

## Russian in post-Soviet countries Русский язык в пост-советских странах

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**Аннотация** В статье проводится сравнительный анализ языковой политики в отношении русского языка и языковой практики на территории четырнадцати пост-советских стран. Вначале анализируется взаимосвязь между языковой политикой, которая предопределяет статус русского языка в каждой из стран, языковой ситуацией в общественной сфере, в том числе в области образования и трудоустройства, и языковой ситуацией в частной практике, которая позволяет понять настоящее положение русского языка и предсказать тенденции его сохранения и передачи. Анализ проводится на основе данных переписей и обзоров, а где возможно также социолингвистических и этнографических исследований. Затем, общие тенденции развития анализируются с точки зрения исторических, социополитических, социально-экономических, демографических и лингвистических факторов, взаимоотношения между которыми ведут к тому, что в географически близких странах складываются разные языковые ситуации.

What happens when an official language spoken by the majority of the country's population loses its status and becomes overnight a language of an ethnic minority? What factors affect the maintenance, transmission, and attrition of such a language? The 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union created a unique controlled experiment enabling scholars to observe how this situation might unfold simultaneously in fourteen countries previously united by the same political system and now embarking on their own nation-building trajectories. In the years 1992–1996 several teams of sociolinguists and political scientists conducted large-scale surveys and ethnographic studies in these countries to examine the initial effects of the new language policies (Laitin 1998; Landau and Kellner-Heinkele 2001; Lebedeva 1995; Savoskul 2001; Smith et al. 1998). In the decade that followed, several scholars conducted in-depth investigations of sociolinguistic and educational changes in the context of a single country (Bilaniuk 2005; Ciscel 2007; Korth 2005; Mečkovskaja 2003; Šajbakova 2005)

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or a group of countries (Hogan-Brun 2005a, 2005b; Kolstø 2002). The purpose of this paper is to offer a comparative overview of this recent work, focusing on the current status and use of Russian in the post-Soviet space.

Each subsection will compare and contrast the situation of Russian in a subgroup of neighboring countries to understand the similarities and differences in their Russian-language policies and practices. I will begin by examining the relationship between language policies that define the status of Russian in each country, institutional practices that shape educational and employment opportunities, and private practices that reveal the current status of Russian and the future of its maintenance and transmission. The latter discussion will highlight studies conducted with members of the youngest generation whose schooling took place in the post-Soviet era, after 1991. These developments will then be analyzed taking into consideration historic, sociopolitical, socioeconomic, demographic, and linguistic factors, the interplay of which shapes diverse linguistic outcomes in geographically close areas.

Throughout, the description of the demographic situation in the countries in the wake of the break-up of the USSR will be based on data from the 1989 Soviet Census (Goskomstat SSSR 1991). The description of the present demographic situation will rely on the census data provided by the countries in question and on the 2004 report of the Russian Center of Demographics and Human Ecology (CDHE) (Aref'ev 2006).<sup>1</sup> Following the conventions of the field, throughout the discussion, the term *Russian-speaking population* will encompass ethnic Russians, members of titular nations, and members of ethnic minorities who designate Russian as their dominant language or preferred language of interaction.

## 1 Russian in Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova

Belarus is the only post-Soviet country—outside of Russia proper—where Russian has remained a dominant language. At first, the 1990 language law, followed by the 1994 Constitution, proclaimed Belarusian the sole state language of the country, giving rise to efforts to revitalize Belarusian. However, in 1995, the recently elected president Aleksandr Lukashenko sponsored a referendum which asked participants to respond to the following question: “Ці згодны Вы з наданнем рускай мове роўнага статусу з беларускай?” (‘Do you agree to grant the Russian language equal status with Belarusian?’) The majority of the voters (83.3%) voted to make Russian the second state language, and the Constitution was revised in 1996 to accommodate that revision (for detailed discussion see Brown 2005; Korjakov 2002; Zaprudski 2002). As a result of these changes, parents were given a free choice of language for schooling, and the majority opted for Russian schools.

Currently, Article 17 of the Belarusian Constitution designates both Belarusian and Russian as the state languages of the Republic of Belarus. This dual-language policy is at odds with the actual language practices that marginalize Belarusian (for concrete examples, see Giger and Sloboda 2008) and position Russian as a *de facto* main language in all sectors of life, starting with official institutions. Even the president’s official website functions only in Russian and English (<http://president.gov.by>). Belarusian may appear on official letterheads, stamps, banknotes, and some public signs, such as road or store signs; in all of these contexts, however, its use is rather symbolic (Giger and Sloboda 2008).

<sup>1</sup>Whereas in several cases the data reported by the CDHE are confirmed by the research data and the data from respective censuses, it is still necessary to mention that the report does not discuss the sampling methodology nor the questions asked and is thus of limited validity.

The population favors Russian literature and media, and the majority of TV and radio channels and mass circulation newspapers, such as *Sovetskaja Belorussija* (<http://www.sb.by>), appear in Russian. Russian also dominates the educational system. In the year 2005/2006, 76% of nursery school and 77% of secondary school students attended Russian-language schools (Giger and Sloboda 2008), and the number of Belarusian-language schools continues to decrease (Giger and Sloboda 2008; Korjakov 2002). Higher education establishments function either exclusively or predominantly in Russian, and in the year 2005/2006, 54% of the students studied exclusively in Russian, 44% in both languages, and only 2% in Belarusian (Giger and Sloboda 2008).

It is not surprising then that Russian continues to function as an unmarked language choice for most Belarusian citizens. The 1999 Belarusian Census revealed that while 81.2% of the population of Belarus self-identify as Belarusian, 62.8% of the population use Russian as their main language at home (<http://www.belstat.gov.by>). The 2004 CDHE report estimates that the number of Belarusian citizens who use Russian actively is about 78% and that overall 98% of the population is competent in Russian (Aref'ev 2006). The preference for Russian among members of the young generation is documented by Brown (2005) who administered a language survey to 559 Belarusian college students in three urban centers, Minsk, Grodno, and Vitebsk. The analysis of participants' responses revealed an interesting discrepancy between the participants' self-identified native language (35% Russian, 31% Belarusian, 27% mixed) and the language they used with their mother in childhood (69% Russian, 6.6% Belarusian, 21% mixed). These diverging responses suggested to the author that "even among the minority of respondents who indicated Belarusian as their native language, Belarusian functions more as a 'badge of ethnicity' (Crystal 2000) than a practical language" (Brown 2005, 323).

A different approach to Russian was taken in Ukraine, where Ukrainian was proclaimed the sole state language, a status reconfirmed in Article 10 of the 1996 Ukrainian Constitution. The post-Soviet Ukrainian government has undertaken major efforts to translate this law into policies and practices aimed at the derussification and ukrainization of all spheres of life in Ukraine. Ukrainian is now the language of the government, law, and official documentation, it is also the main language of secondary and higher education. In the year 2005/2006, 78% of Ukraine's secondary school students attended Ukrainian-language schools (this number does not include Crimea) (Bilaniuk and Melnyk 2008). Outside of the Russian-language schools, Russian is now taught alongside other foreign languages, such as English or German, and selected works of Russian literature are incorporated in Ukrainian translation into the course on world literature. The ukrainization policy has met with resistance in the traditionally Russian-speaking areas of the country and in particular in Crimea, an area that was transferred from Russia to Ukraine in 1954. Eventually Crimea declared itself the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and adopted its own language and education policies. At present, more than 76% of the population of Crimea sees Russian as its native language and 93% of the children are educated in Russian-language schools (Bilaniuk and Melnyk 2008).

