted a language law that proclaimed Romanian based on the Latin script as the sole state language (Pavlenko, 2008a).

In 1990, two regions of Moldova (Gagauzia and Transnistria), populated with the Ukrainian and Russian diaspora, stood up against the imposed language law. They proclaimed autonomy within Moldova and established their regional languages: Russian was declared an official language alongside Gagauz in autonomous Gagauzia and Ukrainian in the self-declared state Transnistria (Abramova, 2020). At the same time, both regions retained the Moldovan language based on the Cyrillic alphabet as an official language (Riaboj & Grachev, 2021).

As a result of the Transnistria separation, where Russians make up 29% of the population (2015), the share of Russians in Moldova decreased from 13% (1989) to 4.1% (2014) (Natsional'nyi sostav gosudarstv SNG (n/d); Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia, 2021) (table 5).

The initiative to officialize the Russian language in Moldova took place on December 16, 2020, when the government passed a law on languages recognizing Russian as a language of international communication in the state and a means of addressing the authorities. However, already on December 18, the given law was applied against by the opposition and, as a result, was canceled in January 2021 when the Constitutional Court found this norm illegal.

The primary language of education in post-Soviet Moldova is the state language. Minority language schools also function in the country. In 2011, 21% of schools offered education in Russian. The educational code of 2014, however, excluded Russian from the obligatory program in secondary school and made it an optional foreign language, along with English and French (Lavrenov & Ushurelu, 2020). At the same time, in the Gagauz Autonomy and the de facto state of Transnistria, Russian is a compulsory subject in schools with non-Russian languages of instruction (Pavlenko, 2008a).

The Russian language is gradually disappearing from higher education, which functions predominantly in the state language. Russian speakers in Moldova have access to Russian-medium programs on a fee basis since scholarships for studying at the universities are available only for courses with Romanian/Moldovan as the language of instruction. The entrance exam in the titular language is compulsory for applicants, including those who are applying to Russian-medium programs (Chernyavsky, 2015).

The presence of minority languages (including Russian) in the information sphere is limited: the total volume of TV and radio programs in non-titular languages may not exceed 15% of airtime. In 2018, Moldova stopped re-broadcasting Russian news TV and radio programs following the passage of the Law on Protecting Informational Space from Foreign Propaganda (Saran, 2016). However, the law did not affect the local mass media run by the Russian diaspora: four Russian-language TV channels, four journals, and six national newspapers. In 2022, state monitoring of news coverage was introduced in response to the information war accompanying the conflict in Ukraine (Sisu et al., 2022).

3.3. The Baltic States: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania

During the Parade of the Sovereignties of the 1990s, non-titular groups, including Russians, residing in the Baltic states, were encouraged to vote at the Independence Referendum on par with the titular residents. With the support of the population expressed in the public vote, the states declared their sovereignty and modified the status from the Soviet Republics to the Republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Newly independent Baltic states proclaimed the Soviet epoch (1940s – 1990s) the era of occupation and chose a political course of state rebuilding and distancing from Soviet influence (Best, 2013).

The changes in political orientation coined the language policy of the countries and affected the position of the non-titular group living there. The significant size of the Russian-speaking population (34%, 30.3%, and 9.4% of the entire population of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania, respectively), which had migrated there during the Soviet era turned out to be an ethnic minority and a reminder of the Soviet occupation (Brhlikova, 2022; Pavlenko, 2008a) (table 5).

After the restoration of sovereignty, Estonia and Latvia granted citizenship only to those who had lived in those states before the Second World War time and their descendants (Croft 2016; Pavlenko, 2006). Those who migrated after 1945, were “stripped of citizenship as „descendants of the occupiers” (Brhliková, 2022: 73). The residents of Estonia and Latvia without the citizenship granted, became stateless. Statelessness has a symbolic meaning as well: non-citizens receive a special document that fixes their status officially: a grey passport in Estonia and a blue passport in Latvia which differ from the passports of citizens of these countries (Figure 4; Figure 5). These passports guarantee rights of permanent residence, and non-refoulement, however, are not officially recognized as official identity documents and are valid only within the EU and in Russia.

Figure 4. Latvian passports of citizens (red) and non-citizens (blue)



Source: <https://rus.is/grazhdane-i-negrazhdane-latvii-smogut-o/>

Figure 5. Estonian passports of citizens (red) and non-citizens (grey)



Source: https://ee.baltnews.com/tags/simple_negragdane/

Any stateless person willing to obtain citizenship has to go through the process of naturalization including culture, history, and constitution tests. An additional requirement for being granted Latvian and Estonian nationality became knowledge of the state language. Given that the level of the Estonian and Latvian languages spoken among the non-titulars was low, in

the newly independent states, 25 percent of the Estonian and 30 percent of the Latvian population, primarily Russian speakers, became stateless (Maksimovtsova, 2022). Moreover, descendants of non-citizens born within the states' territory did not receive citizenship either (Popova & De Bot, 2017).

In 2015, Estonia started providing citizenship automatically to all children born in the state regardless of the citizenship of their parents. In Latvia, a similar law came into force in 2020, almost 30 years after the state had regained its independence (Erdilmen & Honohan, 2020). However, 10% (169 thousand) of the Latvian and 6% (64 thousand) of the Estonian population, mostly retired people over 65, remain stateless (Komori, 2022).

To support stateless compatriots residing in the Baltic states, Russia, acting as a kin-state, grants a visa-free regime for non-citizens of Estonia and Latvia. Additionally, it offers a simplified procedure for the application for the Russian passport. However, obtaining Russian citizenship can become an obstacle on the path to naturalization in the Baltic states. The Estonian legislation states that dual citizenship is forbidden, and in Latvia, Russia is not included in the list of countries whose additional citizenship is allowed along with the Latvian one. In this case, before the naturalization process of Latvia and Estonia, Russian citizens will need to renounce their Russian citizenship first. Additionally, since 2022, security authorities of the Baltic states perceive the passportization of Russian minorities as the Kremlin's attempt to increase the loyalty of the compatriots toward its policy (Strelnikov, 2024). Therefore, for security reasons, Estonia and Latvia consider revoking the residence permit of those non-citizens who have recently used the chance to receive Russian citizenship.

Stateless residents of Estonia and Latvia do not have the right to work as lawyers, judges, police officers, notaries, pharmacists, hold high-ranking positions, or own land (Zverev, 2022). As they are not citizens of the EU, they are not able to present their interests via submitting petitions to the European Parliament and the Ombudsperson. Estonian residents without citizenship may only participate in local elections (Pavlenko, 2008b). They have access to the political sphere via "the Centre Party", which builds a Russophone electorate (Csergő & Kallas, 2022). In Latvia, non-citizens are fully isolated from participating in political decisions, have neither active nor passive rights to vote at any level, and may not establish their political party if at least half of the party members are stateless (Frolov, 2023).

In contrast, Lithuania grants citizenship automatically to all children born within the country's territory and does not limit professional choice for non-titular groups. Every citizen also has active and passive suffrage. No political party is organized by the Russian diaspora for representation of their interests in the parliament. The given fact is interpreted differently in the

literature: Ehala & Zabrodszkaya (2013) consider the absence of political parties as the inability of the diaspora to protect their rights. Best (2013), on the opposite, claims that as ethnic Russians are well integrated into society and not limited in their political rights, there is no need for establishing political parties.

Although Russian speakers constitute 24.5% of the Latvian and 23.7% of the Estonian population (Coolican, 2021), Russian does not have official status and is defined as a foreign language (Law on Language of Estonia of 1995, chapter 1, art. 2; Law on State Language of Latvia of 1999, section 5). In Lithuania, which was exposed to immigration to a lesser extent, Russians make up 5% (2021) of the population and constitute the second minority group after Poles (Kuczynska-Zonik, 2017). The status of the Russian language is not defined. Only the titular languages are state languages of the states (Popova & de Bot, 2017).

Russian does not have regional status in the Baltic states either. However, its speakers constitute 97% of the population of the Ida–Virumaa region in Estonia, 85% of the second-largest Latvian city, Daugavpils, and 51% of the town of Visaginas in Lithuania. The authorities see the regional officialization of the Russian language as ‘a threat to the construction of the national state’ and consider Narva the ‘next Crimea’ (Trimbach & O’Lear, 2015). The questionnaire conducted by Ehala (2013) reveals that the attitude toward the officialization of Russian in the Baltic states varies depending on the usage of Russian among the titular groups and the usage of the titular languages among the Russian speakers. The results show that the more Russian speakers use the state languages, the less they tend to support the idea of the officialization of Russian. And the more the titular group uses the Russian language, the more they express support for its officialization. Therefore, the link between the attitude to the language is interconnected to its use:

The less the state languages are used, the more rigid and essentialist the Russian-speaking identity is perceived to be and the higher the sense of deprivation by Russian speakers. Wider use of the state language seems to be associated with a more flexible identity and a lower sense of deprivation (Ehala, 2013: 108).

Perceiving the Russian minority as an instrument of Kremlin propaganda, the Baltic states aim at forced assimilation of minorities by limiting the activity of those institutions that could maintain their identity, such as schools, universities, museums, libraries, and mass media (Frolov, 2022; Schulze, 2021). Thus, the Russian language is being gradually excluded from school education and replaced by titular languages.

