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**UNDERSTANDING *RUSSLANDDEUTSCHE* IDENTITY
AND ITS IMPLICATIONS**

by

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December 2021

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13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)

The *Russlanddeutsche*, or Russian-Germans, are the largest group of ethnic German repatriates in Germany, having arrived in large numbers from the former Soviet Union in the 1990s. This thesis examines the relationship between *Russlanddeutsche* history, identity, and modern German nationalism. It employs an interdisciplinary approach, including historical analysis, sociocultural linguistics, and nationalism theory. It surveys the *Russlanddeutsche* experience from 18th-century Russia, through the Soviet era, and into modern Germany. It investigates the interplay between shifts in language use and ethnic self-conception over generations. Leveraging the ethnosymbolist approach from nationalism studies, this thesis argues that the *Russlanddeutsche* can be properly understood as an ethnie, a particular ethnic typology often associated with ideas of nationhood. With this characterization in mind, the thesis demonstrates that formerly long-standing German citizenship law placed a special emphasis on the "Germanness" of the *Russlanddeutsche* as a basis for their admission, setting them apart from other immigrant groups. These themes reverberate in the contemporary nationalist and anti-immigrant discourse employed by right-wing parties and Russian information operations intending to galvanize *Russlanddeutsche* support, in some cases to significant effect. Such politics, often incorporating a pronounced NATO-skepticism and Russophilia, pose a challenge to German and transatlantic security.

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UNDERSTANDING *RUSSLANDDEUTSCHE* IDENTITY AND ITS
IMPLICATIONS

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AfD	Alternative for Germany
ASSR	Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic
BdV	Federation of Expellees
BVFG	Federal Law on Expellees
CDU	Christian Democratic Union
DAI	German Foreign Institute
EU	European Union
FDP	Free Democratic Party
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GDR	German Democratic Republic
IBD	Identitarian Movement Germany
IW	Information Warfare
LmDR	Fraternity of Germans from Russia
LS	Life Stage
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NKVD	People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs
NPD	National Democratic Party of Germany
NRW	North Rhine-Westphalia
PEGIDA	Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the Occident
RMfdbO	Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories
SA	Storm Detachment
SPD	Social Democratic Party of Germany
SS	Protection Squadron
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

In the late 1700s, the Romanov empress Catherine the Great—herself of German origin—invited large numbers of German immigrants to settle and work vacant land in Russia, initially in the Volga River region.[1] This grouping was but one population of Germans who found a new home in what today is called "Eastern Europe." Over the ensuing generations, these *Russlanddeutsche* (Russian-Germans), as they came to be called, remained distinct from their ethnically Russian co-subjects and co-citizens, and increasingly differed from the Germans who remained in Central Europe.[2] In the years after World War II, ethnic cleansing forced Germans from many parts of Eastern Europe, inducing legislators in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) to craft a legal basis for their admission. Beginning in 1953, as *Russlanddeutsche* and other ethnic Germans returned to the FRG, the disparity between their unique identity and the modern identity of native Germans in the FRG became apparent. The *Russlanddeutsche* primarily spoke Russian, retained elements of Russian culture, and tended to be more religious and more socially conservative than their new neighbors.[3] After the end of the Cold War, *Russlanddeutsche* left the former Soviet Union for Germany at an unprecedented rate, creating resource, employment, and integration challenges for the newly reunited FRG. Important for this inquiry, in the aftermath of the 2015 migrant crisis, a growing segment of the *Russlanddeutsche* population has been drawn to the nationalist, far-right, and Russia-friendly Alternative for Germany (AfD) party.[4] In 2017, *Russlanddeutsche* were more

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[1] Timothy J. Kloberdanz, "The Volga Germans in Old Russia and in Western North America: Their Changing World View," *Anthropological Quarterly* 48, no. 4 (1975): 210, https://doi.org/10.2307/3316632.

[2] Kloberdanz, 209.

[3] Edmund Spevack, "Ethnic Germans from the East: 'Aussiedler' in Germany, 1970–1994," *German Politics & Society* 13, no. 4 (37) (Winter 1995): 80.

[4] Achim Goerres, Sabrina Mayer, and Dennis Spies, "Immigrant Voters against Their Will: A Focus Group Analysis of Identities, Political Issues and Party Allegiances among German Resettlers during the 2017 Bundestag Election Campaign," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 46 (July 18, 2018), https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1503527.

than twice as likely to vote for the AfD than the overall German population.[5] With these historical and political factors in mind, this thesis asks the following question: how has the experience of living in the former Soviet Union and Germany shaped the identity of the *Russlanddeutsche* and what is the relationship between this identity and modern German nationalism?

B.   SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The *Russlanddeutsche*, together with a broader group of ethnic German repatriates known as *Aussiedler*, form one of the largest migrant groups living in Germany today, totaling between 4 million and 4.5 million people.[6] While their integration into German society has been fairly successful, many still identify as *Russlanddeutsche* or Russian, rather than simply or primarily German. This fact is notable for two reasons: First, when the *Russlanddeutsche* lived in the Soviet Union and Russia, they strove to retain German culture and practices from their ancestral homeland, even while enduring great assimilationist pressures.[7] Second, German legal code initially granted the *Russlanddeutsche* admission by mere virtue of being "German," signaling an institutional acceptance of their "Germanness."[8] Despite these seemingly "Germanizing" factors, it is clear that many in the community maintain a distinct ethnic identity, one not entirely German or Russian. This unique identity is surprisingly prevalent even among younger generations.[9] As an indication of the group's self-perceived distinctiveness, they maintain

[5] Michael Hansen and Jonathan Olsen, "Pulling up the Drawbridge: Anti-Immigrant Attitudes and Support for the Alternative for Germany among Russian-Germans," *German Politics & Society* 38 (June 1, 2020): 117.

[6] Rainer Ohliger, "Country Report on Ethnic Relations: Germany" (Budapest: Center for Policy Studies, Central European University, 2008), 5, https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/index.cfm?action=media.download&uuid=29984DD4-0EE8-0067-0655945751DFF40F.

[7] Kloberdanz, "The Volga Germans in Old Russia and in Western North America," 211.

[8] Marianne Takle, "(Spät)Aussiedler: From Germans to Immigrants," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 17 (April 1, 2011): 163–65, https://doi.org/10.1080/13537113.2011.575312.

[9] Bernhard Köppen, "Self-Attribution and Identity of Ethnic-German SpätAussiedler Repatriates from the Former USSR: An Example of Fast-Track Assimilation?," *Nationalities Papers* 46, no. 1 (2018): 111, https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2017.1354834.

their own *Landsmannschaft*, or regional fraternity.[10] Additionally, many *Russlanddeutsche* continue to speak Russian, consume Russian media, and live in tight-knit communities that foster the preservation of their ethnic identity and relative isolation from neighbors.

Russlanddeutsche identity warrants scholarly examination for two reasons: First, Germany continues to experience high levels of immigration and has a growing share of population with an immigrant background. An understanding of why certain demographic groups in Germany today come to see themselves as "German" while others identify as outsiders might inform policy aimed at facilitating improved integration, acculturation, and assimilation. While such policies are outside the scope of this research, a better understanding of immigrant identity within Germany is especially germane for U.S. military officers who deploy to Europe and are confronted with domestic politics as well as the threat of political violence arising from nationalist tensions analyzed in this study. Second, study of *Russlanddeutsche* identity is significant due to the group's disproportionate level of support for the nationalist Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, which has at best an ambivalent attitude to German democracy and at worst is a fifth column for Russian hybrid warfare and a threat to U.S. interests.[11] While the rise of nationalism in Germany in the past decade has received significant scholarly attention, its relationship with the *Russlanddeutsche* and their complex ethnic identity requires a focused examination. The AfD's combination of German nationalism and desire for closer relations with Russia appears to be an increasingly popular policy prescription within the *Russlanddeutsche* community. Moreover, Russian information operations are known to target would-be AfD voters, often casting the German government as abandoning traditional values. With *Russlanddeutsche* reportedly frequently consuming Russian

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[10] This is also quite typical of *Volksdeutsche* (ethnic German) populations from elsewhere in Europe, such as Bohemia and Moravia or Siebenbürgen in Romania. For more information on the *Russlanddeutsche* fraternity, see "Landsmannschaft Der Deutschen Aus Russland," Landsmannschaft der Deutschen aus Russland e. V., 2019, https://lmdr.de. Information on other *Volksdeutsche* fraternities can be found at "Landsmannschaften," Bund der Vertriebenen, 2019, https://www.bund-der-vertriebenen.de/verband/mitgliedsverbaende/landsmannschaften.

[11] Hansen and Olsen, "Pulling up the Drawbridge," 110.

media, the interplay between their ethnic identity and Russian influence operations has implications for German politics and transatlantic security.

C.   LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to explain the formation and implications of *Russlanddeutsche* identity, two general areas of scholarship must be considered. First are broad theoretical studies examining the underpinnings of nationalism and national identity. Some of this literature examines German nationalism directly. While *Russlanddeutsche* identity cannot be described simply as German, literature focused on German nationalism provides needed historical context on conceptions of traditional German identity. Second is literature from the field of sociolinguistics analyzing the relationship between language and identity. This field offers tools for identifying identity in discourse and is especially relevant for this thesis, given the bilingual environment of the contemporary *Russlanddeutsche* community.

1.   Nationalism and National Identity

Preliminary concepts of nationalism emerged in Europe in the late 18th and 19th centuries. Early thinkers viewed nationalism as inevitable and natural, as a sort of emergent property from ethnically related groups of people within a geographic region.[12] In the 19th century, intellectuals wrote historical narratives that buttressed the concept of the nation, such as Ranke's voluminous contributions on Prussian history and his emphasis on the nation as the preeminent form of political organization.[13] Early nationalist thinkers can be roughly categorized into two schools: primordialism and modernism. While modernism has dominated recent scholarship, a third camp of ethno-symbolism offers critiques of both. Each of these approaches is detailed in the following sections.

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[12] Stephen May, *Language and Minority Rights: Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Politics of Language*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2012), 61, ProQuest.

[13] Ronald Grigor Suny, "History and the Making of Nations," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 22 (January 1, 1998): 580–81.

a. **Primordialism and the *Kulturnation***

In 18th and 19th century Germany, such thinkers as Johann Gottlieb Herder, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, and Wilhelm von Humboldt drew a close connection between the German people, their language, and their nation. According to Herder, "language was the verbal indication of the race, the family tie, the instrument of instruction, 'it was a heroic song of the deeds of their fathers, and, as it were, their voice from the graves.'"[14] This idea provided nationalism with a linguistic foundation and drew an explicit connection between language and race. After Herder, nationalism began incorporating elements of popular sovereignty that emerged from the milieu of the French Revolution.[15] Schulze observes this theme in an address given by Fichte, which depicted the German people "as an innocent and uncorrupted nation fighting for its liberty against military repression—and fighting even more vigorously against cultural subjugation."[16] Fichte placed a special prominence on German culture and argued that the German alone was "capable of real and rational love for his nation."[17]

Heinrich Luden echoed Fichte's cultural sentiments but diverged from Herder's linguistic foundation of the nation by emphasizing the importance of racial elements. According to Schulze, Luden's conception of the German people "already contained a latent virus," which was "activated by the suggestion that what bound together a nation was not so much its language as its blood."[18] Suggestions of outright German supremacy featured in the writings of Humboldt, which depicted German intellectual achievements as unparalleled and German culture superior to that of the French.[19] Later, the German historians Johann Gustav Droysen and Heinrich von Treitschke crafted a narrative that

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[14] Johann Gottfried Herder, *Treatise upon the Origin of Language* (London: Messrs. Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, Paternoster Row, 1827), 106, Google Books.

[15] Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations, and Nationalism: From the Middle Ages to the Present*, The Making of Europe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 166.

[16] Schulze, 166.

[17] Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation*, trans. Reginald Foy Jones and George Henry Turnbull (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1922), 130, Google Books.

[18] Schulze, *States, Nations, and Nationalism*, 167.

[19] Schulze, 168.

bound the state to ethics, morality, and culture.[20] For Treitschke, the nation held a preeminent role in the life of an individual, who "counts for something only in so far as he is part of his nation."[21] The idea that the German nation emerged from ethnic, cultural, and linguistic foundations—a concept termed the *Kulturnation* by Friedrich Meinecke—gained significant currency in German intellectual thought.[22]

By the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, an increasingly racially based ethnonationalism took a pernicious turn toward anti-Semitism. Schulze observes the development, noting that while Treitschke had expressed his wishes that Jews assimilate and become German, later work by Houston Stewart Chamberlain and Count Gobineau "proclaimed that the Jewish 'race' was different in principle from others, and inferior to them."[23] Pseudo-scientific theories of Social Darwinism reinforced this dynamic of racial supremacy and inferiority.[24] German nationalism—then imbued with a Romantic cultural history of the German *Volk* and "legitimized" by accepted natural science—metastasized further into the extreme Nazi variant. The Nazi theorist and Baltic German Alfred Rosenberg brought from the politics of Tsarist Russia an especially brutal and apocalyptic version of German nationalism to Munich, where it was absorbed by Adolf Hitler. Commenting on German national sentiment, Rosenberg wrote "passionate nationalism is no longer direct toward tribal, dynastic or theological loyalties, but toward that primal substance, the racially-based nationhood itself."[25] Following the trend that had begun in force in the mid 19th century, Rosenberg and many of his contemporaries placed special importance on the purity of race. He argued that "a people can still pull itself up out of political servitude, but never again from racial pollution."[26] In light of what he viewed as

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[20] Schulze, 169.

[21] Schulze, 261.

[22] Friedrich Meinecke, *Cosmopolitanism and the National State*, trans. Robert B. Kimber (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 12.

[23] Schulze, *States, Nations, and Nationalism*, 258–59.

[24] Schulze, 260.

[25] Alfred Rosenberg, *The Myth of the Twentieth Century: An Evaluation of the Spiritual-Intellectual Confrontations of Our Age*, trans. James Whisker (Torrance: Noontide Press, 1982), 94, Internet Archive.

[26] Rosenberg, 352.

the grave implications of such race-mixing, he argued that the state had no purpose other than the preservation of the *Volk*.[27]

While most nationalism scholarship after World War II took a sharp turn away from primordial notions of the nation, some elements of these ideas maintain a footing within sociological studies. Scholars within this camp seek to understand why individuals often act against their self-interest in service of their nations and argue that doing so is, in fact, a primordial, natural trait of humankind—a matter of biology.[28] The sociobiological approach argues that nations are a modern-day extension of kin groups. Berghe theorizes that the propensity of ethnic and racial concerns to overcome other interests and even rationality demonstrates their continued influence on modern nations.[29] He argues that kinship became the basis for nationalist thought and that "the ease and speed with which these sentiments can be mobilized even in modern industrial societies" demonstrates their "continued vitality."[30] Later work expanded the primordial idea of kinship to encompass both a biological basis and a connection to a specific shared territory.[31] Grosby argues that "the combination of the narrowly gentilic terms of kinship—mother and father—with the territorial reference to land in the terms 'motherland' and 'fatherland' conveys the significance of this second axis of descent."[32] This modification places nationality on a "continuum of forms of kinship" and seeks to account for the "variability in human affairs."[33]

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[27] Rosenberg, 362.

[28] Atsuko Ichijo and Gordana Uzelac, eds., *When Is the Nation? : Towards an Understanding of Theories of Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 2005), 52, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203001509.

[29] Pierre L. Van Den Berghe, "Race and Ethnicity: A Sociobiological Perspective," *Ethnic & Racial Studies* 1, no. 4 (October 1978): 404, https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.1978.9993241.

[30] Van Den Berghe, 404.

[31] Steven Grosby, "The Primordial, Kinship and Nationality," in *When Is the Nation? : Towards an Understanding of Theories of Nationalism*, ed. Atsuko Ichijo and Gordana Uzelac (London: Routledge, 2005), 63, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203001509.

[32] Grosby, 64.

[33] Grosby, 74.

b.   *Modernism* and the Political Nation

In contrast to the *Kulturnation* and ethnonationalism that emerged from Germany, an alternative conception of nationhood developed in France in the 19th century.[34] Instead of deriving the nation from a particular ethnicity, the nation was bound by a shared set of civic or political beliefs. Ernest Renan famously postulated that a nation was "a large-scale solidarity," a "spiritual principle," and a "daily plebiscite."[35] In this sense, the nation required a committed people to maintain and thus did not simply arise as an epigenetic phenomenon. The idea of a community foundation for a nation, unbound by ethnic or linguistic determinism, was reinforced by Durkheim and Weber in the early 20th century.[36] This early thought, beginning with Renan, marked the precursor to the modernist theory of nationalism.

Later scholarship focused on particular characteristics of the modern era as the root of nationalism. Gellner contends that as the world industrialized, disparate populations came together, received education via a common language, and formed a new "high culture."[37] According to his theory, an affinity for this high culture and a community's defense thereof served as the catalyst for modern nationalism.[38] Anderson also argues that modern society set conditions for the emergence of nationalism. In his view, secularization and liberalization, a standardized concept of time, and the consumption of shared ideas via printed media linked a nation together.[39] These factors facilitated the creation of an "imagined political community—imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign."[40] He posits the newspaper as an especially powerful driver of nationalism, instantiated in the

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[34] Suny, "History and the Making of Nations," 584.

[35] Ernest Renan, "What Is a Nation" (Sorbonne, March 11, 1882), Internet Archive.

[36] Anthony Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism*, 1st Edition (London: Routledge, 1998), 14, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203167960.

[37] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 52.

[38] Gellner, 48–54.

[39] Benedict R. O'G Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 12–33.

[40] Anderson, 6.

"extraordinary mass ceremony" that occurs as readers across a nation simultaneously consume identical information and envision others doing the same.[41]

Other modernist scholars find nationalism emerging as a result of deliberate action, often explicitly designed to foster national spirit. For example, Hobsbawm and Ranger discuss the role of the invention of traditions and the displacement of older practices.[42] In this view, after the Industrial Revolution, nationalism followed the emergence of traditions such as anthems and national symbols, which were introduced to improve group cohesion and provide legitimacy to new political institutions.[43] Similarly, the invention of public ceremonies also served an important role in binding nations together. Hobsbawm notes that the creation of Bastille Day in 1880 provided "an annual assertion of France as the nation of 1789, in which every French man, woman and child could take part."[44] While Breuilly also considers nationalism a result of deliberate action, he frames it primarily as a political phenomenon instead of a cultural or identarian one.[45] He argues that nationalism emerged in Western Europe as political opposition to the state. From his perspective, resistance to the monarchy and the establishment of the National Assembly during the French Revolution "provided a concrete expression of the new conception of the nation that had been developed."[46] In this sense, Breuilly views nationalism as a rational and political response to prevailing governmental conditions.

c.   *Ethno-symbolism*

Critiquing both the primordial and modernist theories, the ethno-symbolism approach emerged in the 1980s. Prior to the actual denotation of ethno-symbolism, Armstrong applied the French historiographical *longue durée* approach toward the study of nations and ethnic identity. He argues that a study of symbols, communication, and myth

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[41] Anderson, 35.

[42] Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 4–5, ProQuest.

[43] Hobsbawm and Ranger, 7–9.

[44] Hobsbawm and Ranger, 271.

[45] John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 2nd ed (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 1.

[46] Breuilly, 90.

is necessary to understand the foundation of nations and that modern nationalism is "part of a cycle of ethnic consciousness."[47] Smith builds on this approach and critiques modernism's view of nationalism as a product of the modern era, arguing that its roots extend further back in history. His ethno-symbolism examines *ethnies*, or ethnic communities, and accounts for their shared myths, histories, and solidarity.[48] In contrast to primordialism, Smith asserts that these *ethnies* need not be formed by biological ancestry, but instead by cultural affinities "embodied in a myth of descent, shared historical memories and ethnic symbolism."[49] Over time, he argues, *ethnies* can develop into nations, but they maintain an important historical link to the past, predating the modern era.[50]

2.   Sociolinguistics and Identity

Identity has become an increasingly prominent area of focus within linguistics, particularly sociolinguistics. Tajfel defines identity as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership."[51] Tajfel's study of identity was influential on linguistics, which as Joseph observes, "has moved slowly but steadily toward embracing the identity function as central to language."[52] Modern scholars of language and identity generally hold that identity emerges through interaction rather than being a fixed, essentialist characteristic. For linguists, the prominence of discourse in human interaction provides a means of studying identity and its formation.

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[47] John A Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 2–4.

[48] Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism*, 191.

[49] Smith, 192.

[50] Smith, 193–95.

[51] Henri Tajfel, ed., *Differentiation between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, European Monographs in Social Psychology 14 (New York: Academic Press, 1978), 63.

[52] John E. Joseph, "Historical Perspectives on Language and Identity," in *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 22, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315669816.ch1.

a. ***Early Sociolinguistic Approaches***

Early sociolinguistic work on identity primarily dealt with dialect distinctions. In the 1960s, Labov studied English dialect variation in Martha's Vineyard and demonstrated that while certain dialectal features were displayed by those native to the island, they were absent in the speech of people who routinely vacationed there during summers.[53] Interestingly, the tendency to express such dialect features—in this case, vowel centralization—occurred most strongly in those who held favorable opinions of the island. Moreover, those with negative opinions exhibited the weakest expression of the feature, and those with a neutral opinion fell in between.[54] Labov concludes, "When a man says [rɐɪt] or [hɐʊs], he is unconsciously establishing the fact that he belongs to the island: that he is one of the natives to whom the island really belongs."[55] This landmark study demonstrates the way in which identity can influence dialect. Dialect variation therefore can be an indicator of distinct identity.

In the 1970s and 1980s, sociolinguistic study of identity broadened beyond regional dialects. Tajfel's social identity theory argues that "positive social identity is based to a large extent on favorable comparisons that can be made between the in-group and some relevant out-groups."[56] Although Labov focused on dialect variation, he seemed to capture this same dynamic in the residents of Martha's Vineyard, who were proudly distinct from the mainland vacationers. Concurrent with work on social identity theory, Giles developed communication accommodation theory which suggests that speakers modify their speech "to signal their attitudes towards each other and their respective social groups."[57] This theory purports that convergence in speech styles between a speaker and his or her

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[53] William Labov, "The Social Motivation of a Sound Change," *WORD* 19, no. 3 (January 1963): 273–309, https://doi.org/10.1080/00437956.1963.11659799.

[54] Labov, 306.

[55] Labov, 304.

[56] Henri Tajfel and John Turner, "The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior," in *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, ed. William G. Austin and Stephen Worchel, 2nd ed, The Nelson-Hall Series in Psychology (Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers, 1986), 16.

[57] Howard Giles and Jane L. Byrne, "An Intergroup Approach to Second Language Acquisition," *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 3, no. 1 (January 1982): 294, https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.1982.9994069.

interlocutor is suggestive of social approval and integration, while divergence can represent disapproval and efforts to disassociate.[58] Le Page and Tabouret-Keller observe a similar behavior but link it more explicitly to identity. They contend that an individual "creates for himself the patterns of his linguistic behavior so as to resemble those of the group or groups with which from time to time he wishes to be identified, or so as to be unlike those from whom he wishes to be distinguished."[59] They view linguistic acts as "acts of identity" and argue that "the language spoken by somebody and his or her identity as a speaker of this language are inseparable."[60] These studies consider group identity and linguistic variation beyond a regional context and suggest that a speaker's use of language offers indications of self-perception, perceptions of others, and identity.

b.   *Indexicality, Conversation Analysis, and Discourse Analysis*

Most modern linguistics studies approach identity as an intersubjective phenomenon that speakers and listeners construct through discourse and interaction.[61] One such approach examines indexicality, a focus that grew out of earlier work in semiotics.[62] Indexicality describes a sign that points to an object and derives its meaning from within a specific context. For example, personal pronouns like "I" and "we" have indexical meaning because their references (and thus their meaning) change with context. Indexical order, first developed by Silverstein, makes a distinction between first-order indexicality and second-order (or higher) indexicality. For instance, Silverstein analyzes "wine talk," where a

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[58] Howard Giles and Tania Ogay, "Communication Accommodation Theory," in *Explaining Communication: Contemporary Theories and Exemplars*, ed. B.B. Whaley and W. Samter (East Sussex: Psychology Press, 2007), 295.

[59] R. B. Le Page and Andrée Tabouret-Keller, *Acts of Identity: Creole-Based Approaches to Language and Ethnicity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 181.

[60] Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 315.

[61] Sian Preece, ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 3, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315669816.

[62] Semiotics is a field within linguistics that studies "signs" as the basic unit of meaning. As an example, semiotics makes the distinction between the word "lamp" (its orthography and phonetics) and the mental or abstract concept of a lamp. In this case, the connection between the spoken or written word (known as the signifier) and the concept (the signified) is completely arbitrary, yet together they provide "lamp" as a "sign" its meaning. For more information, see Paul Cobley, *The Routledge Companion to Semiotics* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2009), 3–9, ProQuest.

highly specific vocabulary is used within the context of wine-tasting.[63] While phrases such as "curiously waxy and dumb," "pebbly bouquet," and "backbone of firm acidity" refer to specific characteristics of the wine in the first-order, they imbue the speaker with a certain prestige in a higher indexical-order.[64] In other words, the meaning of the phrase "pebbly bouquet" is understood because it indexes (or points to) a specific flavor profile of the wine that one consumes. Like the use of the pronouns "I" or "we," "pebbly bouquet" has indexical meaning in the first-order. Unlike the pronouns, however, the specific wine-tasting terminology also indexes to a level of social refinement typically associated with sommeliers and devoted oenophiles. The indexical meaning in this case, while still context-dependent, reaches beyond the first-order. Silverstein observes that "as we consume the wine and properly (ritually) denote that consumption, we become, in performative realtime, [a] well-bred, characterologically interesting (subtle, balanced, intriguing, winning, etc.) person."[65] Like dialect studies, an examination of indexicality can reveal distinct markers of identity, especially when a speaker's language use alludes to a particular group affiliation. Broadening the scope of inquiry, Silverstein's conception of indexicality also allows for the study of smaller lexical units and is not confined to the dialect level of analysis.

Conversation analysis offers insight into who people see themselves to be in relation to others and therefore can be an important resource in the study of various forms of identity. According to Wooffitt, this field involves the "investigation of ordinary talk as the vehicle for interpersonal social actions" and often studies heavily annotated transcriptions of conversations that capture attributes like intonation, timing, and emphasis.[66] Benwell and Stokoe apply conversation analysis to study identity on the assumption "that an analysis of identity categories should be based on what people do and

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[63] Michael Silverstein, "Indexical Order and the Dialectics of Sociolinguistic Life," *Language & Communication*, July 1, 2003, 222–27, https://doi.org/10.1016/S0271-5309(03)00013-2.

[64] Silverstein, 225.

