BETWEEN INTEGRATION AND ISOLATION: THE SOCIAL PENDULUM OF NARVA, ESTONIA¹

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INTRODUCTION³

Considered Europe's most "Eastern" city, Narva is in the Ida-Viru region of Northeastern Estonia, situated along the nation's border with the Russian Federation. Estonia's third largest municipality, with a population of roughly 56,000, Narva's residents have historically lived on the margins of Estonian society: culturally, linguistically, politically, and socially.

Visitors are often struck by the large-scale Soviet apartment complexes right at Narva's entrance, which contrast starkly with the modern and old-town style of architecture found in Estonia's other large cities. Wary of the city's overwhelming Russian community, other Estonians dissociate from this border city. Similarly, many of Narva's residents sense this lack of belonging. This mutual dissociation establishes a national and social divide in the country.

Approximately 90 percent of Narva's population speaks Russian as their native language, with a vast majority of the city's inhabitants possessing inadequate levels of Estonian language. Local media is almost entirely in Russian. Kremlin-sponsored channels, such as RT (formerly Russia Today) and Sputnik, are also broadcasted in Narva, with many of its residents serving as loyal viewers of these notoriously biased, propaganda-filled channels. It is a rare occurrence to hear (and

¹ The bulk of the following article is a chapter from the author's honors thesis, titled "Integrated or Isolated: Exploring the Social Bidirectionality of Ethnic Russians in Estonia and Latvia." As such, this article has been adapted and adjusted from the thesis so that it functions as a standalone analysis. The methodology and results obtained are part of the larger study associated with the thesis.

² A recent graduate of the University of Vermont, Colin Bushweller's area of research specializes in the Baltic region's post-Soviet society. His research analyzes the complications surrounding language use, citizenship, and social belonging for the region's ethnic Russian minority.

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use) Estonian on the streets, as well.

Overall, Narva is a remnant of Estonia's historical relationship with the Soviet Union. Furthermore, it holds an air of unease for ethnic Estonians, who view its historical Soviet ties as a barrier to the nation's westernization. Estonia is westernizing, shedding its Soviet past and integrating into Western Europe. Narva may be a roadblock to Estonians' desired integration. Estonia must therefore reckon with the fact that its third-largest city operates in a different cultural and linguistic world, sharing little to no commonality with much of Estonian society.

Narva was wiped of its Estonian past after Soviet and Nazi bombings during World War II. Its post-war urban reconstruction modeled the layout of Soviet cities. Block apartment complexes were built to house a soon-to-be influx of Russian industrial workers, ridding the city of its once vibrant Estonian heritage, which was significantly different from the monotonous, Soviet culture that replaced it. The uranium factory was revamped to support the Soviet Union's nuclear project. And over time, a Russian identity emerged in Narva, with many even opposing Estonian independence in the early 1990s.⁴ Since then, it is difficult to discern whether or not much has changed in regards to Narva's connection to the Estonian state, as the city shares more similarities with its Soviet bellwethers than modern Estonian society.⁵

However, there has been a recent focus on Narva's development, as Estonian politicians and citizens aim to integrate the isolated population. This component of social bidirectionality for Narva—the presence of new initiatives and information to better incorporate it into Estonian society, which contrast with the ongoing social issues regarding its isolation—was identified in a media content analysis from one half of my thesis research.

Bidirectionality refers to the movement of a concept in two usually opposite directions; in this case, social bidirectionality relates to the co-existence that Narva experiences with integration and isolation in Estonian society. This

⁴ Lisa Fein, "Symbolic Boundaries and National Borders: The Construction of an Estonian Russian Identity," *Nationalities Papers* 33.3 (2005): 339, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905990500193196>

⁵ David Trimbach and Shannon O'Lear, "Russians in Estonia: Is Narva the Next Crimea?" *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 56.5 (2015): 493-498, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15387216.2015.1110040>; Marika Kirch and Aksel Kirch, "Ethnic relations: Estonians and non-Estonians," *Nationalities Papers* 23.1 (1995): 43-59, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905999508408348>

part of my thesis research examined 108 articles over twelve months from three leading Estonian news outlets. For the purpose of this paper, I draw on the results from these Estonian outlets, whose reporting and content mirror dominant discourse in Estonian society, as a way to create an image of Narva's struggles and developments.

This paper will examine Narva's bidirectional positionality in Estonia, analyzing how this ethnic enclave impacts the overall image and lifestyle of the minority Russian population Estonia, and specifically for Narva's ethnic Russian residents. Drawing on Estonian samples from the study that discussed Narva, this paper will follow a discursive structure to analyze the social and ideological implications of media discourse in Estonia. This paper incorporates samples from the text to better understand this border city and its pendulum structure, as it maneuvers between both isolative and integrative qualities. The aim of this analysis is to demonstrate that though Narva continues to struggle with its image and place in Estonian society, due to historically ingrained linguistic and cultural traditions, it is undertaking development opportunities and investment projects to bridge its divide from Estonia.

This paper contains a historical contextualization of Narva, an explanation of its methodology, and two main sections: one analyzing the city's isolative qualities, and then another discussing its integrative qualities. The final section will discuss Narva's future in Estonian society.

SOVIET OCCUPATION AND THE LOSS OF ESTONIAN CULTURE IN NARVA

One of the USSR's main objectives was to instate an ethnic Russian majority presence in all of its republics and phase out non-Slavic ethnicities and cultures. To accomplish this, the Soviet Union initiated mass deportations of non-Slavic ethnic groups, such as Estonians, to gulags and other uninhabitable parts of Russia shortly after the country's illegal annexation in 1940 and throughout the decade.⁶ The target groups of these deportations included "members of the national elite, their families, and 'unreformed' criminals, and prostitutes."⁷

⁶ "Key Moments in the History of Estonia," *Demokratizatsiya* 11.4 (2003): 636-637; Heinrichs Strods and Matthew Kott, "The File on Operation 'Priboi': A Re-Assessment of the Mass Deportations of 1949," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 33.1 (2002): 1-5, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01629770100000191>

⁷ Olaf Mertelsmann and Aigi Rahi-Tamm, "Soviet Mass Violence in Estonia Revisited," *Journal*

Tens of thousands of Estonians were deported throughout this first decade of occupation, eliminating a large portion of the native population and significantly weakening its demographic balance. The most destructive deportations were those that took place in 1941 and 1949. Thousands of executions occurred throughout this period, as well, in order to root out political dissidents that Soviet authorities deemed threats to the government. Others were also forcefully placed into the Soviet military. In 1949 under “Operation Priboi,” for example, roughly 21,000 Estonians were seized and deported to Siberia—many dying on the journey—with deportees ranging from newborns to the elderly. In total from this decade, approximately 47,000 were arrested for political reasons, 35,000 were deported, and 34,000 were forced into the Red Army to spend several months in labor camps, during which one third perished.⁸ This act of Soviet brutality resulted in a drastic decline of population for Estonia, and it also introduced new levels of fear, panic, and terror for ethnic Estonians. These deportations and the dramatic effect they left on the nation were the Soviet Union’s systematic, methodical process of national obliteration and cultural destruction for Estonia.⁹

Thousands of political executions and small-scale deportations occurred throughout this period, as well, so there exist only approximate estimates on the number of Estonians who lost their lives as a result of these policies. The government-sanctioned deportations were discontinued when the USSR entered its de-Stalinization period in 1956.

To make up for the population loss and ensure Slavic dominance, Soviet authorities transferred thousands of ethnic Russians into Estonia, rendering the city’s demographics entirely Russian. Many settled around the Ida-Viru region, located in northeastern Estonia near the Russian border and home to Narva. The Soviets and Nazis bombed this region in the 1944 Battle of Narva, when both sides fought for control of this strategically-located border city. These bombings demolished nearly the entire infrastructure and old-town baroque architecture of the region, especially in Narva. Instead of rebuilding the cultural infrastructure, the USSR forbade Estonians from returning to the Ida-Viru area, and proceeded to demolish the entire city. This made room for the construction of Soviet-style

of *Genocide Research* 11.2-3 (2009): 310, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520903119001>

⁸ Aigi Rahi-Tamm, “Human Losses,” in *The White Book: Losses Inflicted on the Estonian Nation by Occupation Regimes*, ed. Vello Salo (Tallinn: Estonian Encyclopaedia Publishers, 2005): 38-39.

