

Mike Winnerstig [ed.]

Tools of Destabilization

**Russian Soft Power and Non-military
Influence in the Baltic States**

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Sammanfattning

Den pågående ryska aggressionen mot Ukraina har skapat betydande oro i de baltiska staterna Estland, Lettland och Litauen. De är NATO-medlemmar och därmed skyddade av alliansens kollektiva försvarsförmåga, men också de minsta och i relation till Ryssland de geografiskt mest utsatta NATO-länderna.

Detta har gjort att andra företeelser än traditionella militära hot börjat uppmärksammas i Baltikum. Särskilt gäller detta rysk s k mjuk makt ("soft power") och andra former av icke-militärt inflytande. Ofta syftar begreppet mjuk makt på den makt som ett land kan ha genom sin attraktionskraft. Den ryska definitionen av begreppet omfattar emellertid också möjligheten att utöva mjuk makt i syfte att vinna inflytande eller att bekämpa en annan aktör. Icke-militär maktutövning inom de ekonomiska och de energipolitiska områdena, är också sådana som uppmärksammats i de rysk-baltiska relationerna.

Denna rapport studerar ryskt utövande av mjuk makt och andra icke-militära sätt att utöva inflytande i Baltikum under de senaste fem åren. En aktör som baserar sig på sådant inflytande kan agera offensivt utan att använda militära styrkor eller traditionell krigföring. Det är mycket svårt att använda traditionella militära instrument, inklusive medlemskap i militära allianser, som försvar mot detta.

Rapportens slutsatser är att ett stort antal organisationer och andra aktörer – direkt eller indirekt styrda av den ryska statsledningen – sedan flera år implementerar en strategi mot Baltikum baserad på mjuk makt och icke-militär maktutövning. I detta ingår dels den ryska s k landsmanspolitiken ("compatriots policy") som omfattar stöd till alla rysktalande även utanför Rysslands gränser, dels en kampanj syftande till att underminera de baltiska staternas självförtroende som självständiga politiska entiteter, och dels en omfattande inblandning i baltiska inrikespolitiska angelägenheter. Detta förstärks av systematiska ryska försök – genom politiska, mediala och kulturella kanaler – att utmåla de baltiska staterna som "fascistiska", inte minst i relation till de ryska minoriteterna i Estland och Lettland. De senare utgör också målgruppen för mycket av de ryska försöken att utöva mjuk makt i Baltikum. I sin helhet kan den ryska strategin ses som ett sätt att medvetet destabilisera de baltiska staterna.

Resultaten av de ryska ansträngningarna i Baltikum är hittills relativt begränsade. Majoriteten av de rysktalande i t ex Estland är numera estniska medborgare, och bara ett litet antal är "statslösa". I alla tre länderna växer det också fram en yngre generation som har ryska som modersmål men som i ökande grad identifierar sig som lojala medborgare i det baltiska land de bor i. I den meningen är de ryska försöken att utöva mjuk makt mot Baltikum ett misslyckande. På andra områden, t ex vad gäller energifrågor, har rysk icke-militär maktutövning varit mer framgångsrik men även här finns tecken på att de baltiska staterna börjar kunna hantera situationen.

Nyckelord: Ryssland, mjuk makt, icke-militär maktutövning, destabilisering, landsmannapolitiken, Baltikum, Estland, Lettland, Litauen, minoritetsfrågor

Summary

The ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine has generated considerable concerns not least in the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. They are NATO members and thus protected by the collective defence capabilities of the alliance, but also the smallest and geographically most vulnerable members of the alliance.

This has led to an increased interest in other issues than traditional military threats against the Baltic states, in particular Russian "soft power" and other means of non-military influence. In the original definition, soft power denoted the power of attraction, but the Russian reinterpretation of it also entails the possibility of wielding soft power against other actors, in order to gain influence or to engage in non-military warfare. In this, wielding non-military power in the economic and energy sectors has also been observed.

This report analyses the Russian use of soft power and other non-military means of influence in the Baltic states during the last few years. To wield soft power might be a more effective tactic in a conflict than a traditional military attack – especially if the target is protected militarily through an alliance with bigger and more important actors.

The results of the report indicate that a substantial number of organizations and other actors, directly or indirectly governed by the Russian federal government, are engaged in the implementation of a soft power strategy in the Baltic states. Central pieces of this strategy are a) the Russian Compatriots policy, that actively supports all Russian-speaking people outside of Russia proper, b) a campaign aimed at undermining the self-confidence of the Baltic states as independent political entities, and c) a substantial interference in the domestic political affairs of the Baltic states. All this is reinforced by systematic Russian attempts – through political, media and cultural outlets – to portray the Baltic states as "fascist", not least in terms of their treatment of their Russian minorities. The latter groups are also central targets of Russian soft power activities. As a whole, the Russian strategy can be considered as aiming at destabilizing the Baltic states.

The results of the Russian actions are so far rather limited. For example, the majority of the Russian-speakers in Estonia are nowadays Estonian citizens, and a relatively small number are "stateless". In all three Baltic countries there are new younger generations today, with Russian as their mother tongue but increasingly identifying themselves as loyal citizens of their country of residence. In that sense, the Russian wielding of soft power against the Baltic states has been a failure. In other areas, such as the energy sector, Russian non-military power has been more successful, but there are signs indicating that the Baltic states are coming to grips with that situation as well.

Key words: Russia, soft power, non-military power, compatriots policy, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, destabilization, minority issues

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Andis Kudors, Centre for East European Policy Studies, Riga

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Foreword

This report has been produced by the FOI project on Security in the Neighbourhood, which is the nucleus of the Baltic Sea region security programme at FOI Defence Analysis. The project is funded by the Swedish Ministry of Defence. Its general objectives are to provide deep and comprehensive insights regarding the broad security situation of the Nordic-Baltic area and to accumulate knowledge about each country in the region, including their interactions and relationships.

A traditional approach to security, related to military and defence issues, has always been a central part of the project. In this report, however, the emphasis is placed entirely on non-military issues, namely the Russian strategy of soft power and non-military influence in the Baltic states.

As these issues are not the usual area of research within the project, the report has to a substantial extent been written by non-FOI analysts, from well-regarded institutes and academic centres in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, respectively. Thus, the report is the product of an international research effort that has at times been painstaking but also very fruitful.