The Estonian educational reform of 2008 established that only 40% of classes could be conducted in the languages of ethnic minorities; 60% of the courses had to be held in the state

language. 13% of state schools function in Russian-Estonian languages. Nevertheless, the government aims to reach a monolingual education system held only in Estonian by 2024 (Kunitsõn et al., 2022).

In Lithuania, ethnic minorities can receive a complete education in the language of the ethnic group to which they belong, though not in the subjects of History, Geography, and Civics, while the number of Russian schools is decreasing (Popova & de Bot, 2017). The idea of transferring minority schools into the titular ones faces criticism not only from the Russian diaspora but also among the decision-makers. Ausrine Armonaite who holds the position of the Economy and Innovation Minister, states that the linguistic issue should be addressed pragmatically and analytically, not populistically. Closing the schools of minorities is considered by the minister “a terrible mistake” (Lithuanian minister says closing Russian schools would be a 'terrible mistake', 2024).

In 2018, Latvia initiated a gradual transition of minority schools into the state language of education: 50% of classes in grades 1–6 and 80% in grades 7–9 were to be held in the official state language, and in the higher grades 80%–100% of subjects must be taught in Latvian. In 2020, Latvia converted all Russian and bilingual schools into schools with only the titular language of instruction. European Court on Human Rights confirmed that educational reform was not discriminatory towards the Russian minority living in Latvia (Ogranicheniye prava na obucheniye na russkom yazyke, 2023). Furthermore, as a reaction to Russia’s military intervention in Ukraine, Latvia eliminated education in Russian at state and private universities (Auers, 2023).

Only the Slavonic and Russian Studies departments at state universities in Estonia and Lithuania include curricula given in Russian (Popova & de Bot, 2017). The information sphere of the Baltic countries functions predominantly in the titular languages, and state legislation is gradually decreasing the share of media in minority languages.

Moreover, an additional difficulty for Russian-speaking residents of the country is the distortion of the form of Russian names by the norms of the Latvian language and Latin transliteration. The language committee not only translates given and family names but also applies *Latvianization* – amendments to align foreign names to the norms of Latvian grammar and orthography. Introducing norms of another language into Latvian is considered a threat to the state language's existence. This way, a Jewish and Russian community member, Leonid Raihman, born in Latvia in 1959, received a citizen passport in 1998 with his name spelled as Leonīds Raihmans (Naumova, 2014). Numerous appeals to Latvia's legal entities were not successful. The District Administrative, Constitutional, Regional Administrative, and Supreme

Courts of Latvia upheld the language committee decision (Antonenko, 2016). Similarly, the Russian name Miron turned out to be Miron. The Russian minority believes the adopted version of names distances their holders from their ethnic identity.

The Russian media exists in print, namely newspapers and magazines run and sponsored by the Russian diaspora (Popova & de Bot, 2017). No state-funded TV channels broadcast in Russian in Estonia, Latvia, or Lithuania. The channels transmitting from Russia have been progressively excluded from airtime as Russian mass media is perceived to be a means of warfare, propaganda, and a tool of destabilization (Persson, 2014; Schulze, 2021). Moreover, these limitations have been intensifying in reaction to Russia's attack on Ukraine: the countries imposed a 'digital curtain' on Russian state media due to its disinformation and one-sided coverage of the news: Russian TV channel broadcasting being suspended has also led to a bolstered sense of justification for control over print media (Maksimovtsova, 2022; Sisu et al., 2022). In 2023, a draft law was introduced in the Latvian parliament stating that from 2026 state media should produce content only in the Latvian language and languages "belonging to the "European cultural space" (Amnesty International, 2024). This bill caused concern among journalistic unions, as well as human rights organizations. The Amnesty International Report of 2024 considers this project as discrimination against the Russian-speaking population in access to information.

3. 4. The Central Asian States: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan

The states of Central Asia are countries, which were artificially created in 1924-1936 to be Soviet republics and did not have the "previous independent political history" (Pavlenko, 2008b: 71). The states were the last among the Soviet states to proclaim their independence in 1991 as a result of the Soviet Union's dissolution (Solovieva, 2017).

The last population census of the Soviet Union (1989) revealed that 9.5 million Russians lived in the Central Asian states (Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia, 2021). Most of them lived in Kazakhstan (6.1 million), Uzbekistan (1.6 million), and Kyrgyzstan (0.9 million). In Kazakhstan, the share of Russians was almost equal to the percentage of the titular nation (37.4 and 39.7 respectively).

However, the political and economic instability of the region after the states' declarations of independence, civil war in Tajikistan (1992–1997), coups in Kyrgyzstan (2005, 2010), and de-

Russification processes led to mass emigration. As a result, the share of Russians living in Central Asian countries declined from 37.4 to 15.5% in Kazakhstan (2021), from 21.5 to 4.97% in Kyrgyzstan (2022), and from 7.6 to 0.3% in Tajikistan (2020) (Natsional'nyi sostav gosudarstv SNG, [n/d]; Popova & de Bot, 2020; Shulga 2020) (table 5).

In Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, the Russian share of the population in 1989 was 8.3% and 9.5% respectively (Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia, 2021). However, the latest census data is unavailable in these states: Uzbekistan has not held a population census since its proclamation of independence. Turkmenistan conducted a population census in 2012, but the results were not published. Official estimates revealed that the proportion of Russians declined to 2.6% in Uzbekistan (2013) and 2% (2001) in Turkmenistan (Tsyriapkina, 2015). However, experts believe that the numbers are overreported.

In 1989–1990, all five of the independent states raised the status of the titular languages, defined them as the sole state languages, and aimed their language policy at expanding the sphere of titular language usage to all public domains. Also, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan implemented the transition from the Cyrillic to the Latin alphabet. In 2010, Kyrgyzstan became the only state in the region to grant official status to the Russian language: Russian is used in the governmental, judicial, legal systems, and the public sphere alongside the other state language – Kyrgyz (Constitution of 2010, art. 10). In Kazakhstan, Russian is an officially used language along with Kazakh in ‘state organizations and local governments’ (Popova & de Bot, 2020). According to Pavlenko (2008a), official use of the Russian language in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan can be explained by insufficient development of the titular languages, which cannot cover all public domains.

Despite Russians making up only 0.5% (2010) of the population, in 2011, Tajikistan gave Russian the status of the language of international communication (Constitution of 2016, art. 2). And this status is enshrined in the Constitution of the country. This means that the Russian language is used in Tajikistan, is not limited in any way, and anyone who speaks it can freely use it in all aspects of their life. In Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, with the Russian population at 2%, the status of the Russian language remains undefined.

The Central Asian states introduced legislation making command over the national language a requirement for high-ranking positions, thereby replacing Russians with titulars. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan developed a language exam, ‘Kaztest’ and ‘Kyrgyztest,’ for state and civil servants and employees working in senior positions. The tests assess knowledge of the titular languages based on the CEFR scale and include listening, reading, writing, and speaking, as well as grammatical and lexical tasks (I.o. Prezidenta, 2020; Law on State Civil and Municipal

Service of Kyrgyzstan of 2016, art. 14; Popova & de Bot, 2020). The state language exam is compulsory for candidates for deputy in Tajikistan. It consists of writing autobiographies, reading printed texts, and an oral interview with the central election commission and Tajik language scholars (V Tadzhikestane kandidaty v deputaty ot NDPT sdali test na znanie rodnogo iazyka, 2015; Zhang 2021). In Uzbekistan, the language examination system applies to civil servants (Naznachaiushchiesia na rukovodiashchie dolzhnosti, 2020). Only those who pass the language exam and get a certificate of command of the state language are allowed to remain in high-ranking positions. In Turkmenistan, not only is command of the titular language a requirement for state servants, but judicial, law enforcement, security, and financial sector employees must prove their ethnic Turkmen origin going back three generations (Turkmenistan 2022 Human Rights Report, n/d).

The policy of Turkmenization has also affected the educational sphere. There is only one school left in which the language of instruction is Russian (Jehan & Khan, 2022). Russian-medium classes in 30 Turkmen schools with 50 students each were functioning until 2020. Measures to prevent COVID–19 became an official reason to distribute students from the overcrowded Russian classes to Turkmen and transform the educational system into a monolingual one (Iserell, 2021). Turkmenistan is also the only country in Central Asia where Russian is not studied as a compulsory school subject (Yu, 2020). The language of higher education in Turkmenistan was also converted into the titular language, and non-titular students' university admissions became more limited.

In the Central Asian states where Russian has an official status, its position remains strong in the educational sphere: it is the means of instruction in monolingual schools in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, constituting 10% and 17% respectively. It is also used alongside the titular language in bilingual schools, making up 25% and 29% of schools in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan respectively (Bengard, 2018). Russian is also one of the languages of higher professional education: 34% of programs in Kazakhstan and 60% in Kyrgyzstan have Russian as the medium of instruction (Yu, 2020). Despite that, ethnic Russians face discrimination upon admission to the universities in Kazakhstan: privilege is given to applicants from the rural areas inhabited mainly by titulars and ethnic Kazakhs living abroad. Thus, only 6% of students in Kazakhstan are ethnic Russians (Popova & de Bot, 2020). Moreover, in Kyrgyzstan, politicians promise to make a full transition to the state language within higher education so that it is accessible for titular nationals who do not speak Russian, thereby automatically depriving Russian speakers of access to higher education (Mambetaliev, 2023).

In Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, the shares of Russian schools are 4.4%, and 10.0% respectively (Bekmatov, 2020; Saidov, 2023). Russian programs are available at all 63 universities of Uzbekistan (Saidpour, 2022). In Tajikistan, despite the population of Russians being only 0.5%, the Russian language is the language of instruction for 20% of university students and is the language of the Ph.D. thesis defense (Nagzibekova & Petrova, 2022).

State legislation has restricted the use of Russian in the information spheres. Kyrgyzstan is the only country in the region where Russian is the primary language of mass media. 70% of print and internet mass media are in Russian. Russian TV and radio channels are also present in Kyrgyzstan's information sphere. In Kazakhstan, Russian remains in a dominant position only in the sphere of print mass media. The country's language policy aims to increase the total volume of TV and radio programs in Kazakh by 10% every year. Laws and norms are gradually excluding Russian and other languages from electronic media (Popova & de Bot, 2020).

Independent Tajikistan shortened the air time of radio programs broadcast in Russian from 100% (in 1989) to 25% (Yu, 2020). Only two TV channels and a two-hour daily radio program are broadcast in Russian.

The authoritarian regime in Turkmenistan has eliminated alternative information sources and imposed restrictions on the non-titular mass media. In 2002, the state banned all Russian TV channels and non-Turkmen print media except for two journals in the Russian language (Iserell, 2021). The presence of the Russian language on the Internet is also limited in Turkmenistan. Access to Russian internet news sources such as 'Sputnik' and 'Inosmi.ru,' is blocked. Satellite TV is the only source of access to Russian media.

Independent Uzbekistan limited the number of TV channels broadcast in Russian and introduced censorship of the Russian mass media. After Shavkat Mirziyoyev came to power in Uzbekistan in 2016, censorship eased. As a result, new information sources in Russian and Russian-Uzbek appeared (Sverdlov, 2018). In 2020, the Russian printed mass media share was 30% of the total press volume (Yu, 2020).

3. 5. Transcaucasus Region: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia

Emigration of Russians from the Transcaucasian region, which took place during the Soviet era and continued after the dissolution of the USSR, resulted in a significant decline in the share of Russians. A comparison of the latest census results with data from 1989 reveals that the percentage of Russians decreased from 6.3% to 0.7% in Georgia (2014), 5.6% to 0.7% in Azerbaijan (2019), and 1.6% to 0.47% in Armenia (2022) (General Population Census, 2016;

Natsional'nyi sostav gosudarstv SNG [n/d]; Population of Azerbaijan, 2023; The Main Results of RA Census, 2022; Zaionchkovskaya, 2000) (table 5).

Post-Soviet Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia aimed their language policy at expanding the sphere of the titular languages to all domains, which, in turn, reduced the scope of Russian language use. The constitutions of independent Azerbaijan (art. 21), Armenia (art. 20), and Georgia (art. 2.3) declared their titular languages as the sole state languages. The status of Russian is not defined (Soltanova 2023). However, de facto, Russian remains a lingua franca and a language of addressing authorities in local ethnic communities with low competence in the titular languages (e.g., Armenian and Azerbaijani in Georgia) (Pavlenko, 2013).

In the partially recognized states of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, where Russians make up 1.1% (2015) and 9.1% (2020) of the population respectively, Russian has been granted the status of a state language in South Ossetia and the status of the officially used language in Abkhazia (Constitution of the Republic of Abkhazia. art. 6; Constitution of the Republic of South Ossetia. art. 4).

Russian is also a means of negotiation between Armenia and Azerbaijan relating to the military conflict in Nagorno–Karabakh. The region de jure belongs to Azerbaijan but is mainly inhabited by ethnic Armenians (99.7%) who resist the Azerbaijani regime. Russians constitute less than 1% of the total population. The self-proclaimed state, the Nagorny Karabakh Republic, granted official status to Russian in February 2021 (Law on the Basis of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic Independent Statehood of 1992, Art. X). In September 2023, Baku took control of the entire territory of the disputed region. On October 15, the Azerbaijani flag was solemnly hoisted there by President Ilham Aliyev (Azerbaydzhan vernul sebe Karabakh, 2023).

The main languages of secondary education in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia are titular. The main languages of secondary education in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia are titular ones.

In Azerbaijan, more than 140 thousand of pupils study at 16 Russian-medium schools and 340 classes within titular schools (Gusejnli, 2020). The Russian language is taught in 3 thousand schools with the titular language of instruction. The number of teachers of the Russian language in Azerbaijan is more than 6 thousand (Zinnurov, 2022). The state has not reduced the number of Russian-medium schools since the Soviet period (Pavlenko, 2008a). Additionally, the Sunday school at the branch of Moscow State University in Baku offers classes in the Russian language, literature, mathematics, chemistry, physics, and biology free of charge.

In the Nagorno–Karabakh Republic, one Russian school is functioning. Russian is also a compulsory subject in state schools (Nersesyan, 2017).

In Georgia, the Russian sector is represented by 11 schools and 59 classes (Marinosyan & Kurovskaya, 2017). Russian is also an optional foreign language in non-Russian schools. It is also one of the languages of instruction in the de facto states of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Akhmeteli, 2017; Kodalayeva & Kulikova, 2021; Tatabadze, 2018), which “resist the imposition of Georgian and favor native – and Russian-medium schooling” (Pavlenko 2013: 267). After the proclamation of de facto independence, the state of Abkhazia not only strengthened the position of the titular language in the public domains including the educational one, but also converted the Georgian schools into those with Russian language of instruction. Only classes in the Georgian language and literature could be conducted in Georgian. The director of one of the Abkhaz schools Edisher Zukhba argued that the lack of education available in Georgian would not cause a language loss since Georgian students could communicate in their native language in private domains (Kotova & Partzvania, 2021). Therefore, drawing a parallel with the position of the Russian-speaking group in newly independent post-Soviet states, the Georgian ethnic group which constituted the majority of the de jure state, also turned out to be a minority in the self-proclaimed state of Abkhazia.

Armenia converted Russian schools into titular ones. Russian became a foreign language in secondary education (Avakyan, 2020; Pavlenko, 2008b). The Russian sector is present in Armenia, with 38 Russian language classes and one school sponsored by the Russian embassy (Matevosyan, 2018). The titulars are not allowed to receive education in classes given in Russian. Only ethnic Russians and citizens of other post-Soviet countries may be enrolled there. Russian is taught as a foreign language in Armenian schools; however, since 2001, the number of teaching hours has remarkably declined.

The main languages of higher education in the Transcaucasus region are titular. However, Russian language programs are available at four state universities in Georgia and 27 in Azerbaijan (Gusejnli, 2020). Baku Slavic University, where Slavic languages are studied, was opened in 2000 on the initiative of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev (Garayeva, 2022). At the Baku branch of Moscow State Medical University named after I.M. Sechenov and a branch of Moscow State University named after M.V. Lomonosov in Baku, teaching is conducted only in Russian (Zinnurov, 2022). The only university of Abkhazia offers educational programs in the titular, Russian, and Armenian languages. In the 2020/2021 educational year, the share of the scholarship for studying at the Russian-medium programs made up 45% of the total amount (Perechen' napravleniy podgotovki, n/d). The South Ossetian

State University offers educational programs in Ossetian and Russian, however, the titular language is a compulsory entrance exam for full-time programs (South Ossetian State University, 2023).

In Armenia, education in Russian is offered only within the Russian Studies department in branches of seven Russian universities (Matevosyan, 2018). Russian as a foreign language is a subject for first-year students at Armenian state universities consisting of 34 academic hours per semester (Danielyan & Samuelyan, 2023).

In Armenia and Georgia, Russian mass media broadcasting faces the following difficulties: in 2001 the presence of Russian and other non-titular languages in the information space of Armenia was limited to one hour per week for television and one hour per day for radio channels. These restrictions also affected Russian newscasts, which were excluded from airtime altogether. Only entertaining content was allowed to be re-transmitted. In August 2020, amendments to the law in Armenia excluded Russian media from analog TV broadcasting and obliged all non-Armenian programs to be translated into the state language or provide subtitles (Gazazyan, 2020; The Law on Television and Radio Broadcasting of 2000).

In 2008, following the military conflict in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Georgia stopped broadcasting three Russian TV news channels, accusing Russia of propaganda and one-sided coverage of political events (Popova, 2016). Furthermore, in 2019, Russian films and animations were excluded from release in cinemas. In Azerbaijan, the Law on Mass Media of 1999 (art. 6) does not restrict non-titular language use. More than 50 Russian-language journals and seven informational agencies function in Azerbaijan (Gusejnli, 2020). Moreover, screenings of Russian films and performances by Russian creative groups take place in the cinema and concert halls of Azerbaijan. The Russian Drama Theater named after Samad Vurgun is functioning in Baku.

Besides the educational and informational spheres of Azerbaijan, the Russian language is also present in the landscape of the country: the villages that were given Russian names during the Soviet Era (e. g. Ivanovka, Slavianka, Vladimirovka) have not been renamed. A few streets of the capital of Azerbaijan are also named after famous Russian writers and poets: A. Pushkin, M. Lermontov, L. Tolstoy (Zinnurov, 2022).