[65] Silverstein, 226.

[66] Robin Wooffitt, *Conversation Analysis and Discourse Analysis a Comparative and Critical Introduction* (London: SAGE, 2005), 43, https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781849208765.

say in the categories they deploy."[67] Specifically, they seek to extract speakers' identities from a close analysis of naturally occurring conversations.[68] Much of their work examines transcripts of customer-related interactions and the expression of highly specific identities, for example, the prototypical "reasonable patient" who seeks to project understanding and rationality while calling a medical complaint hotline.[69] Other work reveals normative assumptions of speakers, such as when salesmen presume heterosexuality by asking male customers "if it is just yourself or is it Mr. and Mrs.?"[70] While these examples involve fairly nuanced identities, conversation analysis methodology is not limited to such a scope and can be applied in the broader study of national identity.

Like conversation analysis, critical discourse analysis also examines discursive interaction between individuals. However, its approach is less restrictive and allows the practitioner to incorporate discourse outside of conversation, such as texts and images.[71] Critical discourse analysis "examines discourse as a reflection of wider structural and ideological forces…[which] shape and give meaning to the production of discourse."[72] Some critical discourse analysis scholarship focuses specifically on national identity and employs methodology especially useful for this thesis. For example, Wodak et al. "assume that national identities, as special forms of social identities, are produced and reproduced, as well as transformed and dismantled, discursively."[73] They employ a form of analysis denoted as the discourse-historical approach which "attempts to integrate as much available information as possible on the historical background and the original historical sources in

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[67] Bethan Benwell and Elizabeth Stokoe, "Ethnomethodological and Conversation Analytic Approaches to Identity," in *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Identity* (Routledge Handbooks Online, 2016), 68, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315669816.ch4.

[68] Benwell and Stokoe, 68–69. Researchers within this approach strive to maintain a purely empirical stance and avoid imparting their own preconceptions onto examined conversations.

[69] Benwell and Stokoe, 72–75.

[70] Benwell and Stokoe, 70.

[71] Wooffitt, *Conversation Analysis and Discourse Analysis a Comparative and Critical Introduction*, 86.

[72] Wooffitt, 146.

[73] Ruth Wodak et al., *The Discursive Construction of National Identity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 3–4, ProQuest.

which discursive 'events' are embedded."[74] This approach "combines historical, socio-political and linguistic perspectives" and analyzes a variety of data types, including "political speeches, newspaper articles, posters and brochures, interviews and focus groups."[75]

c. *Sociocultural Linguistics*

Bucholtz and Hall incorporate various prominent methods into a single framework which they denote as "sociocultural linguistics." This approach represents the "broad interdisciplinary field concerned with the intersection of language, culture, and society."[76] Sociocultural linguistics integrates approaches from sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, and discourse analysis. As is common in modern identity studies, Bucholtz and Hall share "a view of identity that is intersubjectively rather than individually produced and interactionally emergent rather than assigned in an a priori fashion."[77] They argue that "identity is the social positioning of self and the other."[78] Their theoretical model involves five general principles for guiding the analysis of identity within discourse: emergence (identity emerges from interaction), positionality (identities exist at macro and micro levels and even within temporary roles and positions), indexicality (identities emerge through indexicality in discourse), relationality (identities are constructed in relation to others), and partiality (identities continue to change and develop through discourse).[79] Although these principles are not novel to sociocultural linguistics, Bucholtz and Hall argue that their holistic approach "allows us to incorporate within identity not only the broad sociological categories most commonly associated with the concept, but also more local positionings, both ethnographic and interactional."[80] Given the interdisciplinary and flexible nature of

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74 Wodak et al., 7–8.

75 Wodak et al., 9.

76 Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall, "Identity and Interaction: A Sociocultural Linguistic Approach," *Discourse Studies* 7 (October 1, 2005): 586, https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445605054407.

77 Bucholtz and Hall, 587.

78 Bucholtz and Hall, 586.

79 Bucholtz and Hall, 586–607.

80 Bucholtz and Hall, 607.

sociocultural linguistics, the approach is well-suited for inquiry into national and ethnic identity, which by necessity incorporates historical, cultural, social, and linguistic factors.

D.   HYPOTHESIS AND POTENTIAL OUTCOMES

This thesis seeks to understand *Russlanddeutsche* identity and its relationship to modern German nationalism. The hypothesis is that contemporary nationalism within the *Russlanddeutsche* community is best explained as a resurgence of a *Kulturnation* understanding of the German nation*,* rather than as an isolated response to socioeconomic conditions or a strengthening of civic nationalism. This theory assumes that an examination of relevant contemporary discourse will reveal factors such as shared ethnicity, language, and an idealized traditional culture as preeminent themes, superseding others such as economics, liberalism, and federalism. Furthermore, given the historical and linguistic connections of the *Russlanddeutsche* to Russia, some of these themes are likely to appear within the overlap of *Russlanddeutsche* nationalism and their favorable disposition towards Russia.

E.   RESEARCH DESIGN

This thesis uses an interdisciplinary approach, employing historical analysis and borrowing techniques from sociocultural linguistics. Historical analysis is used to provide needed context to the *Russlanddeutsche* experience in modern Germany. This analysis first includes an overview of the population's history in the Russian Empire, Soviet Union, and Russian Federation. It continues through the repatriation of the *Russlanddeutsche* after World War II, reviews German policies facilitating their emigration, and examines their social and economic situation today. Following this analysis, the relationship between *Russlanddeutsche* identity and language is explored. Finally, *Russlanddeutsche* ethnicity and its connection to the *Kulturnation* are investigated to develop an understanding of the community's relationship with nationalist politics, particularly those espoused by the AfD. Throughout this examination, methods from sociocultural linguistics facilitate the deeper exploration of *Russlanddeutsche* identity through the lens of language and discourse. Where applicable, the principles of sociocultural linguistics are employed, particularly in consideration of interviews, media, and writing published by the *Russlanddeutsche*

community. Discourse directed at the *Russlanddeutsche* community, such as political advertising, also offers rich sources of analysis. Within relevant examples of discourse, the linguistic elements under consideration are lexical and syntactic components that aid in the construction of national and ethnic identity, such as expressions of sameness and difference, solidarity, and shared origin.[81]

F. THESIS OVERVIEW

This thesis is organized into six chapters examining *Russlanddeutsche* identity and its implications in modern Germany. Following this first chapter, the second chapter provides necessary historical background of the *Russlanddeutsche,* from their immigration to the Russian Empire through their experience in the Soviet Union. Chapter III analyzes the contemporary *Russlanddeutsche* socioeconomic situation in Germany, including issues of integration and assimilation. Chapter IV examines the role language plays in *Russlanddeutsche* identity and its variance across generations. Chapter V employs the ethno-symbolist approach to understand the *Russlanddeutsche* as a distinct ethnic community and establishes a connection to the *Kulturnation* and nationalist German politics. Finally, Chapter VI offers conclusions from the research and details the implications of ethnic identity and nationalism on modern German politics and security.

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[81] Unless otherwise noted, translation of German-language sources is performed by the author of this thesis.

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II.   HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The formation of *Russlanddeutsche* identity is a fairly recent development: a result of specific conditions that diminished barriers between formerly distinct German emigrant populations, facilitating their coalescence into a common group in the decades following World War II. Although the history of Germans in Russia dates prior to the 18th century, the period of greatest migration occurred between 1763 and the late 1800s. When Germans began relocating in large numbers to the Russian Empire, they had little in common besides language (albeit in various distinct dialects), their story of immigration, and their vocation as farmers and craftsmen. The various German settlements existed in isolation from one another and their Russian neighbors, enabling a long period of cultural, ethnic, and linguistic homogeneity within each community, preserving these attributes from the myriad territories that comprised the settlers' ancestral homeland.

This stark separation persisted until the late 19th century when external factors began weakening the communities' isolation. The first major shift occurred after the Russian Empire reformed local government institutions, largely abolished the Germans' earlier privileges, and initiated a Russification campaign. In the 20th century, World War I, the Russian Civil War, and catastrophic famines caused the violent disruption of previously tightly knit communities. World War II and Stalin's ordered deportations shattered what remained of the original settlements, with most of the country's Germans permanently relocated to Central Asia and Siberia. In the years that followed, previously separated German populations grew closer culturally and linguistically and experienced greater contact with peoples other than ethnic Germans. These factors, coupled with a collective memory of hardship, laid the foundation for a common *Russlanddeutsche* identity.

A.   GERMAN MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENTS

While Germans lived in Russia for centuries prior to Catherine the Great's reign, her invitation of foreigners to farm Russian land initiated the largest wave of German immigration to the country, attracting settlers from disparate homelands to diverse colonies

across Russian territory. On June 28, 1762, Catherine the Great ascended to the imperial Russian throne. She had been born as Sophia Augusta Fredericka in 1729, a German princess of the small principality of Anhalt-Zerbst, one of approximately 1,800 such territories within the Holy Roman Empire.[82] She rose from relative obscurity to become the wife of Tsar Peter III, himself German-born, and ultimately presided over her husband's arrest and forced abdication in July 1762.[83] Early in her reign, she aimed to enhance Russia's economic standing and expand the development of her empire. To this end, on July 22, 1763, she published a manifesto inviting foreigners to settle and cultivate empty Russian land.[84] Included with the offer was the guarantee of a thirty-year reprieve from taxation and permanent exemption from military service, as well as self-governance and religious liberty.[85] In addition, the Russian government paid many of the immigrants' relocation costs and offered them business loans with no interest for a decade to facilitate their transition.[86] They also established a "Guardian Office" to ensure that the special provisions granted to the German minority were protected, laying a legal foundation for the insular and fairly autonomous nature that would come to characterize German settlements.[87]

Tens of thousands of German emigrants capitalized on Catherine's invitation, electing to settle in Russia for political, religious, and economic reasons. Many desired to leave regions of Germany that had been ravaged by the Seven Years War (1756–1763), especially those from Hesse.[88] Napoleon's invasion of the Rhineland in 1796 similarly

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[82] John G. Gagliardo, *Reich and Nation: The Holy Roman Empire as Idea and Reality, 1763–1806* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 5.

[83] John T. Alexander, *Catherine the Great: Life and Legend* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 3–17, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ebook-nps/detail.action?docID=716663.

[84] Irina Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union* (London: Routledge, 2007), 8, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203963142.

[85] Kloberdanz, "The Volga Germans in Old Russia and in Western North America," 210.

[86] Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 8.

[87] Tony Waters, "Towards a Theory of Ethnic Identity and Migration: The Formation of Ethnic Enclaves by Migrant Germans in Russia and North America," *The International Migration Review* 29, no. 2 (1995): 525, https://doi.org/10.2307/2546792.

[88] Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 9.

displaced Germans from their homes.[89] Other Germans found their religion at odds with changing politics. Mennonites from Danzig and West Prussia opted to leave for Russia rather than face conscription in the Prussian military.[90] Protestant denominations facing persecution—for example, the Pietists and Stundists—were attracted by Catherine the Great's guarantee of religious freedom.[91] Finally, burdensome taxes in the German principalities coupled with a diminishing supply of arable land incentivized many away from their homeland in search of prosperity.[92]

Russian leaders after Catherine the Great continued to encourage German settlement, setting aside even more land for immigrants and preserving their legal protections. On September 6, 1800, Paul I allocated more than 300,000 acres to be distributed to settlers and reaffirmed the terms of Catherine the Great's invitation.[93] Four years later, Alexander I imposed a requirement of financial self-sufficiency on would-be immigrants but otherwise maintained the policies initiated by Catherine.[94] In 1842, Tsar Nicholas I codified all previous privileges granted to the German settlers into a coherent "colonist code."[95] Russia's continued efforts to attract foreign settlement drew Germans to a variety of regions around the empire. These included the Volga region, Ukraine, the Caucasus, Bessarabia, as well as Siberia and Central Asia. These settlements, plus the German communities that existed in urban centers and the Baltics prior to Catherine the Great, comprised the vast majority of Germans within the Russian Empire.

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[89] Mukhina, 9.

[90] Claudia M. Riehl, "Russian-Germans Historical Background, Language Varieties, and Language Use," in *Integration, Identity and Language Maintenance in Young Immigrants: Russian Germans or German Russians*, ed. Ludmila Isurin, IMPACT: Studies in Language and Society 44 (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2017), 12.

[91] Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 10.

[92] Mukhina, 10.

[93] Mukhina, 8.

[94] Mukhina, 8.

[95] Melanie Kolbe, "Does Cultural Recognition Obstruct Immigrant Integration? Evidence from Two Historic Case Studies," *International Migration Review* 50, no. 2 (June 1, 2016): 436, https://doi.org/10.1111/imre.12131.

1. Volga Region

The largest and most-studied German settlement in Russia was situated along the Volga River in the region first opened by Catherine the Great to foreigners. In the decade following her invitation, approximately 27,000 Germans capitalized on the opportunity, creating more than 100 colonies in the lower Volga River area.[96] The emigrants departed from a variety of regions, including Hesse, Württemberg, the Palatinate, and the Rhineland.[97] Their colonies enjoyed considerable autonomy, and their churches and schools continued to use German as the official language.[98] Although they were far separated from their native lands, Kloberdanz observes that they "stubbornly clung to the traditional ways and language of their forefathers."[99] They also preserved the regional varieties of German brought to Russia by their ancestors, with twenty-five distinct dialects spoken until the 1920s.[100] The population remained fairly isolated from ethnic Russians and rarely intermarried with them. Russian was seldom spoken, and even fifty years after their arrival, only 15 percent of the population could read the language.[101] Despite geographic proximity, the Germans viewed themselves as distinct from their Russian neighbors, referring to themselves as "colonists" rather than "peasants."[102]

2. Ukraine

Approximately fifty years after the first Germans arrived in the Volga region, additional immigrants began moving to Ukraine. These settlers first came to the Black Sea region and Crimea, and later to Volhynia in modern northwestern Ukraine. More than 90 percent of Germans in Ukraine settled in small villages in rural areas.[103] In Crimea, a

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[96] Kloberdanz, "The Volga Germans in Old Russia and in Western North America," 210.

[97] Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 10.

[98] Riehl, "Russian-Germans Historical Background, Language Varieties, and Language Use," 12.

[99] Kloberdanz, "The Volga Germans in Old Russia and in Western North America," 211.

[100] Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 10.

[101] Kolbe, "Does Cultural Recognition Obstruct Immigrant Integration?," 434.

[102] Kolbe, 434.

[103] Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 12.

region with a significant ethnic diversity of Slavs, Armenians, and Tatars, the Germans were notably the only ethnic group to abstain from intermarriage with the Tatars and not adopt any indigenous customs.[104] This conspicuous distinction suggests a certain resolve for homogeneity not shared by neighboring groups. The Germans who settled in Volhynia were among the last to immigrate to Russia, beginning in the early 19th century and peaking between the 1860s and 1880s. Over time, descendants of the first-generation of Germans also established *Tochtersiedlungen* (daughter colonies) elsewhere in Ukraine and Crimea.[105]

3. Caucasus Region

The early 19th century also saw the migration of Germans to Russia's recently acquired land in the North Caucasus. Some Germans in the North Caucasus had been deported from Ukraine due to their heterodox religious practices, including specific Bible-reading times and mandatory literacy.[106] These practices gave this community of Germans the highest literacy rate of any group in Russia.[107] By the 1920s, some two hundred German settlements existed throughout the region. The communities tended to be more geographically dispersed than those in the Volga region and were highly diverse in Christian denominations.[108]

4. Other Settlements in the Russian Empire

Numerous other regions around Russia attracted German settlement. In 1812, Alexander I spurred a wave of emigration by inviting settlers to colonize the newly acquired Bessarabia, a region that spans part of modern-day Moldova and southern Ukraine. Following Catherine's example, Alexander aimed to populate the region with craftsmen and skilled farmers.[109] Other Germans even settled as far east as Siberia and

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[104] Mukhina, 11.

[105] Riehl, "Russian-Germans Historical Background, Language Varieties, and Language Use," 12.

[106] Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 13.

[107] Mukhina, 13.

[108] Mukhina, 12–13.

[109] Riehl, "Russian-Germans Historical Background, Language Varieties, and Language Use," 12.

were among the first to document the region's exploration.[110] Large-scale migration to Siberia occurred in the late 1890s, and by the 1900s, Germans had established 323 settlements in the area.[111] Germans also moved to Central Asia, establishing communities in both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Mennonites began settling in Kyrgyzstan in 1882 and other denominations followed in the early 20th century.[112] These communities, like the others across the Russian Empire, were highly isolated from one another and preserved unique dialects and traditions.

5.   Germans in Russia Prior to Catherine the Great

The earliest immigrants to Russia of German ancestry were those who settled in Moscow and St. Petersburg beginning in the 16th century. Unlike their counterparts living in rural agricultural communities, these Germans were predominantly professionals in search of business opportunities or in service of the Russian government.[113] Others worked as doctors, pharmacists, and teachers.[114] In Moscow, German entrepreneurs lived in "German suburbs" and tended to be wealthier than Russian Muscovites.[115] Peter the Great drew from this population members of his government and military positions. Officials with German surnames continued to occupy a significant portion of high-ranking positions throughout the Russian imperial period.[116] Unlike Germans in the Volga or Black Sea regions, those in the urban centers immediately found themselves in a bilingual environment and were more likely to assimilate with their Russian neighbors.[117] In the later period of the Russian Empire, some young Volga Germans even moved to St.

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[110] Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 16.

[111] Mukhina, 16.

[112] Mukhina, 16.

[113] Mukhina, 15.

[114] Riehl, "Russian-Germans Historical Background, Language Varieties, and Language Use," 13.

[115] Waters, "Towards a Theory of Ethnic Identity and Migration," 526.

[116] Waters, 527. Examples include General Matthew Lamsdorff, who undertook the strict education of the young Tsar Nicholas I and General Alexander von Benckendorff who led the Third Section, a secret police force that worked at the behest of the Tsar. For more information, see: Adam Zamoyski, *Phantom Terror*. (London: Williams Collins, 2014), 334–340.

[117] Riehl, "Russian-Germans Historical Background, Language Varieties, and Language Use," 13.

Petersburg for education and quickly integrated into the local culture, opting to remain in the city instead of returning home.[118]

Other Germans, often of noble descent, lived in the Baltic region centuries prior to its annexation by the Russian Empire in the late 18th century and long maintained a connection to their Germanness. The Order of the Teutonic Knights established a foothold in the area as early as 1236, with their descendants assuming prominent positions in society in the ensuing centuries.[119] Baltic Germans became citizens of Russia upon the empire's annexation of the territory but retained their high status. These Germans often enjoyed the privileges of noble pedigree and high education and remained isolated from the waves of Germans settling elsewhere in the Russian Empire.[120] The Baltic region notably produced influential German authors such as Theodor Schiemann (1847–1921) and Alfred Rosenberg (1882–1946), whose writing would shape the extreme German nationalism of the 20th century.[121] Although their views were not necessarily representative of the larger population of Baltic Germans, the emergence of these writers and others from the region indicates the persistence of a strong German identity in the Baltics.

Figure 1 depicts German immigration to Russia from 1763 until 1861.

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[118] Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 16.

[119] Mukhina, 14.

[120] Mukhina, 14.

[121] Like many of his Baltic German peers, Schiemann developed unfavorable opinions of the Russian Empire and Soviet Union. Taking a particularly pointed position, he argued that "one cannot argue sharply enough that the most dangerous and bitter enemy of the German Reich and Germandom in general, is to be found in the Russian people, as was already apparent to the Baltic Germans fifty years ago." Quoted in Michael Burleigh, *Germany Turns Eastwards: A Study of Ostforschung in the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 18.

Figure 1.   German immigration to Russia (1763 to mid-19th century).[122]

Although the arrows indicating origin and paths of travel do not capture all sources of German settlers, they provide a reasonable overview of main populations and their destinations. The *Wolgagebiet*, or Volga region, is easily recognized as the largest settlement.

B.   LIFE IN THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE

In the pre-revolution era, German populations were geographically isolated and culturally distinct from one another. For example, some thought of themselves as "Moscow Germans" while others in the Volga region continued to identify with their forebearers and saw themselves as "Swabians" or "Bavarians."[123] Diversity of dialect certainly helped reinforce these notions. Across the Russian Empire, dozens of dialects of German existed,

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[122] Source: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. https://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/migration/russlanddeutsche/252006/von-der-anwerbung-unter-katharina-ii-bis-1917

[123] Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 2.

with a *Russlanddeutsche* author even recording some as unrecognizable.[124] Main dialects included High German, Platt, Swabian, Bavarian, Sudeten, Rhineland, Pfälzisch, Saxon, Austrian, and a variety of examples that exhibited the regular inclusion of Russian and Ukrainian loanwords.[125]

Travelers to the settlements noted the relative success of German agricultural practice and the isolation of the community. Observing the populations in the Volga region in 1769, a Russian doctor recounted that despite sharing identical climate and environmental factors, the *Russlanddeutsche* produced greater harvests than their Russian neighbors.[126] After around 1775, *Russlanddeutsche* economic productivity began ascending.[127] In 1842, another observer recorded that the Germans raised breeds of sheep superior to those of the Russians and Ukrainians in the region.[128] An article published in 1855 by a government agricultural inspector remarked on the agricultural acumen of the *Russlanddeutsche*, attributing their superior output to their crop rotation practices and use of better equipment.[129] The author also noted the population's isolation, recording that the Germans interacted with neighboring Russians only in "the recruitment of workers and occasional trade."[130] Despite the apparent successes of German farming methods, the practices did not spread to Russian neighbors, indicative of the segregation between the populations.[131] Over the next century, the population remained ethnically homogenous and culturally distinct from nearby Russian neighbors.[132]

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[124] Richard H. Walth, *Flotsam of World History: The Germans from Russia Between Stalin and Hitler* (Essen: Klartext-Verlag, 1996), 99–103, cited in Mukhina, 21.

[125] Mukhina, 21.

[126] Lepekhin, 1795 cited in Vladimir Shaidurov, "Russian Germans in Russian Historiography from the Last Third of the 18th to the First Half of the 19th Century," *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 6, no. 6 S4 (December 8, 2015): 150, https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2015.v6n6s4p148.

[127] Kolbe, "Does Cultural Recognition Obstruct Immigrant Integration?," 435.

[128] A.Z., 1842 cited in Shaidurov, "Russian Germans in Russian Historiography from the Last Third of the 18th to the First Half of the 19th Century," 153.

[129] Strukov, 1855 cited in Shaidurov, 155.

[130] Strukov, 1855 cited in Shaidurov, 155.

[131] Kolbe, "Does Cultural Recognition Obstruct Immigrant Integration?," 435.

[132] Kloberdanz, "The Volga Germans in Old Russia and in Western North America," 214.

The barren Russian steppe presented a climate and topography far different from the forested lands that the *Russlanddeutsche* left behind and seemed to demand a rigorous working life well-suited to their culture. Farming in the Volga region was difficult and time-consuming, but the work itself became an important characteristic of the *Russlanddeutsche* experience.[133] The difficulties of work on the Russian steppe were captured in music and sayings such as: "*Die Arbeit schmeckt besser als Essen*" (the work tastes better than food).[134] Over time, the *Russlanddeutsche* came to view their new territory in a positive light, even referring to it as their "*Wolgaheimat,*" or Volga homeland.[135] Their new *Heimat* was of course one shared with the peoples who predated their arrival: Russians, Kyrgyz, and Tatars. The *Russlanddeutsche* observed distinctions between themselves and their neighbors and developed unfavorable stereotypes of those outside their ethnic German circle. In their minds, the Russians were lazy, and the Kyrgyz and Tatars lacked ambition.[136] Conversely, Russian peasants viewed the Germans in a seemingly positive manner: as industrious, frugal, and orderly.[137] Despite the ostensible cultural differences, the groups generally enjoyed peaceful relations with one another.[138]

One of the factors enabling *Russlanddeutsche* isolation was the adoption of the Russian *mir* system. The *mir*, a system of communal land ownership and division, preserved German control of their villages and colonized areas.[139] Under the *mir*, farmers and their heirs were granted rights to a plot of agricultural land and retained possession as long as they continued to cultivate it. If the farmer failed to make proper use of the land, the *Gemeinde*, or village council, would repossess it as village property.[140] Because the farmers were not authorized the sell the land, the plots became bound to the

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[133] Kloberdanz, 212.

[134] Kloberdanz, 212.

[135] Kloberdanz, 212.

[136] Kloberdanz, 213.

[137] James W. Long, "The Volga Germans and the Zemstvos, 1865–1917," *Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas* 30, no. 3 (January 1, 1982): 336.

[138] Long, 337.

[139] Kloberdanz, "The Volga Germans in Old Russia and in Western North America," 213.

[140] Waters, "Towards a Theory of Ethnic Identity and Migration," 525.

Russlanddeutsche and their descendants, inextricably linking their heritage to the land they farmed. Observing the effects on the *Russlanddeutsche* community, Becker writes, "it was due to [the *mir*] that the peculiar philosophy of life was developed, which, even to this day, is so characteristic of the German-Russian colonist. The colonist clings to the past; he honors the old; he opposes all things new. He is an extreme fatalist."[141] This fatalism was accompanied by a high level of piety. A Volga German historian remarked that "the steppe awakened in us, as it did in the Russian people, a deep ardent longing for infinity, eternity, [and] God."[142] While the Germans would later resist the imposition of Russian reforms on their communities, the *mir* complemented their insular and religious nature and institutionalized the preeminence of their ethnicity and past.

C.   RUSSIFICATION, WAR, AND FAMINE

In the late 19th century, legal reform and revocation of the special privileges granted to German communities in Russia initiated the slow dissolution of previously entrenched regional identities. As Russia was recovering from a humiliating loss in the Crimean War, Tsar Alexander II sought to reform old institutions and improve the empire's position in Europe. On January 1, 1864, the *zemstvo* was established as the government institution charged with managing matters at the local level.[143] The *Russlanddeutsche* referred to the *zemstvos* as the *Landesamt* and viewed their work with suspicion.[144] Deputies of the *zemstvos* were elected by village elders and met in town centers—often far removed from ordinary villagers.[145] Average Germans saw the *zemstvos* as an alien institution, including the personnel that they employed, such as physicians, teachers, and agronomists.[146] *Zemstvo* staff even faced outright hostility from the Germans.[147] Despite local resistance, *zemstvo* leaders

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[141] Conrad Becker quoted in Kloberdanz, "The Volga Germans in Old Russia and in Western North America," 213.

[142] Johannes Schleuning quoted in Kloberdanz, 214.

[143] Long, "The Volga Germans and the Zemstvos, 1865–1917," 336.

[144] Long, 341.

[145] Long, 341.

[146] Long, 342.