⁹ Strods and Kott, “The File on Operation ‘Priboi,’” 18; Mertelsmann and Rahi-Tamm, “Soviet Mass Violence in Estonia Revisited,” 308-309.

apartments for the uranium factory workers, since Ida-Viru was an industrial epicenter for the USSR's nuclear program.¹⁰ The Soviet Union's distrust in ethnic Estonians prevented them from living or working in this region at large.

Once Estonia gained its independence in 1990, Narva was left in a peculiar place. Geographically located in Estonia, but culturally and linguistically connected to Russia, the municipal population felt disconnected and resisted Estonian independence—they demanded autonomy. Many identified not as Estonians, but as Russians residing in the Estonian Soviet Republic.¹¹

Despite these demands, Narva remained part of Estonia because of border agreements made between Estonian and Russian government officials. With this came a number of integrational challenges as the Estonian government reformed a variety of citizenship and naturalization policies in the 1990s. The naturalization process in Estonia was especially challenging for ethnic Russians, since the exam required an advanced knowledge of the very complex Estonian language, as well as Estonian history and culture. Sometimes there was a required oath of allegiance, too. Factors such as these, compounded with an inability for some to fully accept the dissolution of the USSR, deterred ethnic Russians from becoming citizens.¹²

Instead of becoming citizens or moving back to Russia, many ethnic Russians obtained gray passports signifying that they were stateless citizens. Though permitted to reside in Estonia, gray passport holders are excluded from voting in national elections and from engaging in certain types of employment, including law enforcement, public service positions, lawyers, notaries, and

¹⁰ For Narva's role as the industrial epicenter for the USSR's nuclear program, where "most of this secret research was carried out," see E. Lippmaa and E. Maremäe, "The Beginnings of Uranium Production in Estonia," *Oil Shale* 20.2 (Tallinn, Estonia: Estonian Academy Publishers, 2003): 167-168; Gunter Faure and Teresa Mensing, *The Estonians: The Long Road to Independence*, (London, UK: Lulu.com, 2012): 304.

¹¹ Fein, "Symbolic Boundaries and National Borders: The Construction of an Estonian Russian Identity," 339.

¹² Richard Mole, "State- and Nation-Building: the Politics of Identity," in *The Baltic States from the Soviet Union to the European Union: Identity, Discourse and Power in the Post-Communist Transition of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania* (London, UK: Routledge, 2012): 87-92, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203121498>; Ammon Cheskin and Angela Kachuyevski, "The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Post-Soviet Space: Language, Politics and Identity," *Europe-Asia Studies* 71.1 (2019): 11, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2018.1529467>; David Cameron and Mitchell Orenstein, "Post-Soviet Authoritarianism: The Influence of Russia in Its Near Abroad," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 28.1 (2012): 25, <https://doi.org/10.2747/1060-586x.28.1.1>

pharmacists. They also cannot be members of a political party nor can they stand for a seat in parliament. The restrictions around the gray passport has initiated an identity crisis for many ethnic Russians related to their stateless status. This has impeded their sense of Estonian national identity, owing to the restrictiveness and civic exclusion they experience, and it has consequently placed them in an ambiguous position in society as they navigate the complexity of finding belonging in a nation of which, in the official sense, they are not a member or citizen.¹³ To this day, Estonia—with a population of 1.3 million, where 25 percent of which is ethnically Russian—has over 71,000 stateless citizens.¹⁴ The vast majority of those stateless citizens are ethnically Russian and many of whom reside in Narva.¹⁵ Ethnic Russians' unwillingness to obtain Estonian citizenship has previously been seen as a sign of disrespect among ethnic Estonians. This has then furthered cultural and ethnic tension, since citizenship has evolved as a dividing social factor in post-Soviet Estonia.

METHODOLOGY

This article employs a discursive approach to media content analysis as the methodological structure for examining, exploring, and understanding the social positionality of Narva, Estonia. Because the study will analyze national news reports, it uses content analysis, an interpretive approach, to examine how the content of a communication source, such as a media outlet, reflects the political issues and public discourse found in a country, and then what that content signals about society itself. Overall, content analysis employs the “interpretation of the content of text and data through the systematic classification process of coding” to identify recurring social themes or patterns.¹⁶ Introduced in the early 20th century, media content analysis was initially used as a method to study and investigate propaganda. Over the past several decades, its application and usage has extended into other analytic and academic realms. It is a specialized subset of content analysis,

¹³ Tacita Vero, “The Strange Case of the Alien Passport,” *Roads and Kingdoms*, March 12, 2017, <https://perma.cc/YMM3-99XN>

¹⁴ “Population by Ethnic Nationality,” *Estonian Statistics*, June 9, 2020, <https://perma.cc/QQ7J-K33X>; “Stateless Population in Estonia,” *Estonian Statistics*, 2020, <http://andmebaas.stat.ee/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=RV0222U#>

¹⁵ “Number of Stateless Residents in Estonia Drops by over 2,200 in 2018,” *Eesti Rahvusringhääling [ERR]*, January 3, 2019, <https://perma.cc/E544-2GMD>

¹⁶ Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah E. Shannon, “Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis,” *Qualitative Health Research* 15.9 (2005): 1278, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1049732305276687>

whose results produce a two-fold impact, allowing researchers to comprehensively evaluate communicative messages and also offer strategic insights through the tracking of thematic trends.¹⁷

The purpose of content analysis is to describe the characteristics of a designated source's material and to offer a qualitative depiction of society, as created by a set of themes and categories.¹⁸ These organized ideas or stories then provide meaning and understanding of certain events and experiences, which thereby offer glimpses into deeper facets of society. News media picks up on these trends and uses them to organize its own content. As a result, news media often reflects the pre-existing discursive frameworks in society.¹⁹ Examining the social frameworks of Narva's integration and isolation through the media will reveal how the city functions in contemporary Estonian society. It will also help to explain how two starkly different phenomena—integration and isolation—can coexist in one municipality.

The Estonian results in this paper are part of a larger study, which applies media content analysis to understand the social bidirectionality of ethnic Russians in both Estonia and Latvia. This article's results—a subset of the larger findings—center around the national news discourse about Narva, Estonia. Because this article is only examining Estonia, the methodological component for Latvia has been left out in this description.

On a structural level, this study followed a qualitative selection process to gather 36 articles from three national outlets in Estonia. This selection process considered the specific features and social factors that were discussed in the samples, ensuring that the samples do not contain generic reporting (i.e. weather, city events, etc.) that is not useful to the study. Chosen from the outlets' politics, society, and culture sections, the study's articles²⁰ contain content representative of the discourse in each country's economic, social, cultural, and political environments, and therefore relevant to the content analysis.

¹⁷ J. R. Macnamara, "Media Content Analysis: Its Uses, Benefits and Best Practice Methodology," *Asia Pacific Public Relations Journal* 6.1 (2005): 21.

¹⁸ "Content Analysis," *Columbia Public Health*, <https://perma.cc/UF7J-32B5>

¹⁹ Catherine Happer and Greg Philo, "The Role of the Media in the Construction of Public Belief and Social Change," *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* 1.1 (2013): 322, <https://doi.org/10.5964/jsp.1.1.96>; J.R. Macnamara, "Media Content Analysis," 21.

²⁰ All articles used in the study are cited and available at the end of the document.