Table 5. Comparison of the share of Russians in the Soviet Republics and post-Soviet states

Region/Country	Population census 1989	Latest population census
Eastern European region		
Belarus	13%	7.5% (2019)
Ukraine	22%	17% (2001)
Luhansk People's Republic	N/A	38% (2019)
Donetsk People's Republic	N/A	38% (2019)
Crimea	67.3%	58% (2014)
Moldova	13%	4.1% (2014)
Transnistria	13%	29% (2015)
Baltic states		
Estonia	30.3%	23.7% (2022)
Latvia	34%	24.5% (2021)
Lithuania	9.4%	5% (2021)
Central Asian States		
Kazakhstan	37.4%	15.5% (2021)
Kyrgyzstan	21.5%	4.97% (2022)
Uzbekistan	8.3%	2.6% (2013)
Tajikistan	7.6%	0.3% (2020)
Turkmenistan	9.5%	2% (2001)
Caucasus region		
Armenia	1.6%	0.47% (2022)
Azerbaijan	5.6%	0.7% (2019)
Nagorno-Karabakh Republic	1.02%	0.16% (2015)
Georgia	6.3%	0.7% (2014)
Abkhazia	14.3%	9.1% (2020)
South Ossetia	2.16%	1.1% (2015)

CHAPTER 4. ACTIVITIES OF RUSSIA AIMED AT THE MAINTENANCE OF THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE IN THE POST-SOVIET STATES

The activity of Russia intended to maintain the Russian language in the post-Soviet states and support the compatriots is conducted through soft power. The main actors in foreign policy implementing cultural diplomacy are the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, its subordinate structure "the Federal Agency for the Affairs of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation (Rossotrudnichestvo)," the Russkij Mir Foundation, as well as the semi-governmental organization – the Russian Orthodox Church.

4.1. The activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

One of the main fields of cooperation between Russia and the CIS states is protecting the compatriots. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia signed bilateral treaties with each CIS state to protect the linguistic rights of the Russian compatriots who became a national minority in newly established states. The Treaties of Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership were signed with Armenia (1998), Azerbaijan (1992), Belarus (1995), Georgia (1999), Kazakhstan (1998), Kyrgyzstan (1992), Moldova (2002), Tajikistan (1993), Turkmenistan (2002), Ukraine (1999, terminated on April 1, 2019), Uzbekistan (1993). Russia also signed the treaties of friendship and cooperation with the de-facto countries that it recognized diplomatically: Abkhazia (2008); and South Ossetia (2008).

The treaties postulate that the parties protect ethnic minorities' rights to preserve and develop their linguistic, cultural, and religious identity and receive education and information in the languages of their communities. The states shall also encourage opening cultural and scientific centers, and create conditions for learning the Russian language, literature, art, and culture.

In the field of protection of compatriots' rights, Russia evaluates actions of the states related to minority rights, writes reports, and attracts public attention of the European Union, the United Nations, and OSCE to the problems of the compatriots such as non-citizenship, unequal chances for job possibilities and education in the Baltic States.

4.2. The activities of Rossotrudnichestvo

Since opening an office of the Agency is a result of an intergovernmental agreement, the Agency can establish offices only in the states that have diplomatic relations with Russia. Currently, the offices are present in 81 countries. In the Post-Soviet Space, Rossotrudnichestvo has opened centers in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Lithuania, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and in self-declared states of Abkhazia and South Ossetia which Russia recognizes (Russian Houses abroad, n/d). The offices are not present in Georgia and Ukraine, which terminated diplomatic relations with Russia in 2008 and 2022 accordingly. De facto states Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and Transnistria are not recognized by Russia, and therefore the centers of Rossotrudnichestvo have not been founded there (table 6).

The Federal Agency does not have offices and centers opened in Estonia and Latvia (Chinkova, 2018). The activity of the Russian House in Lithuania is also suspended. However, representations of the Agency located in neighboring Finland and Poland expand their activity to this region and make it possible for Russian speakers living in the Baltic States to participate in the events organized by Rossotrudnichestvo (Sputnik, 2020).

The activity of Rossotrudnichestvo covers educational, cultural, scientific, and legal fields. It comprises promoting Russian education, providing methodological support for Russian cultural and educational centers, promoting the Russian culture, strengthening the position of the Russian language in the CIS and other states, supporting initiatives of compatriots living abroad (Rossotrudnichestvo Regulations of 2008, art. 6). At the Rossotrudnichestvo office, there is a branch of the Presidential Library, Educational and Methodological Center of Russian Language and Literature, Center for Children's Creativity and Russian Language Courses. Rossotrudnichestvo also ensures the supply of educational, methodological, and fiction literature in Russian to the libraries of local schools.

Rossotrudnichestvo provides a platform for the educational event *Тотальный диктант* (Eng. Total Dictation), where participants can test their knowledge of the Russian language. The dictation is also available in an online format for participants located in countries where the agency does not have an office (Mezhdunarodnaya obrazovatel'naya aktsiya «Total'nyy diktant», 2023).

In the cultural sphere, the Agency holds festivals, musical concerts, and film screenings. On the platforms of the scientific centers of the Agency abroad, Rossotrudnichestvo organizes

memorial events on 9 May: historical exhibitions, documentary film broadcasting, and online meetings with historians, journalists, and experts (Report of 2020).

The activity of the Agency in the educational sphere includes providing textbooks, training manuals, methodological materials for teaching the Russian language, and scientific literature to Russian scientific centers, schools, and classes. This way, in 2020, the entities of Rossotrudnichestvo in Abkhazia and South Ossetia received more than 100 thousand books to address the issue of shortage of literature (Report of 2020).

The Agency holds methodological seminars and advanced courses for teachers of the Russian language abroad: in 2020, conferences took place in Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and South Ossetia (Report of 2020).

To popularize Russian education, the Agency provides scholarships for studying in the leading universities of Russia. Totally, in 2020, Russia granted 15 thousand scholarships to students from 170 countries (Report of 2020; Khan, 2021). The most significant quota (seven hundred scholarships) is established for the closest ally of Russia – Belarus; five hundred scholarships were given to students from Ukraine and Moldova (E-CIS, 2021). Annually, six hundred thirty students from Tajikistan can receive education in Russia (Sputnik Tajikistan, 2021). Two hundred scholarships were granted to Armenia and Azerbaijan (Rossotrudnichestvo Azerbaijan, 2019). Although the Agency does not have centers in Georgia, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, students living in these countries still can receive education in Russia: in 2020, 100 scholarships were provided for each Baltic country and 125 for Georgia (1tv.lv. n/d; EER.ee, 2020). Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan receive 400 scholarships annually each (E-CIS, 2021).

As the two de facto states of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are not recognized internationally, the degree certificates issued in Abkhazia and South Ossetia are not accepted by most of the states. Therefore, graduates have a chance to continue their studies only in their countries or in the state which recognizes their certificates – in Russia. With this regard, the Russian higher education bodies provide quotas for citizens of Abkhazia and South Ossetia: in 2020, 52 places were allocated under the quota. for each state. The following year the number almost doubled - to 90 placed (Avidzba, 2022; Snigerev, 2021).

The Agency created an electronic library with 250 thousand items of studying literature and an informational portal for supporting Russian schools abroad (Popova, de Bot, 2020). Rossotrudnichestvo granted free access to both websites for all interested in learning the Russian language and culture (Report of Rossotrudnichestvo of 2020).

Since 1996, the Ministry of Education of Russia has run the Moscow Mayor's Scholarship program. This program provides financial support for compatriots in Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Transnistria, and Armenia studying in universities with the Russian language of instruction and showing outstanding results. The objective is to preserve and develop the intellectual potential of Russian compatriots abroad. The number of scholarships given since the establishment of the program has already exceeded five thousand (Programma «Stipendiya mera Moskvyy», 2021). It should be underlined that despite Transnistria has not received recognition from Russia, the state-funded program provides grants to its residents separately from ones in Moldova.

The fundamental project that Rossotrudnichestvo has been working on in Uzbekistan is the program “Class!”/ “Zur!”. The program was launched in 2020 with a 10-year implementation period as a result of the cooperation of the Ministry of Public Education of Uzbekistan, the Ministry of Education of Russia, and the charitable Foundation “Art, Science and Sports” named after Alisher Usmanov (Proyekt «Klass» v Uzbekistane, 2023).

The program was implemented after a large-scale audit undertaken nationwide to test the proficiency of the Russian language among students and teachers who held their classes in Russian and analysis of textbooks on the Russian language. The audit revealed that the textbooks that schoolchildren in Uzbekistan were studying followed the Soviet education system, and Russian spoken in schools was characterized by the large scale of uncontrolled borrowings from the local language, influence of dialectisms, and colloquial expressions (Abdurakhmanov; 2023).

The results of the audit set the following objectives: to work on improving educational literature, introduce innovative educational programs, and enhance the quality of teaching the Russian language (Zorkina, 2022). To address the latter goal, 70 teachers from Russia visited Uzbekistan in 2020 to teach the Russian language on-site and transfer their experience to their Uzbek colleagues. The following year this number reached 139. Furthermore, 2022 expanded the range of academic disciplines and involved not only Russian language teachers, but also teachers of physics, mathematics, chemistry, and biology. Specialists from Russia have worked there to improve the language qualification of teachers who teach classes in Russian, introduce them to the teaching methodologies and standards of education used in Russia, and teach seminars and workshops.