[147] Long, 342.

endeavored to improve the education of the German population, reduce time spent on religious studies, and encourage Russian language instruction.[148]

In addition to the introduction of the *zemstvo* system, Alexander II imposed an even larger shock on the German community with his attempts at Russification. In 1871, the Tsar launched a campaign of Russification and soon after revoked the Germans' right to self-government and their exemption from military service.[149] He ordered the closure of non-Orthodox churches and abolished government offices that previously shielded German settlers from ordinary Russian law.[150] These changes were met with outrage by many Germans. The sudden loss of their privileges, coupled with rising Russian nationalism and a diminishing supply of land, triggered 300,000 to immigrate to North and South America.[151] Notably, while the *mir* system and opposition to Russification efforts fortified German identity in the Russian Empire, those Volga Germans who immigrated to the United States between 1870 and 1910 soon abandoned their ancestors' century-long project of retaining their Germanness and chose a path of assimilation.[152]

Russian government efforts to promote the Russian language and modernize education throughout the German settlements continued through the late 1800s with some success. For much of the 19th century, education was dominated by *Kirchenschulen*, or church schools, whose primary aim was religious and moral instruction. Local German clergy exerted a strong influence over the schools by supervising classrooms, shaping their curriculum, and approving the hiring of all teachers.[153] Leaders of the local *Kirchenschulen* initially resisted the use of the Russian language in education, but in 1897 the Ministry of Education began enforcing an 1881 law that required its use as the primary language.[154]

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148 Long, 344.

149 Kloberdanz, "The Volga Germans in Old Russia and in Western North America," 211; Kolbe, "Does Cultural Recognition Obstruct Immigrant Integration?," 436.

150 Waters, "Towards a Theory of Ethnic Identity and Migration," 526.

151 Kolbe, "Does Cultural Recognition Obstruct Immigrant Integration?," 436.

152 Waters, "Towards a Theory of Ethnic Identity and Migration," 534.

153 Long, "The Volga Germans and the Zemstvos, 1865–1917," 345–46.

154 Long, 345.

Unlike the church schools, *zemstvo* schools automatically offered Russian language instruction, were tuition-free, and taught a more secular curriculum. As a result, they competed directly with the *Kirchenschulen*, especially as their reputation for quality spread.[155] Still, according to Long, the *zemstvo* school teachers "struggled to overcome the custom, tradition, and superstition of their wards by offering a full primary education…which brought with it the risks of being labeled a government agent, an atheist, a 'Russifier,' or a dangerous propagandist of alien notions."[156] By the end of the 19th century, colonists actually began to request the establishment of *zemstvo* schools, recognizing the importance of a modern education and that the Russian language was necessary for success, especially as their sons were conscripted for military service.[157] In another sign of the changing pedagogical environment, by the 1890s, privately funded schools had also proliferated throughout the colonies to address similar needs.[158] Over time, the *zemstvos* reduced the isolation of the German communities and incorporated a growing number of them into their workforce of professionals, deepening their contact with broader Russian administration and bureaucracy.[159]

The years following the turn of the 19th century, especially as Europe edged toward war, imposed significant hardship on Russia's growing German communities and the beginnings of their fragmentation. By World War I, three million ethnic Germans were living in the Russian empire.[160] Although the population had been historically viewed positively by the Russian government—appreciated for their conservatism, agricultural aptitude, and work ethic—their adherence to a decidedly foreign Protestantism began to arise suspicion after the outbreak of hostilities with the German Empire. In spite of the fact that around 300,000 ethnic Germans would serve in the Russian army between 1914 and 1917, Russian military

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[155] Long, 346.

[156] Long, 350.

[157] Long, 347.

[158] Long, 348.

[159] Long, 361.

[160] Cynthia M. Vakareliyska, "Due Process in Wartime? Secret Imperial Russian Police Files on the Forced Relocation of Russian Germans during World War I," *Nationalities Papers* 37, no. 5 (September 1, 2009): 593, https://doi.org/10.1080/00905990903122842.

leadership assessed the population to be the most threatening internal enemy of the empire, and Russian nationalists were quick to develop misgivings of their own.[161] The Russian government ultimately ordered the forced deportation of Germans from the border region and tens of thousands of others from Volhynia. This action taken against the Germans further aroused suspicion amongst Russian civilians, resulting in hundreds of violent attacks and the destruction of German-owned businesses.[162]

Conditions during the relocation process were harsh. Among those deported from western Russia, approximately 40 percent died of starvation or disease on the rail journey across the country or after arrival to the settlements.[163] An estimated 235,000 Germans were moved from their homes throughout the course of the war and were only allowed to return to their homes as of February 1918.[164] However, returning home offered only temporary respite. The famine of 1921, on top of the internecine violence of the Civil War, dealt another severe blow to the Germans, particularly in Volga communities. The combination of Bolshevik grain requisitions and unfavorable climate conditions led to widespread famine in the region, killing 48,000 people—approximately 10 percent of the population. Another 70,000 fled the area in panic, further fracturing the already wounded community.[165]

D.   LIFE IN THE USSR

Soon after coming to power, the Bolsheviks began formulating policies regarding the diverse nationalities that existed throughout the country, easing earlier efforts of Russification on the German community. In 1918, Lenin approved a decree establishing a Volga German

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[161] Hans-Christian Petersen, "The Making of Russlanddeutschtum Karl Stumpp oder die Mobilisierung einer ‚Volksgruppe' in der Zwischenkriegszeit," in *Minderheiten im Europa der Zwischenkriegszeit: wissenschaftliche Konzeptionen, mediale Vermittlung, politische Funktion*, ed. Cornelia Eisler and Silke Göttsch-Elten, Kieler Studien zur Volkskunde und Kulturgeschichte, Band 12 (Münster: Waxmann Verlag GmbH, 2017), 165, https://www.academia.edu/33265903/ The_Making_of_Russlanddeutschtum_Karl_Stumpp_oder_die_Mobilisierung_einer_Volksgruppe_in_der_ Zwischenkriegszeit; Vakareliyska, "Due Process in Wartime?," 590.

[162] Vakareliyska, "Due Process in Wartime?," 595.

[163] Vakareliyska, 603.

[164] Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 35.

[165] James W. Long, "The Volga Germans and the Famine of 1921," *The Russian Review* 51, no. 4 (1992): 523, https://doi.org/10.2307/131043.

Oblast, or administrative region, and in 1924, the region was recognized as an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR).[166] Although the region's inhabitants shared a history of immigration and an agricultural lifestyle, more than twenty distinct dialects were spoken by the Volga Germans at the time of the consolidation of the ASSR.[167] Importantly, German again became the language of instruction and administration in the Volga Republic. The use of German in both official and cultural contexts gave legitimacy to German identity in the region.[168] Additionally, the majority of German-language schools, newspapers, and community organizations were permitted.[169] However, Soviet efforts to foster a single national culture among ethnic German failed as the variety of dialect speakers rejected the forced use of High German and the consolidation of their unique regional backgrounds into a single "Soviet German" amalgamation.[170]

In the late 1920s and 1930s, collectivization and dekulakization dealt a severe blow to the Volga German community, resulting in the deportation of successful farmers to Siberia and Central Asia.[171] Lenin considered kulaks to be the village equivalent of the bourgeoisie and *ipso facto* exploiters of poorer peasants.[172] Under Stalin, building socialism required the "liquidation of the kulaks as a class," which was to be accomplished by deporting them from their villages and collectivizing their agricultural assets.[173] Between 1929 and 1933, the Soviets collectivized farm equipment, livestock, and privately owned land. In the process, wealthier farmers and peasants were deported east to Siberia. Others were arrested and sent to prison camps where they performed forced labor.[174] Some 24,202 Volga Germans were

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[166] Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 30.

[167] Mukhina, 10.

[168] Riehl, "Russian-Germans Historical Background, Language Varieties, and Language Use," 13.

[169] Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 31.

[170] Mukhina, 31.

[171] Riehl, "Russian-Germans Historical Background, Language Varieties, and Language Use," 14.

[172] Martin Edward Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917–1991* (New York: Free Press, 1996), 126.

[173] Malia, 196.

[174] Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 35.

deported between 1930–1931.[175] These measures also resulted in a particularly acute famine in the Volga ASSR between 1932–1933.[176] The harrowing experience of starvation in 1921 was still in recent memory when famine conditions again struck the region. This episode was particularly destructive on the Volga Germans, who lost between 25 and 30 percent of their population and suffered an appreciable weakening of their cultural identity.[177]

Conditions of the Germans in the Soviet Union began to draw the attention of those in Germany in the late 1920s and 1930s. Grain confiscation in 1927–1928 motivated some to apply for exit visas from the Soviet Union and to request an investigation by German officials at the embassy.[178] In 1929, Rosenberg published an article in the Nazi periodical *Völkische Beobachter* titled "The Death of the German Farmer Community in Soviet Russia." In his front-page piece, he argued that the plight of Soviet Germans was a result of a Bolshevik and Jewish plot to destroy the German race.[179] Concern for Soviet Germans was growing, and in 1929 Berlin successfully negotiated with Moscow the release of 5,671 ethnic German refugees back to Weimar Germany.[180] The arrival of these refugees provided German anthropologists a new population to examine using their pseudoscientific means of racial classification.[181] "Confirmation" of the biological similarity between these refugees and native Germans provided a "scientific" justification for concerns over *Auslandsdeutsche*, or Germans abroad, and tracked with rising German irredentism.

In this environment of rising German attention on the east, the USSR grew increasingly suspicious of the Soviet Germans themselves and began targeting the community directly in the 1930s. In 1933, Hitler and Hindenburg approved a relief campaign to assist

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175 Mukhina, 37.

176 Mukhina, 38.

177 Long, "The Volga Germans and the Famine of 1921," 523; Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 13.

178 Lee Chai-Mun, "The Lost Sheep: The Soviet Deportations of Ethnic Koreans and Volga Germans," *The Review of Korean Studies* 6, no. 1 (June 2003): 232.

179 Benjamin W. Goossen, "Terms of Racial Endearment: Nazi Categorization of Mennonites in Ideology and Practice, 1929–1945," *German Studies Review* 44, no. 1 (2021): 27, https://doi.org/10.1353/gsr.2021.0001.

180 Goossen, 30.

181 Goossen, 30.

famine-stricken Soviet Germans, delivering them aid in the USSR and stoking the ire of Soviet authorities. Communist party leaders accused Soviet Germans who helped distribute aid of spying for the Third Reich, resulting in the arrest of approximately 4,000 Soviet Germans in 1934.[182] This apparent connection between Soviet Germans and the German community abroad continued to fuel Kremlin suspicion over the coming years.[183] On June 20, 1937, Stalin authorized the "German operation," which ordered the arrest of all Germans—initially targeting only German citizens but later expanding to include Soviet Germans—working in industries relating to the military and infrastructure.[184] These actions, combined with earlier dekulakization efforts, resulted in the arrest and deportation of more than 100,000 ethnic Germans to Central Asia and Siberia prior to 1941.[185] In addition to persecuting the German population itself, the Soviets also forced the closure of Lutheran churches between 1929 and 1938. The close connection between the Germans and the church was therefore severed, both negatively affecting maintenance of the German language and removing an institution closely interwoven with German identity.[186]

With the outbreak of World War II, Stalin's suspicions over Soviet Germans reached a fever pitch, and he resolved that Soviet security required their deportation away from the front. Those in the Volga ASSR lived approximately sixty miles from the western border and thus were the first affected.[187] On August 30, 1941, the government published a decree announcing the impending deportation of the Germans, many of whom would be sent to Central Asia and Siberia. As cited in a U.S. intelligence report, this action was justified by claims of "tens of thousands of diversionists and spies among the German population of the

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182 Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 38.

183 Mukhina, 38.

184 Mukhina, 39–40.

185 Mukhina, 41.

186 Riehl, "Russian-Germans Historical Background, Language Varieties, and Language Use," 14.

187 Chai-Mun, "The Lost Sheep," 228.

Volga region."[188] Because none of these spies were reported to the government, the people of the region were "covering up enemies of the Soviet people and Soviet power."[189] Scholars dispute the magnitude of these Soviet claims; although there may have been some actual spies, Kremlin paranoia almost certainly exceeded the true level of espionage within the Volga and broader Soviet German community.[190] For example, NKVD documents reveal that between June 22 and August 10, 1941, the security service arrested 145 Volga Germans, directly accusing only 2 of espionage.[191]

Regardless, various decrees on the matter ordered the removal of all Volga Germans and their families, without exception. Although mixed marriages between Volga Germans and Russians were still uncommon in 1941, some existed and complicated efforts to carry out the blanket deportation policy. Authorities eventually decided that German men and their Russian wives were subject to deportation orders, but German women with Russian husbands could remain in their homes.[192] The initial deportation was only the first stage of a grueling journey for large numbers of Volga Germans; soon after arriving in either Siberia or Central Asia, many were sent north to labor camps to serve the *trudarmija*, or working army.[193] Ultimately, the deportation operation uprooted 447,168 Volga Germans from their homes.[194]

Deportation orders followed soon enough for German populations living elsewhere. In August and September, orders targeted Germans in Leningrad and Moscow.[195] On September 22, another decree announced that Germans living in the North Caucuses would also be deported—amounting to over 30,000 families from the region's SSRs relocated to

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[188] "U.S. Military Intelligence Reports, 1911–1944," Soviet Ethnic and Social Groups and Minorities, Volga Germans (Washington, D.C.: National Archives, 1941), Record Group 165, National Archives, Washington, D.C., https://hv-proquest-com.libproxy.nps.edu/historyvault/docview.jsp?folderId=003342-002-0183&q=&position=-1&numResults=0&numTotalResults=.

[189] "U.S. Military Intelligence Reports, 1911–1944."

[190] Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 33.

[191] Mukhina, 33–34.

[192] Mukhina, 43.

[193] Riehl, "Russian-Germans Historical Background, Language Varieties, and Language Use," 14.

[194] Chai-Mun, "The Lost Sheep," 236.

[195] Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 45.

Central Asia and Siberia.[196] Deportation efforts and forced labor were an especially harsh process, resulting in the deaths of 150,000 Germans by the end of 1941.[197] Throughout the following year, Germans were deported from 43 different provinces.[198] Even ethnic Germans who had served honorably in the Red Army were unexempt. More than 33,000 former Red Army soldiers who had been demobilized were deported first to Central Asia and then moved to northern labor camps in the Russian regions of Khanty-Mansiysk and Yamalo-Nenetsky.[199] By the end of 1942, 1,209,430 Germans had been deported from various regions of the Soviet Union to settlements in Central Asia and Siberia.[200]

Although there is a dearth of evidence suggesting a large Nazi fifth column amongst the Soviet German population, as the war progressed, several German citizens of *Auslandsdeutsche* background played notable roles in Nazi efforts in the east. In Nazi-occupied Ukraine, Germans intended to establish settlements for *Volksdeutsche,* an effort that required ethnographic surveys and racial classification of the region's inhabitants.[201] These duties fell upon the Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories (RMfdbO), an agency headed by Alfred Rosenberg, with Georg Leibbrandt and Karl Stumpp playing important roles.[202] Leibbrandt, originally from Ukraine, served as an Undersecretary in the RMfdbO and also participated in the infamous Wannsee conference which crafted the Final Solution.[203] Stumpp, also from Ukraine, conducted significant research on the *Auslandsdeutsche* and worked with the *Deutsches Ausland-Institut* (DAI) in Stuttgart.[204]

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[196] Chai-Mun, "The Lost Sheep: The Soviet Deportations of Ethnic Koreans and Volga Germans," 236; Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 46.

[197] Petersen, "The Making of Russlanddeutschtum Karl Stumpp oder die Mobilisierung einer ‚Volksgruppe' in der Zwischenkriegszeit," 163.

[198] Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 45.

[199] Mukhina, 48.

[200] Chai-Mun, "The Lost Sheep."

[201] Mark Mazower, *Hitler's Empire: How the Nazis Ruled Europe* (New York: Penguin, 2008), 217.

[202] Petersen, "The Making of Russlanddeutschtum Karl Stumpp oder die Mobilisierung einer ‚Volksgruppe' in der Zwischenkriegszeit," 167–68.

[203] Goossen, "Terms of Racial Endearment," 37.

[204] Petersen, "The Making of Russlanddeutschtum Karl Stumpp oder die Mobilisierung einer ‚Volksgruppe' in der Zwischenkriegszeit," 163–82.

Work in Stuttgart on these issues gained additional symbolic importance after 1936 when Hitler bestowed upon the city the title: "*Stadt der Auslandsdeutschen,*" or City of Germans Abroad.[205] During the war, Stumpp led an 80-man *Sonderkommando* team in occupied Ukraine conducting ethnographic research and separating ethnic Germans from Jews and Slavs.[206] In his diary, he recorded the "*Befreiung Europas von der bolschewistisch-jüdischen Pest*" (liberation of Europe from the Bolshevik-Jewish pest), and there is evidence that he personally participated in shootings of Jews.[207] Both men continued to publish writing on *Russlanddeutsche* history after the war, and Stumpp became a founding member of the *Landsmannschaft der Deutschen aus Russland* (Fraternity of Germans from Russia).[208]

During and after the conclusion of World War II, repatriation efforts continued to displace Soviet Germans. Some lived in territory newly occupied by the Nazis and were repatriated once the Soviets regained control. Others had first been "repatriated" by Nazi Germany and placed in camps of the Third Reich, such as those moved from Ukraine to the Warthegau in Poland.[209] Germans in such scenarios then faced a second repatriation by the Soviets after the war's end.[210] The majority of Germans remaining in the Baltics were also deported after the war. Many displaced Soviet Germans sought to avoid repatriation and were taken by force. Some, fearing harsh treatment at the hands of the Soviets, even committed suicide to avoid returning to the USSR.[211] Overall, the Soviet Union ultimately repatriated more than 200,000 Germans from across the theater of war.[212] These Germans, like many that had been deported earlier, were sent both to labor camps and special settlement sites

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[205] Petersen, 182.

[206] Goossen, "Terms of Racial Endearment," 37.

[207] Petersen, "The Making of Russlanddeutschtum Karl Stumpp oder die Mobilisierung einer ‚Volksgruppe' in der Zwischenkriegszeit," 168.

[208] Petersen, 167–68.

[209] Mazower, *Hitler's Empire*, 212.

[210] Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 48–49.

[211] Mukhina, 49.

[212] Mukhina, 174.

where they found themselves located alongside the hundreds of thousands that preceded them.[213] Figure 2 depicts deportation operations conducted in 1941.
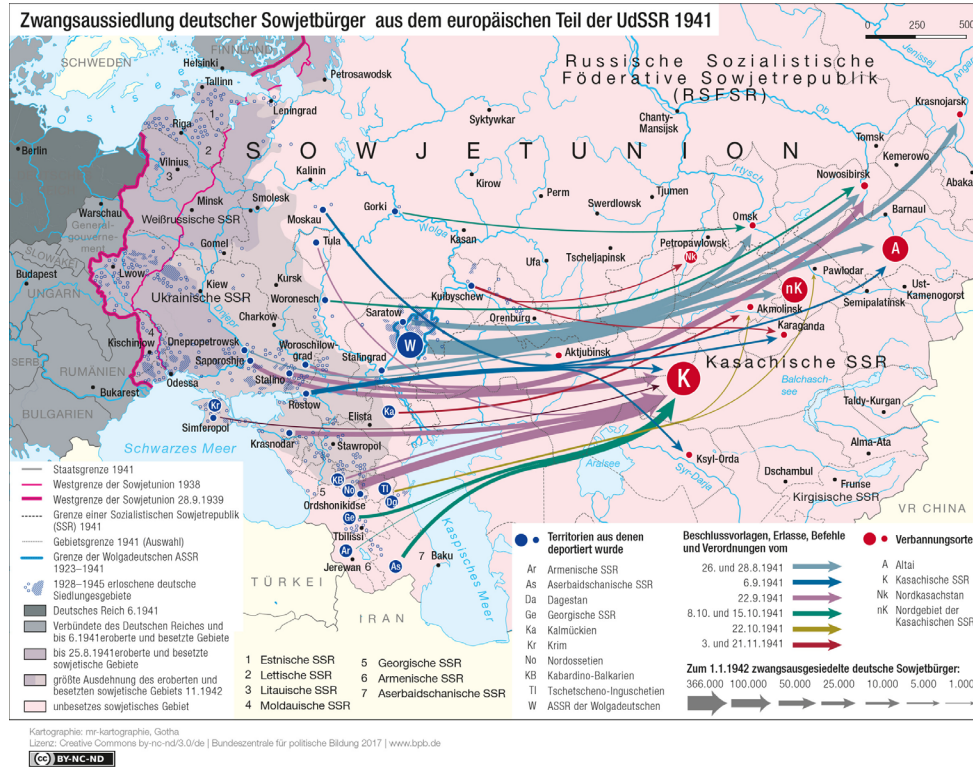
Figure 2.   Forced resettlement of German Soviet citizens from the European
region of the USSR in 1941.[214]

Significant population movements can be seen originating from the Volga ASSR (indicated by a "W") and from SSRs in the Caucuses. The Kazakhstan ASSR ("K" and "nK") and the Altai ("A") region were the largest recipients of displaced Germans.

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213 Mukhina, 174.

214 Source: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. https://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/migration/russlanddeutsche/250039/nationalitaetenpolitik-gegenueber-der-deutschen-minderheit-in-der-sowjetunion-von-1917-bis-zur-perestrojka

E.   THE BEGINNINGS OF *RUSSLANDDEUTSCHE* IDENTITY

Despite their earlier geographic separation and differing backgrounds, Soviet Germans began to develop a common identity after living in exile in Central Asia and Siberia over the subsequent decades. According to Spevack, "their only possible defense mechanism against communism lay in the creation of alternative value systems. Thus they adhered to an antiquated but nevertheless powerful notion of German ethnic identity, very traditional social values, and rigid religious conservativism."[215] This change occurred gradually and was driven by several factors that reduced barriers between previously distinct groups. New settlement locations were more urban than those before deportation, bringing formerly distant groups closer together. While only 15 percent of Germans lived in cities in 1926, 50 percent did in 1979.[216] Religious practice also changed dramatically after the war and assumed a new ethnic significance. Although the Soviets discouraged religious belief and church attendance dropped over time, various confessions worshipped together in the years after deportation.[217] Of those who continued practicing, the broader religious community came to be of greater importance than particular confession, and ethnic association took precedence over liturgy.[218] This tendency also persisted into non-religious *Russlanddeutsche,* who offered the religious practice of their parents as evidence of their German lineage.[219] Women in particular served an essential role in maintaining German heritage in exile, assembling religious gatherings, bringing old customs and traditions into the home, and teaching their children German via songs, poems, and folk tales.[220] As Germans came together from different regions, they exchanged these traditions and songs, further blending their previously unique cultures.[221]

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[215] Spevack, "Ethnic Germans from the East," 82.

[216] Riehl, "Russian-Germans Historical Background, Language Varieties, and Language Use," 14.

[217] Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 145.

[218] Mukhina, 144.

[219] Mukhina, 120.

[220] Mukhina, 121.

[221] Mukhina, 124.

The shared use of the German language across the broader community also had unifying effects. In 1955, German-language newspapers were reintroduced. Although the government prohibited them from publishing "ethnic sentiments," they stood as a tangible symbol of the group's collective readership and identity.[222] Some Germans avoided reading the German-language newspapers for fear of being persecuted—an equally powerful reminder that they were distinct from neighboring Russians.[223] Other German-language periodicals continued to be published through the 1980s, providing a tangible reminder of the German community within the USSR.[224] Furthermore, as Germans from various settlements interacted, their dialects slowly converged into a modified form of High German, attenuating linguistic signs of regional German heritage.[225] The new dialect featured the inclusion of Russian loan words, the use of an ungendered definite article ("*de*"), and the loss of the dative case.[226] Use of this dialect, in addition to German print media, brought Soviet Germans together into a shared linguistic environment.

While the new dialect facilitated communication between older Soviet Germans, younger generations—who initially received education exclusively in Russian—often found it easier to speak Russian amongst themselves and with other ethnic groups, ushering in a decline of the German language.[227] Those born after the early 1950s rarely even learned German as their mother tongue, but did acquire some proficiency through interaction with older family members.[228] In the 1960s, schools began offering classes in German, but only as a foreign language.[229] Still, a lack of materials and qualified instructors often prevented lessons from occurring at all.[230] Reduced use of German in the

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[222] Mukhina, 142.

[223] Mukhina, 142.

[224] Mukhina, 142.

[225] Mukhina, 137.

[226] Riehl, "Russian-Germans Historical Background, Language Varieties, and Language Use," 17–21.

[227] Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 135–37.

[228] Riehl, "Russian-Germans Historical Background, Language Varieties, and Language Use," 21.

[229] Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 135.

[230] Riehl, "Russian-Germans Historical Background, Language Varieties, and Language Use," 15.

home and little opportunity to study the language in school resulted in a significant loss of proficiency: only 43 percent of Soviet Germans reported any spoken German ability in the 1960s.[231] Furthermore, Germans in exile increasingly intermarried with other ethnic groups, predominantly Russians, creating ever-more Russian-speaking families.[232] Ultimately, the decades of exile conditions experienced by multiple generations facilitated a cultural osmosis between formerly distinct groups, resulting in the emergence of a coherent *Russlanddeutsche* identity.

F. CONCLUSION

As the Soviet Union began its descent toward collapse, the identity of the Soviet Germans remained steadfast and deeply ingrained. Despite assimilationist pressures, the near-complete disassociation from old regional identities, the weakening of traditional religious practice, and the tremendous loss of the German language, the group largely retained its formidable solidarity. Unique circumstances in Russia and the Soviet Union—often traumatic and involving direct assaults on the German community—formed the basis for a collective memory and myth that imbued the *Russlanddeutsche* with a stubborn commitment to cultural preservation that they would carry forward on their return to Germany. Although the community's experience of painful events in the Soviet past is becoming an ever more distant memory, it continues to play a consequential role in *Russlanddeutsche* identity.

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[231] Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 135.

[232] Mukhina, 140.

III. *RUSSLANDDEUTSCHE* IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION IN GERMANY

Following the conclusion of World War II, Europe faced a massive refugee crisis as formerly Nazi-occupied territories expelled millions of ethnic Germans. The newly established Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) acted quickly, classifying the expellees and other prospective ethnic German refugees as *Aussiedler,* and inviting them to immigrate and receive citizenship in 1953. In the decades after the war, approximately 4.5 million *Aussiedler* came to Germany, with the majority arriving after 1989.[233] Although experts assessed that the initial inflow of *Aussiedler* successfully integrated into German society, later generations beginning in the 1980s experienced greater difficulty. This later group of *Aussiedler* arrived in Germany with less integration support than their predecessors. Unlike earlier waves, this group was overwhelmingly comprised of *Russlanddeutsche*, a subset of the broader *Aussiedler* population emigrating from territories of the former Soviet Union.[234] Despite citizenship law recognizing *Aussiedler* as "true" Germans, the government placed them in concentrated living arrangements, imposing a relative isolation from native-born citizens. Through the 1990s and early 2000s, their employment and academic outcomes lagged behind those of native Germans, and some experienced outright hostility and discrimination. The *Russlanddeutsche*, originally forged into a coherent group by the cruelty of Soviet policy, once again found themselves in a society where their self-conception and experience distinguished them from the

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[233] Barbara Dietz, "Aussiedler in Germany: From Smooth Adaptation to Tough Integration," in *Paths of Integration*, ed. Leo Lucassen, David Feldman, and Jochen Oltmer, Migrants in Western Europe (1880-2004) (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 118, JSTOR.