While vocal, the resistance has been relatively peaceful, taking place through demonstrations, the media, and publications, such as *Informacionnyj Vestnik Foruma Rusistov Ukrainy* (cf. Men'sikov 2003). Russian speakers in Ukraine may disagree with the current legal status of their language, but they do not experience the same anxieties as Russian speakers in Moldova or Estonia. This attitude is partially explained by the traditionally high (34.4% in 1989) and increasingly growing levels of competence in Ukrainian among the Russian-speaking population. Furthermore, due to the typological closeness between the two languages, even those with low productive abilities are able to follow written and spoken Ukrainian.

The lack of anxiety is also explained by the visible place Russian continues to occupy in everyday life in eastern Ukraine. Both Russians and russophone Ukrainians living in these territories use Russian on a daily basis, with Russian still prevailing in commerce, industry, media, pop-culture, literature, and sports (Arel 2002; Bilaniuk 2005; Bilaniuk and Melnyk 2008; Pavlenko 2006). The dominant factor in this perseverance of Russian is the presence of a large contingent of russophone Ukrainians. The 2001 Ukrainian Census revealed that 67.5% of the population of Ukraine considers Ukrainian to be their mother tongue, while 29.6% see Russian as their mother tongue (<http://www.ukrcensus.gov.ua>). The 2004 CDHE report confirmed that only 30% of Ukrainian citizens claim Russian as a native language, but also indicated that 60% of the population uses Russian on a daily basis, while overall 83% of the population is proficient in Russian (Aref'ev 2006). The discrepancy between the self-proclaimed native language and the language of daily use is reminiscent of the Belarusian situation (Brown 2005) and suggests that russophone Ukrainians too continue to claim Ukrainian as their native language while speaking Russian at home (for a similar argument about the 2001 Ukrainian Census, see Arel 2002).

The widespread maintenance and use of Russian are also seen among the members of the youngest generation in eastern Ukraine. Even within the confines of a Ukrainian-dominated educational system, students switch to Russian during breaks, meetings, and informal events (Bilaniuk and Melnyk 2008; Kopylenko 2006). A survey conducted in 2005 in Kyiv National Taras Shevchenko University revealed that among 199 respondents who identified themselves as Ukrainian, 40% self-identified as russophones, and another 26% as using both languages or a mix of the two (Bilaniuk and Melnyk 2008). At the same time the prestige of Ukrainian has undoubtedly grown in the past fifteen years and so have the levels of Ukrainian-language competence among Russians and russophone Ukrainians. Political leaders, most notably Yuliya Tymoshenko, have made efforts to master Ukrainian and to use it in public. An interesting outcome of the growing equality between the two languages is the phenomenon of cooperative nonaccommodation, where each party conducts the conversation in their preferred language, with the expectation of being understood and respected by the other party (Bilaniuk 2005; Pavlenko 2006).

The situation has not been as peaceful in Moldova, where derussification measures eventually led to a military conflict and secession. In 1989, language law declared Moldovan the sole state language, a measure that helped to expand the use of Moldovan in education and in the public sector. The inhabitants of the largely Russian-speaking Trans-Dniestr region, or Transnistria, have rebelled against this language shift and the larger threats it represented. Authority was transferred to the local institutions and eventually the Transnistrian Republic was established. In 1991 and 1992, several military clashes took place between Moldovan and Transnistrian military units, and the situation is fraught with conflict to this day (for discussion see Munteanu 2002; Skvortsova 2002). Vladimir Voronin's communist government that came to power in 2001 originally planned to resolve the conflict with Transnistria by making Russian the second official language, but the vehement public opposition forced the government to shelve these plans (Cisnel 2008; Roper 2005).

At present, Article 13 of the Constitution declares Moldovan the sole state language of Moldova. The Constitution also acknowledges and protects the right to preserve, develop and use the Russian language and other languages spoken within the national territory of the country. These language laws have significantly affected language practices: the use of Moldovan has spread to all spheres of life, while Russian has retreated, and it has become increasingly difficult for people with no Moldovan language skills to find employment in the state sector (Roper 2005). Due to these difficulties, Moldova has lost around 10–13%

of its Russian population to emigration (Arutjunjan 2003). In education, according to Ciscel (2008), in the year 2006/2007, 80% of secondary schools in Moldova (with the exception of Transnistria) offered education in Moldovan, and 20% in Russian. Among college and university students, 68.3% study in Moldovan-language groups, while 28.4% are in Russian-language groups.

What do these changes in educational practices mean for Russian-language maintenance? According to the 1989 Census, 68.5% of the Moldovan population reported Russian to be their native or second language (Goskomstat SSSR 1991; Skvortsova 2002). In 1998, 87% of the Moldovan respondents to the survey administered by Kolstø and Melberg (2002) reported fluency in Russian. The 2004 CDHE survey found that 56% of the Moldovan population still speaks Russian actively, and 85% displays competence in Russian (Aref'ev 2006). In contrast, the 2004 Moldovan Census reported that 75% of the country's population speaks predominantly Moldovan/Romanian and only 16% uses Russian on a daily basis (<http://www.statistica.md>). This discrepancy suggests that many Moldovans are engaged in bilingual practices whereby Russian may constitute a part of their linguistic repertoire. Consequently, they may respond differently to questions about their main language of interaction and about the use of Russian per se. The data from the 2004 Moldovan Census also do not include the Transnistrian Republic where Russian remains the dominant language. Regardless of these differences, however, it is clear that Russian is losing its dominant status in Moldova and Moldovan is gaining visibility. Ciscel (2008) argues that with Russian as an optional, rather than obligatory, language choice in Moldovan-language schools, the new generation of Moldovans may be growing up without much proficiency in Russian, in particular in rural areas.

Considering the geographic proximity and cultural similarities of these three countries, how can we explain the differences in the laws they adopted (dual-language policy in Belarus vs. single-language policy in Ukraine and Moldova) and in the language practices documented in the three contexts (Russian dominance in Belarus, bilingualism in Ukraine, and language shift toward Moldovan in Moldova)? Let us begin with factors that explain the language policy choices. The first of these is the history of the territory's incorporation into the Russian empire or the Soviet Union and resulting levels of russification, titular language competence, and nationalist consciousness. Belarus had been part of the Russian empire for more than 200 years, and thus subject to tsarist and later Soviet russification policies. As a result, its population displayed high levels of russification, low language loyalty, and a weak sense of national identity. Even during the Soviet times Belarus was considered to be the most russified republic, with the lowest level of titular language competence and loyalty (Brown 2005). In the past two decades, the shift toward Russian has become even more pronounced: according to the 1999 Belarusian Census, 58.6% of ethnic Belarusians use Russian as their main language (<http://www.belstat.gov.by>).

Ukraine and Moldova, on the other hand, had a more complex history of incorporation. While eastern Ukraine, as part of the Russian empire, was subject to russification policies, western Ukraine had been a part of the Austro-Hungarian empire and then Poland, where language policies with regard to minority languages were somewhat less restrictive (Ivšina 2004; Kubajčuk 2004). The annexation of western Ukraine took part in 1939 and it was eventually incorporated into the Soviet Ukraine in 1944. A major part of Moldova, Bessarabia, annexed by the Russian empire in 1812, was under Romanian rule in the period between the two World Wars, and was eventually reannexed by the USSR in 1940 and again in 1945 (Munteanu 2002; Skvortsova 2002). As a consequence, both Ukraine and Moldova had a much higher degree of maintenance of the titular language than Belarus, lower levels of russification, and stronger nationalist movements, in particular in the more recently incorporated western areas.