Since one of the current challenges of teaching Russian in Uzbekistan is a shortage of high-quality educational literature, Rossotrudnichestvo in cooperation with the Russian State Pedagogical University (RGPU) named after Herzen carried out the methodological

management of the program for Uzbek teachers in advanced studies and retraining centers and prepared textbooks for school grades 2-11, methodological manual for the teacher and workbook, which includes homework for the student. When creating new textbooks, authors followed a communicative approach using various modern technologies and interactive forms of work. For example, QR codes placed on the pages of textbooks lead to links with audio recordings. It is also important that all audio recordings are read by native speakers. Therefore, the first years of cooperation resulted in the creation of an integral educational and methodological complex (Proyekt «Klass» v Uzbekistane, 2023). The methodological, financial, and staff support provided by Rossotrudnichestvo to Uzbekistan shall further contribute to achieving high results in teaching Russian and involve more specialists from Uzbekistan and Russia.

One of the recent examples of the activity of Rossotrudnichestvo is its cooperation with the Termez State University located in Uzbekistan. The result of the collaboration became opening two resource centers for studying the Russian language in two Uzbek cities: Termez and Nukus. The opening ceremonies took place at the beginning of December 2023. The centers welcome not only university students but all interested in the Russian language and literature (Pervyy v Uzbekistane, 2023; Rossotrudnichestvo otkryvayet tsenry, 2023).

Resource centers for studying the Russian language are designed with educational objectives in mind. They will be used as platforms for organizing cultural, scientific, and methodological activities and promoting the Russian language and culture, as well as introducing the visitors to opportunities for obtaining education in Russia.

2023 was announced as a year of the Russian language as a means of international communication. Educational and cultural events dedicated to that took place in all states-members of CIS. The schedule of activities included international conferences on topics of the Russian language and literature, Russian language weeks organized in schools, essay contests on the topic of “the role of the Russian language in the world”, events devoted to anniversaries of the classics of the Russian literature (A. S. Pushkin, L. N. Tolstoy, I. S. Turgenev). Some of the scheduled events had a large scope of implementation and took place in every CIS state, others were organized only at the local levels. In this way, the Ministry of Cultural Affairs of Moldova and the Russian Drama Theater named after Chekhov staged a play “The Russian Character” based on the pieces of L. N. Tolstoy, K. G. Paustovskiy, and E. A. Evtushenko (Titova, 2023).

4. 3. The activities of the Russkij Mir Foundation

The Russkij Mir Foundation is a non-commercial organization created in 2007 modeled after such entities as the British Council and Goethe Institut to popularize the Russian language and support programs for studying the Russian language abroad (Popova, de Bot, 2020; Massavetas, 2019; Yudina & Seliverstova, 2020). The organization's charter defines the Russian language as "the national treasure of Russia and an important element of the Russian and the world cultures" (Charter of the Russkij Mir Foundation, art. 2). The target audience of the Foundation is not only Russian-speaking compatriots living abroad but also everyone interested in the Russian language and culture (Persson, 2014).

The Russkij Mir Foundation has established an extensive network of partners in Russia and abroad: it cooperates with the state bodies (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education of Russia, embassies, consulates), political parties, non-profit and commercial organizations, research and educational entities (schools, universities, scientific centers, libraries), compatriots unions, mass media in Russia and abroad (TV and Radio channels, publishing houses).

The Foundation implements the target program via cultural centers, offices, and cabinets located in Russia and abroad. The Russian World Cabinets follow the foundation's goals of promoting the Russian language and popularizing Russian literature and culture. They support the activities of local non-profit organizations (educational institutions, cultural and educational centers, libraries), providing them with educational, methodological, scientific, and fiction literature, multimedia, and technical means of reproduction. The creation of the Russian World Cabinet can be considered as the initial stage of work on organizing the Russian Center. Nowadays, there are 119 centers and 139 Cabinets of the Russkij Mir operating worldwide (Report on the activities of the Russkij Mir Foundation, 2021). On average, each center accepts 3,5 thousand visitors annually.

In the post-Soviet space, offices, and cabinets are established in Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Moldova (including those located in the autonomy of Gagauzia and the de facto state of Transnistria), South Ossetia, Luhansk and Donetsk People republics. The Baltic states do not have cultural centers opened on their territories (table 6). However, Russian speakers living in these countries can participate in events held by the Foundation online or on the territory of Russia and other states. Since 2020, the work of centers and offices has been largely transferred to an online format due to the spread of COVID-19, this has opened up new opportunities for participation in events organized by the Russian world.

The main activities of the Russian Centers cover educational, methodological, creative, and communicative spheres. Annually, the Foundation holds more than 1,5 thousand cultural events devoted to significant dates in the history of Russia and the Soviet Union. An essential part of the Foundation's activity is dedicated to the memorial days of Soviet history and anniversaries of Russian writers and poets.

In the educational sphere, the Foundation annually conducts 1800 forums, training, workshops, and conferences for Russian-language and literature teachers. In 2020, with the support of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus, the Russkij Mir Foundation held the VII International Competition of Pedagogical Excellence “*Хрустальная чернильница* (Eng. Crystal Inkwell)”. Teachers of the Russian language and literature from Belarus, Russia, Italy, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkey, Ukraine, and Poland presented the lesson plans with the aim of exchanging promising experiences in innovative educational practices. Prize-winning places were taken by representatives of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan (Report on the activities of the Russkij Mir Foundation, 2021).

The Foundation provided support for creating a web-based platform named "Lang-Land.com" for learning the Russian language. The target audience is school students whose proficiency in Russian is A2 and higher. The platform makes it possible for students to have personal classes with lecturers at Russia's leading universities and follow Russian teaching programs. The platform is vital in countries where education in the Russian language is limited or restricted by local law.

Also, in 2018, the Foundation provided financial and informational support for publishing a Russian language textbook for students at Russian schools abroad. The book is unique since it provides the methodology for teaching Russian as a mother tongue in non-native linguistic environments. The book is particularly essential for teaching the Russian language in the post-Soviet states where the Russian-speaking diaspora maintains their mother tongue in the environment of the titular languages of the states.

Even though Russkij Mir Foundation does not have a representative office in Nagorno-Karabakh, its partners can also be active in providing help to Russian-speaking educational entities abroad. Thus, in 2021, the Russian Humanitarian Mission provided educational and fiction literature to the only Russian school in Nagorno-Karabakh (*V russkuyu shkolu v Stepanakerte privezli knigi i igry*, 2021). In 2023, volunteers of the Russian Humanitarian Mission also supplied new textbooks, classical literature, encyclopedias, reference books and other materials in Russian to a school in Tashkent (Uzbekistan) which more than 2000 students attend (*Russkaya gumanitarnaya missiya peredala knigi shkole v Tashkente*, 2023).

In 2021, the most significant result of the Foundation activity became a 588-page book "*Русский язык в цифровом пространстве в эпоху пандемии* (Eng. The Russian language in digital space in the Pandemic Era)", written by researchers from 12 states, including countries of the Post-Soviet space: Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Russia. The book represents research on teaching Russian as a foreign language with theoretical and methodological materials and modern trends in Russian studies. The Foundation also granted free access to the book on the website.

One of the leading products of the Foundation activity in the informational sphere is creating the Internet Portal "Russkij Mir" (Russkijmir.ru). The total number of online visitors is about 1.5 million annually from more than 190 countries, including the post-Soviet states.

The portal provides news, articles, interviews, and reports on the most important cultural and socially significant events in the Russian world, the Russian language, education, history, and compatriots abroad. In total, about 8,000 news items are posted annually.

The portal offers Radio, a TV channel, and a journal. It broadcasts 360 Radio and 120 TV informational, scientific, educational, and entertainment programs about Russia, the Russian language, culture, music, and poetry from 5 to 50 minutes long. The educational program "*Говорим по-русски* (Eng. We speak Russian)" provides lessons of Russian as a foreign language (tv.Russkijmir.ru).

Ninety-six paged Russkij Mir.ru magazine goes to press monthly. The magazine contains reports on the Foundation's activity, articles on topics related to Russian culture, history, and traditions, and interviews with scholars, politicians, and public figures on the position of the Russian language abroad. The circulation of each issue varies from 3,000 to 5,000 copies which are distributed among the cultural centers, offices, and cooperating organizations.

The Russkij Mir Foundation in Uzbekistan supports Rossotrudnichestvo in addressing the shortage of methodological literature available in educational entities. In 2022, teachers of the Nukus State Pedagogical Institute named after Ajiniyaz, with the assistance of the Russkij Mir Foundation, prepared and published a textbook "Methods of teaching the native (Russian) language, methods of teaching literacy, part 1." With a focus on modern methods of education, the textbook covers topics of effectiveness in teaching the Russian language in school (Kallibekova, 2022).

The Russian Orthodox Church is involved in the activity of the Russkij Mir Foundation.

Table 6. The presence of organizations supporting the Russian language in the post-Soviet states

	Rossotrudnichestvo	Russkij Mir	
		center	cabinet
Armenia	2	1	-
Azerbaijan	1	1	-
NKR	-	-	-
Georgia	-	-	-
Abkhazia	1	-	-
South Ossetia	1	1	1
Belarus	3	1	1
Moldova	1	2	-
Transnistria	-	1	7
Gagauzia	-	1	-
Ukraine	-	-	-
DPR	-	3	-
LPR	-	2	-
Crimea	-	-	-
Kazakhstan	4	2	-
Kyrgyzstan	2	3	1
Tajikistan	2	4	1
Turkmenistan	1	-	-
Uzbekistan	1	-	8
Estonia	-	-	-
Latvia	-	-	-
Lithuania	suspended	-	-

4.4. The activities of the Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)

The "soft power" concept of Nye (1990) also includes values and ideology as foreign policy tools. In this context, the activity of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) should be discussed.