Table 1: Overview and Characterization of Selected Media Outlets

Estonian Outlets			
	ERR	POSTIMEES	DELFI ESTONIA
Language of Samples	English	Russian	Russian
Reason for Selection	<i>ERR</i> offers a unique governmental perspective, and provides Estonian reporting in English for global readers	<i>Postimees</i> is considered the country's oldest newspaper, and it is Estonia's second-most popular Russian language news portal, reporting on all things related to the nation's Russian community	As a regional outlet in the Baltics, <i>Delfi Estonia</i> is the most popular news source for the country's ethnic Russian population, providing news relating to society, politics, culture, Narva, and more.
Number of Samples	36	36	36
Ownership	Estonian Government	Eesti Meedia Group	Ekspress Grupp
Website	news.err.ee	rus.postimees.ee	rus.delfi.ee

ERR translates and republishes content from Estonian into English, so all ERR samples are in the English language, offering insight into Estonian reporting. The other Postimees and Delfi Estonia samples are in the Russian language, offering insight into the social discourse and contemporary struggles faced by the Russian community. In total, there are 108 samples for Estonia.

The timeline for article selection was the 12-month period between February 1, 2019 and January 31, 2020. Three articles were gathered per month for each outlet to create a detailed reflection of Estonian society throughout the entire year, and establish a representative image of the identified themes. As such, no one theme or concept dominated the study, but rather, many appeared and evolved within the timeframe.

This 12-month timeline was selected for two reasons: 1) Estonian elections occurred during it, which are a reliable catalyst for bringing voter concerns to the forefront of media and stimulating broader discussions about their implications for citizens and society; and 2) This year, 2019, was the thirty-year anniversary of the Baltic Way—a regional protest that helped initiate the Baltic nations' independence from the USSR. This was therefore an illustrative period in evaluating how ethnic

Russians (and Narva) reckon with their transition from the majority to the minority.

Once all the articles were gathered, they were coded according to their thematic representations.²¹ The coding method analyzed the samples' positions on the isolation and integration of Narva and the city's ethnic Russian community. The coding also highlighted the most commonly covered themes from each outlet.

Furthermore, I attached at least one theme or concept—such as “language” or “citizenship and identity”—per article, and then up to three for those articles covering several issues. The limit of three was to ensure that the results were succinct enough to show which themes were most present and which appeared the lowest, while still offering a varied set of results. Articles generally contained two themes within the text. The coding process and concept determination was tripartite: First, I familiarized myself with the collected samples and their positions in social discourse. Second, I coded each article based on the themes presented. Finally, I verified the coding itself (i.e. rechecked all labeled codes) to ensure that the designated themes are represented throughout the text.

Table 2: Overview of Dominant Themes Presented in the Content Analysis

Estonian Outlets		
ERR	POSTIMEES	DELFI ESTONIA
Narva's Internal Challenges: 20%	Language Use 20%	Russian "Otherness" 17%
Language Use: 18%	Development of Narva 18%	Education 17%
Investment and Development in Narva: 14%	Education 14%	Ethnic Politics 14%

²¹ For further information on this approach, see Johnny Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (Los Angeles, California: SAGE, 2013).

Lingering Soviet Tensions w/ Russia 14%	Ethnic Politics 12%	Citizenship and Identity 13%
Ethnic Politics 10%	Narva's Internal Challenges 12%	Development of Narva 12%
Education 10%	Citizenship and Identity 9%	Language Use 10%
Citizenship and Identity 8%	Russian "Otherness" 8%	Narva's Internal Challenges 8%
Inter-Ethnic Relations 4%	Inter-Ethnic Relations 5%	Inter-Ethnic Relations 6%
Russophobia 2%	Estonian-Russian Border 2%	Russophobia 3%
<i>Samples Indicating Integration: 42%</i>	<i>Samples Indicating Integration: 47%</i>	<i>Samples Indicating Integration: 33%</i>
<i>Samples Indicating Isolation: 58%</i>	<i>Samples Indicating Isolation: 53%</i>	<i>Samples Indicating Isolation: 67%</i>

After my qualitative analysis, I moved on to generating quantitative statistics for each outlet's nine dominant themes. These statistics demonstrate which struggles and contentions are most prevalent for Estonia's ethnic Russian communities. The results are organized into the table above—with each media outlet containing its own section and set of statistics. The results highlight the back-and-forth nature of Narva's ethnic struggles and economic development, which is the foundation for this paper. The themes dealing directly with Narva are bolded above, but it is important to note that many themes overlap with one other, such as language use, border issues, education, and lingering Soviet tensions. Because of this multiplicity, Narva has a notable place in Estonian society, and it is an interesting municipality to explore. Additionally, I read each selected article holistically to determine if its content aligned with integration or isolation. Each article was categorized as either having more isolative or integrative qualities, which is shown at the bottom of the table from above.

When addressing the articles, I will list acronyms for the news outlet

it came from (for example, “E” for ERR or “DE” for Delfi Estonia), and the sample’s number from a list at the end of this document (i.e. Sample E-23, referencing article 23 from the ERR list). In my list, I have organized all articles chronologically and by news outlets.

There are some previous studies analyzing the themes and realms of social discourse in the Baltic region.²² However, these existing studies mainly focused on one or two media outlets and used smaller sample sizes over a shorter duration of time. Such studies also used different data sources like political speeches or essays. Furthermore, existing research neglects to explore the bidirectionality of Narva—a society that is simultaneously integrated and isolated. This article aims to address this research gap, analyzing the ways in which integrative and isolative bidirectionality impacts and defines Narva.

NARVA'S ISOLATIVE FEATURES: MUNICIPAL STRUGGLES HINDERING THE CITY'S INTEGRATION

As a result of its overwhelming ethnic Russian demographics, many of Narva’s residents, and especially those with gray passports or whose parents have gray passports, feel alienated. This alienation hinders their integration and engenders social disengagement from the rest of Estonia. They possess feelings of inferiority as they lack the capability to engage in Estonian society in meaningful, material ways, which consequently results in low self-esteem levels for the municipality.²³

These feelings of second-class citizenship are often reinforced by Estonia’s far-right politicians, like Mart Helme from the Conservative People’s Party of Estonia (EKRE), who has stated that Estonians only want one thing from the

²² Krēķis, Jānis, “Collective Memory as a Resource in Russian Information Warfare against Latvia,” *Žurnalistikos Tyrimai* 8 (2015): 92-115, <https://doi.org/10.15388/zt/jr.2015.8.8844>; Maria Golubeva, “Different History, Different Citizenship? Competing Narratives and Diverging Civil Enculturation in Majority and Minority Schools in Estonia and Latvia,” *Journal of Baltic Studies* 41.3 (2010): 315-329, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01629778.2010.498190>; Veronika Kalmus, “Is Interethnic Integration Possible in Estonia?’, *Ethno-Political Discourse of Two Ethnic Groups*,” *Discourse & Society* 14.6 (2003): 667-697, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F09579265030146001>

²³ Maaris Raudsepp, “Ethnic Self-Esteem and Intergroup Attitudes Among the Estonian Majority and the non-Estonian Minority,” *Studies of Transition States and Societies* 1.1 (2009): 41-45.

Russians living in their country—"to leave them alone."²⁴

Table 3: Demographic Breakdown of Narva's Residents as of January 2020²⁵
(Source: Sample DE-35)

Narva's Demographic Composition

According to Ethnicity	According to Citizenship	According to Native Language
Russian 83.3%	Russian 36%	Russian 89.3%
Estonian 3.6%	Estonian 48.5%	Estonian 1.8%
Ukrainian 2.4%	Ukrainian 0.5%	Ukrainian 1.3%
Belarusian 1.8%	Stateless 13.6%	Belarusian 0.2%
Other 8.9%	Other 1.4%	Other 7.4%

Narva's struggles cover a wide array of issues, from a declining population, a corrupt political system, and increased discrimination due to their Soviet history. These isolative features separate Narva from Estonian society. By extension, these features detach the nation's Russian community from Estonian society, as well. These isolative features then develop Narva's reputation as a true "Russian" city whose society and ideals differ from Estonia's. The breakdown of its ethnic composition reinforces this: 83.3 percent of its residents consider themselves Russian, and more than half do not even possess Estonian citizenship, as demonstrated in the table above. Only 3.6 percent consider themselves Estonian, and then less than two percent speak it as their primary language.