Another factor that differentiates Belarus from Ukraine and Moldova is the country's political orientation. All three countries maintain strong economic ties with Russia, and are dependent on Russia for a lot of their energy needs. At the same time, the Belarusian government headed by Aleksandr Lukashenko displays an unabashedly pro-Russian stance, incorporating the Soviet past into its conception of the modern Belarusian state and promoting the idea of historic, political, and economic unity with Russia (Marples 2006). In contrast, the post-Soviet governments of Ukraine and Moldova have questioned the Soviet version of the past and are slowly reorienting themselves towards the West, motivated by the desire to be accepted in the European Union (Munteanu 2002; Pavlyshyn 2006). A nationalist movement in Ukraine has also made strong attempts to anchor a new Ukrainian identity in a new ideology and historiography (Ivšina 2004; Kuzio 2005).

While these historic, sociopolitical, and socioeconomic factors explain the difference in language policies adopted by the three countries, they can only go so far in explaining why the sociolinguistic situations in Ukraine and Moldova are quite distinct, despite identical language laws. These differences are influenced by a constellation of demographic and linguistic factors. The first is the proportion of ethnic Russians and russophones in the country's demographic makeup. Moldova has a relatively small Russian population: 13% according to the Census of 1989, 6% according to the Census of 2004 (<http://www.statistica.md>) that excludes the Transnistrian Republic. In contrast, in Ukraine, ethnic Russians constituted 22.1% of the population in 1989, a proportion that decreased to 17.3% by 2001 (<http://www.ukrcensus.gov.ua>). Furthermore, in 1989 72% of eastern Ukrainians spoke Russian as their first language and so did Jews, Belarusians, and members of many other ethnic minorities (Zevelev 2001). Thus, for the majority of the population Russian was a native or a dominant second language, which made a shift towards bilingualism much more likely than towards Ukrainian as a single language.

Russian-dominant bilingualism observed in Belarus and eastern Ukraine is also an outcome of traditional language ideologies that positioned Russian as the language of urbanity, progress, high culture, science, technology, and the media, and Belarusian and Ukrainian as provincial, backward, rural languages, to be discarded in an urban environment (Bilaniuk 2005). The shift from the titular language to Russian has been further facilitated by the typological similarity between Russian, Belarusian, and Ukrainian. Moldovan, on the other hand, is a language typologically distinct from Russian, albeit one in the throes of its own identity crisis, with two conceptions of the language, that of Moldovan as Romanian and that of Moldovan as an independent language, competing in the public space (Ciscel 2008; Kolstø and Melberg 2002).

To sum up then, fifteen years after the break-up of the Soviet Union, Russian is still one of the state languages and the dominant language in Belarus, as well as in the Transnistrian Republic (Moldova) and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (Ukraine). It also occupies a currently secure position in the rest of eastern Ukraine where levels of bilingualism are rising, but no shift away from Russian has yet been observed. It remains to be seen, however, how Russian will be maintained in the younger generation that is currently being educated in Ukrainian-language schools, and some observers are concerned that the levels of Russian-language competence and literacy are decreasing among the graduates of these schools (Kopylenko 2006). Finally, in Moldova and western Ukraine derussification is at work, and while the Russian language is still present in the public space, in particular in commerce and the media, its future outside of the Russian-speaking community is uncertain.

## 2 Russian in the Baltic countries: Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania

Similar to Ukraine and Moldova, upon gaining independence, the three Baltic countries declared their titular languages the sole languages of the state. Afterwards, they embarked on an aggressive derussification course, replacing Russian with titular languages in the public sphere, and in particular in government, administration, legislation, official documentation, secondary and higher education, science, technology, and the media. The laws also required that employees of state institutions, organizations, and businesses that have contact with the general public must know and use the official language. These policies negatively affected the socioeconomic status of monolingual Russian speakers and their employment and educational opportunities (Aasland 2002).

Latvia and Estonia also adopted citizenship laws that granted citizenship only to those who could trace their citizenship to the pre-war states. These laws left over 30% of the population in Latvia and 25% in Estonia without citizenship and thus effectively excluded the majority of non-titulars from voting in the post-Soviet elections. To become naturalized, these non-citizens had to meet several preconditions, including passing a language proficiency test (for descriptions of the laws, see Rannut 2004). In 2001–2002, non-citizens still constituted 21% of Latvian population and 12.5% of Estonian population (Adrey 2005). Some liberalization of Latvian and Estonian language laws occurred following the pressure of NATO and OSCE in the wake of these countries' accession into NATO and the European Union, but, according to Adrey (2005, 459), "it was watered down by the 'compensating' constitutional provisions". Lithuania, on the other hand, followed other post-Soviet states in granting automatic citizenship to all those residing on the territory of the former Soviet republic.

Let us now consider the interplay between language laws and outcomes in the individual countries. In Latvia, the status of Latvian as the sole state language is proclaimed in Article 4 of the Constitution, as well as in the 1994 Citizenship Law and the 1999 State Language Law, with further amendments made in 2000, 2001, and 2002, in the wake of Latvia's accession to the European Union. Since November 2003, implementations of these language laws and policies have been coordinated by the State language agency. The 1995 Latvian education reforms and the 1998 Latvian Education Law reduced the numbers of Russian-language schools, allowing the government to implement a transition to Latvian-only secondary school education. Russian-medium schools were required to move to bilingual education where up to 60% of the subjects would be taught in Latvian and up to 40% in Russian (Adrey 2005; Priedite 2005). These changes led to large-scale protests throughout 2003 among the Russian-speaking population and resulted in a petition signed by 100,000 people against the language shift prescribed by the educational reform (Adrey 2005). These protests did not, however, succeed in changing the course of educational reforms.

The new language policies and practices decreased the functions and spheres of Russian-language use in Latvia, while increasing levels of Latvian-language competence among Russian speakers. At the same time, Russian still remains the first language of 42% of the Latvian population (Aref'ev 2006), with ethnic Russians constituting 28.5% of the population according to the 2006 Latvian population census (<http://www.csb.gov.lv>). Russian-language skills among ethnic Latvians still supersede Latvian-language skills among the Russians and in many contexts interethnic communication proceeds in Russian, rather than in Latvian. For instance, Latvian army recruits justified their preference for Russian in conversation with their russophone counterparts by noting the superior quality of their Russian and the desire to further improve their Russian skills (Priedite 2005). Russian

also remains a foreign-language option in Latvian-language schools. It is not surprising then that according to the 2004 CDHE report, 56.5% of the country's population speaks Russian actively and overall 87% of the population has competence in Russian (Aref'ev 2006). Similar data is reported by the 2000 population census, according to which 84.4% of Latvia's population still speaks Russian (Adrey 2005). Consequently, Latvia occupies the fourth place in Russian-language maintenance, following Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine (Aref'ev 2006).