[234] This chapter uses both the terms *Aussiedler* and *Russlanddeutsche* throughout. *Aussiedler* is a legal term referring to all ethnic German repatriates invited to settle in Germany after World War II. *Russlanddeutsche* refers to those *Aussiedler* who emigrated from the countries of the former Soviet Union. Where appropriate, this chapter will use the term *Aussiedler*, especially when referring to provisions of German citizenship law and the group of broader ethnic German repatriates. Additionally, much of the previous scholarship germane to this chapter focuses on *Aussiedler* more broadly, resulting in the frequent use of the term for the sake of accuracy. However, due to the large proportion of *Aussiedler* who are in fact *Russlanddeutsche*, the included *Aussiedler* data is relevant to this study and is largely representative of the *Russlanddeutsche* experience.

majority population. This disparity contributed to the preservation of a unique *Russlanddeutsche* identity still evident in the present day.

A.   THE REPATRIATION OF *AUSSIEDLER* TO GERMANY

FRG citizenship law and specific provisions established for *Aussiedler* repatriation played a critical role in shaping the group's experience both as Germans and immigrants. The FRG recognized *Aussiedler* as Germans primarily on the basis of their ethnicity, culture, and language. This recognition afforded millions of ethnic Germans the right to citizenship in the FRG and a significant level of support upon arrival. However, as Germany's political and economic environment changed, the government began reducing benefits for *Aussiedler* and imposed stricter standards for their admission. These developments, along with the fall of the Soviet Union, had a significant impact on immigration patterns to Germany, shifting *Aussiedler* demographics in favor of the *Russlanddeutsche* and ultimately affecting their prospects for integration.

1.   Legal Foundation of *Aussiedler* Repatriation

After World War II, the West German conception of citizenship remained relatively similar to its pre-World War I and Nazi-era formulations. The 1913 Citizenship Law established German citizenship and belonging via the *jus sanguinis* principle, meaning citizenship was conferred as a birthright.[235] After 1934, Nazi lawmakers went beyond simple *jus sanguinis* and placed additional emphasis on the importance of race and the *Volk*. In Nazi thought, the *Volk* derived unity from its shared ethnicity and bloodline. From the *Volk* grew the state, which in turn expressed the will of the people.[236] According to the Nuremberg Laws, published in 1935, "a Reich citizen is a subject of the state who is of German or related blood, and proves by his conduct that he is willing and fit to faithfully

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[235] Patricia Hogwood, "Citizenship Controversies in Germany: The Twin Legacy of Völkisch Nationalism and the Alleinvertretungsanspruch," *German Politics* 9, no. 3 (December 1, 2000): 127, https://doi.org/10.1080/09644000008404610.

[236] Nora Räthzel, "Aussiedler and Ausländer: Transforming German National Identity," in *Transformations of the New Germany*, ed. Ruth A. Starkman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 163, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781403984661_9.

serve the German people and Reich."[237] Another section of the law, crafted for the "Protection of German Blood and German Honor," introduces its foundation as being "moved by the understanding that purity of German blood is the essential condition for the continued existence of the German people, and inspired by the inflexible determination to ensure the existence of the German nation for all time."[238] These provisions indicated the biological primacy in Nazi nationhood and citizenship and undergirded the extreme ethnonationalism of the era.

After the conclusion of World War II and the establishment of the Federal Republic of Germany, citizenship remained tied to the *jus sanguinis* principle. The 1949 *Grundgesetz* or Basic Law, as the German constitution is called, defines a German as someone of German nationality, or a refugee or displaced person with German *Volkszugehörigkeit* (literally a *Volk*-belonging or affiliation, translated as "ethnicity" or "nationality").[239] Importantly for the ethnic Germans abroad, an individual could be considered a *Volkszugehöriger* if he or she was of German descent.[240] The expulsion of around eight million ethnic Germans from formerly Nazi-occupied territories and eastern Europe required swift legal action in the FRG to receive the deportees.[241] The German government openly supported the right of ethnic Germans to emigrate from Central and Eastern Europe and asked foreign governments to allow them to leave.[242] The 1953 *Bundesvertriebenengesetz* (BVFG) (Federal Law on Expellees) codified conditions for the admission of expellees with the aspiration to help mitigate the effects of the humanitarian crisis affecting ethnic Germans abroad. The law stated that those who committed themselves to the German *Volkstum* (national traditions) while in their homelands via

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237 "Nuremberg Laws," Holocaust Encyclopedia, September 11, 2019, https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/nuremberg-laws.

238 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

239 "Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland," Deutscher Bundestag, 2020, https://www.bundestag.de/gg.

240 Räthzel, "Aussiedler and Ausländer," 164.

241 Takle, "(Spät)Aussiedler," 164.

242 Dietz, "Aussiedler in Germany," 119.

factors like descent, language, and culture could be considered German and were legally defined as *Aussiedler*.[243]

Admissions under the 1953 law were initially limited by the sending countries only allowing ethnic Germans who were reuniting with family members inside the FRG to leave.[244] At this early stage, most *Aussiedler* were from areas like Poland and Romania. Upon arrival, the German government provided them numerous benefits to ease their integration, such as financial support, language instruction, and job training.[245] They also offered programs to compensate *Aussiedler* for furniture and other property that they had left behind.[246] Additionally, the government incentivized companies to hire the newly arrived *Aussiedler*, offering to pay half their salaries.[247] The ready acceptance of *Aussiedler* and their legal recognition as Germans suggests a strong commitment under German law of the *jus sanguinis* principle and the *Kulturnation*. While the similarities between the Nazi and postwar conception of nationality should not be overstated, there is obvious continuity in the acceptance of *Abstammung,* or descent, as a defining characteristic of being "German."

Beginning in the early 1970s, concerns arose in the FRG over the prospects of continued immigration from Central and Eastern Europe exceeding the country's carrying capacity.[248] The German government justified the continued admission of *Aussiedler* based on two arguments: 1.) The *Aussiedler* themselves were German; therefore welcoming their return was a patriotic act; 2.) The immigration of *Aussiedler* would provide the FRG a needed labor force and demographic support to an aging population.[249] While the second argument could be applied to any immigrant group, the first focused specifically on the Germanness of the *Aussiedler,* differentiating them from other

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[243] Takle, "(Spät)Aussiedler," 162.

[244] Dietz, "Aussiedler in Germany," 118.

[245] Dietz, 121.

[246] Spevack, "Ethnic Germans from the East," 78.

[247] Spevack, 79.

[248] Räthzel, "Aussiedler and Ausländer," 167.

[249] Räthzel, 168.

prospective migrants. Their Germanness seems to have assuaged concerns over integration, but the continued use of admission criteria based purely on ethnicity was enough to cause discomfort among the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and Liberals, who sought to reduce the importance of ethnic factors in determining one's "belonging" in Germany.[250] In any case, Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, a member of the SPD, secured arrangements with Romania and Poland, offering financial compensation for their willingness to allow *Aussiedler* to emigrate.[251] This action coincided with a debate in West German political discourse between political identity based on a *Kulturnation* versus a *Verfassungsnation* (constitution nation).[252] While conservatives tended to value the *Kulturnation* and a *jus sanguinis* conception of citizenship, those in the left and liberal camps advocated for a move toward *jus soli* citizenship law and a patriotism based on the German constitution, rather than the German cultural nation.[253]

Approximately three decades after the first arrival of *Aussiedler*, with the SPD and Liberals in power, Germany made the first significant modification to the BVFG. According to the Federal Expellee Law of 1980, an applicant earned a right to immigrate into Germany through the possession of German cultural traits and/or a past declaration of Germanness while still living abroad.[254] This change indicated an effort to move beyond a mere biological conception of Germanness, but such other markers as language, culture, and self-declaration were often unavailable to prospective *Aussiedler* because many were unable to speak German and lived in oppressive societies where outward expressions of their Germanness and German culture could be dangerous.[255] In such cases, *Abstammung* again became the pivotal characteristic that granted admission into Germany. The process of verifying *Abstammung* could be cumbersome, especially in the case of German families

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[250] Räthzel, 168.

[251] Kees Groenendijk, "Regulating Ethnic Immigration: The Case of the Aüssiedler," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 23, no. 4 (October 1, 1997): 465, https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.1997.9976606.

[252] Hogwood, "Citizenship Controversies in Germany," 136.

[253] Hogwood, 136–39.

[254] Räthzel, "Aussiedler and Ausländer," 168.

[255] Räthzel, 168.

who had lived abroad for generations. Officials sometimes resorted to traveling to applicants' ancestral hometowns to inquire about family histories, and remarkably, even to reviewing the records of the SS, SA, and Wehrmacht, assuming that only *true* Germans would have been accepted into such organizations.[256] These efforts reinforced the notion of the heritability of Germanness.

As the Soviet Union began to collapse and the Iron Curtain became ever more permeable, emigration became more accessible option for *Russlanddeutsche*. Former Soviet bloc countries became less controlling of emigration and moved toward looser policies than at any point since the passing of the BVFG.[257] Coinciding with these developments, the German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, a member of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), spoke of an "unrestricted welcome" of *Aussiedler*.[258] Taking advantage of the development, some 377,000 arrived in Germany in 1989 alone.[259] In the wake of the sharp increase, native Germans became less inclined to support generous welfare benefits for the *Aussiedler,* and as the Cold War came to a close, the German government lost its incentive to welcome citizens from communist countries as a means of promoting the Western system.[260]

Reacting to these changing circumstances, the German government reduced its support for the mass immigration of *Aussiedler,* cutting economic aid to the countries of origin and reducing financial support for domestic integration efforts.[261] Beginning in July 1990, the government required *Aussiedler* to apply for admission into Germany from a German consulate in their country of origin, rather than completing the process after arrival.[262] This requirement solved an earlier problem of *Aussiedler* arriving as tourists

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[256] Räthzel, 168.

[257] S. Wolff, "The Politics of Homeland: Irredentism and Reconciliation in the External Minority Policies of German Federal Governments and Expellee Organisations," *German Politics* 11, no. 2 (August 1, 2002): 112, https://doi.org/10.1080/714001279.

[258] Goerres, Mayer, and Spies, "Immigrant Voters against Their Will," 5.

[259] Dietz, "Aussiedler in Germany," 119.

[260] Dietz, 121–22.

[261] Dietz, 119.

[262] Groenendijk, "Regulating Ethnic Immigration," 466.

and then requesting citizenship; it also provided authorities with more control over the number of immigrants arriving annually.[263]

Two years later, the German government made another major change to *Aussiedler* law via an "Asylum Compromise" between the SPD and CDU: the SPD agreed to limit general asylum seekers while the CDU agreed to new restrictions on *Aussiedler* admission.[264] A subsequent *Kriegsfolgenbereinigungsgesetz* (War Consequences Conciliation Act) in 1993 enacted three specific modifications:[265] First, the legal term "*Spätaussiedler*" (literally: late emigrants) replaced *Aussiedler,*[266] and the law split prospective ethnic German immigrants into three groups:

1. Those born before December 31, 1923—this group retained status as "*Aussiedler*" and continued to enjoy the right to immigrate into Germany and receive subsequent citizenship on the basis of their ethnicity alone. *Aussiedler* retained this right based on the assumption that they could have faced deportation/expulsion by foreign governments in the more distant past.

2. Those born after 1923 but before January 1, 1993—this group was identified as *Spätaussiedler* and had to meet specific linguistic and cultural requirements in order to qualify for immigration and German citizenship.

3. Those born after January 1, 1993—this group was not considered to be *Spätaussiedler* and was only eligible for immigration via the application of their qualifying parents. They were not granted any special status under the new law.[267]

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263 Groenendijk, 466.

264 Takle, "(Spät)Aussiedler," 168.

265 Wolff, "The Politics of Homeland," 112.

266 This thesis will continue to use "*Aussiedler*" as the general term encompassing both *Spätaussiedler* and *Aussiedler*. Use of *Spätaussiedler* will refer specifically to the group defined by the *Kriegsfolgenbereinigungsgesetz*.

267 Takle, "(Spät)Aussiedler," 168.

Second, the law limited the number of *Spätaussiedler* to 225,000 per year. Third, only ethnic Germans from the former Soviet Union (as opposed to elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe) were accepted without a specific proof of persecution.[268] Arrivals from Romania and Poland dropped sharply, since discrimination against ethnic Germans there had largely ceased by the end of the 1980s.[269] These policy shifts resulted in the *Russlanddeutsche* becoming the primary beneficiary of the new *Spätaussiedler* provision.[270]

Willingness to impose new restrictions on *Spätaussiedler* provisions continued through the decade, but vestiges of the *Kulturnation* remained. Even into the 1990s, the Nazi-era *Volkslisten* (lists of people deemed to be ethnic Germans) were still being used to verify the Germanness of prospective migrants under the *Aussiedler* law.[271] Spevack argues that "the continued use of these documents demonstrates a distinct continuity of German citizenship policy between 1933 and 1994."[272] In 1996, the SPD leader Oskar Lafontaine began to criticize the difference in treatment enjoyed by *Aussiedler* compared to other migrants such as the Turkish.[273] Meanwhile, calls to further restrict *Aussiedler* immigration were sharpened by the country's high unemployment rate and housing shortfalls.[274] Public perception was that the *Aussiedler* were contributing to the unemployment rate and housing shortages in cities.[275] Lafontaine capitalized on this sentiment, arguing that the *Aussiedler* were "*direkt in die Arbeitslosen und Rentenversicherung einwandern*" (emigrating directly into unemployment and

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[268] Takle, 168.

[269] Barbara Dietz and Heike Roll, "Ethnic Germans and Jewish Immigrants from Post-Soviet Countries in Germany," in *Integration, Identity and Langauge Maintenance in Young Immigrants: Russian Germans or German Russians*, ed. Ludmila Isurin and Claudia M. Riehl (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2017), 44.

[270] Takle, "(Spät)Aussiedler," 168.

[271] Spevack, "Ethnic Germans from the East," 85.

[272] Spevack, 86.

[273] Groenendijk, "Regulating Ethnic Immigration," 468.

[274] Groenendijk, 468.

[275] Spevack, "Ethnic Germans from the East," 79.

retirement).[276] In 1997, Parliament passed an amendment requiring that prospective *Aussiedler* achieve qualifying scores on a German language test in order to prove their *Volkszugehörigkeit*—another step away from mere *Abstammung* as a qualifying feature.[277] This measure presented a significant hurdle to the *Aussiedler* population; more than half failed the test in the decades after its instantiation.[278] Similarly, a provision that fast-tracked the application process if an entire family could pass the German test benefited few, with only 20 percent qualifying.[279] In 1999, a Federal Administrative Court ruled that admission of *Spätaussiedler* should be based more on German *Volkstum* and *Abstammung* and less on German proficiency, but in 2001 Parliament reimposed requirements for the German language test.[280] Members of the CDU and SPD alike recognized the importance of the German language for *Spätaussiedler* integration, demonstrating a united shift away from *Abstammung* as sufficient for German citizenship.

In a sign of changing views of German nationhood, Parliament passed a significant revision to the Citizenship Law in 1999, adding a *jus soli* provision that permitted some people born to non-German parents on German soil to receive citizenship.[281] Although the SPD argued for a *Verfassungsnation* while debating the formulation of the new law, they did not question the privileged access to the country provided to the *Aussiedler* as they had in the early 1990s.[282] Some revisions actually benefited *Aussiedler*, facilitating a faster acquisition of citizenship for them.[283] Perhaps under continued pressure related to immigration and unemployment, that same year, the government reduced their allowable annual admissions to 100,000.[284] Still, special integration programs for *Spätaussiedler*

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[276] "Faß auf, Augen zu," Der Spiegel, March 3, 1996, https://www.spiegel.de/politik/fass-auf-augen-zu-a-d198a110-0002-0001-0000-000008891349.

[277] Dietz, "Aussiedler in Germany," 120.

[278] Dietz, 120.

[279] Takle, "(Spät)Aussiedler," 171.

[280] Takle, 171.

[281] Takle, 173.

[282] Takle, 170–73.

[283] Takle, 173.

[284] Dietz, "Aussiedler in Germany," 119–20.

remained exclusive to their group, distinguishing them from other foreign-born immigrants. However, the Immigration Law of 2004 allowed all immigrants with permanent residence access to integration and language courses as had been offered to the *Aussiedler* for decades.[285] The law also required that the families of *Spätaussiedler* pass the German proficiency exam in order to relocate permanently to German territory, further reducing immigration levels.[286]

2.   Immigration Patterns

From the first admission of *Aussiedler* in the 1950s until 1989, the majority were from Poland (61 percent), Romania (13 percent), and the Soviet Union (12 percent).[287] Restrictive policies in sending countries limited early emigration: between 1953 and 1954, only around 30,000 *Aussiedler* were able to migrate to Germany.[288] The first *Russlanddeutsche* arrived in 1958, numbering approximately 5,500, but strict Soviet travel controls dating back to the Stalin era prevented others from emigrating in significant numbers until decades later.[289] In 1986, Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika and looser Soviet emigration policy ushered in a notable shift in immigration patterns. At that time, around 2 million *Russlanddeutsche* were living in the USSR, and by about a decade later, over a million had immigrated to Germany.[290] Between 1989 and 2004, the share of *Aussiedler* from the former Soviet Union—the *Russlanddeutsche*—increased dramatically, rising to 75 percent.[291]

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[285] Takle, "(Spät)Aussiedler," 175.

[286] Takle, 176.

[287] Dietz, "Aussiedler in Germany," 122.

[288] "BVA - Statistiken - Sonderstatistiken und Zeitreihen," Bundesverwaltungsamt, 2021, https://www.bva.bund.de/DE/Services/Buerger/Migration-Integration/Spaetaussiedler/Statistik/Sonderstatistiken_Zeitreihen/Sonderstatistiken_Zeitreihen_text.html;jsessionid=BCDD018B0842BF81C328DF2A3C93E4A1.intranet662?nn=152658.

[289] Nicole Dürr, *Russische Aussiedlerfamilien in Der Erziehungsberatung. Eine Studie Zum Besseren Verständnis von Migrantenfamilien in Der Jugendhilfe* (Hamburg: Diplomica Verlag, 2016), 16, ProQuest.

[290] Groenendijk, "Regulating Ethnic Immigration," 475.

[291] Dietz, "Aussiedler in Germany," 122.

In absolute terms, 1994 marked the beginning of a major decline in annual arrivals, following the enactment of the new *Spätaussiedler* policies.[292] Another sharp decrease began in 2006, probably partially caused by the 2004 Immigration Law. Since 2006, annual *Aussiedler* arrivals have hovered around 4,800 per year.[293] Figure 3 illustrates the total yearly *Aussiedler* arrival in Germany, grouped by country of origin.
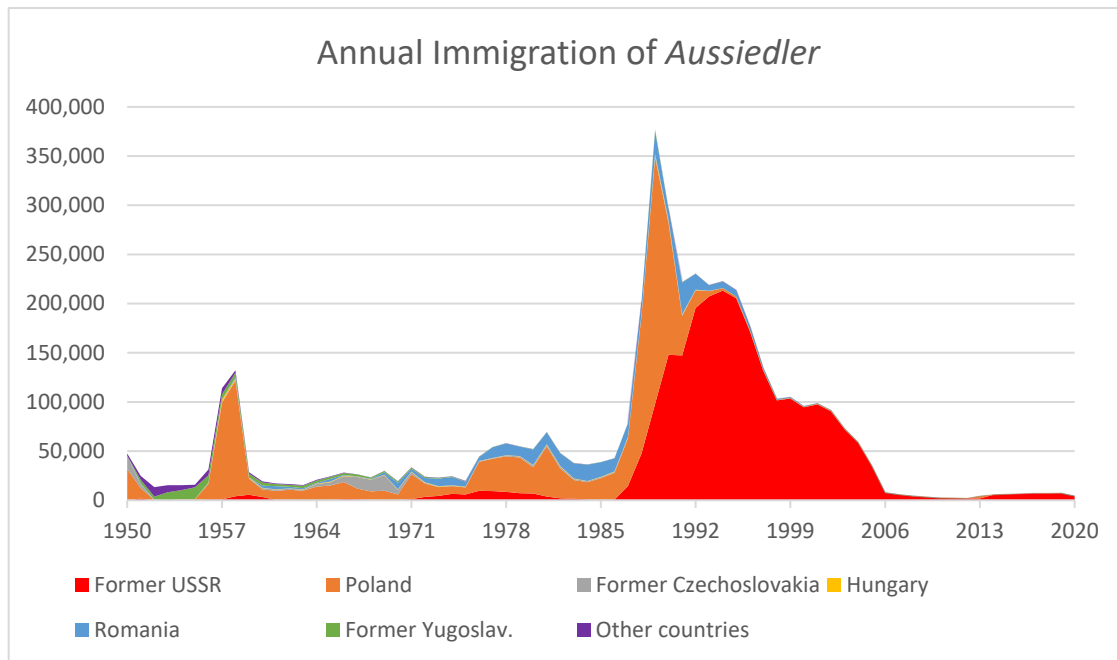
Figure 3.　Annual immigration of *Aussiedler* to Germany (1950–2020).[294]

As the graph makes clear, the vast majority of *Aussiedler* arriving in the late 1980s were *Russlanddeutsche*. This trend continued to sharpen and by 1995, *Russlanddeutsche* comprised 96 percent of all *Aussiedler* entering Germany.[295] The majority of *Russlanddeutsche* departed from the locations of their Stalin-era deportation sites, with

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[292] Dietz, 119.

[293] "BVA - Statistiken - Sonderstatistiken und Zeitreihen."

[294] Adapted from www.bva.bund.de/DE/Services/Buerger/Migration-Integration/Spaetaussiedler/ Statistik/Sonderstatistiken_Zeitreihen/ Sonderstatistiken_Zeitreihen_text.html;jsessionid=BCDD018B0842BF81C328DF2A3C93E4A1.intranet66 2?nn=152658.

[295] "BVA - Statistiken - Sonderstatistiken und Zeitreihen."

Kazakhstan sending even more emigrants than Russia itself. Figure 4 depicts the *Russlanddeutsche* departure countries from within the former Soviet Union.
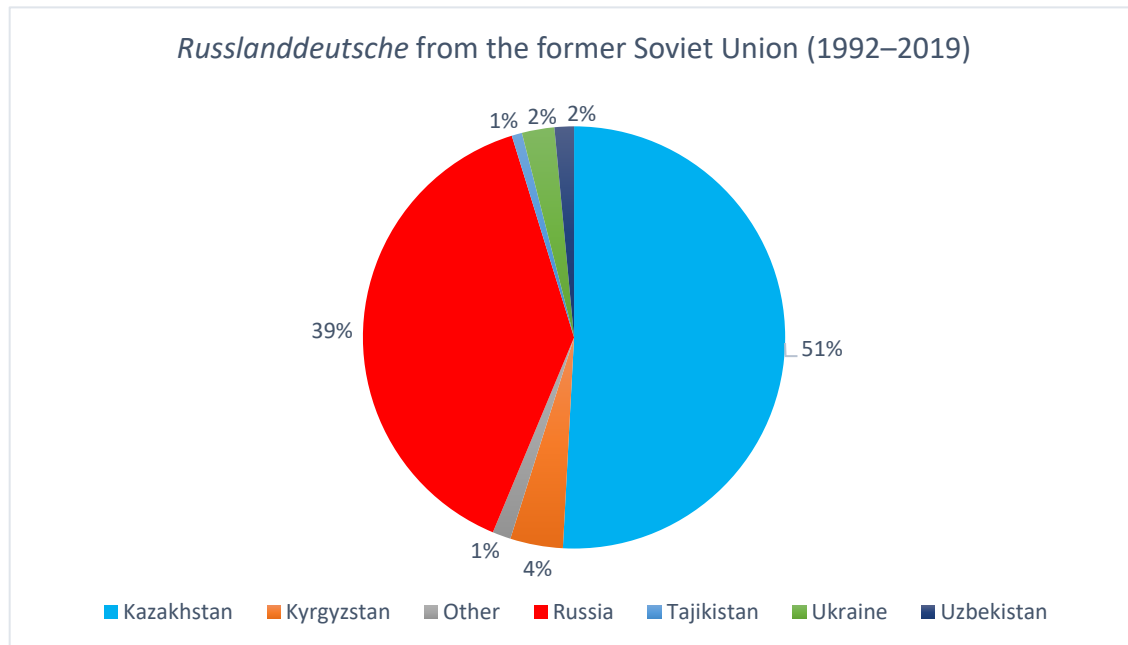
Figure 4.   Immigration of *Russlanddeutsche* from the former Soviet Union (1992–2019).[296]

Despite the myriad sending countries from the former Soviet Union, there exist no significant distinctions such as *Kasachstandeutsche* (Kazakhstan-Germans) or *Tadschikistandeutsche* (Tajikistan-Germans) among the *Russlanddeutsche* population in Germany. The *Landsmannschaft der Deutschen aus Russland* shares this understanding and represents the broad population of Germans from the former Soviet Union. The identification as *Russlanddeutsche*, itself an evolution from *Sowjetdeutsche*, provides a unifying group identity for the broader population of *Aussiedler* from the former USSR. Included within this wave of *Aussiedler* were also many non-ethnic Germans (mostly Russians) who intermarried with Germans abroad and arrived in large numbers beginning

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[296] Adapted from www.bva.bund.de/DE/Services/Buerger/Migration-Integration/Spaetaussiedler/ Statistik/Sonderstatistiken_Zeitreihen/ Sonderstatistiken_Zeitreihen_text.html;jsessionid=BCDD018B0842BF81C328DF2A3C93E4A1.intranet66 2?nn=152658.

in the mid-to-late 1990s. Figure 5 illustrates this demographic shift in *Aussiedler* immigration.
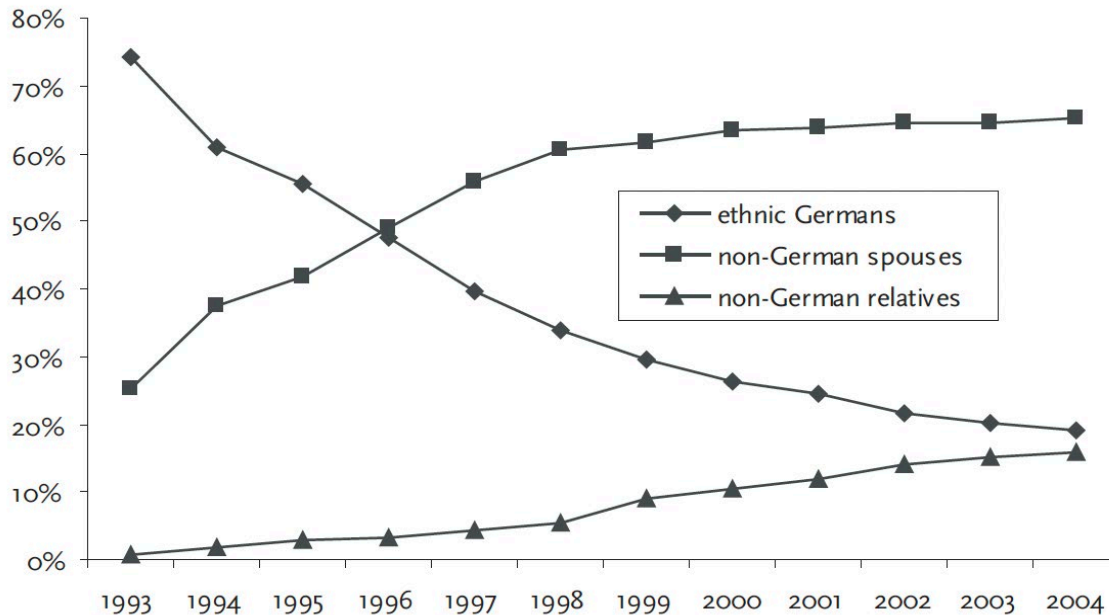
Figure 5.   Composition of *Aussiedler* immigration between 1993 and 2004.[297]

By the late 1990s, *Aussiedler* immigration shifted from being mainly ethnic Germans to primarily their ethnic Russian relatives who often possessed little German language or cultural understanding.[298] Earlier *Aussiedler* recognized this development: one commented that "thirty years ago they were Germans, today, they are more like Russians."[299] In another study, interviewees also associated integration issues with these later-arriving *Aussiedler* from the former Soviet Union.[300] These arrivals coincided with

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[297] Source: Dietz, Barbara, "Aussiedler in Germany: From Smooth Adaptation to Tough Integration," in *Paths of Integration*, ed. Leo Lucassen, David Feldman, and Jochen Oltmer, Migrants in Western Europe (1880-2004) (Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 124, http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt45kdns.9.