The report has been very helpfully reviewed by, Mr. Ingmar Oldberg, now at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs and a former FOI deputy director of research. Dr. Johan Eellend, dr. Johannes Malminen and Mr. Tomas Malmlöf of the FOI have also contributed substantially to the review of the final version of the report.

Mike Winnerstig

Project leader, Security in the Neighbourhood project

Executive Summary

The recent Russian military aggression against Ukraine has caused substantial concern not only in the Baltic states but also in Scandinavia and other parts of Europe. However, the Baltic states are NATO members and thus an attack on them would be considered by US decision makers an attack against the United States too. The deterrence value of this is probably very high.

This deterrence factor notwithstanding, other measures could be used against the Baltic states, the smallest, geographically closest Western neighbours of Russia – and thus the most vulnerable. This report does not focus on traditional military threats, but instead on a much talked-about but less well-known phenomenon – Russian non-military influence and “soft power” in the Baltic states.

Soft power deals in its original form not with the actual wielding of power or influence by an actor but with the power of attraction. In the Russian context, however, soft power is often used in a different way to denote the ability of an actor to wield power in a number of non-military, non-traditional ways, such as through disgruntled minority groups, media outlets, the entertainment industry and the domestic political system of another country. Sometimes it can also denote more traditional means, such as the use of economic or energy related but still non-military assets against another state. Soft power, in this interpretation, is therefore something that an actor can wield against something, and can thus be considered another – or a new – tool of state power. By definition, this means that soft power and non-military influence can be part of the arsenal that a state has at its disposal in a conflict. To wield soft power might even be a new and much more effective tactic in a conflict than a traditional military attack – especially if the target is protected militarily through an alliance with bigger and more important actors.

In this study, we analyse both soft power and other non-military means of influence, such as energy and economic issues. They all have in common that they explicitly omit military means and that they can be used within a multitude of adversarial contexts short of traditional, militarized conflicts.

A soft power offensive can be devastating if it is directed at undermining the cohesion and self-confidence of another state as a political entity. Traditional military defence forces cannot do very much against such attacks.

Hence, the goal of this report is to analyse the forms, extent and effectiveness of Russian soft power and non-military influence in the Baltic states. The time span is essentially the last five years, ending in mid-2014. It asks a number of questions:

- 1) What form does Russian soft power take in the Baltic states?
- 2) Which organizations or actors play roles in the promotion of Russia's soft power?
- 3) Do some domestic actors, such as political parties, have connections with Russia, and what roles do they play?
- 4) What is the role of the media as a conveyor of soft power?
- 5) To what extent are cultural factors important to Russia's ability to wield non-military influence in the Baltic states?
- 6) Have Russian economic or business instruments become means of wielding soft power?
- 7) What role does the energy sector play in Russian soft power in the context of the Baltic states?

The Results of the Report

A number of general conclusions can be drawn from the empirical results presented in this report. First and foremost, Russian actors – financed or directly governed by the Russian federation itself – are engaged in the implementation of a strategy of soft power and non-military influence in all the three Baltic states, and actively try to wield this kind of power in a number of areas. Primarily, this relates to the so-called Compatriots Policy, which entails supporting all Russian-speaking people outside Russia proper.

Second, all three Baltic states also see themselves as the target of Russian strategies devised by ideologues and implemented by activists and establishment figures – with the full backing of the Kremlin. These strategies apparently aim not only to promote the Russian-speaking minorities in the Baltic states but also to undermine the Baltic states as political entities, as well as the self-confidence of their non-Russian populations and confidence in the ability of the EU and NATO to assist the Baltic states in the event of an external crisis.

Third, Russia's strategy involves substantial interference in the domestic political systems of the Baltic states. The linkages – for example in terms of non-transparent Russian economic support - between the United Russia party in Russia, on the one hand, and the Estonian Centre Party, the Latvian Harmony party and the Lithuanian Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania party, on the other, are just one sign of this.

Fourth, all the Baltic states have been the target of Russian accusations regarding their allegedly "fascist" past and present attachment to "fascism". These

accusations form a broad base from which Russian or Russia-related actors seem to work to undermine the political credibility of the Baltic states.

Fifth, Russian media companies and their broadcasting services work essentially in tandem with the Russian political authorities, at least in the sense that they convey political messages coherent with the latter actors' views in their news services in the Baltic states.

Finally, cultural exchanges seem to play a minor role in the strategy – as there is an inherent interest in and affection for Russian culture in the Baltic states, without negative connotations.

Taken as a whole, the entire Russian strategy toward the Baltic states in this regard amounts to using soft power and non-military means of influence as tools of destabilization.

In terms of the effects of all the above, it seems fair to say that most of the Russian efforts against the Baltic states in this regard seem primarily to influence the Russian-speaking minorities in these countries. The majority populations are affected – in terms of being or becoming pro-Russian – to a much lesser degree. Russia's actions against Ukraine have also caused increased polarization among the Russian-speaking minorities in Estonia and Latvia, between those who support Putin's policies and those who do not.

Russian soft power strategies, however, are not alone. All three Baltic states have active integration and cultural policies directed at their own minorities. These policies, together with general societal development, affect the attitudes of such minorities to the societies and nations in which they live. There are also signs of increased and better integration of Russian-speaking minorities into the Baltic societies, for example, in terms of increased naturalization of citizens in Estonia in particular but also to some extent in Latvia and Lithuania. In this sense, the Russian Compatriots Policy is a failure. The Russian-speaking minorities could in the long run develop a new identity as Russian-speaking but otherwise loyal Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians. Such a development, however, is far from certain.

Another observation that can be made is that economic issues per se do not seem to be of central importance to the Russian soft power strategy in the Baltic states. There are a number of exceptions, but in general it seems fair to say that the economic field – the energy sector aside – is not a major motivation for Russian actions against the Baltic states. There are signs, however, that the influx of Russian capital, especially to Latvia, has caused corruption and economic dependence that could have a destabilizing influence on markets and society.

In the specific case of Estonia, the lack of a political party composed primarily of and for ethnic Russians is made up for by the existence of the Centre Party,

which successfully caters to Russian-speaking Estonians even though it is led by ethnic Estonians. In Estonia, the issue of Russian as an educational language has led to an intense human rights debate that is heavily underscored by Russian actors. At the same time, Russian-speaking Estonians seem to be integrating increasingly well in Estonia. Only 6.7% of the population is now “stateless”, down from more than 32% twenty years ago, and 53% of the Russian-speaking Estonians are now also Estonian citizens.