In Estonia, Article 6 of the Constitution declares Estonian the sole language of the state. The measures undertaken by the independent Estonian government succeeded in estonianizing all spheres of public life, most importantly education. By the school year 2003/2004, 521 schools (82.3%) functioned in Estonian, 87 in Russian (13.7%), and 25 schools were bilingual (4%) (Rannut 2004). Nevertheless, surveys demonstrate that, as in Latvia, Russian-language skills among Estonians are still higher than Estonian-language skills in the Russian-speaking population. According to the 2000 Estonian Census, Russian speakers currently constitute 29.6% of the population of Estonia (<http://www.stat.ee>). Only 38% of these speakers know Estonian well, while 58% of Estonians know Russian well (Hogan-Brun 2003; Rouillard 2005). Overall, according to the 2004 CDHE report, 38.5% of the Estonian population still speaks Russian actively, while 77% of the population has competence in Russian (Aref'ev 2006).

In Lithuania, article 14 of the Constitution, the 1995 Law on State Language, and the 2003 State Language Policy Guidelines declare Lithuanian the sole language of the state. Lithuanian is now used in all public domains, legislature, administration, official documentation, and most importantly education. By 2001, minority language schools constituted only 9% of Lithuanian schools; of these, 68 were Russian-language schools and 60 bi- and trilingual schools with Russian as one of the languages (Hogan-Brun and Ramonienè 2003). By 2006/2007 only 4.5% of students were educated in Russian-language schools (Bulajeva and Hogan-Brun 2008). Higher education in Lithuania is offered mainly in Lithuanian (97.3%).

As a result of these derussification measures, the functions and spheres of use of Russian in Lithuania and in particular the proportion of time allocated to Russian channels in the media have significantly decreased (Burenina 2000). Russian speakers now constitute 7.9% of the Lithuanian population (6.3% of these are ethnic Russians) and levels of bilingualism among them are on the rise (Bulajeva and Hogan-Brun 2008; <http://www.stat.gov.lt>). In a 2002 survey Russian speakers reported using Lithuanian more frequently with their children (27%) and grandchildren (33%), than with their brothers and sisters (12%) and parents and grandparents (3–8%) (Hogan-Brun and Ramonienè 2005).

At the same time, Russian is still used by members of the Russian community who have access to Russian theaters, literature, TV and radio channels, newspapers, and magazines. It is also emerging as a popular second foreign language (obligatory in grades 6–10) and is currently studied by 207,826 students (Bulajeva and Hogan-Brun 2008). Russian has also preserved its role of a lingua franca in interethnic interactions. According to the 2002 survey conducted in the multiethnic eastern and south-eastern Lithuania, where Russians constitute 13% of the population, the overall use of Russian, by 90% of the population, supersedes that of Lithuanian (83%): 100% of the Russian speakers continue to use Russian on a daily basis, and so do 83% of the Lithuanians, 94% Poles, and 93% Belarusians (Hogan-Brun and Ramonienè 2005). Consequently, it is not surprising that, according to the 2001 Lithuanian Census, 60% of the Lithuanian population reported knowledge of Russian (<http://www.stat.gov.lt>). The same number is reported by the 2004 CDHE report, with numbers rising to 80% among members of the older generation, and decreasing to 17% among children up till the age of 15 (Aref'ev 2006).



To sum up, it is not surprising that all three countries adopted single-language policies. Annexed by the Soviets in 1940, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania already had an experience of independent statehood and returned to it after a little more than four decades of Soviet rule. They had spent the least time in the Soviet Union and their citizens had high levels of national consciousness and language loyalty, and vehemently opposed russification. These states also chose to orient themselves toward the West economically, socially, and politically.

What requires explanation is the difference between Lithuania and the other two countries in terms of citizenship laws, and, conversely, the higher levels of Russian-language maintenance in Estonia and Latvia that have more stringent citizenship laws. These outcomes are interconnected and both are influenced by the demographic factors. Latvia and Estonia entered their independence with sizeable Russian-speaking populations: According to the 1989 Census, 42.5% of the Latvian population (34% of these ethnic Russians) and 34.8% of the Estonian population (30.3% of these ethnic Russians) reported Russian as a native language (Goskomstat SSSR 1991; Hogan-Brun 2003; Savoskul 2001). These largely monolingual Russian speakers were perceived as a threat to the revival of national languages and as a reminder of more than forty decades of occupation. In contrast, in Lithuania in 1989 only 11.7% of the population had Russian as a first language (9.2% of them ethnic Russians) (Goskomstat SSSR 1991; Hogan-Brun 2003). The three countries also differed in levels of titular language competence: 38% of ethnic Russians in Lithuania, 22.3% in Latvia, and 13.7% in Estonia were proficient in titular languages (Adrey 2005). Consequently, Lithuania could afford to adopt a more liberal approach to granting citizenship and language rights to its minority populations, although Russian speakers were still required to master Lithuanian (Adrey 2005; Hogan-Brun 2003). In contrast, the governments of Latvia and Estonia were concerned about the presence of such large Russian-speaking populations, which, given the right to vote, could change significantly the future course toward independence. The presence of these large contingents led Latvian and Estonian governments to adopt stringent citizenship laws and language policies. At the same time, the presence of these contingents contributed to higher levels of Russian-language maintenance in both countries.

### 3 Russian in the Transcaucasus: Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia

Similar to the Baltic countries, the three countries in the Transcaucasus opted for single-language policies that made the titular language the language of the state. Russian has a dual status of a minority language (and is thus subject to protection and accommodation) and a foreign language (thus an option for foreign language instruction). Informally, Russian also maintains its status as a language of interethnic communication in multiethnic areas.

In Azerbaijan, Article 21 of the Constitution declares the national language the sole language of the state. Russian still functions as a lingua franca in communication between various ethnic minorities and in interaction with other post-Soviet countries. The country's long-term president Heydar Aliyev repeatedly said that all Azeris are russophones and it would be impossible to separate Azeris from the Russian language (Landau and Kellner-Heinkele 2001, 79). The new president of the country, Ilham Aliyev, is also fluent in Russian; his official website (<http://www.president.az>) functions in three languages, Azerbaijani, English, and Russian, and features statements that declare full support for the Russian community and its language. Russian-speakers in Azerbaijan have full access to

Russian TV and radio channels, theater, and a wide variety of Russian-language books and newspapers, such as *Zerkalo* (<http://www.zerkalo.az>). The secondary school system includes 378 Russian-language schools, and in higher education, Russian-language courses are offered by Baku Slavic University (Kaftan 2004).

At the same time, the sphere of Russian-language use and the levels of Russian competence have undoubtedly decreased. The titular population now constitutes 90.6% of the country's population (compared to 82.7% in 1989) and in the wake of the interethnic conflicts and civil war the proportion of ethnic Russians has significantly diminished due to emigration (5.6% in 1989; 1.8% in 1999), as has that of other ethnic minorities (<http://www.azstat.org>). At present, according to the 2004 CDHE report, 24% of the citizens of Azerbaijan use Russian actively, and 67% have competence in Russian (Aref'ev 2006). According to the 1999 Census, Russian is particularly widespread as a language of ethnic minority members (e.g., 83.7% of the Tatars, 77.9% of the Ukrainians, and 66.4% of the Jews called it their native language) (<http://www.azstat.org>). To date, however, there are no sociolinguistic studies of Russian use in Azerbaijan known to this researcher that would allow us to elaborate on these numbers.