[298] Takle, "(Spät)Aussiedler," 177.

[299] Köppen, "Self-Attribution and Identity of Ethnic-German SpätAussiedler Repatriates from the Former USSR," 113.

[300] Köppen, 114.

economic unease in Germany, ever-rising immigration levels, and diminishing support for integration efforts offered by the German government. Together, these factors led to new integration difficulties for the *Russlanddeutsche* that were faced less commonly by earlier *Aussiedler*.

B.   *AUSSIEDLER* INTEGRATION IN GERMAN SOCIETY

Although the integration of early waves of *Aussiedler* seems to have been largely successful, later generations faced increasing difficulty, particularly after the end of the Cold War. In the late 1960s, scholars observed a successful process, noting that *Aussiedler* were hardly distinguishable from native Germans.[301] However, shifts in *Aussiedler* demographics and a changing political environment in Germany created new challenges. The *Russlanddeutsche* were culturally distinct from earlier *Aussiedler* from Poland and Romania, who tended to better preserve their German traditions and language and thus enjoyed smoother integration and acceptance by natives.[302] During the 1990s, it became evident that the integration of *Russlanddeutsche* was not without difficulty. Observing worrying trends in 1997, sociologist Kees Groenendijk wrote that "the lack of adequate training and publicly financed support, the increasingly negative attitude of the native Germans toward the Russian Germans and the continuing immigration of about 200,000 each year, could favor isolation instead of integration of this immigrant group."[303] Groenendijk's warning proved to be prescient, as numerous indicators in the ensuing years revealed a problematic integration and assimilation.[304]

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[301] Henning Süssner, "Still Yearning for the Lost Heimat? Ethnic German Expellees and the Politics of Belonging," *German Politics & Society* 22, no. 2 (71) (2004): 10.

[302] Dietz, "Aussiedler in Germany," 123.

[303] Groenendijk, "Regulating Ethnic Immigration," 472.

[304] The preponderance of scholarship on the integration of ethnic German repatriates analyzes the broader category of *Aussiedler*, rather than *Russlanddeutsche*. However, given that a large majority of *Aussiedler* are from the former Soviet Union, data on *Aussiedler* beginning in the mid-1990s can be considered fairly representative of the *Russlanddeutsche*.

1.   Geographic Factors

Upon arrival in Germany, many *Aussiedler* chose to move to areas in which their friends and relatives had already settled, building large pockets of immigrant communities around the country.[305] The *Russlanddeutsche* followed this same pattern: between 1989 and 1998, they favored the states of North-Rhine Westphalia and Baden-Württemberg, with Bavaria and Lower Saxony also receiving large numbers.[306] Table 1 contains the distribution of *Russlanddeutsche* across Germany.

Table 1.   Distribution of *Russlanddeutsche* across German states between 1989 and 1999.[307]

State	Percentage
Baden-Württemberg	13.5
Bavaria	12.3
Berlin	2.0
Brandenburg	3.1
Bremen	0.9
Hamburg	2.7
Hesse	8.0
Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania	2.3
Lower Saxony	10.4
North-Rhine Westphalia	23.7
Rhineland-Palatinate	5.7
Saarland	3.2
Saxony	5.7
Saxony-Anhalt	3.2
Schleswig-Holstein	1.8
Thuringia	3.1

German law regarding the settlement location of *Aussiedler* directly contributed to the establishment of regional concentrations. In 1989, Parliament passed the

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[305] Dietz, "Aussiedler in Germany," 132.

[306] Dietz, 133.

[307] Adapted from Dietz, Barbara, "Aussiedler in Germany: From Smooth Adaptation to Tough Integration," 133, in *Paths of Integration*, ed. Leo Lucassen, David Feldman, and Jochen Oltmer, Migrants in Western Europe (1880-2004) (Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 120, http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt45kdns.9.

Wohnortzuweisungsgesetz (Place of Residence Allocation Law), requiring *Aussiedler* to live in pre-determined locations for at least two years unless they could demonstrate viable employment elsewhere.[308] Under the law, the government-funded the construction of new housing projects which would be provided to *Aussiedler* at below-market rent.[309] Other housing became available as foreign troops withdrew from Germany, leaving behind residential buildings that the German authorities could use to house *Aussiedler*.[310] In other cases, private owners purchased the buildings, offering them to eager *Aussiedler* who desired to live near one another.[311] The concept of creating dense settlement locations was based on a theory known as *Binnenintegration* (internal integration) developed in Germany in the 1980s by the sociologist Georg Elwert. Elwert's theory assumed that spatial connectedness between migrant groups would give them the assuredness and confidence needed to succeed in the new country and that the population could offer social support for its members when government services fell short.[312] These living arrangements, which accommodated many of the *Russlanddeutsche* in the 1990s, enabled the new arrivals to maintain tightly integrated communities separate from those of native Germans where the use of their native Russian and distinct cultural practices could continue. Here, they established multi-generation family units and tended to follow traditional arrangements with defined gender roles for men and women.[313] For example, many men were the sole

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[308] Susanne Worbs et al., "(Spät-)Aussiedler in Deutschland: Eine Analyse Aktueller Daten Und Forschugsergebnisse," Forschungsbericht (Nürnberg: Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2013), 23, https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Forschung/Forschungsberichte/fb20-spaetaussiedler.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=14.

[309] Groenendijk, "Regulating Ethnic Immigration," 465.

[310] Dietz, "Aussiedler in Germany," 133.

[311] Dietz, 133.

[312] Ute Bauer and Hans-Joachim Bürkner, "The Spatially Concentrated Settlement of Ethnic Germans (Aussiedler) - an Opportunity for Integration? Experience from a Model Project in Brandenburg / Le Rassemblement Géographique Des Allemands Ethniques (Aussiedler) : Une Chance d'intégration ? L'expérience d'un Projet Modèle Au Brandebourg," *Espace, Populations, Sociétés* 16 (January 1, 1998): 435, https://doi.org/10.3406/espos.1998.1858.

[313] Dürr, *Russische Aussiedlerfamilien in Der Erziehungsberatung. Eine Studie Zum Besseren Verständnis von Migrantenfamilien in Der Jugendhilfe*, 23–24.

breadwinners of the household, while women were responsible for matters of the family and children.[314]

Unfortunately, such concentration seems to have produced negative externalities in addition to whatever benefits it may have conferred, a result of relative *Aussiedler* isolation from the broader German community. In 1998, a study of geographically concentrated *Aussiedler* in Brandenburg revealed issues with such living arrangements.[315] The local government believed that a concentrated living situation in former military buildings would provide the *Aussiedler* with a strong base of relationships from which to handle the rigors of integration into their new environment.[316] A main motivation for *Aussiedler* to move into the settlement area, known as Niedergörsdorf, was the ability to live close to family members. In Niedergörsdorf, where about a third of the population was native-born German, the *Aussiedler* were at best tolerated and at worst met with clear disapproval.[317]

Overall, Bauer and Bürkner found that while the concentrated settlements gave the *Aussiedler* some "psychic stabilization" and facilitated easier access for welfare organizations to provide support to the community, the isolation of the community (both socially and geographically) limited integration and opportunities for engagement with broader German society.[318] The *Aussiedler* in *Niedergörsdorf* had a nearly 30 percent unemployment rate, and although the majority had been employed in their countries of origin, they became heavily reliant on government assistance.[319] Bauer and Bürkner also observed that the geographic concentration provided a more recognizable population and thus one more prone to arising the xenophobia and hostility of right-wing natives.[320] They

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[314] Dürr, 24–25.

[315] Bauer and Bürkner, "The Spatially Concentrated Settlement of Ethnic Germans (Aussiedler) - an Opportunity for Integration?"

[316] Bauer and Bürkner, 435.

[317] Bauer and Bürkner, 437.

[318] Bauer and Bürkner, 439–40.

[319] Bauer and Bürkner, 433.

[320] Bauer and Bürkner, 440.

concluded by assessing that "there is reason to assume that the disadvantages of the settlement project for the *Aussiedler* minority will exceed its actual benefits."[321]

Despite these findings, dense *Aussiedler* living arrangements persisted over the next decade. The 2010 German Microcensus revealed a continued concentration of *Aussiedler* within large, multi-residence apartment buildings: 40.6 percent of *Aussiedler* lived in buildings with seven or more dwellings, while only 23 percent of native Germans did.[322] Whatever the drawbacks of such living conditions, they do offer an environment where *Aussiedler* communities and social networks can form. This situation may indeed provide beneficial "psychic stabilization," but as hostile right-wing juveniles demonstrated in the Brandenburg case, they also create a readily apparent "us versus them" dichotomy, one that likely shapes the self-perception and identity of the *Aussiedler*.

2.   Socioeconomic Integration

Despite promising initial signs in the socioeconomic integration of *Aussiedler*, large inflows of *Russlanddeutsche* after 1989 coincided with worsening outcomes within the group. Although experts assumed that the younger age profile of the *Aussiedler* population would ease their integration into German society, troublesome unemployment levels among young *Aussiedler* beginning in the 1980s cast doubt on this assumption.[323] The German labor market was at least partially to blame, often not recognizing professional certifications and education that the *Aussiedler* received in the Soviet bloc, creating obstacles for hiring and advancement.[324] This impacted potential earnings: in 1998, *Aussiedler* made 25 percent less than native Germans and tended to perform lower-skilled jobs, despite having similar qualifications.[325] Additionally, more than 50 percent of *Aussiedler* were working outside of fields in which they were qualified, inhibiting their

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[321] Bauer and Bürkner, 440.

[322] Worbs et al., "(Spät-)Aussiedler in Deutschland: Eine Analyse Aktueller Daten Und Forschugsergebnisse," 112.

[323] Dietz, "Aussiedler in Germany," 125.

[324] Dietz, 125.

[325] Dietz, 128.

professional advancement and income potential. Commenting on this issue, a *Russlanddeutsche* woman remarked in an interview that "it is a pity that learned and studied people have to work as cleaners. And I know a lot of academics that work as cleaners."[326]

The typical blue-collar professions of *Russlanddeutsche* and lower proficiency in German also contribute to lower salaries than the native German average. *Russlanddeutsche* work more frequently in agricultural jobs, a continuation of the community's long history of farming in Russia and the Soviet Union. They also tend to work more in the industrial sector and less and the service sector.[327] Table 2 compares *Aussiedler* as a whole to native Germans, reflecting these occupational tendencies found in *Russlanddeutsche* communities.

Table 2.   Occupational status of employed native Germans and *Aussiedler*.[328]

		Blue-Collar	White-Collar	Self-Employed	Civil Servant	Caring for family
Native German	Men	31.3%	47.4%	14.3%	6.6%	0.4%
	Women	13.6%	72.3%	7.6%	5.5%	0.9%
	Total	23.0%	59.0%	11.2%	6.1%	0.6%
Aussiedler	Men	58.5%	32.4%	7.1%	2.0%	-
	Women	34.6%	59.2%	4.6%	1.4%	-
	Total	47.1%	45.1%	5.9%	1.7%	-

Concern over *Aussiedler* socioeconomic integration in the 1990s was not without merit and has been substantiated by recent scholarship. A 2011 study highlighted the economic disparities between native Germans and *Aussiedler* between 1995 and 2004. *Aussiedler* men were paid less than native German men, making 56 percent of the salary. While native Germans had an unemployment rate of 4.7 percent, unemployment for

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[326] Goerres, Mayer, and Spies, "Immigrant Voters against Their Will," 18.

[327] Dietz, "Aussiedler in Germany," 127.

[328] Adapted from Worbs et al., "(Spät-)Aussiedler in Deutschland: Eine Analyse Aktueller Daten Und Forschugsergebnisse," 67.

Aussiedler was 14.4 percent.[329] Similarly, *Aussiedler* women faced a 21.1 percent unemployment rate compared to 7.4 percent for native German women. Like the men, they also earned less on average.[330] Although unemployment numbers have since improved (7.2 percent for men and 6.4 percent for women in 2011), the 2011 Microcensus still determined *Aussiedler* to be at a higher risk for poverty than native Germans (18.8 percent vs. 12.3 percent).[331]

Education outcomes also differ between *Aussiedler* and native Germans.[332] An analysis of 2002–2003 school year data in North Rhine Westphalia revealed that *Aussiedler* were more likely to be without completion of *Hauptschule* than native Germans and less likely to complete *Fach/Hochschule* (11.3 percent vs. 35.3 percent).[333] Another study conducted in western German states demonstrated that *Aussiedler* were proportionally less likely to attain an *Abitur* (24.3 percent vs. 46.3 percent) and more likely to have the *Hauptschulabschluss* as their highest level of education (34.9 percent vs. 19.3 percent). *Aussiedler* also tended to be slightly more represented in *Mittlere Reife* than native

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[329] Yitchak Haberfeld et al., "Differences in Earnings Assimilation of Immigrants from the Former Soviet Union to Germany and Israel during 1994–2005: The Interplay between Context of Reception, Observed, and Unobserved Immigrants' Attributes," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 52, no. 1–2 (February 1, 2011): 12, https://doi.org/10.1177/0020715210377157.

[330] Haberfeld et al., 14.

[331] Worbs et al., "(Spät-)Aussiedler in Deutschland: Eine Analyse Aktueller Daten Und Forschugsergebnisse," 85.

[332] Germany has a complex secondary education system offering three main tracks, differentiated by their academic rigor and intended purpose. Secondary school systems also vary slightly between states. The following provides a brief overview relevant for the understanding of data cited in this thesis: The most basic secondary schooling is *Hauptschule* (basic secondary school), generally attended until the 9th or 10th grade. Upon completion, one earns a *Hauptschulabschluss* (secondary school diploma). The *Realschule* is another type of secondary school that offers more intensive education and prepares students for eventual vocational school or university admission. *Realschule* generally ends at the 10th grade with students earning a *Realschulabschluss* or *Mittlere Reife* (intermediate level diploma). Completion of *Realschule* and subsequent *Fachoberschule* (technical or vocational college) earns students a *Fachhochschulreife* (technical college certificate), allowing them to apply for *Fachhochschule* (university of applied sciences). Finally, *Gymnasium* is the secondary school for university preparation and thus the most academically rigorous, usually ending at the 13th grade. Students who graduate from *Gymnasium* earn an *Abitur* as their diploma and may progress to *Universität* (university).

[333] Janina Söhn, "Bildungsunterschiede zwischen Migrantengruppen in Deutschland: Schulabschlüsse von Aussiedlern und anderen Migranten der ersten Generation im Vergleich*," *Berliner Journal für Soziologie* 18, no. 3 (October 2008): 406, http://dx.doi.org.libproxy.nps.edu/10.1007/s11609-008-0028-1.

Germans (40.8 percent vs. 34.4 percent).[334] Like unemployment figures, *Aussiedler* educational achievement does seem to be increasing based on findings in the 2011 Microcensus. Table 3 highlights these converging outcomes.

Table 3.   Highest education achieved by citizens between ages 25 to 65.[335]

	Without Abschluss	*Hauptschule*	*Realschule/ Oberschule*	*Fachhochschulreife/ Abitur*
Native German	1.6%	28.8%	37.5%	32.1%
Aussiedler	3.6%	34.6%	34.6%	27.2%

Complicating integration efforts, some *Aussiedler* report suffering from discrimination by native Germans. For example, during the 2007/2008 school year, 15 percent of surveyed *Russlanddeutsche* students reported facing some form of discrimination (such as less opportunity for advancement).[336] Assessing disparities in education and the role played by discrimination, Meng and Protassova write:

> We may add that the repatriates' deficits in the field of high education are caused by procedures in the German education system that only can be characterized as forms of structural discrimination: For example, the almost automatic assignment of immigrant children to lower secondary school (Hauptschule), long periods of unskilled employment before and after vocational education, and the neglect of the first language.[337]

Similarly, a 2012 survey found that 23.1 percent of *Aussiedler* perceived discrimination in the labor market, 20.4 percent by public offices and authorities, and 15.2

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[334] Söhn, 416.

[335] Adapted from Worbs et al., "(Spät-)Aussiedler in Deutschland: Eine Analyse Aktueller Daten Und Forschugsergebnisse," 46.

[336] Worbs et al., "(Spät-)Aussiedler in Deutschland: Eine Analyse Aktueller Daten Und Forschugsergebnisse," 135.

[337] Katharina Meng and Ekaterina Protassova, "Young Russian-German Adults 20 Years after Their Repatriation to Germany," in *Integration, Identity and Language Maintenance in Young Immigrants: Russian Germans or German Russians*, ed. Ludmila Isurin and Claudia M. Riehl, IMPACT: Studies in Language and Society 44 (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2017), 191–92.

percent in educational institutions.[338] Although only affecting a minority of the *Aussiedler* population, the perceived existence of discrimination in the workplace or academic environment suggests an unsuccessful integration, at the very least in the consciousness of those reporting the mistreatment. Discrimination, spatial isolation, and relative socioeconomic deprivation each distinguish *Aussiedler*—and *Russlanddeutsche* in particular—from native-born Germans.

C.   CONCLUSION

For the early generations of *Aussiedler* in Germany, successful integration appears to have been the norm. However, a gradual shift in outcomes began to surface as large numbers of *Russlanddeutsche* arrived in Germany in the 1990s with less support from the government and perhaps less acceptance from native Germans. Although measures of socioeconomic integration improved in the 2010s, effects of the experience linger in *Russlanddeutsche* communities, and the vicissitudes faced by generations in both the Soviet Union and Germany leave an indelible mark on the group's collective identity. This identity—not quite Russian, and not quite German—nevertheless possesses a strong ethnic, cultural, and linguistic character.

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[338] Worbs et al., "(Spät-)Aussiedler in Deutschland: Eine Analyse Aktueller Daten Und Forschugsergebnisse," 137.

IV. *RUSSLANDDEUTSCHE* LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY

Sociolinguistic factors play an important role in *Russlanddeutsche* identity. Such linguists as LePage and Keller argue that language and identity are in fact inseparable from one another, and that the use of a particular language reflects a desire to associate or disassociate with a particular identity.[339] It provides a medium through which identity is crafted, contested, and transmitted. Language is also a critical component of integration and assimilation, able to ease or burden the process. This chapter reviews quantitative and qualitative data from research on *Russlanddeutsche* social networks, language use, and the self-attribution of identity. Data are primarily drawn from studies ranging from the 1990s to the 2010s in order to capture trends in language use and any concurrent changes in the group's self-conception. Additionally, principles of the sociocultural linguistics approach proposed by Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall are applied to provide additional insight into the ways in which *Russlanddeutsche* identity is constituted.[340] This analysis reveals significant differences between *Russlanddeutsche* generations, subtle shifts in identity over time, and the close connection between the population's mixed-language environment and hybrid Russian-German identity. This lack of uniformity is an expected trait by sociocultural linguists, who recognize the way in which identities are shaped through discourse, and that any single account of an individual's identity is necessarily a partial one.

A. *RUSSLANDDEUTSCHE* SOCIAL NETWORKS AND LANGUAGE USE

After arriving in Germany, the *Russlanddeutsche* remained fairly isolated from the native German population, even more so than the other *Aussiedler* who came before them. Observations conducted by Barbara Dietz in 1997 revealed similar patterns of isolation in sociolinguistic markers. Compared to other *Aussiedler,* the *Russlanddeutsche* were less proficient in German and more proficient in the language

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[339] Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, *Acts of Identity*, 315.

[340] As detailed in Chapter I, these principles are emergence, positionality, indexicality, relationality, and partiality.

of their countries of origin, in their case Russian. *Russlanddeutsche* friendship networks also remained within their ethnic community more often than other *Aussiedler*: Almost half of *Russlanddeutsche* reported that their three best friends were from their country of origin and 77 percent had at least one friend from Russia. Moreover, 95 percent reported meeting with friends or relatives at least monthly, creating tightly knit social networks within the *Russlanddeutsche* community.[341] Still, the community is far from monolithic, particularly in terms of language use across generations. These differences between generations offer important insights into potentially changing *Russlanddeutsche* identity. Additionally, the comparison of *Russlanddeutsche* social networks and language use to those of a peer immigrant community—the Russian-Jews—further illuminates the complex relationship between *Russlanddeutsche* identity, ethnicity, and language.

1.   Generational Differences

Despite their many cultural commonalities, there are meaningful sociolinguistic differences between *Russlanddeutsche* generations. Between 1992 and 1995, Katharina Meng studied *Russlanddeutsche* language use and integration, revealing significant variation in language proficiency between generations.[342] She identified four relevant generations as the "great-grandparents," the "grandparents," the "parents," and "children." German language competence was greatest amongst the "great-grandparent" generation (those born before 1924). They immigrated to Germany as reasonably proficient speakers and continued to improve after arrival. The "grandparent" generation (born between 1921 and 1950) spoke a unique *Russlanddeutsche* German dialect—a combination of earlier regional dialects colored with Russian influence—creating problems of communications with native Germans. The "parent" generation (born between 1948 and 1972), having spoken mostly Russian in the Soviet Union, experienced the greatest difficulty, finding easy communication in German impossible

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[341] Dietz, "Aussiedler in Germany," 120.

[342] Katharina Meng and Ekaterina Protasova, *Russlanddeutsche Sprachbiografien: Untersuchungen Zur Sprachlichen Integration von Aussiedlerfamilien*, Studien Zur Deutschen Sprache, Bd. 21 (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2001).

until after living in Germany for five or six years. After arrival, both parents and grandparents expressed a desire for the children to learn German and retain Russian.[343] Despite their limited German proficiency, the "parent" generation made an effort to incorporate the language in speech to their children, though use of Russian with family and friends remained commonplace.[344] *Russlanddeutsche* continue to value bilingualism, even helping to establish bilingual kindergartens and Saturday schools in larger German cities.[345] In the 2010s, Meng and Protassova conducted follow-up interviews with some of the "children" from the 1990s study. They found that most had achieved "fluent standard German with few regional characteristics" and maintained the use of Russian, particularly in conversation with parents and friends.[346] Their research indicates the lingering importance of Russian in the personal lives of *Russlanddeutsche*, even in those who arrived in Germany as young children.

Approximately a decade after Meng and Protassova's initial study, new trends in *Russlanddeutsche* Russian and German language use became apparent. Vera Irwin collected data between 2004 and 2005 offering additional precision on sociolinguistic differences between *Russlanddeutsche* age groups. She categorized the *Russlanddeutsche* into four "Life Stages," which roughly correspond to the generational groupings studied by Meng.[347] Age ranges of the Life Stages are as follows:

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[343] Katharina Meng, "Sprachliche Integration von Aussiedlern: Einige Ergebnisse, Einige Probleme," *Sprach Report / Institüt Für Die Deutsche Sprache*, no. 2 (2001): 8, https://ids-pub.bsz-bw.de/frontdoor/deliver/index/docId/2569/file/Meng-Sprachliche_Integration_von_Aussiedlern-2001.pdf.

[344] Meng, "Sprachliche Integration von Aussiedlern: Einige Ergebnisse, Einige Probleme."

[345] Due to funding challenges, these kindergartens, schools, and Saturday schools often face difficulty in hiring and retaining qualified teachers. As a result, the bulk of the effort to foster bilingualism amongst *Russlanddeutsche* children must be handled within the family. The German education system is not postured to maintain Russian-German bilingualism in children from a young age. For more information, see Meng and Protassova, "Young Russian-German Adults 20 Years after Their Repatriation to Germany," 191.

[346] Meng and Protassova, 168–77.

[347] Vera Irwin, "When Networks Tell Just Half the Story: Social Networks, Language and Social Identity among Russian German and Russian Jewish Migrants in Germany," in *Integration, Identity and Language Maintenance in Young Immigrants: Russian Germans or German Russians*, ed. Ludmila Isurin and Claudia M. Riehl, IMPACT: Studies in Language and Society 44 (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2017).

1.   Life Stage 1 (15–19 years old).[348]

2.   Life Stage 2 (22–26 years old).[349]

3.   Life Stage 3 (28–51 years old).[350]

4.   Life Stage 4 (55–79 years old).[351]

These Life Stages exhibit the trend of diminishing German language proficiency in younger generations of *Russlanddeutsche* that occurred in the Soviet Union, particularly as old community barriers were broken, and formerly isolated ethnic Germans increasingly spoke Russian both with one another and non-Germans while in exile.[352] Self-assessments of language ability conducted by *Russlanddeutsche* upon arrival in Germany capture this reduction in German proficiency across subsequent Life Stages. These results are displayed in Table 4, with proficiency rated on a scale of 1–10.