In Latvia, the local dominance in Riga of the Harmony (formerly the Harmony Center) party – which is essentially led by and caters to ethnic Russians in Latvia – complicates the political landscape, as the party has not been allowed by the other parties to be part of any governmental coalition at the national level. This seems to have provided fertile ground for Russian soft power policies, not least through media outlets. The effect of these policies seems to be that Latvian public opinion is the most positive in terms of its views on Russia. Around 90 per cent of the Russian-speaking minority and around 46 per cent of the ethnic Latvian majority hold positive or somewhat positive views on Russia. The fact that a sitting Latvian president has been allowed to make a state visit to Moscow seems to underline this relationship. In the economic field, however, it is apparent that Russian economic interests partly serve as levers for Russian political goals in Latvia.

In Lithuania, the complex domestic minority situation seems to have been used by Russian actors not only to divide the Polish minority from the Lithuanian majority, but also to generate divisions between Poland and Lithuania. However, the Russian Compatriots Policy also seems to be losing in Lithuania in the long term, as younger Lithuanians do not speak Russian to the same extent as their parents did.

1 Introduction

Dr Mike Winnerstig, FOI

Since the end of the Cold War, the Baltic Sea area has been considered a fairly peaceful place. Although there have been certain residual fears, especially in Eastern Europe and the Baltic states, concerning the risk of future Russian revanchism, these were for many years dismissed by observers in Western Europe as exaggerated or generated by an unfortunate past.

The Russian aggression against Ukraine and the illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 have, to a substantial degree, changed all this. Even if the direct military threat against the Baltic states has not increased, the obvious willingness of the Russian leadership to alter borders by force has been considered a game-changer in other parts of the world. Many observers have pointed out that the new and “creative” forms of warfare used in the Crimean operation, such as the infiltration of “little green men” – Russian soldiers without nationality markings on their uniforms – could be repeated elsewhere. At the time of writing, eastern Ukraine seems to be witnessing a substantial destabilization operation by “local self-defence forces” apparently heavily supported by Russian military elements.¹

These developments have caused substantial concern not only in the Baltic states – the smallest and geographically closest neighbours of Russia – but also in Scandinavia and other parts of Europe. The major issue of debate is whether Russia would dare to act in a similar manner against countries that have been organizationally, politically and economically deeply rooted in the West for over 20 years. Conventional wisdom states that it would not. The Baltic states are NATO members and thus an attack on them would be considered by US decision makers an attack against the United States too. The deterrence value of this is probably very high.

There are, however, other forms of warfare, or at least highly antagonistic behaviour well short of a traditional military attack, that could be used against the Baltic states. Wielding influence against smaller neighbours is, after all, historically very common when it comes to great power behaviour. In the autumn of 2014, Russia acted against all three Baltic states within less than a month in a way that is well short of a military attack but still reeks of provocation: (a) an Estonian security police officer was abducted by Russian agents on the border between Russia and Estonia; (b) a high-ranking official from Moscow made a speech in Riga attacking the Baltic states for promoting fascism and human rights violations against their Russian-speaking minorities; (c) the Russian

¹ For a recent analysis of the Ukrainian crisis see Granholm, N., Malminen, J. and Persson, G. (2014), *A Rude Awakening: Ramifications of Russian Aggression Toward Ukraine* (Stockholm: FOI), FOI-R--3892--SE.

authorities reopened criminal cases against some 1500 Lithuanians who refused to do their military service in the Soviet Union in 1990; and (d) a Lithuanian fishing vessel was seized for unclear reasons, and its crew detained, outside the Russian port city of Murmansk.² It seems unlikely to be a coincidence that all these events occurred in the context of the visit of the US President, Barack Obama, to Tallinn and the NATO Summit in Cardiff, Wales.

Thus, this report does not focus on traditional military threats, but instead on a much talked-about but less well-known phenomenon – Russian non-military influence, or “soft power”, in the Baltic states.

Soft power is a concept coined by the Harvard political science professor Joseph Nye that does normally not have negative connotations. In its original form, it deals not with the actual wielding of power or influence by an actor but with the power of attraction. In the Russian context, however, soft power is often used in a different way to denote the ability of an actor to wield power in a number of non-military, non-traditional ways, such as through disgruntled minority groups, media outlets, the entertainment industry and the domestic political system of another country. Sometimes – but not in official Russian doctrine – it can also denote more traditional means, such as the use of economic- or energy-related but still non-military assets against another state. Soft power, in this interpretation, is therefore something that an actor can wield against something or someone, and can therefore be considered a tool of state power, just like any other state resource such as its armed forces. By definition, this means that soft power an non-military influence can be used as instruments of war – or at least be part of the arsenal that a state has at its disposal in a conflict. To wield soft power might even be a new and much more effective tactic in a conflict than a traditional military attack – especially if the target is protected militarily through an alliance with bigger and more important actors.

It has to be noted, though, that the concept of soft power is used in several ways with several meanings. In this study, we use a broad interpretation of it but to be true to its origins, we analyse both soft power and general non-military means of influence, such as energy and economic issues. They all have in common that they explicitly omit military means and that they can be used within a multitude of adversarial contexts short of traditional, militarized conflicts.

The Baltic states are in many ways vulnerable to external pressure. Their populations are small, as is the size of their defence forces and territories. Nonetheless, they are all members of both the EU and NATO, and as such card-carrying members of the Western world and therefore militarily and politically safer than they have ever been. Most sober assessments of their geopolitical

² See Lucas, Edward (2014), “Putin Targets the Baltics to Discredit NATO”, *Wall Street Journal*, 22 September.

position conclude that any military threat is quite remote, particularly given the fact that post-Crimea developments have included a substantial response in terms of military and political solidarity between the Baltic states and their NATO allies, in particular the United States.

However, some new means of power and influence are inherently difficult to counter by traditional military measures. When it comes to soft power, in all its forms, society is affected in a very different way than it would be by a military attack. A soft power offensive might on the face of it be basically positive, for example, if a nation's government wanted to promote knowledge and understanding of its own cultural heritage in another country, but it can also be devastating if it is directed at undermining the cohesion and self-confidence of another state. Military defence forces can do very little against such attacks.