The ROC has conducted its international activity since 2007 when the “Act of Canonical Communion of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia” was signed (Shafiee & Fallahi, 2018).

The status of the ROC is unique: it is defined as a semi-governmental organization in the secular state of the Russian Federation. It is also one of most influential public institutions of the CIS countries (Batishchev & Ivanov, 2019; Curanovic, 2018; Solik & Baar, 2019). The Moscow Patriarchate plays an essential role in maintaining the Russian ethnicity of the compatriots living abroad since it strengthens the awareness of affiliation to the Russian nation (Persson, 2014).

Moreover, the ROC directs the World Russian People's Council (WRPC) which lobbies for the rights of compatriots living abroad for language, culture, and religion, combats crimes on national and religious grounds, and promotes friendly international relations. The Council conducts cooperation with governmental and non-governmental institutions including OSCE, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and the United Nations where it granted a consultative status and established a representative office (Lunkin, 2018; Tereshchenko, 2023).

The charter of the Russian Orthodox Church (art. 1.3) declares that 16 countries, including all post-Soviet states except for Armenia and Georgia, are the canonical territory of the Russian Orthodox Church and postulates that the Orthodox parishioners living in these states are under the jurisdiction of Moscow Patriarchate. In post-Soviet Ukraine, the Orthodoxy subordinate to the ROC was present with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. However, on January 6, 2019, the latter received a tomos of autocephaly from Archbishop Bartholomew of Constantinople to get independent from the Russian Orthodox Church and subordinate directly to the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Thus, only the Ukrainian Orthodox Church remained under the jurisdiction of the ROC (Hudson, 2019; Shafiee & Fallahi, 2018).

In the post-Soviet states, the ROC substitutes the homeland for the 20-million Russian diaspora residing near abroad remarkably with above-average religiosity. The population census and estimates results revealed that the Orthodoxy parishioners make up 12% of the population of Ukraine, 48.3% of Belarus, 92% of Moldova (2017), and 91% of the de-facto state Transnistria (World Factbook, n/d; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Transnistria, n/d; Solik & Baar, 2019). In the Baltic states, Orthodox believers make up 16.2% of the Estonian, 15.3% of the Latvian, and 4.1% of the Lithuanian population (2011) (Popova, de Bot, 2017). In the Central Asian states, where the dominant religion is Islam, the spiritual support of the affiliation to the Russian nation has particular importance: the share of the Orthodox parishioners is 26.2% of the Kazakhstan population (2009), 9% of Uzbekistan (2014), 6.4% of Turkmenistan (2020), 3% of Kyrgyzstan (2017), and 1.2% of Tajikistan (2014).

In the Transcaucasus states, the ROC has jurisdiction over the five Orthodox Churches located in Baku and three in other cities of Azerbaijan, where the parishioners make up 2.3% of the population (2010) (World Factbook, n/d; Garayeva, 2022). At the beginning of 2024, the president of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev ordered to allocate of sponsorship funds to support religious denominations and improve their financial condition. This way, the ROC received 350 thousand manats (\$205.9 thousand) (Rustambekov, 2024). Parochial schools at the Baku-Azerbaijan Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church act as platforms for educational events held in Russian. The diocese also publishes periodicals: the magazine "*Православный Каспий* (Eng. Orthodox Caspian)", the newspaper "*Православный вестник* (Eng. Orthodox Bulletin)", Orthodox calendars, educational and liturgical literature (Zinnurov, 2022).

Although the Orthodox Churches of Armenia and Georgia are not under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate and are followed by the vast majority of the population (92.6% and 80% accordingly), the Russian Orthodox Churches are present in both states: 0.25% of the Armenian and 3% of the Georgian citizens are parishioners of the ROC.

As a semi-governmental organization, on the one hand, it cooperates with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on the other hand, it conducts its autonomous political course. The independence was manifested in the position of the ROC regarding self-proclaimed states. While Russia diplomatically acknowledged the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the ROC did not incorporate the churches of these states and did not acknowledge their independence from the Georgian and Greek Orthodox Churches accordingly (Lunkin, 2018). Furthermore, the Moscow Patriarchate did not make any public statement about the separation of the Donbas republics and Crimea in 2014. In contrast, the ROC was one of the first organizations that established contact with the newly elected president of Ukraine - Petro Poroshenko (Curanovic, 2018).

In 2013, the Russian Orthodox Church signed a cooperation agreement with MGIMO - the leading university in Russia. In the cooperation framework, the joint educational MA, Ph.D., and post-doctoral programs in Theology were established for Russian citizens and Russian speakers living abroad. Twenty-one international students were enrolled in the 2020/2021 studying year (Postgraduate program of the Church (2020). The main focus of the study programs is the role of the ROC in the foreign policy of Russia, and Church diplomacy. The cooperation also includes the scientific field: seminars, research, advanced training, and conferences are held regularly by the Moscow Patriarchate and the MGIMO University (Patriarchia, 2013).

Similarly, the ROC maintains cooperation with the governmental organizations engaged in compatriot support: Russkij Mir Foundation and Rossotrudnichestvo. Practically, it results in distributing the Orthodox literature among the Russian cultural and educational centers abroad and organizing religious events. In 2015, 54 ceremonies were held by the ROC and Rossotrudnichestvo in the CIS and the Baltic States (Lunkin, 2018; Blitt, 2021).

The Church has its Orthodox TV channel available in the CIS and the Baltic states via satellite and the Internet. It broadcasts prayers from Russian churches and covers news related to the activity of the Moscow Patriarchate in Russia and abroad (Popova, de Bot, 2020).

CHAPTER 5. PERCEPTION OF THE ACTIVITIES OF RUSSIA AIMED AT THE MAINTENANCE OF THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE IN THE POST-SOVIET STATES

As the “Legal Framework” subchapter of the present dissertation shows, international law recognizes the rights of kin-states to legitimately support and promote the identity, language, and culture of their national minorities due to different historical reasons residing in neighboring or other states. Kin-states can act as advocates of compatriots, calling for the protection of the rights of ethnic minorities living abroad. Several kin-states run activities in this field, which are not prohibited by international legal norms. Hungary, for instance, following the principles of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, actively supports ethnic Hungarians in other countries in social, educational, and cultural domains, additionally, simplifies the procedure for relocation to the kin-state.

The collapse of the Soviet Union resulted not only in the establishment of independent states but also in a radical change in the status of the Russian language and its speakers. Overnight, 25 million Russians found themselves as minorities under the jurisdiction of new, nationalizing states. At the same time, the Russian language shifted from a dominant status to a minority one, and in some cases, it became a reminder of occupation and the Soviet past.

Russia, as a successor of the Soviet Union, assumes the role of a “kin-state,” and naturally focuses on the social, political, and economic conditions of millions of Russians and their descendants who reside on the territories of new nation-states. As discussed in the dissertation, Russia puts significant effort into supporting the language, culture, and identity of Russians and protecting their linguistic rights.

In the international relations context, this activity is commonly seen as an implementation of “soft power” using culture, language, religion, and diaspora as tools for spreading the influence. However, as this policy focuses on the Russian diaspora living abroad, it can also be understood within the conceptual framework of “kin-state policy.”

However, the Russian kin-state policy aimed at the maintenance of the Russian language in the other states is not always received positively. As was discussed in the “Soft Power” subchapter, the attraction of a state can be measured objectively and subjectively and depends on the country’s reputation and involvement in international relations. Thus, attributes of the country’s soft power also face change depending on the country’s perception. Attraction of the

Russian language, culture, and diplomacy lost popularity after February 2022 as it got negative associations with aggression, international law violation, and imperialism.

Along with the fall in Russia's rating, there has been also a tendency to rethink the significance of material Russian culture. Monuments to Russian emperors, commanders, poets, and cultural figures erected during the Tsarist and Soviet eras, and after the USSR collapse became a subject of debate. Although such narratives found a response among the political establishment of the post-Soviet states even before 2022, they had mostly an anti-Soviet nature, with the goal of distancing from the Soviet past (Gironi, 2023). In this way, in 2015, Ukraine introduced legislation of decommunization resulted in renaming more than 200 streets bearing Russian or Soviet meanings (e.g. Moscow Street, Stalingrad Avenue) and dismantling more than 300 statues of Soviet leaders (Vladimir Lenin, Karl Marx) known in media and literature as “*Ленинопад* (Eng. Lenin-fall)” (Fedinec & Csernicskó, 2017; Ukraine Dismantles Soviet-Era Monuments, 2023). Similar cases took place in the Baltic states: in 2007, the Bronze Soldier dedicated to the Soviet Victory over Nazi Germany, however, perceived as a reminder of the Soviet occupation and repressions, was replaced from the city center of Tallinn to the military cemetery (Kaiser, 2012). The memorial complex to the Liberators of Riga was brought down in August 2022 as a reminder of occupation and "the associated fate of many people: deportation, repression, and so on” (Latvia removes Soviet-era monument in Riga, 2022).

Special attention has been given to the monuments of the Russian poet Aleksandr Pushkin, who lived in Imperial Russia (1799-1837). Continuing the tendency of rethinking the significance of Russian culture, Pushkin's works have been analyzed for their historical and political content. His writings have been noted for condemning the participants in the Polish uprising, supporting Russian policy, and glorifying Russia's greatness. Consequently, his poems dedicated to historical events have drawn criticism for their imperialistic connotations, reinforcing accusations that Pushkin supported Russian imperialism (Kamusella, 2022).