In Armenia, Article 12 of the Armenian Constitution, Language Law, and the State Program of Language Policy, uphold the status of Armenian as the sole state language, and guarantee free use of minority languages within the territory of the country. In accordance with these laws, following the 1991 declaration of independence, the Republic of Armenia undertook measures towards derussification in all spheres of life, starting with education. At present most primary and secondary schools function in Armenian, with Russian taught as an obligatory foreign language between 2 and 4 hours a week (Grzeljan 2007). According to the First Report of the Republic of Armenia to the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages (2003), there remain only eight Russian-language schools in Armenia, four of which are administered by the Republic of Armenia (in Yerevan, Tsakhkadzor, and the villages of Fioletovo and Lermontovo), three by the Russian Federation Army Garrison (Yerevan, Gyumri, Armavir), and one by the Russian embassy (Yerevan). Institutions of higher education also function predominantly in Armenian, with the natural exception of departments of Russian linguistics, literature, and philology.

At the same time, Russian media and literature maintain their popularity with the Armenian public, and even for the youngest generation popular fashion and music trends still come from Moscow (Karapetian 1999; Halpin and Hughes 2007). In Yerevan one can still hear Russian and see Russian signs (as part of trilingual, Armenian/Russian/English signage), the city also houses a Russian bookstore and a popular Russian theater (Halpin and Hughes 2007). According to the 2004 CDHE report, 31% of the country's population uses Russian actively and 69% displays competence in Russian (Aref'ev 2006).

Nevertheless, the radical reduction of the amount of time dedicated to the Russian language in Armenian schools has led to decreased Russian-language competence throughout the country, causing concerns among some Armenian leaders. In an interview with the newspaper *Golos Armenii*, Pavel Balayan, the dean of the Russian philology department at Yerevan State University questioned whether the nation had the right to continue 'losing the language that helps our cultural and spiritual treasures to reach a wider world' (Grzeljan 2007; author's translation). Noticeably, in recent years Russian has begun to receive more support in Armenia: 200 Russian-language teachers are sent annually to Russia for professional development, and they now have access to more resources, such as the quarterly magazine *Russian in Armenia* that resumed its publication in 2000 (First Report of the Republic of Armenia to the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages 2003).

In Georgia, Article 8 of the Constitution declares Georgian the sole state language and recognizes Abkhazian as the second official language on the territory of Abkhazia. As Georgia has gained independence, this language policy has served to derussify the education system. By 1996/1997, only 6.6% of the secondary school students were educated in the Russian language (these numbers do not include Abkhazia and South Ossetia) (Kock Kobaidze 2001). Notably, students in Georgian Russian-language schools include not only ethnic Russians but also Armenians, Greeks, Kurds, Assyrians, and Georgians whose parents choose to educate their children in Russian. At present Russian-language schools can be found in Tbilisi, in Russian villages, such as Gorelovka, Spasovka, or Orlovka, inhabited by members of the Russian Dukhobor community, and also in places with large minority populations, such as Akhalkalaki, where 80% of the population is Armenian (Kock Kobaidze 2001; Wheatley 2006). Russian-language schools also function in the secessionist, formerly autonomous republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, supported by Russia.

Georgian-language schools assign a very limited amount of time to Russian language and literature and oftentimes use textbooks that abound in errors; as a result, levels of Russian linguistic and cultural competence have decreased among the graduates of these schools (Bezirganova 2006a, b). Higher education establishments in Georgia function in Georgian, with Russian offered as a foreign language (Bezirganova 2006b). At present, Georgia does not have Slavic universities similar to those functioning in Central Asia, Armenia, or Azerbaijan. It is not surprising then, that, according to the 2004 CDHE report only 60% of the Georgian population displays competence in Russian (Aref'ev 2006).

At the same time, 38% of the Georgian population reports using Russian actively (Aref'ev 2006), which is a higher proportion of the population than in either Armenia or Azerbaijan and is not reflective of the proportion of ethnic Russians in Georgia (1.5%). Rather, this is a reflection of the ongoing use of Russian as a lingua franca in oral and written communication between Georgian linguistic minorities, in particular Armenian and Azeri communities, and the state authorities (Wheatley 2006). The reason for that is that Georgian authorities are much more likely to understand documents in Russian than in Armenian or Azerbaijani, while members of the local communities may be more fluent in Russian as a second language than in Georgian (Bezirganova 2006a; Kock Kobaidze 2001; Wheatley 2006). Kock Kobaidze's (2001) study of Armenian students studying in Russian and Armenian schools in Georgia reveals the same disparity between the mother tongue reflective of one's ethnicity (Armenian) and the language learned in childhood and used in everyday communication (Russian) identified by Brown (2005) in Belarus and by Bilaniuk and Melnyk (2008) in Ukraine. Only 36% of Armenians studying in Russian schools in Georgia reported Armenian as their mother tongue and even they displayed various degrees of proficiency in the language. Russian was their preferred language of communication.

The choice not to give Russian the normative status in the three countries can be best understood through historic and demographic factors. Armenia and Georgia had long histories of statehood, and, accordingly, long histories of literary and linguistic development, with the oldest known texts going back to the 5<sup>th</sup> century (Ajvazjan 2007; Tabidze 1999). In Azerbaijan, the first state under the name of Azerbaijan appeared in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. As a consequence, nationalist feelings and language loyalties in all three countries have been traditionally high, and they were the only ones to declare their national languages to be official under the Soviet regime.

All three countries were home to relatively small ethnic Russian populations, which decreased even further due to high levels of emigration caused by military conflicts, and

political and economic instability (Arutjunjan 2003). According to the 2001 Armenian Census, 98% of the country's population are ethnic Armenians, with ethnic Russians representing only 0.5% (approximately 14,660 people) (<http://www.armstat.am>). In Georgia, in 1989 Russians constituted 6.3% of the population, while a decade later, according to the 2002 Census they constituted only 1.5% of the population (Wheatley 2006). And in Azerbaijan, Russians formed 5.6% of the population in 1989 and 1.8% in 1999 (<http://www.azstat.org>). Notably, in multiethnic Georgia and Azerbaijan the numbers and, consequently, proportions of speakers reporting Russian as a native language are higher than those of ethnic Russians: according to the 2004 CDHE report, the Russian-speaking population constitutes 3% in Azerbaijan (250,000) and 2.8% in Georgia (130,000) (Aref'ev 2006). This is not the case for the predominantly monoethnic Armenia, where the numbers of native Russian speakers and ethnic Russians correspond to each other (0.5% of the population) (Aref'ev 2006; <http://www.armstat.am>).

In view of these historic and demographic similarities, what requires further explanation is the difference in support offered currently to Russian in the three countries. In Armenia we see evidence of increased interest and support. Part of the explanation lies in the characteristics of its Russian population. 5,000 of the 14,660 of Armenia's Russians are Molokans, that is Russians who split from the Russian Orthodox Church in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and came to live in Armenia in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Akin to the Amish in the US, Molokans live in their own villages and are still largely monolingual, which creates problems in terms of access to higher education, offered largely in Armenian (Krikorian 2005). In addition to Molokans, members of some other minority groups, such as Assyrians, also receive their education in Russian. In 2001, Armenia signed the European Charter (EC) for protection of language minority rights and since then has been monitored by the EC and UNICEF representatives and has had to make regular reports on ways in which the problems are being addressed. This increased accountability has contributed to the increased support for Russian as a minority language.