Hence, the goal of this report is to analyse the forms, extent and – to a degree – effectiveness of Russian soft power and non-military influence in the Baltic states. The time span is essentially the last five years, ending in late 2013. It asks a number of questions:

- 1) What form does Russian soft power take in the Baltic states?
- 2) Which organizations or actors play roles in the promotion of Russia's soft power?
- 3) Do some domestic actors, such as political parties, have connections with Russia, and what roles do they play?
- 4) What is the role of the media as a conveyor of soft power?
- 5) To what extent are cultural factors important to Russia's ability to wield non-military influence in the Baltic states?
- 6) Have Russian economic or business instruments become means of wielding soft power?
- 7) What role does the energy sector play in Russian soft power in the context of the Baltic states?

The concept of Russian soft power is not confined to the Baltic states. In chapter 2, Dr Gudrun Persson examines the concept as a whole. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 are written by Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian analysts, respectively, and deal with the implementation or execution of Russian soft power and non-military influence in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Although these chapters are essentially written "from within", they are written in a traditional scholarly fashion, with extensive footnotes making it possible for the reader to assess the report's sources.

The last chapter compares and analyses the empirical chapters in order draw conclusions and to suggest implications for future research.

2 Russian Influence and Soft Power in the Baltic States: the View from Moscow

Dr Gudrun Persson, FOI

2.1 Introduction

One of the explicit objectives of Russian foreign policy today is to “increase its weight and authority” in the world. One way of achieving this, according to the Russian Federation’s Foreign Policy Concept of 2013, is to use “soft power” as a complement to traditional diplomacy. The main aim of this chapter is to analyse Russia’s view of its influence in the world: Russia’s intentions, the main actors involved and the instruments of Russian influence.

Influence can encompass economic power and energy policies, but these are beyond the scope of this chapter. Economic power, according to Joseph Nye, is defined separately to soft power.³ The focus of this study is on Russia’s view of exerting influence through soft power. It examines important doctrinal documents, as well as relevant government programmes on its Compatriots Policy. Key policy speeches by the political leadership are analysed and the most important actors are examined. The main actors include *Rossotrudnichestvo*,⁴ *Russkii mir* and various media enterprises.

2.2 Definitions and Limitations

The definition of influence follows Sherr, who defines it as “the ability to persuade or induce others to respect or defer to one’s wishes without resort to force or explicit threats”.⁵ Closely linked to influence is the concept of soft power. As defined by Nye this means, “the ability to get what you want through attraction”.⁶

What, then, is the Russian view of soft power? What instruments are used to exert such power?

³ Nye, Joseph (2004) *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, New York: Public Affairs, pp. 30–32.

⁴ Federal Agency for the CIS, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation.

⁵ Sherr, James (2013) *Hard Diplomacy and Soft Coercion: Russia’s Influence Abroad*, London, Chatham House, p. 12.

⁶ Nye, op. cit. (2004): 5–6.

One way to study these questions is to use the Russian vocabulary to structure the analysis.⁷ The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MID) frames these questions in its annual reviews under the heading “humanitarian trends”, which consist of “legal rights issues, defending compatriots abroad, consular work, and culture, science and education”.⁸ Much the same vocabulary is used in the Foreign Policy Concept, and although these words are of value for identifying Russia’s efforts in this area, this study avoids use of the word “humanitarian”, since it tends to confuse rather than to clarify. In fact, the Russian perception of soft power and the cultural and humanitarian dimensions of policy are synonymous.⁹ Instead, a more concrete structure is used. First, the fundamentals of Russia’s policy to increase its influence abroad are examined, that is, its position set out in key doctrines, federal laws and government programmes. Second, the main actors or facilitators of this policy are analysed. Finally, some tentative conclusions are drawn on the question of Russia’s use of soft power.

The chapter is based on the notion that official doctrines and key policy speeches reflect genuine intentions. Whether these intentions can be fulfilled obviously depends on a number of factors, such as economic and domestic developments, international relations, and so on. Saying is one thing, doing is another. However, the past 20 years has shown that Russia has been able to achieve its aims when the opportunities arise. The creation of a Eurasian Customs Union is a case in point.¹⁰ The use of energy resources as an instrument of foreign policy is another.¹¹

2.3 Russia and the Baltic States

One of the goals of Russian Foreign Policy is to protect its citizens and compatriots abroad.¹² Russian-speaking minorities live in all three of the Baltic

⁷ Pelnēns, Gatis, ed. (2009) *The “Humanitarian Dimension” of Russian Foreign Policy toward Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and the Baltic States*, Riga.

⁸ MID (2013): *Plan deiatelnosti Ministerstva inostrannykh del Rossiiskoi Federatsii na period do 2018 g.*

<http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/nsosndoc.nsf/e2f289bea62097f9c325787a0034c255/a2fd6cef39f6706944257ba600461abb!OpenDocument>.

⁹ Sherr, op. cit (2013): 87, citing Vladimir Frolov, ‘Printsipy miagkoi sily’, *Vedomosti*, 8 April 2005.

¹⁰ Dragneva, Rilka & Wolczuk, Kataryna (2012) ‘Russia, the Eurasian Customs Union and the EU: Cooperation, Stagnation or Rivalry?’, *Russia and Eurasia REP BP 01/2012*, London, Chatham House August.

¹¹ Oxenstierna, Susanne & Hedenskog, Jakob (2012) “Energistrategi” [Energy Strategy] in Vendil Pallin Carolina (ed.) *Rysk militär förmåga i ett tioårsperspektiv* [Russian Military Capability in a ten year perspective] – 2011 FOI-R--3404--SE, Stockholm, March, p. 125.