Nearly all of its residents speak Russian as their native language, as indicated in the table above, and they also lack advanced Estonian language skills

²⁴ Aili Vahtla, ed. "Russian Cultural Autonomy on the Other Side of Narva River, says Helme," *ERR*, October 2, 2018, <https://perma.cc/4H9N-GU65>

²⁵ The "Other" categories include, but are not limited to, Latvians, Lithuanians, Finns, Tatars, and Poles.

when compared with the rest of the country, since the lingua franca of the city is overwhelmingly Russian. This linguistic divide is perpetuated in younger generations since Narva's school system lacks resources to teach Estonian. Currently, Estonian law requires 60 percent of instruction in minority language schools to be in Estonian, and 40 percent may be conducted in Russian. Narva's minority language schools often fail to meet this requirement, because the city's teachers lack the Estonian proficiency to effectively teach it, subjecting many students to a poor level of Estonian instruction. The majority of its teachers are older, and their Estonian language skills are not as strong.

Narva schools, unfortunately, also cannot recruit younger Russian teachers who speak Estonian proficiently. In fact, a report from Estonia's National Audit Office in August 2019 found that Ida-Viru lacks qualified Estonian-language teachers. This shortage hinders the community's ability to linguistically integrate with the rest of Estonia.²⁶ As such, the burden is placed on the parents and students to learn Estonian, since the city's school system is incapable.

Additionally, due to the high presence of ethnic Russians, many Narva residents hold differing views of USSR occupation from their Estonian counterparts.²⁷ This difference in opinion is evidenced by Narva residents' view of May 9th, also known as "Victory Day,"²⁸ which honors and pays tribute to the Soviet Union's 1945 victory over Nazi Germany. While celebrations for this date have remained popular in Narva, May 9th is a day of national mourning for the rest of Estonia. Though to Russians this day represents liberation, the titular population views it as a mere re-occupation of their homeland, since it began the second wave of brutality perpetuated by the Soviet regime on the nation's non-Slavic population. As such, Narva's staunch celebration of it separates the city from much of Estonia, and detracts from the city's Estonian integration.

²⁶ Aili Vahtla, ed., "Audit Office: Estonian Language Training for Adults Poorly Organized," *ERR*, August 28, 2019, <https://perma.cc/NNW4-CWTY>

²⁷ Andrey Makarychev and Alexander Yatsyk, *Borders in the Baltic Sea Region: Suturing the Ruptures* (United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd, 2017): 139-140, <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-352-00014-6>.

²⁸ Monuments also represent a key figure in understanding Narva's stark difference, when compared with other cities, in interpreting Estonian history. To the residents of Narva, Soviet monuments and statues are an important part of their history, and therefore ought to remain unaltered. See Siobhan Kattago, "Commemorating Liberation and Occupation: War Memorials Along the Road to Narva," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 39.4 (2008): 431-449, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01629770802461225>

In Estonia, there also exists a tension around any and all memorabilia related to the Soviet Union, such as the USSR's flag. For Estonians, this Soviet memorabilia brings back difficult memories of occupation; for Russians, however, this memorabilia merely celebrates the perceived strength and glory of the USSR, for which many elder Russians still hold respect. Prior to the country's ban on Soviet flags in the early 2000s, many residents of Narva would showcase them in parades or outside their houses on Victory Day. Now, however, if individuals do this—and some still do—then they face a fine (Sample P-10).²⁹ Additionally, Narva's own city council members—such as Larissa Olenina, who has been investigated for corruption multiple times—have organized May 9th celebrations (Samples E-10 & DE-10), likely for political benefit. If politicians in Narva can appeal to the public on these ideals, they are viewed as protectors of the city's history, traditions, and values, which are often demeaned by other Estonians.

Narva also suffers from a declining population, which threatens its social and economic future (Samples E-35, P-16, P-34, P-36, DE-35). With a population of 82,979 by 1992, Narva had a stable source of professional opportunities under the Soviet regime, owing to the presence of a number of government and industrial positions, such as with the Kreenholm Manufacturing Company, which employed many of the city's residents.³⁰ However, in a post-Soviet Estonia, where industrial work is not as prevalent, Narva has a population of 56,000, and, according to sample DE-35, the population is set to decrease in the years to come, as Narva struggles to attract new residents due to low wages, weak infrastructure, high crime rates, and corrupt politicians. The region's proximity to Russia, especially in light of the Russian invasion into Ukraine in 2014, further renders it undesirable to many.

Sample P-34, titled "Residents Leave Ida-Virumaa: Over the Past Year, the Population has Declined by 5,000," notes that Ida-Viru's population decline rate doubled in 2019, with Narva's population decreasing by nearly 2,500 residents that year. Narva's housing units have a capacity of 80,000 individuals, many of which currently remain vacant or abandoned. This vacancy signifies a city that is declining, aging, and unable to sustain itself.

²⁹ Some residents responded to the ban on Soviet flags by displaying a red flag on Victory Day, but without the hammer and sickle, according to sample P-10. Though clearly a representation of Soviet glorification, the Estonian state cannot fine these individuals, since the flag is not overtly Soviet, even if the flag owners intend for it to appear so.

³⁰ "Narva in Figures," dataset, *City of Narva*, 2009, <https://perma.cc/BV6A-B9MF.pdf>

The diminishing population has alarmed city officials, who view the loss of workers and residents as barriers to the city's development and maintenance. Sample E-35 reported on the city government's population concerns, and claimed "societal attitudes" are a primary factor in individuals' departure. In this sample, Narva's then-mayor, Aleksei Jevgrafov, a Centre party member elected in April 2019,³¹ offered solutions for mitigating the dwindling population:

Of course [the population decline] is unfortunate, and sad news, but we will pay attention to it and give people the opportunities [to think] that living in Narva would be cool. There are parks, recreational facilities, concert programs, and we work closely with industrial parks and we meet investors all the time who are willing to come to Narva and set up factories here. Only then will Narva make money and be able to channel the revenue it collects from people into its development. We need to look at how life in Narva is changing, where more people are living today and this depends on where we contribute more financially. We need to pay more attention to keeping the population at 55,000 people.

Narva's demographic problem is further complicated by its declining birth rates and large elderly population, who are retired and rely heavily on pensions. Therefore, it is imperative that the Estonian government work on programs to incentivize childbirth and retain younger populations. If individuals are encouraged to start a family with reduced costs of raising a child, they may be more likely to stay in Narva, which is currently Estonia's poorest city. Currently, however, these programs have not been fully developed, and so Narva does not have an adequate system to encourage people to stay and start a family in the city.

Another priority of Narva's officials is attracting younger individuals to combat the population decline. This can be achieved by advertising desirable professional opportunities in Narva. However, this is difficult to accomplish due

³¹ Mayor Jevgrafov was ultimately removed from his position in November 2020 as a result of a no-confidence vote that the city council brought against him. The vote of no-confidence was initiated because of two reasons: Jevgrafov's work on Narva's proposals submitted for the EU's fair transition plan and his inability as mayor to establish normal relations between Narva and the Estonian state. See "Mayor of Narva loses vote of no confidence," *ERR*, November 11, 2020, <https://perma.cc/JS7A-HZLE>

to a lack of employment opportunities. Younger individuals may then be more likely to leave Narva if they speak some Estonian, given the abundance of opportunities that exist outside of this Russian municipality, such as in Tallinn or Tartu.³² The quality of life and the pay is higher in these cities, and the rates of crime and drug abuse are lower, making it attractive and preferable to live elsewhere.