The Russkij Mir Foundation underlines the importance of the poet in Russian culture and names Pushkin "the Flagship of Russian cultural life" (Pushkin i Russkij Mir, 2024). However, following the events of February 24, 2022, symbols of Russian culture, including the poet and his work, are perceived as attributes of the aggressive “Russian world” and irredentism, with Pushkin’s legacy often linked to a nostalgic return to the borders of imperial Russia (V Armenii prizvali snesti pamyatnik Pushkinu, 2022).

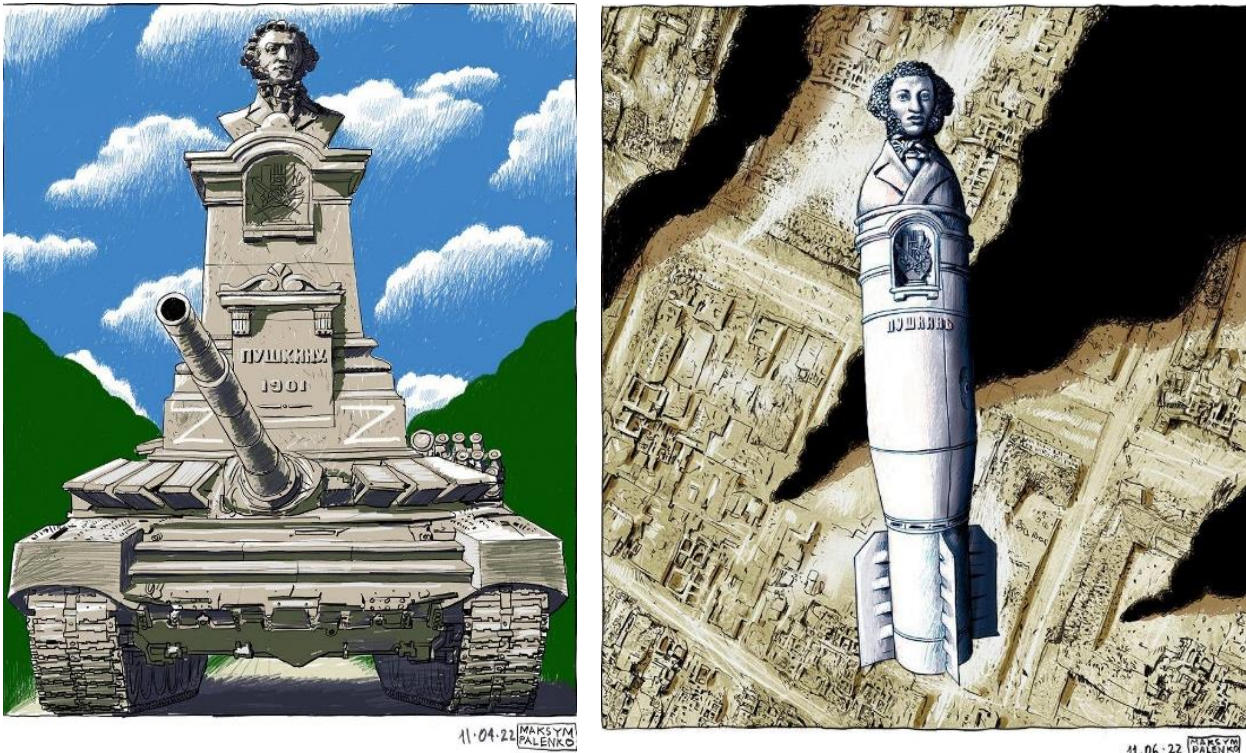
As a result, the monuments of Pushkin, along with those of other significant figures, are viewed as reminders of tsarist and Soviet imperialism. Kamusella (2023) concludes that the Russian language and culture are weaponized instruments of the Kremlin which aims the

irredentist policy at “gathering all Russian-speaking lands”. This perspective has led to the phenomenon known as *Пушкинфалл* (Eng. Pushkin-fall) or de-Pushkinisation (Piechowska, 2023) when monuments of the poet are demolished. In this way, in 2023, six monuments of Pushkin were demolished in Riga, approved by the local authorities, as part of an effort to liberate from Russian monuments, which are perceived as significant components of Russia’s colonial heritage (Latvia removes Soviet-era monument in Riga, 2022). The law “On the prohibition of the display of objects glorifying the Soviet and Nazi regimes and their dismantling on the territory of the Republic of Latvia” was adopted, which mandated the demolition of all monuments exhibiting signs of Soviet ideology. Notably, one of these six monuments was installed in Kronvalda Park of Riga in 2009, after Latvia had already proclaimed its independence, and was dedicated to the 210th anniversary of the poet’s birth. This monument was dismantled and placed in the courtyard of the Union of Artists Museum (Kugel, 2023). Despite the date of installation, sculptures glorifying Russian culture are perceived as residual symbols of Russian imperialism, tools of soft power, propaganda, and hybrid occupation (Shanava, 2022). Local authorities argue that monuments to Pushkin and other Russian poets and writers appeared only because the states were conquered by the Russian Empire and later by the Russian communists.

The presence of Pushkin monuments is seen as a marker of Russia's or the USSR's cultural influence, despite the fact that the latter state collapsed more than 30 years ago (Kamusella (2023). For instance, political opponents in Belarus Pavel Severinets and Nikolai Dedok contend that monuments of Russian or Soviet culture act as instruments for maintaining colonial status and spreading imperial influence (Krutaya aktsiya ili vandalizm?, 2020). Similar narratives emerge in Georgia (Shanava, 2022), Armenia (V Armenii private snesti pamyatnik Pushkinu, 2022), Latvia (2023), and Ukraine (Rudenko, 2023).

In Ukraine, more than 30 statues dedicated to Aleksandr Pushkin have been defaced with graffiti or removed since 2022 (Gironi, 2023). The demolition of Pushkin monuments is reflected in caricatures depicting the Russian poet as the head of a tank and a rocket falling on a residential area. These images suggest an association with hard power and military aggression, portraying Pushkin as one of the Kremlin’s instruments, comparable in scale to military weapons (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Caricatures depicting Pushkin as a tool of military attack.



Source: <https://apostrophe.ua/news/society/2023-11-15/russkiy-voennyiy-pushkin-poka-yarkie-memyi-na-demontaj-pamyatnika-v-kieve/308573>

Another group of caricatures gives a brief impression of how Ukraine evaluates the functioning of the Russian institutions active in the maintenance of the Russian language, which were presented in the previous parts of the dissertation.

In the Figure 7, the Russkij Mir Foundation, one of the main instruments of Russian soft power, is depicted as a toad approaching Ukraine. The toad is covered by a Zeppelin-shaped rain cloud with the message "*aggression of the Russian world.*" It carries a hammer and sickle, symbolizing a return to the Soviet past, and has a Kremlin tower on its head. In contrast to the rainy "*Russian World,*" Ukraine is depicted as sunny and peaceful, adorned with its symbols: Prince Vladimir/Volodymyr, who baptized Kievan Rus, the Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv, the inscription "*Мова*" (language, in Ukrainian), "*Майдан*" (Square, in Ukrainian) referring to the place where the revolution took place, and in the background, it holds the flags of the EU and Ukraine together, underlining the state's orientation. The Russian toad is therefore depicted as a threat to everything important to Ukraine: its history, language, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Ukrainian statehood, revolutionary ideals, and Kyiv's willingness for European integration (Csernicskó, 2023).

Figure 7. Caricature depicting the Russkij Mir policy as an invader.



Source: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/politychna-karykatura-satyra/31209132.html>

The figure 8 is a caricature made in 2016. Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, Russian President Vladimir Putin, and Orthodox Patriarch Kirill are pictured. As the ROC is one of the actors implementing the soft power of Russia, the presence of the Patriarch in such a picture in a row with the defense minister reveals its perception as a military tool. The ironic text at the top of the caricature "Speak Russian! We will come and protect you!!!" drives the association of the Russian language with the reason for military intervention. Kamusella (2022) argues the Kremlin equalizes the term *Russians and Russian speakers* considering them a loyal audience for Russian policy, and that "Putin pledges to 'protect' them by expanding Russia, so that finally the country's territory would fully overlap with the 'Russian world'" (Csernicskó, 2023: 3).

Figure 8. Caricature of Sergei Shoigu, Vladimir Putin, and the Moscow Patriarch Kirill.



Source: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/28082746.html>

These two cartoons show how Ukraine views Moscow's policy of protecting the Russian minority. It can also be seen that the assessment of Russkij Mir and the Russian Orthodox Church is as negative in this context as the assessment of the Russian army or the Russian president.

To designate and critique Kremlin ideology, a new term "Rashism" emerged in Ukrainian and Western literature after the 2014 Crimean crisis (Sohn, 2014; Gaufman, 2015; Yushchenko, 2018). The discourse has expanded notably in 2022 (Kamusella, 2022, 2023; Philo & Vitaliev, 2022; Shaparenko, 2022). Drawing parallels between Russian policy and fascism, authors argue that Moscow's official position denies the existence of the Ukrainian and Belarusian languages and nations, portraying them as parts of the Russian nation. They critically assess the Russian activities in Ukraine aimed at imposing the Russian language in de facto Russian entities such as Crimea and the Donbas republics, at the expense of local Ukrainian and Tatar languages. According to these authors, these actions reflect a historical pattern of Russification used during the imperial era to suppress dissent and enhance regional loyalty.