¹² Foreign Policy Concept (2013): *Kontsepsiia vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/Brp_4.nsf/arh/6D84DDEDEDBF7DA644257B160051BF7F?OpenDocument, §4zh. Confirmed by President Vladimir Putin on 12 February 2013. Available in English at: http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/76389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D.

states. As of 2011, Latvia and Estonia had the largest shares, at 26.9 per cent and 25.5 per cent, respectively, while in Lithuania the share was 5.4 per cent.¹³ The number of Russian speakers in all three countries is gradually declining.¹⁴

It is well known that Russia regards the area of the former-Soviet Union as its sphere of interest.¹⁵ It has frequently used various methods – political, economic and media-related – to try to influence these countries.¹⁶ Russia's use of its so-called Compatriots Policy as a way of exerting soft power over neighbouring countries has raised concerns in the Baltic states for many years.¹⁷ The fact that the media and entertainment industries in the Baltic states are becoming increasingly dominated by Russian companies is also an issue of concern.¹⁸ Recently, the security services in Estonia and Latvia have expressed worries about Russian efforts to try to influence policymaking.¹⁹ A particularly hot topic is the differing views on the Soviet occupation of the Baltic states in 1940. The controversy over the Bronze Statue in Tallinn is another.²⁰

2.4 Soft Power: the View from Moscow

The new Foreign Policy Concept, adopted in February 2013, explicitly mentions soft power, *miagkaia sila*, as an increasingly important tool in foreign policy. However, soft power is nothing new in Russian foreign policy. The phrase was used in the *Foreign Policy Review of the Russian Federation* in 2007, and its legacy dates back to Soviet times.²¹ The Foreign Policy Concept of 2013, however, describes soft power as a complement to classic diplomacy,²² but

¹³ Smirnov, Vadim (2012): *Russia's "soft power" in the Baltic*, Russian International Affairs Council, 4 May, http://russiancouncil.ru/en/inner/?id_4=367.

¹⁴ Compare with the share from 2000-2002 in Hedenskog, Jakob & Larsson, Robert (2007): *Russian Leverage on the CIS and the Baltic States*, FOI-R--2280--SE, Stockholm, June, p. 31.

¹⁵ *Russia of Transformations*, Ministry of Defence, Finland, Helsinki (2013): 13-14; Ciziunas, Pranas (2008) 'Russia and the Baltic States: Is Russian Imperialism Dead?', *Comparative Strategy*, 27:3, p. 287.

¹⁶ Kaljurand, Riina. *Russian Influence on Moldovan politics during the Putin era (2000-2008)*, International Centre for Defence Studies, Tallinn, (November 2008).

¹⁷ Kudors, Andis (2010) "'Russian World" – Russia's Soft Power Approach to Compatriots Policy', *Russian Analytical Digest*, No. 81, 16 June, 2-4.

¹⁸ Ljung, Bo; Malmlöf, Tomas; Neretnieks, Karlis and Winnerstig Mike (ed.) (2012): *The Security and Defensibility of the Baltic States*, FOI-R--3471--SE, Stockholm, October, p. 19-20.

¹⁹ Estonian Internal Security Service (2012), *Annual Review 2012*, https://www.kapo.ee/cms-data/_text/138/124/files/kapo-aastaraamat-2012-en.pdf, SAB [The Constitution Protection Bureau, Latvia] *Annual Report 2011*, <http://www.sab.gov.lv/index.php?lang=en&nid=285>.

²⁰ For several interesting essays on Baltic-Russian relations see Berg, Eiki and Ehin, Piret (2009) *Identity and Foreign Policy: Baltic-Russian Relations and European Integration*, Burlington: Ashgate. A useful study on Russians in Latvia is Malmlöf, Tomas (2006) *The Russian Population in Latvia: Puppets of Moscow?* FOI-R--1975--SE, May, FOI: Stockholm.

²¹ Pelnēns, op. cit. (2009): 19, 27.

²² Foreign Policy Concept, op. cit. (2013).

identifies a risk that soft power might be used as a tool to interfere in the domestic affairs of states through, “among other things financing humanitarian projects and projects related to human rights abroad” (§ 20). Clearly, the definition of soft power used here is not the traditional one of increasing a country’s attraction. Soft power is seen as broad area that covers many areas of policy, both domestic and foreign. Two members of the Civic Chamber recently concluded that it was necessary for Russia to develop the attractive side of soft power and create a base to fight the manipulative side of the concept.²³ Vladimir Putin defines soft power as: “instruments and methods to achieve foreign policy objectives without the use of weapons – information and other levers of influence”.²⁴ He has also defined it as “the strengthening of the Russian language, the active promotion of a positive image of Russia abroad, the ability to integrate into global information flows”.²⁵

According to the Russian International Affairs Council, Russian soft power efforts can be grouped into a number of main themes: culture and education, science and technology, and the Russian Orthodox Church.²⁶ The Russian political leadership concentrates the soft power efforts in three main areas.²⁷ First, it aims to promote Russian culture, language, and education. Second, it uses counter-propaganda to refute negative images of Russia in the international press and put other countries, such as the Baltic states, under pressure. Third, it tries to create a network of “friends of Russia” around the world, building on anti-Americanism.

It is noteworthy that the Soviet legacy of international propaganda and positive image making is still present in the soft power efforts of today.²⁸ The International Council of Russian Compatriots takes pride in its Soviet legacy, and the Head of *Rossotrudnichestvo*, Konstantin Kosachev, claims that his agency is working on the basis of “the traditions and practical skills which emerged in the old Soviet times”.²⁹

²³ Grigorev, Maksim & Ordzhonikidze, Sergei (2013), ‘Soft power: protivodeistvovat manipulatsiiam’, Rossiiskoe federalnoe izdanie “VVP”, No 4 (82) 2013. http://www.oprf.ru/print_dats/22392. The civic chamber is an advisory body created on initiative of the Russian President in 2005, with the purpose of strengthening civil society. See <https://www.oprf.ru/en/about/>.

²⁴ Putin, Vladimir (2012) ‘Rossiia i meniaiuchshisia mir’, *Moskovskie novosti*, 27 February, <http://www.mn.ru/politics/20120227/312306749.html>.

²⁵ Putin, Vladimir (2013) ‘Vstrecha s sotrudnikami MID Rossii’, <http://news.kremlin.ru/news/17490>, 11 February.

²⁶ Russian International Affairs (2012): 30-31.

²⁷ Lukyanov, Fyodor (2013) ‘Depardie protiv progressa’, *gazeta.ru*, 17 January, <http://www.gazeta.ru/column/lukyanov/4929549.shtml>.

²⁸ I am grateful to Prof. Alexander Sergunin, St. Petersburg State University for this point.

²⁹ Kosachev, Konstantin (2012): ‘V mire slozhiilos prezumptsiia vinovnosti Rossii’, *Kommersant*, 3 September, <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2014308> (accessed 30 October 2013).

2.5 The Image of Russia and Russians Abroad: the Doctrines

The view of the Russian government on increasing Russia's role in the world is determined in its National Security Strategy, Military Doctrine and Foreign Policy Concept. At this strategic level, the issue is broader than just soft power, and also encompasses traditional hard power, i.e. primarily military power – as the Military Doctrine indicates. Russia's view on its role in the world encompasses all Russians living abroad, not only those in the Baltic states.