Narva possesses the lowest income per capita in the country. In Narva, the average monthly income is approximately 925 euros, according to sample E-14, compared to Estonia's average of 1,300 euros. National unemployment has been decreasing in recent years, as Estonia further integrates with the EU economy and new professional opportunities emerge for its citizens. However, this has not been the case for Narva, where unemployment continues to rise. Unemployment in Narva's region rests at 12.4 percent, whereas the country average is 5.1 percent.³³ Narva continues to rely on blue-collar work, such as the textile, clothing, transport, metalworking, furniture, and shale oil industries.³⁴ Residents of Narva are largely unable to find work outside of these blue-collar sectors. With the nation's decision to also move toward a more environmentally-friendly energy system away from shale oil mining, which employs a number of the city's residents, the rate of municipal unemployment may increase significantly.³⁵

Power plant lay-offs in mid-2019, for example, weakened the city's already fragile economy (Samples E-15 & DE-13). Enefit Energy Production, a subsidiary of state-owned Eesti Energia, announced lay-offs of roughly 500 employees, caused by Estonia's transition out of oil shale in its power production. This raised concern in the Narva community in laid-off workers' ability to retrain for a new profession. These laid-off employees will likely encounter challenges trying to find similar work, as other companies make similar cuts to prepare for the nation's energy pivot. A shock to the workers, the trade union, and the locals, the country's transition from oil shale benefits Estonia as a whole, but weakens Narva, forcing

³² However, for those young ethnic Russian residents of Narva, who do not speak Estonian well, then their only option is to remain in Narva. Unfortunately, this is the case for many, especially if their parents do not teach them Estonian at a young age.

³³ "Why Narva?" *Narva 2024: Narva for European Capital of Culture 2024*, 2019, <https://narva2024.ee/en/why-narva>.

³⁴ "Narva in Figures," *City of Narva*; "Why Narva?" Narva 2024, 2019, <https://narva2024.ee/en/why-narva>;

David Trimbach, "Sense of Place in Narva: How Do Narva's Residents Feel and Think about Their City?" *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, October 31, 2019, <https://perma.cc/GXJ7-WFQ4>

³⁵ Weyland, "The Threat from the Populist Left," 32.

it to branch out more from its crude-reliant, Soviet past and adapt to Estonian economic arrangements.

Evgeny Dmitriev, a heating engineer and one of the many laid-off employees expressed his concerns of finding another job:

Thoughts and expectations, of course, are only negative. Life plans are crumbling. Many of us at one time were taking loans for cars, apartments. So, what is next? We worked almost all our lives at the station in a particular specialty. Where do we go? Where do we go for our families, children, especially since we can only do what we learned? I have no other specialty. It is impossible to find another job today in Narva and a salary at the level of NE.

Yet, while some in Narva do still have employment, this job security is not guaranteed. Another employee named Ronan communicated his fears:

I really hope that they will not cut me. It's even scary to imagine if this happens. I have two children, we still pay leasing. It seems that all this is done on purpose to permanently kill any production in Narva. They refer to cheap Russian electricity, but it was necessary to anticipate this in advance. Behind each laid-off worker are families, children, taxes in the end.³⁶

These examples further isolate and mar the image of Narva as a city with a precarious financial state. In response, residents leave to seek work elsewhere, causing brain drain. On the contrary, older individuals and pensioners move to Narva for lower costs of living and a quieter environment (Sample P-36). These migration trends regress the preexisting imbalanced age demographics, increases the number of financially dependent residents, and hinders Narva's local development with low consumption by pensioners living on tight budgets. With this influx of older residents, Narva is unable to develop a more young, lively, and active community—a municipal cultural trait that is oftentimes prioritized by those moving to a different city.

³⁶ These two quotes from Dmitriev and Ronan come from sample DE-13.

Additionally, a growing number of gray passport holders—who have been residing outside of Estonia in recent years—are returning to Narva. This return could be viewed as a positive trend for Narva's economy. More people, even if elderly, means at least a bit more participation in the local market, which results in a stronger, more robust economy and a more appealing city to move to. However, on another level, the return of gray passport holders harms Narva's social integration more than it promotes economic well-being. This is because Estonians across Estonia are wary of these gray passport holders' symbolic connections to the USSR. Narva then becomes a safe haven for ethnic Russians who never chose to naturalize.

As a result, it is challenging for city officials to portray Narva as a desirable, worthwhile location to move to. Crime also stains the city's reputation. Narva possesses the highest crime rate per capita in all of Estonia.³⁷ Similarly, the violence rate has increased nearly three-fold in the city since 2017, overwhelming city officials and local law enforcement.³⁸

Starting in the early 2000s, Estonia, as a country, has also suffered from an extensive fentanyl epidemic. Entering from the Russian border with Narva, this synthetic opioid found its way into the Estonian drug market in 2003 and it quickly replaced heroin for the drug of choice. As a result of its widespread use, Estonia had the highest mortality rate from drug overdoses in Europe from 2007 to 2017.³⁹ Owing to the interconnection between opioid abuse and contracting HIV/AIDS, this Baltic country has additionally struggled in recent years with containing the collateral health damage to its citizens that has come with the opioid epidemic.⁴⁰ The HIV/AIDS outbreak has been especially prevalent in Narva, which is where the epidemic initially began in 2001.⁴¹ To this day, Narva has the highest

³⁷ "Estonia 2019 Crime & Safety Report," *US Department of State Overseas Security Advisory Council* [OSAC], April 1, 2019, <https://perma.cc/LQ9C-9EM7>

³⁸ "Police Commented on the Surge in Killings in Narva," *Viru Prospekt*, June 26, 2019, <https://perma.cc/42YV-M3ZP>

³⁹ Anneli Uuskula, Don Des Jarlais, and Sigrid Vorobjov, "The Fentanyl Epidemic in Estonia: Opportunities for a Comprehensive Public Health Response," *The Lancet*, December 2019, <https://perma.cc/ZE5J-T85E>

⁴⁰ Isabelle Giraudon, Federica Mathis, Dagmar Hedrich, Julian Vicente, and André Noor, "Drug-Related Deaths and Mortality in Europe," *European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction*, July 2019, 17, <https://perma.cc/ZP8A-67T5>

⁴¹ Kaja-Triin Laisaar, Radko Avi, Jack DeHovitz, and Anneli Uuskula, "Estonia at the Threshold of the Fourth Decade of the AIDS Era in Europe," *AIDS Research and Human Retroviruses* 27.8 (2011): 841-851, <https://doi.org/10.1089/aid.2010.0223>

proportion of HIV-positive individuals in Estonia.⁴²

Narva's high levels of crime, compounded by the nation's fentanyl outbreak, have gripped the city's younger population in the past two decades. Juvenile delinquency poses a significant and immediate challenge for Narva. With a lack of social programs and activities to occupy their time, they engage in criminal activities. And for the vast majority of exclusively Russian-speaking youth, childhood in Narva has been marked by several obstacles: high rates of unemployment, low incomes, and high rates of violence.⁴³ Estonia's former Minister of Justice, Urmas Reinsalu, noted in late 2018 that: "[Narva's youth] need to be dealt with even before the prosecutor's office, court or other law enforcement agencies become involved. As preventive work, young people must be given activities and shown the direction of how to grow into a law-abiding citizen."⁴⁴ These efforts could include increasing education and extracurricular activities, in addition to fostering deeper connections between young people and the state, so that they have greater access to alternative and positive ways to occupy their time.

Drug-related crimes are not the only ones plaguing the city. Narva also suffers from varying forms of crime—both violent and non-violent—often found in other cities around Europe. In addition to the higher rates of crime, however, the actual brutality of criminal incidents committed in this border city serves as another factor worrying ethnic Estonians, who have access to online reports about the higher crime rates in Narva, and whose content reinforces their aversion to and apprehension of the city. Recent crimes in Narva and the Ida-Viru region from the past year include: elder abuse, domestic violence, and hit-and-runs. Local news sources have also reported on the appearances of corpses around the city, parents physically abusing their young children, armed robberies, and various stabbings.⁴⁵ On a national level, high crime rates in Narva

⁴² Kristjan Kallaste ed., "Statistics: Increased Numbers of Women and Heterosexuals Diagnosed with HIV," *ERR*, June 11, 2020, <https://perma.cc/LAJ9-3B4J>

⁴³ Nelli Kalikova, Aljona Kurbatova, and Ave Talu, "Estonia Children and Adolescents Involved in Drug Use and Trafficking: A Rapid Assessment," *International Labour Organization: International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour [IPEC]*, June 2002, 11, <https://perma.cc/7RDG-6ZGR>

⁴⁴ "Reinsalu: To Help Young People, Social Programs Must Also Be Made Available in Ida-Virumaa," *Delfi Estonia*, September 8, 2018, <https://perma.cc/HWB4-3TB6>

⁴⁵ The crime section for this portal is named "112." This is the website's link: <https://prospekt.ee>.

bolster Estonia's criminal stereotypes against Russian communities at-large.