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[348] These individuals arrived in Germany as children, typically around age 12, and received no German training outside of classes in the normal school curriculum. They were born between 1985–1989, largely corresponding to Meng's "children" generation.

[349] These individuals arrived in Germany nearing the end of their professional training or university education. They were able to continue their education or begin working upon arrival and were eligible for formal German language courses offered to immigrants. This group falls between Meng's "parents" and "children" in age.

[350] This group finished their education or professional training prior to emigration, sometimes having worked for several years in their profession prior to departure. These individuals could enter the labor market after completing German language training and recertification in their fields if needed. Born between 1953 and 1976, this group mostly aligns with Meng's "parent" generation.

[351] This group arrived in Germany already retired or approaching retirement age and therefore did not pursue continued education or continued employment. They were also eligible for formal German language courses. These individuals were born between 1925–1949, generally corresponding to Meng's "grandparent" generation.

[352] Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 135–37.

Table 4.   Self-reported German proficiency of *Russlanddeutsche* at the time of immigration.[353]

	Life Stage 1	Life Stage 2	Life Stage 3	Life Stage 4
Speaking	0.70	0.80	1.10	5.62
Listening	0.60	1.20	0.90	5.88
Reading	0.80	2.40	2.40	5.38
Writing	0.70	2.40	2.50	5.38

Scale: 0 to 10

Individuals in Life Stage 1 arrived in Germany with very limited German ability. This finding is consistent with Meng's earlier analysis and confirms the especially sharp loss of German language in younger generations. Indeed, proficiency drops across each subsequent age group, significantly between Life Stage 4 and Life Stage 3. Language use between age groups also reflects the general relegation of German and the increased prevalence of Russian. Table 5 depicts the language of choice in these interactions, grouped by Life Stages. A score of 0 indicates communication entirely in Russian, while a score of 4 represents entirely German.

Table 5.   Language use between *Russlanddeutsche* Life Stages.[354]

		Speaking to:			
		LS 1	LS 2	LS 3	LS 4
Speakers:	LS 1	2.40	1.88	0.90	0.43
	LS 2	2.00	0.89	0.56	0.44
	LS 3	1.67	0.75	0.70	0.50
	LS 4	2.43	1.86	1.25	1.62

Scale: 0=Russian only, 4=German only

[353] Adapted from Irwin, "When Networks Tell Just Half the Story: Social Networks, Language and Social Identity among Russian German and Russian Jewish Migrants in Germany," 107.

[354] Adapted from Irwin, "When Networks Tell Just Half the Story: Social Networks, Language and Social Identity among Russian German and Russian Jewish Migrants in Germany," 120.

Several notable trends appear in the data. Within and across most Life Stages, Russian remains the favored language of communication. The decision to speak Russian, whether by choice or necessity, reinforces the group's distinction from native Germans and maintains a link with their historical experience abroad. Only three exceptions exist to this pattern, each occurring in interactions involving members of Life Stage 1. When members of this youngest age group speak to one another, the second strongest propensity for German use appears. This proclivity for German indicates that by 2004– 2005, those in Life Stage 1 had sufficiently improved their German to the extent that it was their preferred language of communication with one another. It may also suggest a potential shifting identity among the community's youngest members as the use of German becomes more prominent in daily life. This shift toward German by the study's youngest subjects appears to be reinforced by older members. When the oldest members of the community speak to the youngest, they use German at the highest rate of any of the interactions. However, many of youngest individuals who continue to speak Russian to their senior-most relations reported doing so due to difficulty in communication presented by the grandparents' *Russlanddeutsche* dialect.[355] Those in Life Stage 2 also demonstrate a shift toward German when speaking with their juniors, using German equally as often as Russian. However, this shift proves to be an exception rather than a rule: Even conversations between members of Life Stage 2 skew heavily in favor of Russian. Additionally, across all Life Stages, communication with friends and family continues to favor the use of Russian. Table 6 provides data on these interactions using the same scale as Table 5.

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[355] Irwin, "When Networks Tell Just Half the Story: Social Networks, Language and Social Identity among Russian German and Russian Jewish Migrants in Germany," 121.

Table 6.   *Russlanddeutsche* language use with family and friends.[356]

	Life Stage 1	Life Stage 2	Life Stage 3	Life Stage 4
With family	1.47	0.96	0.98	1.76
With friends	2.76	0.98	0.92	1.73

Scale: 0=Russian only, 4=German only

A bias toward German occurs only in communication between the youngest subjects of the study and their friends. They were also most likely to visit households where German was spoken and least likely to visit Russian-speaking homes or receive visits from Russian-speaking guests.[357] Importantly, however, their interaction with family continues to favor the use of the Russian language. Regardless, the inclusion of some German is a salient factor for *Russlanddeutsche* identity. For Irwin, "the fact that German language historically had been an integral part of the community's identity as the language spoken by the oldest family members before migration (often mixed with Russian) seemed to provide a link to [*Russlanddeutsche*] pre-migrant history."[358]

This historical connection intertwined with discourse is an example of a type of *relationality* known as *authentication*. According to Bucholtz and Hall, *authentication* "often relies on a claimed historical tie to a venerated past."[359] Although Russian continues to dominate the conversations between *Russlanddeutsche*, the use of German *authenticates* the interlocutors' Germanness. Likewise, the importance of Russian in everyday speech *authenticates* the *Russlanddeutsche* link to Russia and the former Soviet Union. The value that members of the *Russlanddeutsche* community place on bilingualism is likely both a function of its practicality and its importance to their unique group identity.

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[356] Adapted from Irwin, "When Networks Tell Just Half the Story: Social Networks, Language and Social Identity among Russian German and Russian Jewish Migrants in Germany," 119, 122.

[357] Irwin, "When Networks Tell Just Half the Story: Social Networks, Language and Social Identity among Russian German and Russian Jewish Migrants in Germany," 123.

[358] Irwin, 124.

[359] Bucholtz and Hall, "Identity and Interaction," 602.

2.   *Russlanddeutsche* and Russian-Jews

Germany's community of Russian-Jews offers a valuable comparison to the *Russlanddeutsche*. Like the latter, Russian-Jews emigrated from the former Soviet Union predominantly as monolingual Russian speakers.[360] Most Russian-Jews arrived in the 1990s under special rules governing their admission that granted them permanent residency.[361] Approximately 250,000 Russian-Jews live in Germany today.[362] Like the *Russlanddeutsche*, Russian-Jewish identity and family history are influenced by past persecution and mistreatment in the Soviet Union.[363] While both communities departed from a similar linguistic environment, some notable sociolinguistic differences have emerged between the groups. Their differences in language use provide additional insight into the role played by language in constituting *Russlanddeutsche* identity.

The frequency and perception of code-mixing (the mixing of two or more languages) strongly differ between the *Russlanddeutsche* and Russian-Jews. Irwin found a substantial use of code-mixing by the *Russlanddeutsche*, which they referred to as "our language" or "our way to speak."[364] Code-mixing even occurred in the speech of those with limited German proficiency when speakers would occasionally opt for the use of a German word in place of a Russian word if it came to mind first.[365] Participants in the study characterized the use of German in Russian conversations as a means of teaching one another (and especially children) the German language.[366] In contrast, Russian-Jews largely take a negative view of code-mixing and instead endeavor to maintain a "purer" or

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[360] Irwin, "When Networks Tell Just Half the Story: Social Networks, Language and Social Identity among Russian German and Russian Jewish Migrants in Germany," 100.

[361] Köppen, "Self-Attribution and Identity of Ethnic-German SpätAussiedler Repatriates from the Former USSR," 110; Irwin, "When Networks Tell Just Half the Story: Social Networks, Language and Social Identity among Russian German and Russian Jewish Migrants in Germany," 100.

[362] Irwin, "When Networks Tell Just Half the Story: Social Networks, Language and Social Identity among Russian German and Russian Jewish Migrants in Germany," 100.

[363] Köppen, "Self-Attribution and Identity of Ethnic-German SpätAussiedler Repatriates from the Former USSR," 114.

[364] Irwin, "When Networks Tell Just Half the Story: Social Networks, Language and Social Identity among Russian German and Russian Jewish Migrants in Germany," 123.

[365] Irwin, 123.

[366] Irwin, 124.

more standard Russian.[367] Remarking on the practice of code-mixing in the *Russlanddeutsche* community, a Russian-Jewish woman pointedly attributed the practice to "the insufficient level of the inner development. Something like that."[368] The *Russlanddeutsche* labeling of code-mixing as their "way to speak" and the Russian-Jewish perception of it as something inherently *Russlanddeutsche* demonstrate an identity constituted through *indexicality*. According to Bucholtz and Hall, "in identity formation, indexicality relies heavily on ideological structures, for associations between language and identity are rooted in cultural beliefs and values—that is, ideologies—about the sorts of speakers who (can or should) produce particular sorts of language."[369] In other words, the use of code-mixing *indexes* to the identity of *Russlanddeutsche*, as it is recognized both within and outside of the group as a way in which they employ language.

Social insularity and its resultant linguistic effects also distinguish the *Russlanddeutsche* from Russian-Jews. Echoing the findings in Dietz's data, *Russlanddeutsche* participants in Irwin's study frequently reported an insularity from native Germans and far greater contact with other members of their own group. Some maintained minimal contact with German neighbors, limited to exchanging simple pleasantries or solving disagreements.[370] Commenting on this isolation, a Life Stage 2 man remarked that "the only time I speak with German neighbors is when I turn up my music too loud. Then they come out and yell 'Please [make] the music quieter' or something like that."[371] In addition, many reported that they could fulfill most of their everyday errands and shopping without encountering German-speakers since they frequented stores staffed by Russian-speakers.[372] An interview with a Life Stage 3 woman participant illustrates this point:

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[367] Irwin, 124.

[368] Irwin, 125.

[369] Bucholtz and Hall, "Identity and Interaction," 594.

[370] Irwin, "When Networks Tell Just Half the Story: Social Networks, Language and Social Identity among Russian German and Russian Jewish Migrants in Germany," 114.

[371] Irwin, 114.

[372] Irwin, 114.

Interviewer: How often do you find yourself in situations where you have to speak German?

Participant: Oh…that's a difficult question. We don't do anything like that.

Interviewer: Maybe once a month?

Participant: Oh, no, not even. Probably once a year or something like that.[373]

Even the youth, who more frequently interact with native Germans, continue to favor *Russlanddeutsche* social networks, citing differences in "mentality," behavior, and unacceptance by native Germans as reasons for the gulf.[374] This process of drawing attention to group dissimilarities is known as *distinction*, another form of *relationality*, whereby language is used to emphasize perceived differences between identity groups.[375]

The degree of social isolation maintained by the *Russlanddeutsche* is absent from the Russian-Jewish community. Russian-Jews have more contacts with local Germans across all Life Stages.[376] They report spending more free time with native Germans, more time with German-speaking neighbors, and more frequently visiting the homes of German speakers.[377] However, they also strongly favor the use of Russian within the family across all Life Stages.[378] Russian-Jews display a stronger affinity for Russian culture and a desire to share it with their children.[379] The difference in community insularity between *Russlanddeutsche* and Russian-Jews leads to somewhat of a paradox in expected linguistic outcomes. As Irwin points out, members of more isolated social networks are presumed

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[373] Irwin, 114.

[374] Irwin, 115.

[375] Bucholtz and Hall, "Identity and Interaction," 600.

[376] Irwin, "When Networks Tell Just Half the Story: Social Networks, Language and Social Identity among Russian German and Russian Jewish Migrants in Germany," 110.

[377] Irwin, 112.

[378] For comparison to the *Russlanddeutsche* values in Table 3, Russian-Jews in Life Stages 3 and 4 reported values of 0 (i.e., exclusive use of the Russian language). Life Stage 2 and 3 reported 0.03 and 0.72, respectively, all strongly favoring the use of Russian over German with family members. Irwin, 119.

[379] Köppen, "Self-Attribution and Identity of Ethnic-German SpätAussiedler Repatriates from the Former USSR," 117.

more likely to reinforce the use of their first language and resist the incursion of a second language.[380] That the *Russlanddeutsche* freely allow and even encourage the inclusion of German within family settings (as opposed to Russian-Jews who reserve German for communication with outsiders) suggests a favorable attitude toward "Germanizing" at the familial level, likely stemming from their own ethnic self-perception. In contrast, Russian-Jews do not feel the same ethnic pressure to assert their Germanness in the household. They comfortably integrate within German society and seek German friends, but are under no perceived obligation to prove the veracity of an "ethnic belonging" in Germany. Furthermore, in the *Russlanddeutsche* community, families are larger, live closer together, and intra-family interactions are far more frequent.[381] As a result, family interaction plays a comparatively larger role in *Russlanddeutsche* life and is of significant importance. Their inclusion of the German language in these interactions, despite varying proficiency levels, serves as an *authentication* of their German-inflected ethnic identity.

B.   SELF-CONCEPTION OF IDENTITY

Irwin's analysis of *Russlanddeutsche* Life Stages also pointed to a self-understanding of identity that could not be discretely characterized as German or Russian. She found that the subjects in her study "almost invariably" reported a mixed identity.[382] One of her participants offered a familiar response to a question about how she perceived her identity:

> In Russia, I wasn't considering myself Russian, and here, I don't feel German. It's hard to say what I am. I feel neither Russian nor German. What kind of German am I? I have so much Russian in me. And back there, I thought, what kind of Russian am I? I have so much German in me. Now we are mixed. That's it.[383]

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[380] Irwin, "When Networks Tell Just Half the Story: Social Networks, Language and Social Identity among Russian German and Russian Jewish Migrants in Germany," 128.

[381] Irwin, 108–9.

[382] Irwin, 129.

[383] Irwin, 124.

Based on her qualitative and quantitative data, Irwin concludes that "overall, a strong parallel could be drawn between the ways [*Russlanddeutsche*] immigrants seemed to accept their own 'mixed' ethnicity on the one hand, and a 'mixed' language on the other."[384] As illustrated by *Russlanddeutsche* code-mixing, mixed language can serve to constitute identity in a variety of ways, shaping the manner in which speakers view themselves and the way that others perceive them.

In a study on *Russlanddeutsche* integration and self-identification, Maria Savoskul describes the general *Russlanddeutsche* identity as one caught between two worlds and defined in negative terms (i.e., it is *not* Russian and *not* German).[385] Her interviews of *Russlanddeutsche* subjects revealed three separate typologies of self-identification: *germanische Deutsche* (Germanic Germans), *Russlanddeutsche*[ID], and *Russaki* (from the Russian word "Руссаки," meaning Russian person, though not necessarily ethnically).[386] Notably, these self-identifications correspond with levels of German proficiency, and with the level of achievement in integration and education discussed in Chapter III.

The first group arrived before 1988, spoke excellent German, and mostly had achieved some higher education. According to Savoskul, they form the "intellectual elite" of *Russlanddeutsche* society.[387] Many were critical of the more recently arrived *Russlanddeutsche* who remained immersed in a Russian-language environment.[388] The *germanische Deutsche* were well-integrated and felt thoroughly German. Capturing this sentiment, one member of this group commented, "*Deutschland ist meine Heimat, mein Zuhause. Ich empfinde mich als Deutscher. Russland ist nur ein Ort, in dem ich geboren*

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[384] Irwin, 129–30.

[385] Maria Savoskul, "Russlanddeutsche in Deutschland: Integration und Selbstidentifizierung," in *Zuhause fremd: Russlanddeutsche zwischen Russland und Deutschland*, ed. Sabine Ipsen-Peitzmeier and Markus Kaiser, Bibliotheca eurasica 3 (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2006), 209, https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839403082.

[386] Savoskul, 211. For the purpose of clarity, this chapter will use the term "*Russlanddeutsche*[ID]" with the superscript when referring to this particular ethnic self-identification in applicable studies. *Russlanddeutsche* with no superscript continues to refer to all *Aussiedler* from the former Soviet Union regardless of self-identification.

[387] Savoskul, 212.

[388] Savoskul, 213.

bin" (Germany is my homeland, my home. I feel like a German. Russia is only a place where I was born).[389] This speaker demonstrates the principle of *relationality*, *authenticating* his Germanness in the first declarative sentence about his homeland before introducing his felt identity. In the third sentence, he displays another form of *relationality* known as *denaturalization.* According to Bucholtz and Hall, speakers engage in *denaturalization* by disrupting "assumptions regarding the seamlessness of identity."[390] In this case, the interviewee disrupts the expected connection between his place of birth and his national identity, enabling his Germanness to take precedence.

Those in the second group tended to be young or middle-aged, found employment and their place in German society, but retained connections to both Russian and German cultures. They reported experiencing difficulties in the process of integration, and some were surprised by the native German perception of them as Russians rather than Germans.[391] Reflecting on this experience, a young man recounted, "*Eine gewisse Zeit lang hat mich das gestört, dann aber habe ich mich damit abgefunden und achte nicht mehr darauf. Das ist geblieben, stört mich aber nicht mehr. Ich halte mich für einen Russlanddeutschen*" (For a while this bothered me, but then I came to terms with it and no longer pay attention to it. It has remained, but no longer bothers me. I consider myself a *Russlanddeutsche*).[392] In this instance, the young man encounters *illegitimation*, another type of *relationality*, which Bucholtz and Hall describe as "the ways in which identities are dismissed, censored, or simply ignored."[393] Native Germans dismiss his claim to Germanness, leading him to consider his own identity in relation to that of *true* Germans. In doing so, he rejects their assignment of Russianness, but accepts an identity other than German.

Members of the third group had trouble defining their identity, but could state that they felt neither Russian nor German. These individuals comprised the largest proportion

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[389] Savoskul, 212.

[390] Bucholtz and Hall, "Identity and Interaction," 601.

[391] Savoskul, "Russlanddeutsche in Deutschland: Integration und Selbstidentifizierung," 214.

[392] Savoskul, 214.

[393] Bucholtz and Hall, "Identity and Interaction," 603.

of participants, were represented by all age groups, and were often isolated and inadequately integrated into German society. Most lacked a college degree and many lacked hope that their position in society would improve. That this demographic is the largest corresponds to previous research indicating that only a small minority of *Russlanddeutsche* earned a college degree.[394] Revealing a difficulty in categorizing identity, a 24-year-old *Russaki* woman stated, "*Ich weiß nicht, was ich bin. Deutschland ist nicht meine Heimat, ich bin hier nicht zuhause. Ich empfinde mich hier nicht ganz vollwertig*" (I do not know what I am. Germany is not my homeland, I am not home here. I do not feel quite complete here).[395] In contrast to the *germanische Deutsche* man who *authenticates* his identity through declaring Germany as his home, the *Russaki* woman demonstrates a *denaturalization* of any expectation of a connection between her and her country of residence. She is thus free from Germanness, but lacks a cultural anchor for her identity.

In addition to the differences in education and integration between each of the aforementioned identity groups, the frequency in which each group interacts with various ethnolinguistic organizations, businesses, and media also varies. Based on her interview data, Savoskul estimates the frequency of these interactions, assigning them values from 1 to 3, with larger numbers corresponding to a higher recurrence. Her findings are depicted in Table 7.

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[394] According to the 2011 Microcensus, 12.3% of *Aussiedler* completed a university of applied sciences or university degree. Nearly 25% lacked any professional qualification. Worbs et al., "(Spät-)Aussiedler in Deutschland: Eine Analyse Aktueller Daten Und Forschugsergebnisse," 56.

[395] Savoskul, "Russlanddeutsche in Deutschland: Integration und Selbstidentifizierung," 215.

Table 7.   Frequency of engagement with various organizations, businesses, and media in *Russlanddeutsche* life.[396]

	Germanische Deutsche	Russlanddeutsche[ID]	Russaki
Landsmannschaft	3	2	-
House of the Heimat	3	2	-
Russlanddeutsche historical society	3	2	-
Russlanddeutsche theater	2	2	-
Russlanddeutsche literature society	2	2	-
Russian language newspapers	2	3	3
Russlanddeutsche websites	1	3	2
Russian businesses	1	2	3
Russian travel offices	1	3	3
Russian bars, clubs, and restaurants	-	1	3

Scale: 1-random and sporadic, 2-more often, but not regularly, 3-regularly or daily

Those who identify as *Russlanddeutsche*[ID] are the only group who exhibit engagement with organizations, businesses, and media across the entire range of options. Their engagement with Russian-oriented businesses and media is more frequent than among the *germanische Deutsche*, as is their use of *Russlanddeutsche* websites, the latter observation possibly explained by age differences between the groups. *Germanische Deutsche* are often involved in *Russlanddeutsche* organizations, but are less interested in Russian businesses. Overall, the *Russaki* display the least engagement with the listed options and heavily skew toward Russian businesses and media. This tendency mirrors their own self-identification, one with a decidedly Slavic inflection. Compounding this effect, Savoskul assesses that many

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[396] Adapted from Savoskul, 216.

Russaki between ages 30 and 50 have little to no proficiency in German, severely inhibiting their employment prospects.[397] While the *Russlanddeutsche* as a whole can be characterized as rather insular, the *Russaki* seem to be gripped by an added component of resignation from the broader German and even *Russlanddeutsche* community. For the *Russaki*, frequent interaction with Russian-specific organizations (both in the linguistic and ethnic sense), coupled with their limited German proficiency, may reinforce their sense of isolation and distinction from German society.

More recently, there are indications of shifting self-identification within the *Russlanddeutsche* community. In a study on *Russlanddeutsche* identity published in 2018, Bernhard Köppen conducted interviews and surveys of *Russlanddeutsche*, finding varied self-identification across the population. He examined four typologies of *Russlanddeutsche* self-identifications: German, Russian, *Russlanddeutsche^{ID}*, and "neither Russian nor German or other." Although he did not include the term *Russaki* in his study, it would likely fall into the latter category. Among several interesting trends, his results indicate that the largest segment of the population now identifies as *Russlanddeutsche^{ID},* rather than as *Russaki* or "neither Russian nor German." His complete findings are displayed in Table 8.

Table 8.   *Russlanddeutsche* ethnic self-identification.[398]

Ethnic Self-Identification				
Age when arrived in Germany	I am German	I am Russian (Kazakh, Kyrgyz…)	I am *Russlanddeutsche^{ID}*	I am neither Russian nor German or other
46+	50%	5%	30%	15%
19–45	27%	13%	48%	12%
14–18	12%	24%	60%	4%
0–13	33%	20%	41%	6%
All	29.4%	15.8%	45.2%	9.4%

[397] Savoskul, "Russlanddeutsche in Deutschland: Integration und Selbstidentifizierung," 215.

[398] Adapted from Köppen, "Self-Attribution and Identity of Ethnic-German SpätAussiedler Repatriates from the Former USSR," 111.

The waning of a "neither Russian nor German" identification may correspond with the increasing measures of socioeconomic integration in German society discussed in Chapter III. Notably, the youngest respondents were most likely to identify as *Russlanddeutsche*[ID], despite their increased use of the German language in everyday life demonstrated by Irwin's youngest cohort. However, one-third do in fact identify as German, a ratio higher than any age group besides the oldest. That the most senior members of Köppen's study exhibit the strongest sense of Germanness is consistent with Savoskul's results, likely related to their greater German proficiency and better integration. Similarly, the growing tendency of the youth to identify strictly as "German" may represent the beginning of a trend toward Germanization and assimilation in the youngest generation. For now though, identification as *Russlanddeutsche*[ID] remains a strong plurality. According to Köppen, *Russlanddeutsche* continue to speak Russian (often code-mixed with German) with their families and report that Russian customs are used for "leisure," "being happy," and that they play an important role in family events.[399] Potentially inhibiting complete assimilation, the majority of Köppen's interviewees also report their Russian accents as a barrier to being accepted as genuinely German.[400] These pervasive linguistic and cultural traits of the *Russlanddeutsche* community provide a basis for their unique identity.

C.   CONCLUSION

Analysis of *Russlanddeutsche* identity at the individual and interactional levels demonstrates its heterogeneity. As patterns of language use change in the *Russlanddeutsche* community, so too may the group's identity. There appears to be a movement toward fuller Germanization by members of the youngest generation, but many in the community remain deeply immersed in a Russian-language milieu. Köppen concludes that "it is too early for deciding if we can speak of a persistent, prototypical Russian-German culture, or if the current two-tier/hybrid self-attribution reflects the current—and temporary—position in the process of further integration and

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[399] Köppen, 118.

[400] Köppen, 115.

assimilation."[401] For the time being, the continued bilingual and bicultural experience of the *Russlanddeutsche* in Germany preserves the community's distinction both from native Germans and other immigrant groups alike.

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[401] Köppen, 119.

V.   *RUSSLANDDEUTSCHE* AND NATIONALISM

Although *Russlanddeutsche* individuals express varying levels of identification with the German nation, there is an important connection between the community's collective identity, ethnic background, and contemporary German nationalism. While Germany has formulated a broader understanding of citizenship over the past two decades, some right-wing organizations and political parties adhere to a cultural conception of the nation—an understanding more readily intertwined with characteristics like ethnicity and traditional culture. Some *Russlanddeutsche*, having immigrated to Germany on the basis of similar cultural factors, seem to place a particular emphasis on these traits, especially when juxtaposed against new waves of immigrants (comprised of non-German ethnic groups) settling in the country today. Modern right-wing political parties—most recently the Alternative for Germany (AfD)—recognize this dynamic and aim to capture available *Russlanddeutsche* support by employing ethnonationalist discourse appealing to the community's "rightful" place in the German nation, particularly in contrast to newer Muslim immigrants and refugees.

A.   *RUSSLANDDEUTSCHE* AS AN *ETHNIE*

Having considered the nuanced ways in which *Russlanddeutsche* identity is constituted at the individual level through linguistic interaction, analysis at a macro level is needed to understand the community's position within the broader German state and nation. The modern *Russlanddeutsche* community is best described as an *ethnie*, a term borrowed from French by Anthony Smith in *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*.[402] According to Smith, an *ethnie* is a group of people defined by their historical and cultural connection, rather than simple biological kinship.[403] Moreover, he argues that "it is this sense of history and the perception of cultural uniqueness and individuality which differentiates populations from each other and which endows a given population with a definite identity,

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[402] Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).