The National Security Strategy states that the role of “the sphere of culture” is to strengthen the international image of Russia and to develop a common “humanitarian” and information-telecommunication environment on the territories of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and neighbouring regions (§ 84).³⁰ The Strategy does not mention soft power explicitly, but it is clear that paragraph 84 is addressing this area.

The Foreign Policy Concept notes that among the basic goals of Russian foreign policy are to protect the “rights and legitimate interests of Russian citizens and compatriots residing abroad, as well as to promote, in various international formats, Russia's approach to human rights issues, and to promote the Russian language and strengthen its position in the world and to consolidate the Russian diaspora abroad” (§4zh, z).

It is clear from the above that the emphasis on human rights is closely linked to the protection of Russian compatriots abroad.³¹ On the other hand, as is stated in the Foreign Policy Concept, human rights can be used by foreign countries to interfere in Russian domestic policy.

The Concept underlines the importance of efforts in: “humanitarian cooperation”, “consular support”, the “protection of compatriots” and “culture, education and science” (§ 39). It is Russia's task to “consolidate the organization of compatriots, in order to strengthen their rights in their countries of residence, to secure the ethno-cultural originality of the Russian diaspora”. In a key paragraph, it determines Russia's tasks as:

...working to establish Russia's positive image worthy of the high status of its culture, education, science, sporting achievements, the level of civil societal development, as well as participation in programmes of assistance to developing countries; moulding tools to improve its perception throughout the world; improving the application of soft power and identifying the best forms of activities in

³⁰ National Security Strategy (2009): *Strategiia natsionalnoi bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federatsii do 2020 goda*, http://president.kremlin.ru/ref_notes/424).

³¹ See also Pelnēns, op. cit. (2009): 22.

this area that would take into account both international experience and national peculiarities and build on mechanisms of interaction with civil society and experts; further developing the regulatory framework in the above-mentioned areas (§390).

The Concept, which was approved by President Putin in February 2013, also directly defines soft power as: “a comprehensive toolkit for achieving foreign policy objectives building on civil society potential, information, cultural and other methods and technologies alternative to traditional diplomacy, [which] is becoming an indispensable component of modern international relations.”³²

The **Military Doctrine** stipulates that it is legitimate to use the Armed Forces to “ensure the protection of its citizens located beyond the borders of the Russian Federation in accordance with generally recognized principles and norms of international law and international treaties of the Russian Federation” (§ 20).³³ It specifies that: “With a view to protecting the interests of the Russian Federation and its citizens and maintaining international peace and security, formations of the Russian Federation Armed Forces may be used operationally outside the Russian Federation” (§ 16). Furthermore, it states that one of the main tasks of the armed forces and other troops in peacetime is to “protect citizens of the Russian Federation outside the Russian Federation from armed attack” (§27j).

Russian citizens and compatriots abroad are thus seen as a vital group. Supplementing the doctrinal and strategic approach, a number of important documents regulate Russian policy in the area of increasing its influence in the world. These are examined below.

2.6 The Image of Russia and Russians Abroad: Governmental Programmes and Policy

One of the basic laws regulating Russia’s Compatriots Policy is the Law on State Policy on Compatriots Abroad. It was adopted in 1999 but has undergone several changes and was most recently amended on 23 July 2013. It recognizes four categories of compatriots: (1) persons born in a state, who live in it and are characterized by a common language, history, cultural heritage, tradition and customs, and their direct relatives; (2) citizens of the Russian Federation living permanently abroad; (3) those born in the Soviet Union who now live in states that used to be part of the Soviet Union, and who have obtained citizenship in their country of residence, as well as those without any citizenship; and (4)

³² Foreign Policy Concept, op. cit. (2013).

³³ Military Doctrine (2010): *Voennaia doktrina Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, 5 February 2010, <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/18/33.html>.

emigrants from the Russian Federation or the Soviet Union who have obtained citizenship in their country of residence, as well as those without any citizenship (article 1). The Law also states that the Compatriots Policy is an integral part of both domestic and foreign policy (article 5.1), and that the aim of the policy is to support the interests of Russia's compatriots (article 5.3).

A government programme to support the voluntary return of compatriots living abroad was launched in 2006. It seems not to have been very successful. In the first three years after its launch, around 10,000 compatriots resettled in Russia, mostly from Kazakhstan.³⁴

A State Programme to Work with Compatriots Living Abroad is adopted every two years. The latest two-year programme was launched on 5 July 2013.³⁵ The programme involves several ministries and organizations, but the MID plays a key role. The different efforts are grouped under five headings: (1) consolidating compatriot organizations, through international actions, festivals, and so on; (2) developing information for compatriots; (3) developing cultural, scientific and religious relations with compatriots, and securing Russian spiritual, cultural and linguistic ties among Russian-speakers; (4) measures to support the youth in the Russian diaspora; and 5) support for socially exposed sections of compatriot communities.

Thus, the programme takes a broad approach to the issue of compatriots, from film festivals, to scientific seminars to medical aid. It also involves organizations such as *Rossotrudnichestvo*, *Russkii mir*, ITAR-TASS and other media enterprises.

When examining the view from above on soft power and the issue of compatriots, the State Programme for Foreign Policy is revealing. It was adopted on 15 April 2014.³⁶ Sub-programme 3 deals with these issues, and *Rossotrudnichestvo* is given a key role. The sub-programme lists nine areas in which work is required to strengthen Russian interests abroad: (1) to strengthen the networks and modernize Russian centres of science and culture abroad; (2) to promote Russian science, culture and education in foreign countries; (3) to strengthen the position of the Russian language abroad; (4) to support compatriots living abroad; (5) to develop public diplomacy, scientific, educational, cultural, economic, informational and other humanitarian relations with governmental and non-governmental organizations within the CIS, as well as other foreign governments and with international and regional organizations; (6) to develop international relations on the subject of the Russian Federation and

³⁴ Pelnēns, op. cit. (2009): 321.

³⁵ *Programma raboty s sootchestvennikam, prozhivaiushchimi za rubezhom na 2013-2014 gody*, <http://www.garant.ru/products/ipo/prime/doc/70311152/>.