In sum, not only do Narva's residents grapple with the struggles of identity formation and a dwindling economy—they must also deal with the city's high rates of opioid use, specifically fentanyl. For ethnic Russians, this drug abuse and its subsequent increase in crime rates further stigmatize and isolate Narva from Estonian society, contributing to its reputation as a “problem-ridden industrial town.”⁴⁶

Political corruption is another municipal issue degrading Narva's image. Its city councilors were linked to corruption scandals in 2018 and 2019 (Samples E-2, E-6, E-12). Law enforcement has achieved some success in sanctioning Narva's municipal government and political parties, according to sample E-2, but has been unable to achieve lasting results.

Arrested and convicted in 2019, city councilor Aleksei Voronov's corruption scandal subjected Narva to scrutiny. Voronov violated several public procurement procedures by accepting bribes of at least 60,000 euros. Additionally, a vote of no-confidence in March 2019 led to the dismissal of former Narva mayor Tarmo Tammiste of the Centre Party (Sample E-8). An investigation then also began in April 2019 as a result of allegations of counterfeited election documents related to the process of conducting the no-confidence vote against Tammiste.⁴⁷ Moreover, at the urging of Estonia's Centre party Prime Minister, eight members of Narva's city council resigned in early 2019 to mitigate political damage, after Narva's prosecutor's office presented suspicions that they had violated the city's anti-corruption laws related to bribes in their political positions (Sample E-2).

The national Centre party, commonly supported by Estonia's ethnic Russians, has declined in popularity in Narva due to the party's corruption, internal conflicts, failure to affect tangible social and municipal change, and the lack of socially conservative principles. Although Russians have more recently become discontented with the party, Centre's links to Putin's United Russia party has provoked long-standing ethnic Estonian distrust in its ability to promote Estonian interests.

Narva's region had only a 24 percent voter turnout for its previous EU elections, according to sample E-12, and then it had the country's lowest voter

⁴⁶ Airi-Alina Allaste and Mikko Lagerspetz, “Drugs and Doublethink in a Marginalised Community,” *Critical Criminology* 13 (2005): 267, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10612-005-3184-z>

⁴⁷ Aleksei Voronov was the city councillor who started the no-confidence processions against the mayor, according to sample E-8.

turnout by over ten percent in the parliamentary elections.⁴⁸ Described as “depressingly low,” with a weak turnout from young and middle-aged voters, this figure is nearly ten percent lower than previous years, such as 2011 and 2014, indicating that voters in Narva are losing interest in their political system (Sample DE-4).⁴⁹ In sample E-12, Jana Toom, a leading Centre politician, cited corruption as a reason for low voter turnout in Ida-Viru in national and EU elections. “There is a certain disappointment among the people,” Toom stated, “and there is this negativity in connection with the corruption scandal in Narva.”

In Sample DE-4, Narva journalist Roman Vikulov noted political disengagement as another difference between Narva and Estonia. He writes:

Ida-Virumaa is further and further removed from the state, the more the state does to involve the Northeast in the life of the republic, the more opposition it provokes. If the residents of the county demonstrate their indifference to politics, then let them not whine when politics is indifferent to them. Ida-Virumaa is still not Estonia because they do not teach Estonian in schools. Russophobes have deprived the Russians of hope for a better life [...] If we proceed from the fact that Ida-Virumaa voters are still not indifferent, indifferent to politics and the fate of the state, and to admit that the decision not to vote was a difficult, long-suffering, responsible choice for many, we have to admit that there were many reasons for the inhabitants of the Northeast to leave their votes to themselves.

Political participation is regressed as a result of this indifference and detachment, and this isolated framework also renders corruption and political misbehavior endemic and recurrent, as Narva’s residents are disillusioned from resolving the system. With a political system that appears forever entrenched in corruptive politics, Narva’s citizens also likely lack faith that any politicians

⁴⁸ “Voter Turnout Statistics,” dataset, *Valimised*, March 5, 2019, <https://perma.cc/CP2Z-RQR7>

⁴⁹ The voter turnout for Estonia’s 2019 parliamentary elections was 48.2 percent in Ida-Viru, whereas the national average was 63.7 percent. Harju county, located about 40 kilometers outside of Tallinn, had the highest voter turnout with 69.8 percent. See “Voter Turnout Statistics,” *Valimised*.

can fundamentally affect change, so they do not view voting as a truly effective means to enact social change in their city. Since in many ways Narva operates autonomously, local corruption proliferates as it is politically and socially confined to municipal borders, unchecked by national enforcement. Therefore, politicians can more easily take advantage of the city's isolation and its lack of structural connection with the rest of the country.

Overall, Narva finds itself in a uniquely challenging position in Estonian society. With declining demographics, linguistic disconnect, a lack of worthwhile employment opportunities, ongoing crime, and an ineffective political system, the city experiences several layers of municipal struggles that isolate it from the rest of Estonia. In turn, this complicates the status of the city in Estonia and presents it with an array of social, political, and linguistic complexities that it must handle in the years to come, in order to find a deeper place in the national society.

NARVA'S INTEGRATIVE FEATURES: DEVELOPMENT, INVESTMENT, AND INCREASED NATIONAL ATTENTION

Though many view Narva as an isolated city, struggling economically and politically, the content analysis revealed some contradictions against Narva's complete isolation. At the very least, the city's status extends beyond its isolative features. Estonian political leaders are attempting to reduce isolation by developing the city's infrastructure and social programs. In doing this, officials also want to reframe Narva as a desirable location for tourists, young professionals, and other potential residents, establishing a sustainable, self-sufficient economy and a more civil society.

As referenced in the content analysis, these reforms represent another perspective of Narva, reflecting the city's bidirectionality. While many news samples indicate Narva's internal struggles with Estonian incorporation, there are numerous news samples also indicating otherwise. The latter samples highlighted Narva's efforts to offer cheaper and more accessible Estonian language programs, develop infrastructure and promote political engagement with Narva. The successful implementation of these efforts could boost the morale of Narva's residents, and integrate them with Estonian society.

Narva applied to be the EU's Capital of Culture for 2024, for guidance and funding in tourism and migration promotion. The EU's annual Capital of Culture initiative invigorates the cultural and social structures of a lesser-known European city. It organizes events with a strong pan-European dimension while

simultaneously spurring internal development and interest in the city. Moreover, this initiative provides several millions of euros in funding and aims to impart a long-term positive impact on the selected city's culture, society and urban development (Sample DE-20).

Narva's application was ultimately unsuccessful, but the application process served the city well, as Narva officials outlined potential improvements to its infrastructure and economy.⁵⁰ Labeled "the thesis on the development of the city" by Narva's then-mayor, he argues in sample P-21 that the city should adopt some of the development plans outlined in its application, but "rethink" the alternative funding sources. With Narva's residents' desire for improved infrastructure, there is hope that this application will spur municipal development in the coming years (Sample E-1).

In addition to its bid for Cultural Capital, Narva announced several internal development and investment projects in 2019, aiming to revitalize infrastructure and tourism. For instance, Estonian developing company Varesesaar LLP is leading the renovation of an old complex of cotton warehouses into a new tourist attraction called "The World of Textiles," exhibiting Narva's history of textiles manufacturing. Describing the soon-to-be exposition, sample P-32 notes:

In the now empty cotton warehouses, an interesting and exciting world will appear in the future, the interactive external and internal exposition of which will tell about the history of Kreenholm and other topics related to textiles. The whole family, from toddlers to grandparents, are guaranteed vivid and informative impressions of their visit to the complex.