Other factors are, however, at play in the maintenance of Russian as a second language or lingua franca in Armenia. The key among them are the country's political, social, and economic ties to Russia, which are particularly crucial given the ongoing tension between Armenia and its two neighbors, Azerbaijan and Turkey. Currently, the import-export trade with Russia is increasing and Russian, as a result, continues to represent an important linguistic resource. This resource is particularly valuable for those who look for economic opportunities outside the country. The highest transnational migration from Armenia is to Russia, which currently houses the largest Armenian diaspora in the world (up to 1.5 million) (Halpin and Hughes 2007). Similar factors are at play in Azerbaijan that also has a close economic relationship with Russia. At the same time, Azerbaijan is building other relationships, in particular with Turkey. Consequently, the role of Turkish as an important linguistic resource is visibly rising.

In contrast, in Georgia the role of Russian is decreasing, at least partly due to the increasing economic and political tensions between Georgia and Russia. In the words of Georgian president Mikhail Saakashvili: "What changes if you know Russian? You can't get Russian visas, trade with Russia is going down, we have our own TV channels now. To have a career, you don't need to know Russian. You need to study English, Turkish." (*Večernij Tbilisi*, 8, January 31<sup>st</sup>–February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2007, <http://www.opentext.org/ge/vechorka>; author's translation). The president then commented that last year a million Georgians crossed the Turkish border, which is several times more than those that crossed the Russian one. He then went on to say that personally he would have liked for his own son and for other Georgian children to study Russian and to read Russian books, and that the

process of decrease in Russian language competence is not yet irreversible and depends on the relationship between Georgia and Russia. Saakashvili then proceeded to discuss the creation of additional Russian-language schools in Georgia with the Russian ambassador Vyacheslav Kovalenko (*Večernij Tbilisi*, 15, February 24<sup>th</sup>–27<sup>th</sup>, 2007, <http://www.opentext.org/ge/vechorka>).

To sum up, then, we can see that single-language policies and corresponding educational and institutional reforms in the three countries have affected the status of Russian and resulted in decreases in Russian-language competence among the general population (Aref'ev 2006). Russian is still maintained as a native language by the ethnic Russian populations in these countries, and also by some other ethnic groups who find the language an important resource. The future of Russian as a second language in these countries critically depends on their political, social, and economic relationship with Russia. Improvements may lead to expansion in the numbers of Russian-language schools and programs, while tensions may lead to further decreases in the interest and fluency in Russian.

#### **4 Russian in Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan**

The five republics of Central Asia have several characteristics in common: all are multilingual and multiethnic, with the predominance of the Muslim population; none had previous independent political history, rather they were artificially formed by the Soviets from the territories of Turkestan, Bukhara, and Khorezm between 1924 and 1936 (Hirsch 2005); none wanted to break away from the Soviet Union, unlike the Baltic or Transcaucasian countries (Landau and Kellner-Heinkele 2001). Nevertheless, when the dissolution of the empire became final, they adopted different strategies in addressing the role of Russian within their borders: Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan eventually decided to legitimize Russian by designating it an official language of the country, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan proclaimed Russian the language of interethnic communication, while Uzbekistan took an aggressive course toward derussification.

Article 7 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan declares Kazakh the state language and Russian an official language that may be officially employed on a par with Kazakh in state institutions (a 1995 upgrade from the language of interethnic communication). In recognition of this bilingual mode, the president of Kazakhstan traditionally addresses his population first in Kazakh and then in Russian (Kaftan 2004). The main thrust of the education reforms of the independent Kazakh government was the kazakhization of the population, rather than its immediate derussification. As a result, by 2004, according to Fierman (2006), 56% of the country's population was educated in Kazakh-medium schools, with the numbers higher in the rural areas and lower in the urban ones. Among the ethnic Kazakhs, 80% are educated in Kazakh, while 20% continue to receive instruction in Russian. The number of mixed urban schools offering instruction through both mediums rose from 242 in 1988 to 723 in 2004 but such schools do not appear to serve the needs of the Kazakh language as well as they serve the needs of Russian, as the level of Kazakh instruction is at times low, and informal communication outside the classroom takes place in Russian even among ethnic Kazakhs. In higher education, Russian is still dominant, and only 32% of the students study in Kazakh generally, with only 21.9% in the technical subjects, because there is still a shortage of Kazakh-language textbooks in this area.

Consequently, for now, Russian still continues to function as a dominant language in Kazakhstan. Kaftan (2004) reports that Kazakhstan has 477 Russian-language newspapers, and allocates 34% of the TV and radio programming time to Russian-language programs. According to the 2004 CDHE report, Russian is actively used by 66% of the population, and overall 81% of the population has competence in Russian (Aref'ev 2006). Similar data are reported by the 1999 Kazakh Census, according to which 81% of the population, including 75% of ethnic Kazakhs, have mastery of Russian (<http://www.stat.kz>). Additional support for the view that Russian is still the language of social advancement and opportunity in Kazakhstan comes from a survey Rivers (2002) administered to 857 respondents, 60% of whom were ethnic Kazakhs, asking about the language in which the respondents would like to raise their children. The results indicated that female Kazakh college students were more likely to express the desire to raise their children in Russian than in Kazakh.

Despite the continuing dominance of Russian, the spheres of use and the levels of Russian-language competence may be diminishing slightly, affected by high levels of migration among the Russian and German populations and increases in the size of the Kazakh population, due to the high birth rates and the return of ethnic Kazakhs from other countries (Altynbekova 2004; Šajbakova 2005; Smagulova 2008). Smagulova's (2008) analysis of a survey of an ethnically mixed sample of 2,255 respondents administered in 2005–2007 revealed generational differences in reported Kazakh and Russian proficiency: Russian proficiency has decreased among the younger population schooled after 1991, while Kazakh proficiency has increased. To give but one example, 90.3% of Kazakh respondents age 55 and older claim to speak Russian fluently, but only 45.7% of those who are 23 and younger make the same claim.

The current policy in Kyrgyzstan is the same as in Kazakhstan, although Russian did not become an official language there until 2000. At present, Article 5 of the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic proclaims Kyrgyz the state language and Russian an official language in the Republic. As in Kazakhstan, the educational and institutional policies of the Kyrgyz government have aimed at raising the levels of native language competence. As a result of these policies, by the academic year 2005–2006, only 7% of the secondary schools in Kyrgyzstan operated in Russian, and 16% offered bilingual instruction in Kyrgyz and Russian (Orusbaev et al. 2008). These Russian-language schools are highly prestigious and in high demand by Russian parents and by those from other ethnic groups. Higher education in Kyrgyzstan is available in several languages, with Russian-language education offered by the Kyrgyz-Russian Slavonic University, the Kyrgyz-Russian Academy of Education, and the Kyrgyz-Russian Pedagogical Institute financed by Russia (MacWilliams 2003; Orusbaev et al. 2008).

The increased emphasis on Kyrgyz, the shortages of Russian-language textbooks and teachers, combined with the emigration of ethnic Russians, other Slavs, and Germans, led to decreased levels of Russian-language competence among the younger population, in particular in rural areas (Korth 2005; Orusbaev et al. 2008). According to the 1999 Kyrgyz Census, only 33% of the ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbek speak Russian fluently, although among other ethnic groups the numbers are much higher (e.g., 81% Kazakhs, 98% Ukrainians) (<http://www.stat.kg>). Overall, according to the 2004 CDHE report, Russian is now actively used by 30% of the population of Kyrgyzstan and overall 70% of the population has competence in Russian (Aref'ev 2006). Russian still remains the language of the popular media, higher education, and commerce, while Kyrgyz is now appearing alongside Russian in administration, documentation, and at official meetings (Korth 2005).