³⁶ *Gosudarstvennaia programma RF "Vneshnepoliticheskaia deiatelnost"*, <http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/activity.nsf/0/70C680302CAF0CC744257B4000450BF3>.

of municipal formations; (7) to strengthen regional and supra-regional integration within the CIS; (8) to contribute to the concept of the Russian Federation's participation in international development; and (9) to participate in information-analysis on the policy to strengthen objective views on Russia and the cultural-humanitarian influence of today's Russia in the world. These areas sum up the official view of soft power. In order to fulfil the sub-programme, "problems within the sphere of soft power" they need to be systematically resolved.

In sum, it is clear that the concepts of soft power and the Compatriots Policy are closely linked. The idea of compatriots is based on several principles. First, it attempts to maintain a working relationship with Russian-speakers abroad by encouraging them to feel a loyalty to modern-day Russia – including its political system and its interpretation of history – while remaining in their country of residence.³⁷ Second, the policy aims to create social networks of compatriot organizations that can be used to achieve specific foreign policy goals.

2.7 The Main Actors and Instruments

The Russian state plays a key role in efforts to use soft power.³⁸ Most of the instruments in this field are government-controlled, and the NGOs involved are in reality semi-governmental.³⁹ It is therefore useful to outline the main state actors involved in these efforts.

On the Compatriots Policy, a Presidential Commission supports the State Programme on the voluntary return of compatriots living abroad.⁴⁰ The Commission is headed by the Director of the Federal Migration Service and includes representatives of several ministries and governmental bodies. At the government level there is a Commission for Compatriots living Abroad, led by Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.⁴¹ There is also a commission dealing with compatriots in the Duma.

2.8 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The MID is a key actor. The Department for Cooperation with Compatriots is responsible for the Compatriots Policy. There is also a Department for Humanitarian Cooperation and Human Rights. One example of work in this sphere is the publication by the MID in 2012 of a review of human rights in the

³⁷ Pelnēns, op. cit. (2009): 319.

³⁸ Sherr, op. cit. (2013): 87.

³⁹ Sergunin, Alexander (2013) *Putin's Concept of 'Soft Power': Elusive Meanings*, unpublished paper presented at the 2013 Aleksanteri Conference, 23–25 October 2013, Helsinki.

⁴⁰ Mezhdovomstvennaia kommissia, <http://state.kremlin.ru/commission/4/news>.

⁴¹ Pravitelstvennaia kommissiia, <http://government.ru/department/156/>.

EU. Its explicit aim was to demonstrate to EU member states the existence of serious human rights problems across the EU, thereby implying that the EU is in no position to criticize other countries for human rights abuses.⁴² Estonia and Latvia, for instance, are criticized for discriminating against their Russian-speaking minorities, and Lithuania for preventing minorities from obtaining an education in their mother tongue.

In addition, *Rossotrudnichestvo*, an agency within the MID, was created in 2008 to coordinate the running of cultural and scientific centres abroad. It is led by Konstantin Kosachev and, according to its own information, is represented in 77 countries and has a staff of 600 people, 415 of whom are stationed abroad.⁴³ In the Baltic states it is represented only in Lithuania. Kosachev has publicly criticized Estonia and Latvia for not allowing *Rossotrudnichestvo* to open cultural and scientific centres.⁴⁴ Currently, the Baltic states do not seem to be a priority of the agency, however, and there were no specific projects planned for the countries in 2013.⁴⁵

According to MID's plan to 2018, the number of Russian scientific and cultural centres abroad will increase from 96 to 110, and the number of Russian language centres within these will increase from 70 to 91.⁴⁶

2.8.1 Russkii Mir

Another important actor is *Russkii mir*, the Russian World, which was created by presidential decree in 2007 as an NGO under the MID and the Ministry of Education. It is headed by Viacheslav Nikonov, a politician and historian, and the grandson of the well-known Stalin-era Bolshevik, Viacheslav Molotov. The main task of *Russkii mir* is to encourage the study of the Russian language and Russian culture abroad. Its target audience is not primarily compatriots, but a broader public interested in Russia. *Russkii mir* is represented in all three of the Baltic states, with two centres each in Latvia and Lithuania, and one in Estonia.⁴⁷

⁴² MID (2012) *Doklad o situatsii s obespecheniem prav cheloveka v Evropeiskom soiuze*, Moskva, http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/newsline/1ED8A7DD4E137C7844257ACC0031D3FC, p. 3.

⁴³ Studneva, Elena (2012) 'Rossotrudnichestvo: "miagkaia sila" nabiraet ves', *Mezhdunaronoj zhizn'*, 6 September, <http://interaffairs.ru/print.php?item=8751>.

⁴⁴ Kosachev, Konstantin (2013) 'Kak vidiat na Zapade segodniashniuiu Rossiiu', *Moskovskii komsomolets*, 7 September 2013.

⁴⁵ Rossotrudnichestvo (2012): *Plan Federalnogo agentstva po delam Sodruzhestva Nezavisimykh Gosudarstv, sootchestvennikov, prozhivaiushchikh za rubezhom, i po mezhdunarodnomu storudnichestvu na 2013 god*, http://rs.gov.ru/sites/rs.gov.ru/files/plan_na_sayt_0.pdf.

⁴⁶ MID (2012): *Doklad o situatsii s obespecheniem prav cheloveka v Evropeiskom soiuze*, Moskva, http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/newsline/1ED8A7DD4E137C7844257ACC0031D3FC.

⁴⁷ *Russkii mir* (2013) *Katalog russkikh tsentrov*, <http://www.ruskiimir.ru/ruskiimir/ru/rucenter/catalogue.jsp?pager.offset=0&pageIndex=1&pageSize=30>.

2.8.2 Other Actors

In addition, a number of organizations, often connected to the state, are involved in soft power efforts. MID and *Rossotrudnichestvo* are responsible for a newly created body, the Foundation for Supporting and Defending the Rights of Compatriots Living Abroad, which was set up on 1 January 2012. The Foundation's website map for "monitoring events" notably labels the Baltic states as the "near abroad" rather than Europe.⁴⁸

Rossotrudnichestvo's 2012 annual review names the Russian Association for International Cooperation as an important partner in exerting soft power. Another actor in this sphere is *Russkii vek*, the Russian Century, an Internet site and journal aimed at Russians living abroad, financed by the State Programme to Support the Voluntary Return of Compatriots Living Abroad. The Gorchakov Foundation of Public Diplomacy, the Andrei Pervozvanni Foundation, the International Council of Russian Compatriots, the Library Foundation *Russkoe zarubezhe* (Russia Abroad), the Institute for Democracy and Cooperation and the International Association for Compatriots' Youth Organizations are also involved in Russia's soft power efforts – and this is by no means an exhaustive list.