As of early 2020, Narva implemented a civic initiative program that funds residents' municipal development proposals (Sample P-35). In order to participate, residents complete a paper or electronic questionnaire to propose

⁵⁰That being said, Ivan Sergeev, the head of Narva's bid for the 2024 Capital of Culture, alleged that the competition's officials did not truly believe Narva could accomplish everything the city claimed it would, if selected. According to sample P-21: "The members of the competition committee carefully watched the news from Narva and simply doubted that the city authorities would do what was promised in the Narva application for the 'Cultural Capital.'"

their project to a filter committee, which will review each submission to ensure its compliance with the program. Once reviewed, the city's residents vote online for those submitted projects they most prefer. Winning proposals will be implemented by the author of the proposal and the board. This collaboration between the proposal author and local administration is crucial to the program's success. This civic initiative program, common in other Estonian cities, provides Narva with 200,000 euros to fund these projects. For comparison, the program budget for Tartu, which is larger than Narva, is about 150,000 euros; in Viljandi and Rapla, it is 30,000 euros; and in Tapa, it is 20,000 euros. Narva's allotment of funds signals the potential and willingness of the state to invest in the city, while including the input and ideas of its citizens.

Furthermore, in late July 2019, an outdoor development project was announced: the extension of the walkway trail along the Narva River by one kilometer (Sample P-18). This attraction, popular among locals, is in its third stage of construction now, with complete construction of the walkway extension expected to take two to three years. The 1.9 million euros for this stage of the project come from the Cross-Border Cooperation Program of Estonia and Russia, which is largely funded by the EU.

Besides the walkway extension, Narva began a three-year, seven million euro project in early 2020 to preserve pre-USSR vestiges and modernize infrastructure of its historic town hall building. The town hall building is, unfortunately, just one of three buildings in the city's Old Town that survived the 1944 Battle of Narva—when Red Air Force aerial bombardment and destruction by retreating German forces destroyed 98 percent of the city's buildings. According to samples P-7 and E-33, much of the town hall building's interior will be rebuilt to include a tourist center, tea rooms, a restaurant, and a souvenir shop. While these additions will modernize the town hall, the building's post-war remnants, like its famous wooden staircase and authentic cellars, will be preserved. The refurbishment of the town hall building is part of a larger goal to revitalize the Old Town district, which city officials hope will attract entrepreneurs and businesses who can ultimately contribute to the city's development.

Tourism has additionally been increasing in Narva's region as the city embarks on infrastructure development, with a six percent increase in tourism in 2019 (Sample E-27). As more people come to Narva to visit, the city experiences more and more economic engagement. In increasing tourism, Narva also has the opportunity to showcase all the city has to offer to travelers, in a bid to encourage

more people to move to Narva permanently.

The bulk of citizens visiting in 2019, however, were citizens of the Russian Federation. Though this is beneficial for Narva on an economic level, it does not aid very much on a social level. The reason being: Estonians are then likely to view Narva as not only a Russian residential city, but also a vacation spot for citizens of Russia, who flock to Narva and Narva-Jõesuu (the nearby beach town) to get a dose of Europe—but without leaving the linguistic and cultural comforts of Russia.

As it continues to develop, the Estonian government has supported the formation of Narva's "Estonian Language House," where residents can practice and learn the language for free (Samples DE-25, E-19, E-23, E-25, P-25, P-26). The Estonian Language House was created by The Integration Foundation, a Narva-based organization that seeks to integrate Russians into Estonia. The foundation works nationally, offering free online language courses and forming language houses in Russian-dominated cities. Described as "an important cooperation partner in promoting global Estonianness" by Riina Solman, Estonia's Population Minister, the Integration Foundation has generated substantial interest in Estonian culture, offering language cafes, tandem studies, and culture clubs. Falling under the command of both the Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Education, the foundation aims to establish Estonian national unity, deconstructing the country's ethnic tensions to promote national integration (Samples E-19 & E-25). In sample DE-25, Estonia's Minister of Culture Tõnis Lukas describes the linguistic opportunities afforded by the language house:

A prerequisite for cultural integration is language proficiency. The Narva House of Estonian is a stronghold for teaching Estonian and other important work of the Ministry of Culture [...] A cultural space and language environment is created [here] that are conducive to language practice. The creation of such an environment is especially important in Narva, where the Estonian language [is not spoken] so often. The Integration Foundation has done a very valuable job; therefore, the government has allocated an additional two million euros to the Ministry of Culture for teaching Estonian to adults in 2020. Thanks to this, next year a large number of people will be able to learn our native language

for free in this new house.

While many in Narva view government-mandated programs to learn Estonian as coercive and antagonistic, the Language House has been effective in offering voluntary instruction and promoting the genuine integration of Narva's ethnic Russian community. In offering the Language House as a public space, Narva's residents feel more comfortable attending and practicing at their own pace. As their language skills improve, Russian Estonians feel more comfortable using the language in public spheres of society, such as in stores and restaurants.

Simultaneously, Estonian teachers at the language house are interested in improving their Russian, with which many in Narva can help. This reciprocal learning style reinforces the linguistic community of the language house, and portrays it as a public space in which all language learners are welcome.

While The Language House accepts all learners, it is marketed to the younger generations. Narva has begun youth-based initiatives, with the goal of integrating the community and allowing younger populations to learn Estonian early on. Sample DE-18 highlights the establishment of a free, language-learning summer camp, where younger school students work in small groups on various tasks and activities for two weeks under the guidance of an Estonian-speaking teacher.

Another program, the Noored Kooli ("Youth to School") city camp, brings together 300 young Narva students for two weeks to study the Estonian language, develop communication and self-management skills, and engage in their Estonian projects. The participants put on sketches, compose Estonian-language newspapers, develop recipe books, create board games, organize art exhibitions, and create homemade films.

Kaye Metsla, the head of the board for the camp, described the benefits for both students and camp counselors:

For Narva schoolchildren, two weeks in a city camp is without a doubt a useful pastime: there they will make new friends, develop their projects, and along the way they will also learn Estonian. But for the newly-educated Noored Kooli teachers who are guiding children and young people, this will be a good test before the start of the school year, allowing them to develop their pedagogical and leadership skills.

Therefore, the benefits of this camp are two-fold. The students will improve their language skills from the immersive environment, while also developing connections and friendships along the way that will promote the further use of Estonian, since language was the initial force that connected them together. Then for the educators, this camp offers a unique chance to hone their teaching skills, so that they can grow more comfortable communicating the many concepts and nuances of the Estonian language to their pupils. It functions as a very concentrated and valuable precursor to (and preparation for) the school year.

In addition to these linguistic developments, Narva has also been receiving an increase in attention from Estonian president Kersti Kaljulaid, who assumed office in October 2016. Kaljulaid. An ethnic Estonian herself, President Kaljulaid has criticized the ethnic divide that many Estonian and Russian politicians have perpetuated. She has made it a focus of her presidency to not only better integrate the country's Russian minority, but specifically the Russian minority in Narva. The president has previously claimed she understands Estonia's Russian minority well, and that she is offended when she hears individuals claim this minority group is a "threat" to Estonian security (Sample D-8).

Her affinity for Narva is demonstrated through several samples, highlighting her goals for Narva's development and the integration of its Russian community (Samples P-24, E-33, E-26, and E-1). She relocated her office to Narva for parts of the fall of 2018, for example, to increase her understanding of the city's contemporary society. Prior to working in Narva for these various periods in the fall, the president had previously stated that: "Working here, it's possible to meet plenty of great people, and of course the area will get more attention, which will help to break through some of the stereotypes some people still have about Narva."⁵¹

Sample E-1, referring to Narva's identity as "more than Russian or Estonian," included comments from Narva College information technology professor Dr. Yar Muhammad, who noted the increasing state attention to Narva, as politicians from various parties and high-profile personalities visit the border city. These public figures interact with locals to understand the city's problems and work towards solutions. Speaking about the president's visits to Narva, Dr.