[403] Smith, 21–22.

both in their own eyes and in those of outsiders."[404] Crucially, the various forms of self-attribution expressed by participants in the studies by Savoskul and Köppen do not undermine the existence of the *Russlanddeutsche* as an *ethnie*. Smith characterizes individual identity as "subordinate" to the *ethnie* and as a more malleable concept.[405] Additionally, he argues that "the features of any *ethnie*, whatever its distant origins, take on a binding, exterior quality for any member or generation, independent of their perceptions and will; they possess a quality of historicity that itself becomes an integral part of subsequent ethnic interpretations and expressions."[406] In other words, although some members of the *Russlanddeutsche* community may use a variety of labels to describe themselves, a sufficiently influential number of those both within and outside of the *ethnie* recognize the individuals collectively as the *Russlanddeutsche*—a result of numerous factors that will be discussed in this section. Savoskul's use of the term *Russlanddeutsche* to describe her collective participants—regardless of whether they identified as *germanische Deutsche, Russlanddeutsche^{ID}*, or *Russaki*—further illustrates this point.[407] Smith identifies five dimensions of an *ethnie*, each of which is manifest in the *Russlanddeutsche* community. These are a collective name, a common myth of descent, a shared history, a distinctive shared culture, an association with a specific territory, and a sense of solidarity.[408]

The collective name of the *Russlanddeutsche* comes relatively late in the population's history. Only after Stalin forced disparate groups of Germans living across the Soviet Union into exile did the cultural, linguistic, and religious differences between them begin to attenuate, allowing a single name to sensibly refer to the group as a whole.[409] The possession of a name is highly significant in the formation of an *ethnie*. Smith argues

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[404] Smith, 22.

[405] Anthony D. Smith, *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism: A Cultural Approach* (London: Routledge, 2009), 124, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203876558.

[406] Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 22.

[407] Savoskul, "Russlanddeutsche in Deutschland: Integration und Selbstidentifizierung."

[408] Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 22–30.

[409] Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 131.

that "the name summons up images of the distinctive traits and characteristics of a community in the minds and imaginations of its participants and outsiders—as well as posterity—though these images may differ wildly."[410] Early on, Russians thought of the Germans as the "colonists" or "non-Russian property holders."[411] Meanwhile, the Germans continued to identify themselves with the regions from which they departed. These names failed to produce any sort of unity across the disparate and isolated German communities across the Russian Empire. However, once these formerly disunited Germans found themselves living side by side in exile, all having faced similar tribulations, a collective name became more appropriate. As the name became understood both within and outside of the community, one could refer to the population as the *Sowjetdeutsche* and later the *Russlanddeutsche* after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. As the *Russlanddeutsche* began to settle in Germany, their name continued to evoke their distinction from the native population and their persistence as a unique *ethnie*.

Common myth and shared history have long played an essential role in *Russlanddeutsche* identity. These two dimensions of the *ethnie* are considered together, as they play related roles and are often transmitted through the same media. The myth of the *Russlanddeutsche* is perpetuated through a variety of media, including literature and art. According to Smith, the myth is "in many ways the *sine qua non* of ethnicity, the key elements of that complex of meanings which underlie the sense of ethnic ties and sentiments for the participants, myths of origins and descent provide the means of collective location in the world and the charter of the community which explains its origin, growth and destiny."[412] Myths are passed from generation to generation and shaped by collective experience. They also possess an "aesthetic dimension" and are "conveyed in apt genres for communication and mobilization."[413] Moreover, as stated by Smith, a shared history "unites successive generations, each with its set of experiences which are added to the common stock, and it also defines a population in terms of experienced

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[410] Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 24.

[411] Mukhina, *The Germans of the Soviet Union*, 22.

[412] Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 24.

[413] Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*.

temporal sequences, which convey to later generations the historicity of their own experience."[414] In a survey, *Russlanddeutsche* respondents recounted four historical factors as pivotal to their identity: Catherine the Great's invitation, preservation of the German language in Russia, Stalin's treatment of the group following WWII, and family lore of Germany as the historical homeland.[415] Importantly, the history of the *ethnie* need not cohere with events that scholars might record in an academic journal, but only provide a chronology that situates the group in its current place in time.[416] In this way, it may act in a mythological sense as well.

The *Landsmannschaft der Deutschen aus Russland* (LmDR) serves as an excellent repository for the myth and shared history of the *Russlanddeutsche ethnie*. Although the organization primarily draws support from educated members of the *Russlanddeutsche* community, the intellectual class of an *ethnie* serves an operative role in crafting ethnic or national narratives for the larger population.[417] Among their publications can be found videos, annual *Heimatbücher* (homeland books), literature by *Russlanddeutsche* authors, and the magazine "*Volk auf dem Weg*" (People on the Way).[418] Incidentally, Karl Stumpp, the former *Sonderkommando* and founding member of the LmDR, served as editor of the *Heimatbücher* and *Volk auf dem Weg* during the 1950s and 1960s, playing a significant role in crafting the narrative of *Russlanddeutsche* as a collective *Volk*.[419] The motif of a "people on the way" and the memory of mistreatment endured along the journey have come to form vital components of *Russlanddeutsche* myth and sense of history. The LmDR operates a children's education project titled "*Kinder auf dem Weg*," teaching children the history of German immigration in the 18th and 19th centuries.[420] Similarly, celebrated

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[414] Smith, 25.

[415] Goerres, Mayer, and Spies, "Immigrant Voters against Their Will," 16–17.

[416] Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 25.

[417] Smith, *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism*, 124.

[418] "Landsmannschaft Der Deutschen Aus Russland."

[419] Petersen, "The Making of Russlanddeutschtum Karl Stumpp oder die Mobilisierung einer ‚Volksgruppe' in der Zwischenkriegszeit," 168.

[420] Albina Baumann, "Kinder auf dem Weg," Landsmannschaft der Deutschen aus Russland e. V., 2019, https://lmdr.de/kinder-auf-dem-weg/.

Russlanddeutsche artists such as Viktor Hurr and Michail Disterheft capture past suffering in art. Several examples of their work feature in *Keiner ist Vergessen* (Nobody is Forgotten), a memorial book published by the LmDR on the deportation and exile of Germans in the Soviet Union.[421] Figure 6 is an example of a Hurr painting in his typical impressionist style.

Figure 6.   *Im Arbeitslager* (In the Labor Camp) by Viktor Hurr.[422]

These items support a process of "symbolic cultivation" that reinforces the uniqueness of the *Russlanddeutsche* and strengthens their sense of shared ethnicity.[423] Literature and art within the LmDR and elsewhere mold the *Russlanddeutsche* understanding of themselves and their experience in the modern world.

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[421] Hans Kampen and Nina Paulsen, eds., *Keiner Ist Vergessen: Gedenkbuch Zum 70. Jahrestag Der Deportation Der Deutschen in Der Sowjetunion* (Stuttgart: Landsmannschaft der Deutschen aus Russland e.V, 2011).

[422] Source: Kampen and Paulsen, 20.

[423] Smith, *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism*, 48.

In both the Soviet Union and Germany, the *Russlanddeutsche* maintained cultural traits that distinguished them from neighboring populations. Smith cites language and religion as the most common of these, but also highlights others including customs, folklore, food, and the arts.[424] Language has long distinguished the *Russlanddeutsche* from their compatriots in Russia and Germany. Other elements of culture, such as religion and customs, also provide the *Russlanddeutsche ethnie* with distinction. In the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, *Russlanddeutsche* religious practices—usually of Protestant confession—largely differed from Russian Orthodoxy and state atheism. In Germany, where their confessions might have aligned with neighbors, *Russlanddeutsche* again distinguished themselves with their higher level of religiosity.[425] These elements have tangible effects on *Russlanddeutsche* interaction with others. One participant in Meng and Protassova's study reported differing culture as an impediment to friendships with native Germans:

> So I don't have a single friend who is really a German only. My best friend is also from Kazakhstan. I think that connects us…I guess when you're at her house, it's like in our house. There's nothing embarrassing. And all these customs and culture and everything. If I go to a German friend's, that's kind of a different world.[426]

The participant also remarked on differences in music, food, rituals, and family celebrations—all markers of the distinctive culture possessed by the *Russlanddeutsche ethnie*.[427]

The *Russlanddeutsche* association with territory (both in Germany and the former Soviet Union) forms another component of their *ethnie*. Smith writes that an *ethnie* "may well reside in that territory; or the association with it may just be a potent memory."[428] He adds that "*ethnie* do not cease to be *ethnie* when they have lost their homeland; for ethnicity

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[424] Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 26.

[425] Spevack, "Ethnic Germans from the East," 80.

[426] Meng and Protassova, "Young Russian-German Adults 20 Years after Their Repatriation to Germany," 190.

[427] Meng and Protassova, 189–90.

[428] Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 28.

is a matter of myths, memories, values and symbols…it is even possible for an *ethnie* to exchange one homeland for another."[429] For the *Russlanddeutsche*, Germany was long recognized as the *Urheimat*. According to "myth," the ethnic Germans abroad remained a "*Volk auf dem Weg*" on a generations-long quest to return to the fabled homeland. Today's *Russlanddeutsche* carry this history of shifting homeland into their identity, and while the significance they ascribe to each homeland varies by individual, the name by which they refer to themselves is indicative of their bi-territorial past. Rivers often serve as a common metaphor for the expression of their territorial association in poetry. The *Russlanddeutsche* poet Viktor Heinz captures this influence of two territories in his poem about an old man, "*Der Alte*":

> *Sein Blick flackert über den Rhein,*
> *aber er hört das Plätschern der Wolga,*
> *des Obs und der Kolyma.*[430]

> (His gaze flickers over the Rhine,
> but he hears the ripples of the Volga,
> the Ob, and the Kolyma.)

It is this connection with *two* places rather than a single one that shapes the territorial association of the *Russlanddeutsche ethnie*.

Community solidarity has long been a mark of the *Russlanddeutsche* throughout their history, continuing into modern Germany. For Smith, the dimension of solidarity distinguishes the *ethnie* from other—perhaps less significant—ethnic categorizations. He argues that this dimension is often found in "institutional philanthropic expression," and in order for an ethnic group to qualify as an *ethnie*, "there must also emerge a strong sense of belonging and active solidarity, which in times of stress can override class, factional or regional divisions within the community."[431] Solidarity amongst the *Russlanddeutsche* is demonstrated both by their organizations and through the degree to which members of the population report helping one another. The LmDR and the *Bund der Vertriebenen* (BdV)

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[429] Smith, 28.

[430] Kampen and Paulsen, *Keiner Ist Vergessen*, 83.

[431] Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 29–30.

(Federation of Expellees) both emerged in the 1950s to support the return and integration of ethnic Germans from abroad.[432] The LmDR offers numerous resources to *Russlanddeutsche*, including general integration assistance, programs tailored to women and children, and efforts to increase political engagement.[433] In addition to the support offered by these associations, the *Russlanddeutsche* also spend more time helping others within their community than do native Germans: 60.4 percent of *Russlanddeutsche* report helping relatives or friends at least monthly compared to 42 percent of native Germans.[434] These factors, together with the other requisite dimensions, firmly establish the *Russlanddeutsche* community as an *ethnie*. This existence as an *ethnie*—rather than as an ethnic or cultural community with looser linkages—plays a critical role in the *Russlanddeutsche* interaction with modern German nationalism.

B. *KULTURNATION* AND MODERN GERMAN NATIONALISM

Modern German nationalism and its focus on ethnicity, culture, and nationhood can be understood as an outgrowth of the concept of *Kulturnation* detailed by historian Friedrich Meinecke. Writing in the early 1900s, he argues that as a prerequisite, "a natural core based on blood relationship must be present in a nation."[435] With this foundation established, nations can generally be categorized into two ideal types. According to Meinecke, "we can still divide nations into cultural nations and political nations, nations that are primarily based on some jointly experienced cultural heritage and nations that are primarily based on the unifying force of a common political history and constitution."[436] In his view, Germany began as a *Kulturnation*, while countries like France and England better exemplified political nations.[437] Consequently, it was the ethnic German core, its

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[432] The *Bund der Vertriebenen* is a parent organization of the LmDR, maintaining a broader focus on all *Aussiedler*. For more information, see "Aufgaben," Bund der Vertriebenen, 2019, https://www.bund-der-vertriebenen.de/verband/aufgaben.

[433] "GWO-Projekte," Landsmannschaft der Deutschen aus Russland, 2019, https://lmdr.de/gwo-projekte/.

[434] Dietz, "Aussiedler in Germany," 131–32.

[435] Meinecke, *Cosmopolitanism and the National State*, 9.

[436] Meinecke, 10.

[437] Meinecke, 12.

language, literature, and its cultural affinities that provided the foundation for the German nation-state. He argues that "a standard language, a common literature, and a common religion are the most important and powerful cultural assets that create a cultural nation and hold it together."[438] His assessment of the German nation is reflected in the country's long-standing *jus sanguinis* citizenship law and the Federal Law on Expellees which granted *Aussiedler* admission solely based upon their descent, language, and culture.

Germany's initial emphasis on descent as a qualifying characteristic for the admission of repatriates—moderated later to include additional cultural and linguistic requirements—strengthened the perceived link between the *Russlanddeutsche ethnie* and their place in the German *Kulturnation*. Smith argues that while *ethnies* provide the historical root of nations, not all *ethnies* become nations (nor do they necessarily desire to do so).[439] This caveat applies to the *Russlanddeutsche*, who despite standing on firm ground as an *ethnie*, do not aim to establish their own nation. Additionally, many nations—modern Germany included—contain multiple *ethnies* (e.g., ethnic Germans, *Russlanddeutsche*, Turkish-Germans, etc.). Within a nation, nationalism may be promoted by a single dominant *ethnie* or through multiple *ethnies* in concert. This nationalism may be expressed through values such as autonomy, authenticity, national identity, and the homeland.[440] Through the sharing of like values, German nationalists are able to find common cause with sympathetic members of the *Russlanddeutsche ethnie*. Spevack writes that many of the *Russlanddeutsche* "will never abandon the conservative religiosity and traditional family values that differentiate them so clearly from the average population…The antiquated ideas of 'Germanness' (*deutsches Volkstum*) to which they cling clash with modern German identity on a daily basis."[441] These "antiquated ideas of Germanness" nest well within an ethnonationalist understanding of the *Kulturnation*.

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[438] Meinecke, 10.

[439] Smith, *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism*, 126.

[440] Smith, 62–63.

[441] Spevack, "Ethnic Germans from the East," 80.

1.   Nationalist Outreach

The linkage between the *Russlanddeutsche ethnie* and the German *Kulturnation* offers right-wing nationalist movements a viable strategy for political outreach. This has been the case for over a decade: In 1995, Spevack observed that "coming from former communist countries, the *Aussiedler* are known among politicians for their frequently conservative and specifically antisocialist attitudes."[442] Although a plurality of *Russlanddeutsche* voters has historically and continues to support the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), right-wing groups recognize their reputation as a conservative-leaning population and assess a potentially receptive audience for their messaging.[443] Goerres et al. argue that the CDU's emphasis on the Germanness of the *Russlanddeutsche* and the party's welcoming policy created a strong emotional connection between the *Russlanddeutsche* as an ethnic group and the party itself.[444] In interviews, older *Russlanddeutsche* report their appreciation of the CDU and Helmut Kohl, but younger generations are less likely to feel the same allegiance.[445] Research from the early 2000s and 2010s corroborates a decline in *Russlanddeutsche* support for the CDU, particularly amongst younger voters.[446] This decline offers other parties an opportunity to gain the support of disaffected CDU voters. As Germany—largely under the leadership of the CDU—has refashioned itself as a political nation over the past two decades, nationalists and right-wing populists promote ideas of the *Kulturnation* to populations uncomfortable with the transformation. According to linguist Ruth Wodak, right-wing populist discourse tends to invoke a variety of common themes, including a homogenous population or *Volk*, protection of the homeland against outsiders, and traditional values.[447] German nationalist

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[442] Spevack, 76.

[443] Tatiana Golova, "Akteure der (extremen) Rechten als Sprecher der Russlanddeutschen? Eine Explorative Analyse," in *Zuhause fremd: Russlanddeutsche zwischen Russland und Deutschland*, ed. Sabine Ipsen-Peitzmeier and Markus Kaiser, Bibliotheca eurasica 3 (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2006), 243, https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839403082.

[444] Goerres, Mayer, and Spies, "Immigrant Voters against Their Will," 10.

[445] Goerres, Mayer, and Spies, 20.

[446] Goerres, Mayer, and Spies, 8.

[447] Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean* (London: Sage, 2015), 66–67.

organizations and parties leverage each of Wodak's themes in the service of the idea of *Kulturnation*, appealing to the *Russlanddeutsche ethnie* as members of the *Volk*, claiming to be in defense of a *Heimat* under siege, and as preservers of a shared Christian tradition.

In the 2000s, the short-lived *Partei Rechtsstaatlicher Offensive* (Party for a Rule of Law Offensive) and the neo-Nazi National Democratic Party (NPD) endeavored to gain *Russlanddeutsche* votes, employing populist and ethnonationalist discourse.[448] In an interview with a *Russlanddeutsche* newspaper, the leader of the *Partei Rechtsstaatlicher Offensive* remarked that the community held a special position in Germany's *Leitkultur* (guiding or dominant culture) based on belonging to the "German value system"—an appeal to the population's understanding of traditional values.[449] In 2003, the NPD published a leaflet addressed to "*alle deutschen Brüder und Schwestern aus Rußland*" (all German brothers and sisters from Russia), with an overtly ethnonationalist plea:

> *Kommt zu uns und kämpft mit uns zusammen für ein Deutschland, das*
> *wieder so wird, wie es unsere Väter einst kannten. Die NPD will mit Euch*
> *ins Gespräch kommen, weil das die einzige Partei ist, die unserem Land*
> *und unserem Volk verbunden ist. Ihr könnt der NPD dabei helfen und*
> *umgekehrt kann die NPD euch helfen.*[450]

> (Come to us and fight for a Germany that will once again be as our fathers
> knew it. The NPD wants to talk to you, because this is the only party that
> is connected to our country and our Volk. You can help the NPD and
> conversely the NPD can help you.)

Despite these overtures, for some members of the NPD, the *Russlanddeutsche* were insufficiently German and thus could never be fully accepted.[451] Members of other far-right organizations engaged in similar dissent, mocking the supposed Germanness of the *Russlanddeutsche* in online discussions.[452] Nevertheless, the NPD and other far-right groups did inspire some reactionary *Russlanddeutsche* support, and in one infamous case,

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[448] For a more expansive list of right-wing groups that have sought *Russlanddeutsche* support, see Golova, "Akteure der (extremen) Rechten als Sprecher der Russlanddeutschen? Eine Explorative Analyse."

[449] Golova, 254.

[450] Golova, 255.

[451] Golova, 256–57.

[452] Golova, 258.

with a tragic result: in 2009, a *Russlanddeutsche* supporter of the NPD stabbed to death an Egyptian woman while being tried in court for racist and anti-Islamic harassment that he had previously directed toward her.[453]

Although the NPD has declined in popularity,[454] new organizations espousing ethnonationalist views have found a foothold in German society and seek *Russlanddeutsche* followers. The identitarian movement, comprised of a series of decentralized organizations across Europe espousing anti-globalist and often ethnonationalist rhetoric, has attracted support in Germany since 2012.[455] While the German Identitarian Movement (IBD) reportedly has less than 1,000 members, its anti-immigrant and anti-Islamic ideology has found sympathizers in a political party with a much larger membership: the AfD.[456] After revelations of close connections between both organizations emerged in 2016, the AfD declared that it would not work with the IBD, but examples of the cross-pollination of members remain.[457] Despite government surveillance directed at both the IBD and AfD for potentially extremist activity, the organizations maintain an ardent following.[458] Like earlier right-wing organizations, the AfD employs tailored identitarian messaging emphasizing the Germanness of the *Russlanddeutsche* and the threat posed by Islam and refugees. These themes are consistent with typical right-wing discursive strategies identified by Wodak.

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[453] Steffen Winter, "Bloßer Hass," Der Spiegel, September 5, 2009, https://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/a-646122.html.

[454] In the 2021 federal election, the NPD received approximately 0.1 percent of the second vote compared to 10.3 percent for the AfD. Der Bundeswahlleiter, "Bundestagswahl 2021 Ergebnisse," Der Bundeswahlleiter, 2021, https://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/en/bundestagswahlen/2021/ergebnisse/bund-99.html.

[455] Peter Hille, "How Dangerous Is the Identitarian Movement?," Deutsche Welle, July 13, 2019, https://www.dw.com/en/how-dangerous-is-the-identitarian-movement/a-49580233.

[456] Ben Knight, "Who Is Germany's 'New Right'?," Deutsche Welle, June 18, 2021, https://www.dw.com/en/who-is-germanys-new-right/a-57949592.

[457] Hille, "How Dangerous Is the Identitarian Movement?"

[458] Hille; "Germany Places Entire Far-Right AfD under Surveillance — Reports," Deutsche Welle, March 3, 2021, https://www.dw.com/en/germany-places-entire-far-right-afd-under-surveillance-reports/a-56757489.

Direct links between the IBD and the *Russlanddeutsche* are fairly sparse aside from brief mentions on social media. For example, in 2015, a *Russlanddeutsche* group on the Russian website *VKontakte* advertised a couple of joint meetings between the "*Russlanddeutsche für Deutschland*" and members of the IBD.[459] No additional meetings were acknowledged. Other research has identified examples of IBD memes shared in *Russlanddeutsche* chat groups, but the evidence does not suggest a substantial level of participation by *Russlanddeutsche* in the IBD.[460] However, the IBD has successfully inserted some of its ideas into broader right-wing discourse where they are more effectively transmitted to a larger audience, including the *Russlanddeutsche*.[461] One such concept is that of "remigration," an idea that the *Bloc Identitaire* (a French identitarian organization) defines as "the peaceful and organized return of a great part of immigrants and their ancestors."[462] According to the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, until 2017, the IBD and its members were nearly the exclusive users of the term "remigration" on Twitter, but after 2018, accounts linked to the AfD began publishing some of the most-shared tweets on the topic.[463] Many of these tweets discussed the deportation of Syrians and the "remigration" of Turks who choose not to integrate into German society.[464] As of 2020, the IBD is banned from Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, but through the AfD, their ideas are "legitimized" by the auspices of an official political party and are carefully crafted for a *Russlanddeutsche* audience.[465]

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[459] "Russlanddeutsche Für Deutschland," VKontake, September 19, 2015, https://vk.com/inforfd.

[460] "Wie Rechtspopulisten Versuchen, Russlanddeutsche Für Ihre Sache Zu Gewinnen," Zentrum Liberale Moderne, March 24, 2021, https://libmod.de/ rechtspopulisten_versuchen_russlanddeutsche_soziale_medien_gewinnen/.

[461] "2019 EU Elections Information Operations Analysis: Interim Briefing Paper" (London: Institute for Strategic Dialogue, May 24, 2019), https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Disinfo-European-Elections-Interim-report-ISD-2-V2.pdf.

[462] Jose Pedro Zuquete, *Identitarians: The Movement Against Globalism and Islam in Europe.* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2021), 158.

[463] "2019 EU Elections Information Operations Analysis: Interim Briefing Paper," 8.

[464] "2019 EU Elections Information Operations Analysis: Interim Briefing Paper," 8.

[465] Nils Metzger, "Rechtsextremismus im Netz: Identitäre Bewegung von Twitter verbannt," ZDF, October 10, 2020, https://www.zdf.de/uri/aa733d71-5b76-42ce-886b-37acb8c25082.

2. AfD's Tailored Political Discourse

In the years following Germany's 2015 refugee crisis, the AfD found an anti-immigrant and anti-Islam platform an effective means of galvanizing a voter base, including the *Russlanddeutsche*.[466] Although the AfD seeks to distance itself from the IBD—and in some cases takes legitimate action against its own extremists[467]—its political messaging around issues of immigration relies on an ethnonationalist sentiment that would be familiar to members of identitarian or earlier right-wing populist organizations. Discussion of topics like "remigration" remain on the party's website and their platform even calls for a national and supranational "*Remigrationsagenda*."[468] Much of the AfD's outreach to the *Russlanddeutsche* also occurs on party websites and social media groups. In 2016, the party translated its platform into Russian, nominated six *Russlanddeutsche* candidates, and was careful to refer to the *Russlanddeutsche* as ethnic Germans, rather than immigrants.[469] This messaging incorporates the *Russlanddeutsche ethnie* into the AfD's understanding of the German *Kulturnation* and avoids the NPD's mistake of "otherizing" them. Eugen Schmidt, himself a *Russlanddeutsche* member of the Bundestag in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), created a website titled "*Russlanddeutsche für die AfD NRW*."[470] It offers both Russian and German content with identitarian and ethnonationalist themes and aims to expose more *Russlanddeutsche* to the AfD and its platform, to include those living in states outside of NRW. The website's German-language "about us" section identifies "asylum chaos" as a source of consternation amongst the *Russlanddeutsche,* creating worries of "losing everything" and fear for "their wives, their children, and above all terror."[471] It also purports that the *Russlanddeutsche* are searching for a party that

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[466] "Germany Places Entire Far-Right AfD under Surveillance — Reports."

[467] "Germany's Far-Right AfD to Dissolve Extreme 'Wing' Faction," Deutsche Welle, March 20, 2020, https://www.dw.com/en/germanys-far-right-afd-to-dissolve-extreme-wing-faction/a-52864683.

[468] "Asyl & Einwanderung," Alternative für Deutschland, August 27, 2020, https://www.afd.de/wahlprogramm-asyl-einwanderung/.

[469] Goerres, Mayer, and Spies, "Immigrant Voters against Their Will," 7–8.

[470] Eugen Schmidt, "Über Uns," Russlanddeutsche für AfD NRW, June 29, 2016, https://russlanddeutsche-afd.nrw/ueber-uns/.

[471] Schmidt.

advocates for "conservative and Christian values" and stands against the "potential, threatening Islamization of Germany."[472] Here again are elements of right-wing discourse identified by Wodak: the AfD paints the *Russlanddeutsche ethnie* as under threat, highlights dangers to the *Heimat*, and emphasizes traditional values that support the *Kulturnation*.

Notably, the "about us" on the Russian-language section uses slightly more evocative diction. Instead of the simple term "asylum chaos," it describes the "uncontrolled influx of culturally alien migrants with no desire to integrate into our society."[473] Similarly, instead of a "*potential* Islamization" of Germany, it laments the "*creeping* Islamization."[474] Additionally, the Russian-language section highlights the "imposition of gender ideology…on our children in schools," a complaint absent from the German section.[475] Incidentally, this statement also echoes complaints over shifting gender norms in identitarian ideology and nests within the overall AfD push toward traditional and conservative values.[476] This sharpened content may be leveraging the observed propensity of *Russlanddeutsche* to favor Russian over German for emotionally charged topics.[477] Additionally, the AfD's willingness to use the Russian language to express ideas of German nationalism provides further evidence of their comfort with the *Russlanddeutsche*.