In Uzbekistan, Article 4 of the Constitution proclaims Uzbek the sole language of the state. The adoption of this law was accompanied in Uzbekistan by very aggressive efforts to

eliminate the Russian language from the public space and to limit the number of available Russian TV channels and newspapers (Alpatov 2000; Khalikov 2006; Kosmarskij 2004; Podporenko 2001; Sengupta 2003). The country now houses only 150 Russian-language schools (Kaftan 2004), and Russian speakers with no knowledge of Uzbek have experienced a downslide in terms of employment (Arutjunjan 2003).

An interesting discrepancy between the language used at work and at home in two of Uzbekistan's largest cities, Tashkent and Samarkand, was found in a survey cited by MacFadyen (2006): in Tashkent, 40.2% of the respondents reported using only Russian at work, 41% used both languages, and 7.4% used only Uzbek; in Samarkand, the respective percentages were 39%, 38%, and 11%. The proportions changed, however, when it came to the language of the home: in Tashkent, 29% reported using only Russian at home, 20.7% reported using both, and 44.3% used Uzbek; in Samarkand, the respective percentages were 20%, 21%, and 19% (since Uzbekistan's population is multilingual, the remaining number was divided among other languages). These numbers suggest that approximately 77–81% of the urban population still uses Russian at work, even when it is not the language of the home, presumably to accommodate Russian speakers whose levels of competence in Uzbek remain low (Arutjunjan 2003).

Overall however, Russian-language competence among Uzbeks, in particular those schooled in the post-Soviet era and those living in the rural areas, has decreased significantly (MacFadyen 2006). According to the 2004 CDHE report, Russian is now actively used only by 20% of the population, while overall 60% retains competence in Russian (Aref'ev 2006). Since 2003 Uzbekistan has been experiencing a rapprochement with Russia and the country's leaders have begun to express growing concerns about the low levels of Russian-language competence that do not allow the country's citizens to take advantage of new educational and economic opportunities (Khalikov 2006). Several attempts have been made to address the issue: for instance, the Russian Consulate in Uzbekistan donated 300,000 Russian-language textbooks to local schools, while Omsk University arranged a series of residential courses for Uzbek Russian-language teachers (MacFadyen 2006).

Even more acute decreases in Russian competence can be observed in Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, despite the fact that both countries have declared Russian the language of interethnic communication, while the titular language has been declared the language of the state (Article 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of Tajikistan; Article 13 of the Constitution of Turkmenistan). According to the 2004 CDHE report, in Tajikistan Russian is actively used by 16% of the population, while overall 48% retains competence in Russian (Aref'ev 2006). The country is, however, taking measures to address the drastically decreasing Russian-language competence. In 2004, President Rakhmonov made the teaching of Russian obligatory from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> grade in all Tajik and Uzbek schools in Tajikistan. Russian-language streams are available in higher education establishments, with the Russian-Tajik Slavic University offering instruction exclusively in Russian. At present, out of 118,427 university students in Tajikistan, 30,058 (25.4%) are educated in Russian (Nagzibekova 2008). The Russian government fully supports these educational initiatives, offering resources and professional development opportunities to Russian language professionals (Dubovickij 2007).

The situation is quite distinct in Turkmenistan, where Russian is actively used by 2% and only 19% retain competence in Russian (Aref'ev 2006). What is particularly interesting about this data is that Turkmenistan is the only country where the proportion of people claiming Russian as a native language (150,000; 3%) exceeds that of people who report using Russian daily (100,000; 2%) (Aref'ev 2006). Unfortunately, at present, no sociolinguistic studies known to this researcher shed light on these numbers.

How can we explain the differences in language policy between Kazakhstan/Kyrgyzstan and the other three countries? The first set of factors combines demographic and linguistic characteristics of the respective populations. In 1989 in Kazakhstan there was an almost equal number of Kazakhs (39.7% of the overall population) and Russians (37.6%); in urban centers Russians (50.8%) outnumbered Kazakhs (27.1%), and the remaining 22.1% consisted of members of ethnic minorities most of whom also spoke Russian as a first language or as a lingua franca (Fierman 2006; Goskomstat SSSR 1991). In Kyrgyzstan, Russians were a minority but a sizeable one (21.5% in 1989, 12.5% in 1999) (<http://www.stat.kg>). More importantly, however, in both republics, members of the titular population, and in particular urban elites, were also russified, favoring Russian language, literature, and culture, and displaying low levels of competence in and loyalty to Kazakh and Kyrgyz, a phenomenon frequently referred to as *mankurtism* (Fierman 2006; Korth 2005; Landau and Kellner-Heinkele 2001; Rivers 2002). Both countries also had a sizeable population of other ethnic minorities, including Ukrainians, Germans, Koreans, Jews, and Tatars, for whom Russian was either a native or a dominant language. Both Russians and members of these minorities traditionally displayed low levels of competence and interest in Kazakh and Kyrgyz.

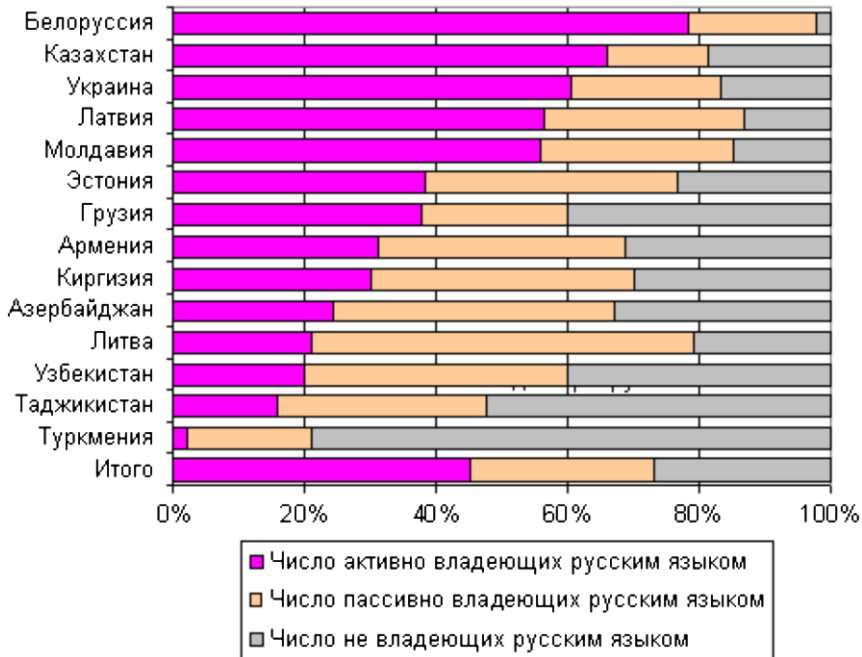
To a certain extent the reason for these attitudes may be the lack of previous statehood history in the territories of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, which were traditionally inhabited by nomadic tribes. In contrast, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan had long historic traditions going back to the Khanates of Khiva, Kokand, and Bukhara, as well as long literary tradition. Their populations displayed high levels of national consciousness and titular language competence and low levels of russification (for a discussion of the complex history of Central Asian states and of the redistribution of the territorial borders and creation of ethnic and linguistic identities in that territory, see Hirsch 2005; Sengupta 2003). These countries also housed relatively small ethnic Russian populations located predominantly in urban centers. In Tajikistan, for instance, according to the 2000 Census, ethnic Russians constitute 1.2% of the country's population (Nagzibekova 2008). Furthermore, while the governments of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan chose to maintain close political and economic relations with Russia, the governments of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan, with their largely Muslim populations, oriented themselves toward Islamic countries, such as Turkey or Iran (MacFadyen 2006; Sengupta 2003).