⁵¹ Dario Cavegn, "President Kersti Kaljulaid Starting First Work Week in Narva on Tuesday," *ERR*, August 28, 2018, <https://perma.cc/ED6L-RL6W>

Muhammad said:

She gave special attention to Narva, and visited many times in the last couple of months, even staying a couple of weeks, and she visited many different places, had meetings with many officials, participated in local events, and even met with local people to help understand the reality, concerns and problems as seen on the ground.

President Kaljulaid has also revisited Narva several times since her trips in 2018, as she focuses on establishing more ways to integrate the city's economy. Sample P-24, titled "Estonian President will come to Narva to discuss innovation and development of Ida-Virumaa," reported on Kaljulaid's meetings in Narva with local businesses about the city's "entrepreneur week." This free program provides "beginning entrepreneurs and for those who are just thinking of starting their own business" with relevant training, excursions, market insight, and practical business strategies.

To better understand the Narva community and its needs, the president also engages with the local community in her visits. For example, sample E-26 highlighted some of these engagements:

On Thursday, she will meet students from the Kiviõli 1 school and present them with a civic education class. She will also visit the Reinart Hallik Basketball School, based at the Iisaku upper secondary school, followed by the LAD day care center for children with disabilities, and the recently-opened Estonian Language House (Eesti Keele Maja). In the evening, she is set to address the state defense teachers' seminar, according to a press release from the president's office. On Friday, the president attends the opening of the OBJEKT creative incubator in Narva, which opens its doors at the Narva Culture and Business Center. She will share her thoughts on innovation and the development of Ida-Viru County with Narva mayor Aleksei Jevgrafov and Allan Kaldoja, founder of the on Linda 2 cultural and entrepreneurship center.

Renewing her commitment to the city's cultural integration, President

Kaljulaid has ventured to Narva to commemorate Estonian memorial days, visit local power plants, discuss plans for its Capital of Culture application, address stationed troops, and engage in NATO-related dialogues. Amid the coronavirus pandemic, she also took part in online discussions with the Narva community. For example, she delivered a virtual social studies lesson to Narva's high school graduates.

These visits have resonated with the border city's people, who have noticed her genuine interest and efforts to develop the city in meaningful, inclusive ways. Over the course of her visits, President Kaljulaid bonds with the community, so that they better identify themselves with the Estonian state. In Sample E-1, Head of the Integration Fund Irene Käosaar cited an instance of the President's connection with Narva. Listening to two older Russian women on the street after the presidential motorcade drove by, during one of Kaljulaid's visits, she overheard one say to another: "Did you see? That was our president going home." That simple statement represents something significant (Sample E-1). In Narva, where Russians lack a strong relationship with the state and its political figures, it spoke volumes to the Integration Foundation's leader, Irene Käosaar, to hear an older Russian individual possess such a potent connection.

CONCLUSION: NARVA AS A SOCIAL PENDULUM

While its infrastructure struggles and its Russian population feels isolated, Narva is undertaking increased efforts to revitalize its community, and find a place in Estonian society for its Russian minority. This raises the question: What does Narva's future hold?

Narva's residents have a very strong "sense of place." This phenomenon, the "sense of place," reflects the people-place relationships in society, and how or why people "depend on, attach to, identify with, and attribute meaning to place, including countries, cities, or even neighborhoods." In Narva, 84 percent of respondents in a survey examining municipal attachments expressed an attachment to the city.⁵² Considering residents' attachment to the city and the recent increase in development projects, Narva is likely to integrate with Estonia. As infrastructure projects continue to develop and modernize the city, Narva

⁵²David Trimbach, "Understanding Narva & Identity: Local Reflections from Narva's Russian-Speakers," *Baltic Worlds* 9.1-2 (2016): 4-12, <https://perma.cc/5VZE-QZF8>; Trimbach, "Sense of Place in Narva."

will assume a new reputation as a desirable location. Under these new projects, Narva's Old Town will be revitalized; outdoor attractions have been extended; abandoned factories are slowly being reinvigorated as cultural hotspots; and historic architecture will be preserved. The city's developed infrastructure will draw attention from Estonian businesses and entrepreneurs, redefining conceptions of Narva's economic status.

This urban development will likely generate economic opportunities for the city's residents, who currently suffer from wages significantly lower than the rest of Estonia, high rates of unemployment, and poverty. Moreover, the current downsizing of the Narva's power plants exacerbate residents' financial troubles, impacting other social factors, such as the city's low birth rate and decreasing population. An increase in professional opportunities would provide Narva with a necessary economic boost, allowing the residents financial security and access to improved infrastructure. With increased financial security, Narva's residents would feel a more pronounced sense of unity with Estonia, thereby possessing greater means of societal and economic engagement.

While language disparity persists as a significant barrier in Narva's integration, Estonia's efforts to linguistically integrate the Russian community with the rest of Estonia show signs of greater linguistic cohesion in Estonia. Narva's Russian residents could find greater cultural connection and participation in Estonian society. To Estonians, speaking the national language is a sign of respect, who also value and appreciate ethnic Russians' use of the national language, even if only at intermediate levels.

Similarly, public and state attention, and specifically from Estonian President Kaljulaid, is likely to increase the Narva community's affiliation with the Estonian state, signaling the city's value to Estonia. The President's municipal efforts demonstrate to residents her commitment to improving their quality of life and providing social tools to foster integration with Estonia while continuing to respect Russian culture. This produces conducive integration, rather than perceived coerced assimilation.

Nevertheless, these efforts—whether improving infrastructure, creating more jobs, or learning more Estonian—result in incremental change. The city's integration will be an evolving process that will not come quickly nor easily. Given the long process of integration, Narva's isolation appears unchanged in many ways. The burden of integration is on Narva's Russian community to collectively counter their own city's social, political, and linguistic problems. Narva's residents

are socially passive, and collective action may be a challenge, especially as Narva continues to lose younger, Estonian-proficient residents to cities like Tartu or Tallinn for educational and professional purposes.

Three frailties of the city—political misbehavior, crime, and language deficiency—continue to distance Narva from the rest of Estonia. Compared to recognizably integrative progresses, resolutions of these deep-seated isolating problems will only appear in later years, with the implementation and success of various municipal initiatives, civic programs, and communal efforts. Until then, however, Narva retains its image as a city struggling with crime, a weak political system, and a declining population that lacks Estonian proficiency and shares more cultural similarities and historical values with the Russian Federation. And since Narva's residents possess low voting participation rates, their fraught political system will hold for the foreseeable future, until the city's voters seize their political agency, reckon the failures of their politicians and the Centre party, and replace them with impactful, legitimate ones.

Though Narva's ethnic Russians are responsible for organizing Narva's economic, socio-political, and linguistic development, the Estonian state and ethnic Estonians must undo the stigmatization of Narva, its minority community, and its historical connections to the USSR. This can be accomplished through a continuance of its recent social and economic strategies, which have focused on ways to bring the country's Eastern city into Estonia's increasingly Western society. Ethnic Russians outside of Narva arguably have a responsibility to advocate for the border city and support its development, too, as Narva still bears a Russian heritage. This advocacy would be most effective if done on a micro-level, with ethnic Russians focusing on how each individual—in conversations and discussions alike—can play a part in positively portraying the city and communicating its uniqueness in Estonia. In improving Narva's status and position in Estonian society, ethnic Russians living outside of this border city then improve the status and image of the minority community itself all over the nation.

As such, Narva embodies social bidirectionality in many ways. From its present isolated status to its indications of an integrated future, Narva will oscillate on this social pendulum for years to come, as this border city and its Russian minority community uncover their place in Estonian society.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: ERR Samples

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Appendix B: Postimees Samples

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Appendix C: Delfi Estonia Samples

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