As the linguistic issue became one of the main official reasons for mass riots in Donbas and referendum in the Crimea, remaining debatable in the literature and recognized as illegitimate by Ukraine and most member-states of the United Nations (Gunawan et al., 2020; Marxsen,

2014), the policy of Russia aimed at supporting the Russian language faces negative perception. Several analyses reveal that in several speeches, Putin referred to the fact that Moscow had to intervene and protect the Russians living in Ukraine from Kiev's violent policy (Csernicskó 2022a, 2022b, 2023, Csernicskó & Kontra, 2022). The President of the Russian Federation repeated in 2014, 2021, and 2022: the Russian state had to protect the Russian national minority living in Ukraine (Address by President of the Russian Federation, 2014; 2022). Thus, maintaining the Russian language and support of its speakers does not fit into the concept of soft power, but also encompasses hard power instruments. This can have consequences such that the assessment of the minority issue and the Kin-State Policy acquire negative connotations in the international political discourse (Csernicskó 2022a, 2022b).

CHAPTER 6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

6.1. Discussion

As stated earlier, maps of ethnic groups do not match the political borders. Most of the states are de facto multinational and representatives of the same nation can be present within borders of more than one state. Borders themselves are not stable. Due to different reasons, they change and affect the ethnic compositions of countries. Therefore, different ethnic groups coexist in dynamic heterogeneous societies. However, national diversity does not create conditions for tensions and conflict, but unbalanced language policy does. Explicitly or not, state rulers attempt to unify the society under the principle “one state – one nation – one language” aiming to avoid separatism movements and simplify the process of national building and integrity.

However, language is not only a tool of communication. It is a crucial part of identity. Forceful assimilation, discrimination, and manipulation of language can result in what the rules try to avoid the most – riots, armed conflicts, tensions, or attempts (successful or not) to proclaim independence from the mother state. At the same time, it is also hard to say that de jure equalizing the status of all languages spoken within the state can automatically establish multilingualism de facto. It requires a more nuanced approach and expertise in different domains.

Furthermore, language policy studies are not purely linguistic or political subject of investigation. It is also not just a sum of these fields. Apart from being a complex interplay of linguistic and political studies, it is also a subject of conflict studies, ethnic and cultural policies, linguistic landscape, sociology, history, international law, kin-state studies, human rights, international relations, and so on.

Underlying the importance of multidisciplinary studies, the present dissertation combines theoretical frameworks of Constructivism with Spolsky's Language Management Model (LMM) to provide a more nuanced analysis. Constructivism generates an understanding of how ethnicity, religion, race, and language determine politics and analyzes the Russian language as a national-building instrument. This perspective emphasizes that language is deeply interconnected with broader socio-political domain. At the same time, Spolsky's LMM complements the study offering a structured framework to analyze the language policy and the position of Russian in different domains of society including but not limited to education, information, services, and governance. This model facilitates a detailed examination of

measures taken by the Russian government and post-Soviet Republics throughout the studied period.

Constructivism discusses a language and its speakers as tools of cultural diplomacy. The framework of the soft power concept used in the research depicts how the language is used as a foreign policy tool. It sheds light on how Russia influences its position in the international arena using the language in the informational, educational, cultural, and religious spheres.

First, the study shows how the Russian language, culture, and religion become incorporated into the foreign policy course of Russia, but then it shows the reverse connection: how everything Russian loses value being associated with military power, or in other words, how language is perceived as a weapon. In the discourse, the Russian diaspora is named “next Crimea”, “Trojan Horse”, and "a tool of destabilization".

However, it is of extreme importance to underline that, despite the politicized nature of the Russian language, it remains the communication tool and a marker of identity. The research offers to distinguish between the active and passive roles of the language and diaspora in international relations, characterizing the position of the Russian-speaking diaspora and the language as passive, therefore, it underlines the importance of linguistic rights.

The study discusses how military conflicts having linguistic reasons as an official background, become subjects of discussion at the international level regarding the effectiveness of international law, its duality, and grey zones. However, the dissertation is not aimed at a legal assessment of the activity of the Russian Federation in Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014, 2022). Rather, it reveals how the attitude toward the Russian language and Russian policy at its maintenance is changed under the circumstances of military conflicts.

6.2. Conclusion

The present paper is an up-to-date descriptive language policy study: the newest data available were used: it is based on the official data (population census, estimates), language legislation acts and documents, reports, and the latest media texts related to language policy of the studied countries.

The research investigates, on the one hand, the consequences of the Soviet Union’s collapse on the position of the Russian language and the Russian-speaking population living there, and on the other hand, studies the implementation of Russian foreign policy designed to maintain the Russian language in the post-Soviet states.

The time frame of the research covers the Tsarist epoch, the Soviet period, and the post-Soviet era.

Geographically, the study encompasses the states situated on the territory of the former Soviet Union. At the same time, as this study of language policy aims to describe the situation comprehensively, it underlines the importance of considering all political units regardless of their international legal status (recognized, non-recognized, partly recognized states, debatable territories, autonomies within the states). The given approach sheds light on how the status of the Russian language and its use in de facto states and disputed regions (LPR, DPR, Crimea, Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and the Nagorno–Karabakh Republic) differs from the language laws enacted by the states from which they have de facto broken away.

The study focuses on the activity of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its subordinate organizations: the Russkij Mir Foundation, Rossotrudnichestvo, and the Russian Orthodox Church.

In the educational domain, the activities of the Russkij Mir Foundation and Rossotrudnichestvo include providing grants and scholarships for studying at Russian universities. These activities are essential in the states where secondary and higher education in Russian has been eliminated (Latvia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine) or limited by local legislation (Estonia, Lithuania, Moldova, the Caucasus, and Central Asian states).

Providing modern textbooks, holding seminars, and conducting advanced studies for Russian language teachers is essential for Central Asia, where the low quality of methodological materials, insufficient level of Russian teachers training, and a shortage of teachers are additional challenges to the Russian language in education.

The Russkij Mir Foundation is active in the informational sphere. Since the usage of non-titular languages in mass media is restricted by the law of the post-Soviet states (except for Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, and Belarus), the Russkij Mir Foundation provides information in the Russian language via the same-named online platform, Radio, TV channels, and journals.

In the religious sphere, the activity of the Russian Orthodox Church plays an important role in forming and maintaining the national identity via the awareness of affiliation with the Russian nation.

The activity of Russia aimed at maintaining the Russian language in the post-Soviet states corresponds to the objectives of its foreign policy, which in turn, follow the soft power concept.

Overall, the study describes the unique situation where for one century the language shift occurred twice: when Russian became the dominant language of the Soviet Union and displaced titular languages from most public domains, and after the dissolution of the USSR, when it

became a minority language in the independent states despite the considerable number of its speakers.

6.3. Limitations of the Study

The study of the language policy of the post-Soviet states may run into several limitations. The theoretical limitation is the lack of a universal framework that would apply to all language policy studies, which may lead to a non-comprehensive description. As previously stated, language policy is a multidisciplinary research field requiring a comprehensive approach and attention to numerous issues. Thus, studying the post-Soviet states with the model of Spolsky (2009) covered the main public fields. However, it might omit some aspects of the linguistic situation that are not part of the model and consequently bias the results.

The limitation of the present paper lies in the data presented by the population census results. The results include data from 2001 (Ukraine, Turkmenistan) to 2021 (Lithuania). Moreover, Uzbekistan has not held a census in its independent history, and the data that we do have comes from state estimates, which we cannot consider to be as reliable as population census results.

Another statistical challenge is the presence of non-recognized countries in the post-Soviet space. The numbers in the official census of *de jure* states also include populations from non-recognized states. However, it is crucial to describe each state separately in language policy studies, regardless of its legal status. Self-proclaimed states present data in the form of estimations instead of a census. There is also the possibility of politically motivated bias in the population census results.

As the sources of the present research include media, a limitation may be caused by the subjectivity of the news portals, journals, and websites.

Data interpretation is another factor possibly leading to bias. The example mentioned in the introduction regarding how the lack of pro-Russian political parties in Lithuania should be explained, reveals how differently facts may be interpreted depending on the researcher's perception.

The constantly changing geopolitical situation is an additional challenge for the present research. The conflict between Russia and Ukraine is in an active phase, and the situation is evolving in real time. Therefore, the study may not reflect the latest changes affecting the position of the Russian language and the Russian-speaking diaspora. The issue is strengthened by the fact that the study encompasses at once fourteen recognized countries and political entities with different extents of recognition (partly recognized, non-recognized, autonomies,

debatable territories, conflict zones, etc.). A slight amendment to the geopolitical landscape may result in a rapid change in the language policy of the studied countries.

6.4. Scientific or scholarly significance

The study incorporates political and linguistic frameworks into the studies. It underlines the importance of a multidisciplinary approach and can act as a recommendation for further studies investigating language policy and linguistic minority rights as a complex phenomenon.

An even more complete picture of language power can probably be gleaned through the lens of other disciplines. However, the study highlights that it is insufficient to study only one dimension of language; it is essential to incorporate it into other fields and build dialogues between disciplines. Sharing perspectives can lead to a broader view of each discipline, which, in turn, can have practical outcomes such as including linguistic rights in fundamental documents like the Human Rights Declaration, or on the level of society, to establish broader inclusiveness of minorities into political and public life.

As previous studies have shown, there are blurred boundaries between *de facto* and *de jure* states. The present study discusses *de facto* states as a separate actor in international relations and underlines the importance of building a dialogue with such political entities, regardless of their international recognition.

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