At present, Russian, legalized as an official language, remains dominant in Kazakhstan and stable in Kyrgyzstan, where a realistic outcome is bilingualism in the titular language and Russian, rather than a shift to the titular language (Altynbekova 2004; Korth 2005; Šajbakova 2004). In turn, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan display the lowest levels of Russian-language maintenance among all of the post-Soviet countries, even though Russian is still used there, in scientific and technical fields, in some institutional contexts and also as a lingua franca in communication among non-titular populations (Aref'ev 2006; MacFadyen 2006; Nagzibekova 2008; Podporenko 2001; Sengupta 2003). In view of improving relations with Russia and increasing work-related migration, the governments of these countries have expressed concerns about the loss of competence in Russian and are undertaking measures to reverse this language attrition (Dubovickij 2007).

## 5 Discussion and conclusions

To sum up, we can see that in all post-Soviet countries, with the exception of Belarus, the spheres of use and functions of Russian have decreased, albeit to different degrees, and





**Figure 1** Russian-language maintenance in post-Soviet countries, according to the 2004 CDHE report (adopted from Aref'ev 2006).

so have levels of Russian-language competence among the titular populations. Belarus, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Latvia, and Moldova lead in Russian-language maintenance, despite differences in language laws and policies adopted in the individual countries (see Fig. 1). This suggests that language laws are not necessarily the only factor influencing Russian-language maintenance, transmission, and attrition. Undoubtedly, assigning Russian the status of a state language, as was done in Belarus, supports and perhaps even guarantees its maintenance. At the same time, we can see that countries with similar laws, such as Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, differ in levels of Russian-language maintenance, while countries with different laws, such as Belarus and Ukraine, display similar levels of maintenance, at least at present.

What other factors shape the future of Russian-language maintenance in the post-Soviet countries, both in the Russian-speaking community and among the titular populations? A preliminary analysis of the literature suggests that the course of Russian-language maintenance, transmission, and attrition, is affected by four clusters of factors: (1) the ethnic and linguistic makeup of the country's population; (2) linguistic and ideological factors that shape attitudes toward Russian and the titular language; (3) educational and employment policies and opportunities; (4) the country's political, economic, social, cultural, and religious orientation.

The first cluster of factors involves the country's ethnic and linguistic composition. Not surprisingly, the countries with the highest levels of maintenance are also the ones with the largest Russian-speaking populations, or at least with the largest proportion of Russian-speakers in terms of the overall population. These speakers commonly display high levels of language loyalty and do not show any signs of impending language shift, despite

growing levels of bilingualism in Russian and the titular language. Another important factor is the level of russification of the titular population: the three countries with the highest levels of Russian-language maintenance—Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine—are also the ones with the highest levels of russification among the titulars. Consequently, Russian in these countries is maintained not only by ethnic Russians but also by russified titulars. The third factor is the ethnic makeup of the country. As discussed in the case of Georgia and Lithuania, in multiethnic contexts Russian retains its role as a *lingua franca* not only in interpersonal communication but, in some cases, in communication between the central administration and minority communities. Members of many ethnic minorities, including Ukrainians, Belarusians, Jews, Germans, Tatars, or Armenians, may in fact speak Russian as a native language and thus contribute to its maintenance and transmission. Consequently, Russian will be maintained best in countries with the largest Russian-speaking populations and also in multiethnic environments where it will continue to function as a *lingua franca*.

The second and related cluster involves linguistic and ideological factors that influence the attitudes toward Russian and the titular language in a given context. The elevated status of Russian as a language of progress, prestige, and urbanity, witnessed in Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan, contributes to Russian-language maintenance, as does the low level of titular language loyalty. For titular populations Russian-language maintenance is additionally facilitated by typological distance: typological closeness, as between Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian, facilitates Russian-language maintenance, while typological distance, as between Russian and Armenian, or Russian and Estonian, makes Russian-language maintenance less likely, as learning it will require more effort. The view of Russian as a language of the oppressor contributes to the attrition of Russian, and possibly even to deliberate “deskilling” (Laitin 1998, 132) among the titular populations.

The third cluster of factors involves the educational options and employment opportunities offered by particular countries. Access to Russian-language higher education and employment opportunities that do not require high levels of titular language knowledge motivate Russian-speaking parents to continue sending children to Russian-language schools. In turn, the availability of such schools supports Russian-language maintenance and transmission. In contrast, the lack of employment and higher education opportunities linked to the Russian language may influence Russian-speaking parents to send their children to titular-language schools even when Russian-language schools are still available. Thus, transmission and maintenance will be strongest in contexts where Russian-speaking parents have access to Russian-language and bilingual schools and are motivated to send their children there, and weakest in contexts where Russian-language schools are either unavailable or limit students’ future educational and employment opportunities. Russian-speaking students studying in titular-language schools are likely to maintain everyday Russian but exhibit decreases in academic Russian competence and literacy (Gavrilina 2004; Kopylenko 2006).

Educational and employment opportunities also affect the maintenance of Russian as a *lingua franca* and the learning of it as a second/foreign language by the titular populations and other ethnic minorities. In contexts where Russian is viewed as an important linguistic resource, central for commercial activity or for working abroad and transnational migration, students in post-Soviet countries will continue learning and practicing Russian. The outcomes of this learning will be further influenced by the amount of time and the degree of support given to Russian in titular-language schools. The decrease in the amount of time allocated to Russian, as well as resource shortages, lead to decreases in Russian-language competence, while allocations of additional time and resources are likely to increase the competence in contexts where extrinsic and intrinsic motivation is also present.

The fourth and related cluster of factors involves the country's political, economic, social, religious, and cultural orientation, and in particular its relationship with Russia. Belarus, Kazakhstan, or Armenia, whose relationship with Russia is close, are much more likely to invest in the maintenance of Russian than Georgia or Estonia, whose relationship with Russia is tense and whose orientation is toward the West, making Russian if not obsolete at least significantly less valuable as a linguistic resource. An additional factor in this cluster is the status of the local media—Russian competence is likely to be maintained longer by populations that depend on the Russian-language media for access to information.

This is only a preliminary analysis, mainly because the overwhelming majority of the studies to date rely on census and survey data, and thus on notoriously unreliable self-reports (on particular problems with Soviet and post-Soviet census data, see Alpatov 2000; Arel 2002). Following examples set by Laitin (1998), Landau and Kellner-Heinkele (2001), Bilaniuk (2005), Ciscel (2007), and Giger and Sloboda (2008), to name but a few, future studies of Russian-language maintenance need to incorporate ethnographic and observational data, examining linguistic landscapes, language use in the media and in official documentation, and interactional practices in institutional and educational contexts, and in the private domain, paying attention to actual linguistic behaviors, including language choice, code-switching, and code-mixing. These studies need to provide a detailed picture of the educational and employment opportunities available to Russian-language speakers and a comprehensive analysis of the ways in which larger political, economic, and social forces influence these opportunities. Finally, no study of Russian-language maintenance, transmission, and attrition would be complete without incorporating linguistic measures that would examine Russian-language competence among the members of the youngest generation educated during the post-Soviet period.

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