Elsewhere on the website, the party publishes campaign flyers and makes them available for download and distribution. Although many flyers cover typical political topics discussed across the political spectrum (e.g., jobs, the economy, upcoming events, etc.), some echo the identitarian themes found in the "about us" section.[478] One of the most

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[472] Schmidt.

[473] Eugen Schmidt, "о нас," Russlanddeutsche für AfD NRW, July 18, 2016, https://russlanddeutsche-afd.nrw/ru/o-нас/.

[474] Schmidt.

[475] Schmidt.

[476] Markus Willinger, *Generation Identity: A Declaration of War Against the '68ers* (London: Arktos, 2013), 27–28.

[477] Köppen, "Self-Attribution and Identity of Ethnic-German SpätAussiedler Repatriates from the Former USSR," 117.

[478] "Aktuelles," Russlanddeutsche für die AfD NRW, 2021, https://russlanddeutsche-afd.nrw/aktuelles/.

striking examples is a flyer advocating the preventative detention of suspected Islamists, shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7.   AfD political flyer published on November 6, 2020.[479]

The cartoonish and racialized examples of threatening Islamists depicted on the flyer play on the perception of Muslims from the Middle East and Africa as an imminent danger to German society. The website has published numerous flyers covering refugee-related crime and problems with Muslim immigrant integration.[480] Other messaging includes invocations of the sanctity of traditional culture, images depicting the "people" that invariably feature individuals with a prototypically Germanic phenotype, and flyers completely in Russian, all packaging ethnonationalist ideas and marketing them specifically to the *Russlanddeutsche*.[481] Figure 8 contains an example of each.

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479 Source: Eugen Schmidt, "Islamistische Gefährder präventiv in Gewahrsam nehmen," Russlanddeutsche für AfD NRW, November 6, 2020, https://russlanddeutsche-afd.nrw/aktuelles/2020/11/islamistische-gefaehrder-praeventiv-in-gewahrsam-nehmen/.

480 "Aktuelles."

481 Eugen Schmidt, "Kommunalen Flyer für Russlanddeutsche," Russlanddeutsche für AfD NRW, August 10, 2020, https://russlanddeutsche-afd.nrw/aktuelles/2020/08/kommunalen-flyer-fuer-russlanddeutsche/.

Figure 8.   Targeted AfD political flyers in German and Russian.[482]

On the main website, an uncropped version of the flyer on the left is followed by verbiage that states that the AfD is for "*eine Heimat- und Identitätspolitik, die unsere Traditionen und christlichen Werte schütz*" (a homeland and identity politics that defend our traditions and Christian values).[483] Many of these official flyers are also shared in *Russlanddeutsche* social media groups where members can further distribute them to a larger audience.[484] The most active "*Russlanddeutsche für die AfD*" social media account is on *Odnoklassiki*, a Russian social media website similar to Facebook. The use of *Odnoklassiki* may indicate AfD attempts to interact with *Russlanddeutsche* who consume

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482 Source: Schmidt; Eugen Schmidt, "Europaflyer," Russlanddeutsche für AfD NRW, April 3, 2019, https://russlanddeutsche-afd.nrw/europaflyer/.

483 Schmidt, "Kommunalen Flyer für Russlanddeutsche."

484 For additional examples of social media content, see "Russlanddeutsche Für Die AfD," Facebook, accessed September 16, 2021, https://www.facebook.com/AfDrus; "Russlanddeutsche Für Die AfD," Odnoklassniki, accessed September 17, 2021, https://ok.ru/afdrus.

primarily Russian media, such as the self-described *Russaki* identified by Savoskul. Both it and the Facebook group are advertised on the official *Russlanddeutsche für die AfD* website. Both social media accounts post numerous articles, images, and political cartoons with familiar identitarian and ethnonationalist themes. Equally important, the AfD adeptly uses the group to acknowledge the myth and shared history of the *Russlanddeutsche ethnie*. Figure 9 is a post from the official social media account advertising a ceremony in remembrance of the deportation of *Russlanddeutsche* in the Soviet Union.

Figure 9.   *Odnoklassiki* post from August 24, 2021.[485]

485 Source: "Russlanddeutsche Für Die AfD."

This type of outreach goes beyond simply stoking sentiments of German nationalism and, in addition, recognizes key historical events that remain of utmost importance to the *Russlanddeutsche ethnie*.

The AfD's use of the Russian language and incorporation of important elements of the historical *Russlanddeutsche* experience demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of their target audience. These techniques, coupled with offering a recognition of the *Russlanddeutsche* belonging to the German *Kulturnation,* offer some in the community an attractive option. The AfD seems to assess that the *Russlanddeutsche* are a potentially receptive audience for ideas popularized by the identitarian and earlier nationalist movements. The party also appears to have learned from past mistakes of the NPD and other right-wing groups, whose at times bigoted views of the *Russlanddeutsche* no doubt placed a ceiling on their potential membership and support.

3.   2017 Bundestag Election Results

Despite claims by the AfD that they are the only party representing the interests of the *Russlanddeutsche*, they have only managed to garner the vote of a minority of the population.[486] A plurality of *Russlanddeutsche* voters continue to favor the CDU. Still, in the 2017 Bundestag election, the AfD did overperform with *Russlanddeutsche* compared to the broader German population. Goerres et al. found that the *Russlanddeutsche* and broader electorate cast their second vote as shown in Table 9.[487]

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[486] Schmidt, "Über Uns."

[487] In German federal elections, voters provide a "first vote" and "second vote." Their first vote is cast for a candidate running to represent their district. Half of the German parliament's seats are allocated to winners of these district races. For the second vote, the voter chooses the political party which he or she prefers to be allocated seats in parliament. This vote follows a proportional system, in which the next half of seats in parliament are allocated to political parties in proportion to the number of "second votes" received. Parties must earn at least 5% of the second vote in order to qualify for seats. Prior to the election, parties develop lists of candidates to occupy any seats won in the second vote. For additional information, see Rebecca Staudenmaier, "How Does the German General Election Work?," Deutsche Welle, April 19, 2021, https://www.dw.com/en/german-election-process/a-37805756.

Table 9.   Second vote results in the 2017 Bundestag election.[488]

	CDU	SPD	Linke	AfD	Greens	FDP	Other
Russlanddeutsche	27	12	21	15	8	12	5
All voters	30	20	11	10	8	12	4

However, results for AfD support should be approached with caution. For instance, the 10 percent support reported by all German voters falls nearly 3 percent below the actual election outcome; as a result, Goerres et al. suspect that influences of "social desirability" led to participants underreporting their support for the AfD. Because of this, they expect the 15 percent support from the *Russlanddeutsche* to be a "rather conservative estimate."[489]

Hansen and Olsen conducted additional analysis of the sample of voters used by Goerres et al., refining the sample by omitting non-voters and those who failed to respond to important variables in their study.[490] Figure 10 displays both the projected first and second vote results of the 2017 election, with a notably higher level of *Russlanddeutsche* support for the AfD at 20 percent.

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[488] Adapted from Achim Goerres, Dennis Spies, and Sabrina Mayer, "Deutsche Mit Migrationshintergrund Bei Der Bundestagswahl 2017: Erste Auswertungen Der Immigrant German Election Study Zu Deutschtürken Und Russlanddeutschen" (Duisburg: Universität Duisburg Essen, March 2, 2018), 6, https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.26582.55364.

[489] Goerres, Spies, and Mayer, 6.

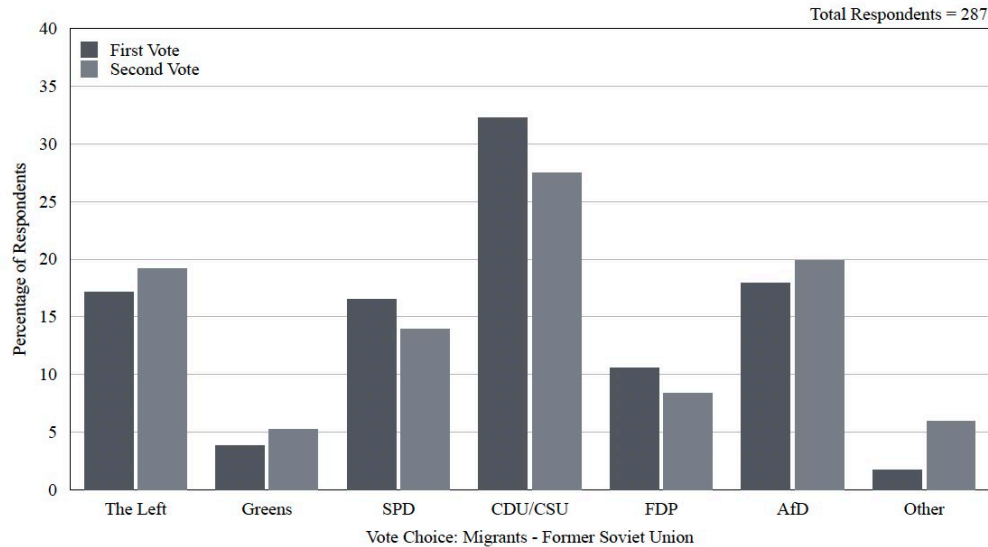[490] Hansen and Olsen, "Pulling up the Drawbridge," 114.

Figure 10.   *Russlanddeutsche* first and second vote choice in the 2017 national election.[491]

Overall, the AfD outreach to the *Russlanddeutsche* community seems to have found some success: according to Hansen and Olsen's refined estimate, *Russlanddeutsche* were approximately twice as likely to vote for the AfD compared to native-born Germans.[492] Additionally, *Die Linke* (The Left)—another party espousing radical and pro-Russia views, but from the far-left of the political spectrum—notably received a substantial level of support, similar to that of the AfD. Despite these gains, *Russlanddeutsche* continue to vote at a lower rate than the larger German population: post-2017 election survey data indicated that 43% did not vote.[493] However, that significant portions of the voting *Russlanddeutsche* population favor non-mainstream parties further illustrates their unique position in German society and has implications for German political outcomes.

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[491] Source: Hansen and Olsen, 117.

[492] Hansen and Olsen, 117.

[493] Hansen and Olsen, 116.

C.   CONCLUSION

Frequent *Russlanddeutsche* engagement with identitarian themes and political material on social media—often approvingly—demonstrates the continued appeal of these ideas amongst some members of the population. As Germany's largest immigrant group, they maintain a sizeable voting bloc that nationalist parties like the AfD seek to leverage. To the extent that they succeed, politics in Germany will be affected, potentially in ways that are deleterious to German and transatlantic security.

VI. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR GERMAN AND TRANSATLANTIC SECURITY

The historical experience of the *Russlanddeutsche* placed a special emphasis on the group's ethnicity, language, and culture. Like in the former Soviet Union, upon arrival to Germany, the *Russlanddeutsche* created insular social networks that fostered the maintenance of their cultural and linguistic idiosyncrasies. A souring of the German public on rising rates of *Russlanddeutsche* admission in the 1990s sometimes manifested in unwelcoming neighbors and even outright discrimination and violence. *Russlanddeutsche* insularity and friction with natives, coupled with difficulties in transferring into career fields corresponding to their Soviet vocational training and education, limited their ease of integration. Nowadays, measures of integration are improving, and the use of the German language is becoming more prevalent among the youngest *Russlanddeutsche* generation. As the youngest generation and their eventual children grow older with a very different lived experience than their elders, their identities may differ significantly from that of the great-grandparent, grandparent, and the especially troubled parent generation. However, many in the youngest generation continue to identify as *Russlanddeutsche* or even Russian. These self-identifications seem to be related to levels of education, the consumption of Russian media, and the patronage of Russian businesses.

Although shifts toward greater acculturation and assimilation may occur in the coming decades, the community's contemporary situation in Germany has implications for German and even transatlantic security. The importance of ethnocultural attributes within the *Russlanddeutsche ethnie* may contribute to the group's disproportionate support for the AfD—a party whose political ambitions if realized would undoubtedly be disruptive to Germany's established position in NATO and the EU. Such an eventuality would pose a clear security challenge to Germany, especially as the AfD questions current security arrangements and seeks a closer relationship with Russia. Given the size of the *Russlanddeutsche* population, even a minority of their vote could make a meaningful difference. If parties are able to mobilize *Russlanddeutsche* citizens who have historically abstained from voting, the effect could be even more significant. Additionally, the

Russlanddeutsche historical, cultural, and linguistic links to the former Soviet Union offer a potential attack vector for Russian information warfare (IW), a domain posing security challenges to all NATO allies. Finally, while the Russia-*Russlanddeutsche* dynamic is fairly unique, the act of one state attempting to gain sway over a corresponding ethnic minority in another state is certainly not an isolated phenomenon. A study of Russia-*Russlanddeutsche* interaction offers insights into other efforts at rousing the support of particular ethnic groups.

A. *RUSSLANDDEUTSCHE* SUPPORT FOR THE AFD

Several studies demonstrate that factors relating to Germany's immigration policy were the strongest predictors of *Russlanddeutsche* support for the AfD, with nationalism and Euro-skepticism also playing a clear role. Goerres et al. note that when discussing newly arrived Syrian refugees, *Russlanddeutsche* often assert their own identity and ethnic origin, highlighting the differences between them and those from the Middle East, seemingly with the implication that the new refugees have less justification for their refugee status or are less-deserving of admission.[494] A former leader of the BdV echoed this idea at a major AfD event, drawing a contrast between the era of *Aussiedler* admission and the modern influx of refugees, noting that "*Damals kamen Deutsche zu Deutschen*" (at that time, Germans came to Germans).[495] In other words, while the speaker deems *Aussiedler* policy as favorable due to the ethnic link between the immigrant group and the native population, her comments imply that new refugees violate this maxim and therefore are less desirable or acceptable. Moreover, *Russlanddeutsche* report that the AfD's proposed restrictive immigration policy, its unabashed nationalism, and its intent to improve relations with Russia as attractive components of the platform.[496] They appreciate the AfD's translation of political material into Russian, sensing that it could benefit some

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[494] Goerres, Mayer, and Spies, "Immigrant Voters against Their Will," 22.

[495] Jan Friedmann, "AfD: Warum die Partei bei Russlanddeutschen so beliebt ist," Der Spiegel, September 9, 2017, https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/afd-warum-die-partei-bei-russlanddeutschen-so-beliebt-ist-a-1166915.html.

[496] Goerres, Mayer, and Spies, "Immigrant Voters against Their Will," 24.

members of their community and signifies the party's recognition of them.[497] Hansen and Olsen confirmed the results of Goerres et al., finding that out of numerous variables, anti-immigration sentiment was the strongest predictor for *Russlanddeutsche* support of the AfD, while factors such as socioeconomic category and age ranges had no significant impact.[498] The importance of ethnocultural factors is communicated both online and at political rallies. Figure 11 is a photograph taken at a 2016 Nuremberg rally where members of the AfD and Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the Occident (PEGIDA) spoke to crowds of gathering *Russlanddeutsche*. Both the German and Russian text translates as "My homeland stays German."

Figure 11.   Photograph from a rally in Nuremberg in January 2016.[499]

That the protestor demands the homeland remain German while holding a sign half-written in Cyrillic serves as an exemplary representation of the unique nationalist sentiment

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[497] Goerres, Mayer, and Spies, 25.

[498] Hansen and Olsen, "Pulling up the Drawbridge," 119–24.

[499] Source: Melissa Chan, "German Girl, 13, Admits to Lying About Migrant Rape Claim," Time, February 1, 2016, https://time.com/4202091/germany-migrant-rape/.

that exists within the *Russlanddeutsche ethnie*. Similar ethnocultural factors emerge when comparing differences between *Russlanddeutsche* supporters of the AfD and CDU. Those who report holding nationalist or Euro-skeptic views are more likely to identify with the AfD than the CDU.[500] Lastly, while socioeconomic factors do not appear to play a major role in predicting AfD versus CDU support, AfD supporters are represented more strongly by those with lower levels of education.[501]

The primacy of ethnocultural factors (e.g., anti-immigration, nationalism, connection with Russia, etc.) in *Russlanddeutsche* support for the AfD is explained by the group's relationship to the German *Kulturnation*. Critically, it is not merely a matter of the *Russlanddeutsche* themselves identifying as German and gravitating toward a party espousing German nationalism. In fact, those who feel exclusively German tend to prefer the CDU.[502] Instead, it is the orientation toward the idea of *Kulturnation* that proves decisive. Those *Russlanddeutsche* who support the AfD seem to draw a sharp distinction between the belonging of their *ethnie* to the German nation and the belonging of others, specifically recently arrived refugees. *Russlanddeutsche* individuals might routinely speak Russian, consume Russian media, and engage in cultural practices alien to native Germans, but they nonetheless maintain an ethnic connection to Germany that has profoundly impacted their community's historical experience. The rapid arrival of new refugees in Germany provided a foil against which they could contrast their own belonging. From the perspective of *Russlanddeutsche* sympathetic to ethnonationalist arguments, the new refugees—non-ethnic Germans from an Islamic religious background who lack German proficiency—violate the bounds of the *Kulturnation* that offered their *ethnie* the right to return.

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[500] Natalie Klauser, "Party Identification among Germany′s (Spät)Aussiedler: The Sources of Favoring CDU/CSU or AfD" (Enschede, University of Twente, 2018), 52, https://essay.utwente.nl/75336/1/Klauser_MA_BMS.pdf.

[501] Klauser, 54.

[502] Klauser, 53.

B. RUSSIAN INFORMATION WARFARE

Russia frequently targets Germany with information warfare, where its efforts focus both on radical political parties like the AfD and *Die Linke* and the *Russlanddeutsche* population itself. The AfD has been a significant beneficiary of Russian propaganda and is the political party closest to Russia.[503] Russia favors AfD politicians who parrot Kremlin positions and its media displays a positive bias towards the party, portraying it as mainstream and victimized by the German political establishment.[504] During the 2017 Bundestag election campaign, Russia employed *RT Deutsch* and *Sputnik* to reach far-right leaning German voters and repeatedly broadcasted themes of election fraud and the immigration crisis.[505] Russia's Internet Research Agency also utilized bots and trolls on social media to exploit political divisions, especially favoring the AfD.[506] The close relationship between the AfD and Russia continues to the present day, recently demonstrated by the visit of an AfD delegation to Moscow in March 2021.[507]

The *Russlanddeutsche* are perhaps Russia's most accessible target for propaganda.[508] The relationship with Russia is important to the community, particularly amongst younger voters.[509] According to Goerres et al., *Russlanddeutsche* with dual Russian and German citizenship were more likely to vote for the AfD than those with only German citizenship (23 percent vs. 14 percent).[510] They were also more likely than the

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[503] Anne Applebaum et al., "'Make Germany Great Again': Kremlin, Alt-Right and International Influence in the 2017 German Elections" (London: Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2017), 10, https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Make-Germany-Great-Again-ENG-081217.pdf.

[504] Applebaum et al., 10–12.

[505] Applebaum et al., 12.

[506] Jeffrey Mankoff, "Russian Influence Operations in Germany and Their Effect," Center for Strategic & International Studies, February 3, 2020, https://www.csis.org/analysis/russian-influence-operations-germany-and-their-effect; Applebaum et al., "'Make Germany Great Again': Kremlin, Alt-Right and International Influence in the 2017 German Elections," 13.

[507] "Germany's Far-Right AfD Lawmakers Visit Moscow," Deutsche Welle, March 10, 2021, https://www.dw.com/en/germanys-far-right-afd-lawmakers-visit-moscow/a-56829773.

[508] Ohliger, "Country Report on Ethnic Relations: Germany," 5.

[509] Goerres, Mayer, and Spies, "Immigrant Voters against Their Will," 23.

[510] Goerres, Spies, and Mayer, "Deutsche Mit Migrationshintergrund Bei Der Bundestagswahl 2017," 7.

average German population to prefer a stronger leader who occasionally breaks the rules in order to get things done.[511] Some 60 percent of *Russlanddeutsche* supported Russia's actions in Crimea, rising to 71 percent among *Russlanddeutsche* who emigrated from Russia itself.[512] Many continue to consume Russian media, which during the 2017 election season, ran stories critical of modern Western values and portrayed a powerful Russia and a declining Europe.[513] These efforts are likely an attempt to foster a "permissive environment" within the German population, an objective of Russian IW which is achieved when Russian-produced information (whether true or false) is interpreted as factual by its targeted audience. Its purpose is to sway the public opinion of a population toward an orientation that benefits Russia.[514]

The migrant crisis provided Russia fertile ground for exploitation, especially as public opinion grew divided over the swelling numbers of refugees arriving in Europe. One of the most infamous examples of Russian IW in Germany was the "Lisa Case" in January 2016, in which Russian messaging was adopted by the AfD, *Die Linke*, and members of the *Russlanddeutsche* community. In this instance, turmoil began when a 13-year-old *Russlanddeutsche* girl reported being raped by three migrants in Berlin—a claim that was quickly disproven by police.[515] Regardless, Russian media like *RT Deutsch* and *Sputnik* quickly amplified the story. Sergei Lavrov, the Russian Foreign Minister, even personally commented twice on the event, suggesting Germany sought to bury the story out of concerns for political correctness.[516] Thousands of *Russlanddeutsche* and members of far-

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[511] Goerres, Spies, and Mayer, 10.

[512] Goerres, Spies, and Mayer, 11.

[513] Applebaum et al., "'Make Germany Great Again': Kremlin, Alt-Right and International Influence in the 2017 German Elections," 6.

[514] For more information on Russian IW strategy, see Keir Giles, "Handbook of Russian Information Warfare," NDC Fellowship Monograph Series (Rome: NATO Defense College, November 2016), 9, https://www.ndc.nato.int/news/news.php?icode=995.

[515] Kaan Sahin, "Germany Confronts Russian Hybrid Warfare," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, July 26, 2017, https://carnegieendowment.org/2017/07/26/germany-confronts-russian-hybrid-warfare-pub-72636.

[516] "The 'Lisa Case': Germany as a Target of Russian Disinformation," NATO Review, July 25, 2016, https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2016/07/25/the-lisa-case-germany-as-a-target-of-russian-disinformation/index.html.

right groups led protests around the country in response, demanding security for Germany and protection of German culture.[517] Figure 12 is a photograph from one such rally in the state of Baden-Württemberg.

Figure 12.   *Russlanddeutsche* demonstration in Villingen-Schwenningen in January 2016.[518]

Russian media sent correspondents to cover the protests, further propagating the false story.[519] Even members of *Die Linke* spread erroneous details of the Lisa case, demonstrating the ability of Russian disinformation to incorporate both ends of the political spectrum and the *Russlanddeutsche* simultaneously.[520]

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[517] "Russlanddeutsche Demonstrieren Gegen „Ausländergewalt"," Die Welt, January 25, 2016, https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article151420833/Russlanddeutsche-demonstrieren-gegen-Auslaendergewalt.html.

[518] Source: Chan, "German Girl, 13, Admits to Lying About Migrant Rape Claim."

[519] "The 'Lisa Case': Germany as a Target of Russian Disinformation."

[520] Aleksandr Fisher, "Trickle Down Soft Power: Do Russia's Ties to European Parties Influence Public Opinion?," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 17, no. 1 (January 8, 2021): 5, https://doi.org/10.1093/fpa/oraa013.

C. *ETHNIES* AND BROADER SECURITY IMPLICATIONS

Although the *Russlanddeutsche* have been the focus of this study, the dynamic between *ethnies*, nationalism, and external influence is not limited to their group. When minority *ethnies* feel dissatisfied with the policies of the elites—often the majority *ethnie*—they may become targets for foreign influence. Just as the Russian government perceives discontent amongst members of the *Russlanddeutsche* and seeks to exploit it, Germany's large Turkish population offers another similar audience to Turkish President Recep Erdogan. Like the *Russlanddeutsche*, Turkish-Germans are a sizeable *ethnie*, possessing their own unique culture, language, traditions, and a population that has felt the effects of a less-than-optimal integration across generations.[521] In August 2017, Erdogan urged Turks in Germany not to vote for the CDU, SPD, and Greens, the former two being Germany's mainstream and largest parties.[522] Opponents of these parties—apparently on offer by Erdogan's recommendation—include the AfD and *Die Linke*, neither of which espouse policy positions particularly supportive of current German security arrangements and foreign policy. In the end, Erdogan's comments were unsuccessful in diverting Turkish voters from the mainstream parties and Turkish-Germans largely continued to favor the SPD (35 percent) and CDU (20 percent), while *Die Linke* and Greens received less support (16 and 13 percent, respectively).[523] However, this failure should not be interpreted to signal an inherent inability of foreign leaders to substantively influence domestic politics elsewhere. Future outreach could become savvier, more targeted, and catalyze more destabilizing results.

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[521] Inken Sürig and Maren Wilmes, "Conclusions and International Comparisons," in *The Integration of the Second Generation in Germany*, Results of the TIES Survey on the Descendants of Turkish and Yugoslavian Migrants (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015), 183–88, JSTOR; Roya Imani Giglou, Leen d'Haenens, and Baldwin Van Gorp, "Determinants of Degree of Integration of Turkish Diaspora in Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany," *International Communication Gazette* 81, no. 3 (April 1, 2019): 260–61, https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048518820455.

[522] "Erdogan Tells German Turks Not to Vote for Angela Merkel," Deutsche Welle, August 18, 2017, https://www.dw.com/en/erdogan-tells-german-turks-not-to-vote-for-angela-merkel/a-40149680.

[523] Goerres, Spies, and Mayer, "Deutsche Mit Migrationshintergrund Bei Der Bundestagswahl 2017," 6.

D.   CONCLUSION

In Germany's 2021 Bundestag election, the AfD appears to have lost some support. Compared to the 2017 results, the AfD fell from 11.4 percent to 10.1 percent in the first vote and 12.6 percent to 10.3 percent in the second vote.[524] However, the AfD did win a plurality of votes in Saxony, Thuringia, and made some improvement in Saxony-Anhalt.[525] At the time of this writing, *Russlanddeutsche* voting patterns in 2021 are unavailable, but there are no indications that *Russlanddeutsche* support for the AfD has significantly changed. Whether or not the AfD persists decades into the future, new right-wing populist and nationalist parties could form to fill the niche. A resurgence of 1930s-style German national socialism, fueled by obsessions with racial hierarchies and overt anti-Semitism, seems unlikely. The German government continues to take action against parties and organizations that cross a certain threshold of extremism, but underground groups maintain membership and plan violence. Additionally, potential destabilization in the Middle East and Africa, coupled with a tremendous youth bulge in the latter, may portend large future waves of immigration to the European continent. These will likely trigger populist and nationalist backlash, particularly if coupled with times of economic uncertainty. To the extent that the *Russlanddeutsche* or any element of the German population supports such politics, German and transatlantic security interests may be challenged.

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[524] "Bundestagswahl 2021 Ergebnisse."

[525] "Bundestagswahl 2021 Ergebnisse."

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