Needless to say, the mass media plays an important role in Russian soft power activities. The MID clearly highlights the media – both printed and electronic – as vital to getting the message across.⁴⁹ Many of the major news agencies and television channels are directly or indirectly controlled by the state. *Rossotrudnichestvo* cooperates with such media enterprises as ITAR-TASS, Voice of Russia and RT (formerly Russia Today). *Russkii mir* cooperates with some of these as well as the Russian television channel *Kultura*, among others. According to Kudors, Russian television is quite popular in the Baltic states: "With the help of satellite television, Russia's extensive and flourishing popular culture, comprising its growing film industry, pop music, modern literature and dramatic art tradition, make Russia a rather attractive regional power".⁵⁰

Russia's soft power ambitions within the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS) should also be mentioned. Within the Council's framework of culture and education, the Baltic youth camp, Artek, in Kaliningrad has received support, and Sergei Lavrov hailed it as a "prominent event" during the Russian CBSS

⁴⁸ Fond podderzhki, <http://pravfond.ru/>.

⁴⁹ MID (2013): Plan deiatelnosti Ministerstva inostrannykh del Rossiiskoi Federatsii na period do 2018, <http://www.mid.ru/bdcomp/nsosndoc.nsf/e2f289bea62097f9c325787a0034c255/a2fd6cef39f6706944257ba600461abb!OpenDocument>.

⁵⁰ Kudors, op. cit. (2010): 4.

Presidency in 2012–2013.⁵¹ It could be that this support was confined to declarations – it was not one of the major priorities of the Russian presidency –⁵² but the fact that the youth camp received the attention of the Foreign Minister indicates that soft power efforts are gaining weight.

Other youth camps organized by Russia have caused concern in the Baltic states. The Latvian Defence Minister, Artis Pabriks, has warned that youth camps with military training are a potential threat to Latvian national security.⁵³

2.8.3 The Russian Orthodox Church

According to Nye’s concept of soft power, its sources may include particular values that are broadly perceived as belonging to a country’s identity. The Russian Orthodox Church is of particular importance here. The Russian analyst, Fyodor Lukyanov, argues that the Orthodox Church is one of the main instruments of Russian soft power.⁵⁴ The concept of the “Russian world” is being promoted as an alternative to Western values. This concept is not to be confused with the organization of the same name, as the concept is much broader in scope. Patriarch Kirill has a clear vision of a consolidated Russian world becoming more powerful than political alliances.⁵⁵

This ties in very well with the current state policy of patriotism and the efforts by the political leadership to define a Russian national identity.⁵⁶ In a speech at a conference devoted to the search for a national identity at the Valdai Club, President Putin depicted Russia as the defender of Christian values in today’s world.⁵⁷ In recent years, both *Rossotrudnichestvo* and *Russkii mir* have signed cooperation agreements with the Russian Orthodox Church.

The role of the Russian Orthodox Church in this sphere is not uncomplicated. The Moscow Patriarchate is sometimes viewed with scepticism due to its close

⁵¹ Lavrov, Sergey (2013): Speech of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov about CBSS at the third Ministerial meeting of the Northern Dimension, Brussels, 18 February 2013, http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/7415566D34DB37EF44257B1900555D7A.

⁵² Oldberg, Ingmar (2012) ‘Soft Security in the Baltic Sea Region: Russian interests in the Council of Baltic Sea States, UI Occasional Papers, No 12. 31 October, UI: Stockholm, p. 58–59.

⁵³ Deutsche Welle (2013): *Russian youth camps irk Latvia*, DW, 29 June, <http://www.dw.de/russian-youth-camps-irk-latvia/a-16896948>.

⁵⁴ Kudors, op. cit. (2010); Lukyanov, op. cit. (2009).

⁵⁵ Kirill (2009) ‘Vystuplenie Sviatishhego Patriarkha Kirilla na torzhestvennom otkrytii III Assamblei Russogo mira’, p. 3 November; Sherr, op. cit. (2013), p. 89.

⁵⁶ Sherr, op. cit. (2013): 89-90. For a useful study on the relationship between the Church and the State, see Bodin, Per-Arne (2013): ‘Legitimacy and symphony: On the relationship between state and Church in post-Soviet Russia’, in Bodin, Per-Arne; Hedlund, Stefan and Namli, Elena (eds.) *Power and Legitimacy – Challenges from Russia*, London: Routledge.

⁵⁷ Putin, Vladimir (2013): ‘Vstrecha s sotrudnikami MID Rossii’, <http://news.kremlin.ru/news/17490>, 11 February.

links with political power in Moscow. Perhaps to alleviate negative nationalist associations, the Russian International Affairs Council suggests that the Russian Orthodox Church should be positioned as a transnational institute rather than a strictly national one.⁵⁸

2.9 Conclusions

At first glance, it might seem that the concept of soft power is an attractive and rather innocent tool in a country's foreign policy. As is demonstrated above, however, it is an area full of pitfalls. Russia uses both hard and soft power to exert influence. The Georgian War in 2008 showed that the use of military force in Russia's neighbourhood is never far away. This was shown again when Crimea was annexed in 2014.

The use of Russian soft power seems likely to increase, at least if all the official statements are to be believed. The political will is clearly there, the basic governmental infrastructure is in place and there is potential for expansion too. The mere fact of all the investment in *miagkaia sila* indicates that the Russian political leadership has felt the lack of Russian soft power. The focus today is on language, culture and anti-Americanism. This raises several questions over seemingly contradictory policies and unclear definitions.

First, there is an internal contradiction between the Russian principle of non-intervention in foreign relations and the use of soft power. This is also reflected in the declared view that soft power is a double-edged sword. The attractive side of soft power is recognized while at the same time the concept is seen as the work of foreign intelligence services in Russia and hence a threat to national security.

Second, both the notion of "compatriots" and the broader concept of the Russian World lack clear definitions. This is not a new problem, but when it comes to using soft power it can be complicated to get your message across if your audience has not been identified.

Third, the sheer number of state organizations and semi-governmental NGO in the sphere – often with the same or overlapping aims – makes a coordinated policy very difficult. The division of labour in soft power efforts between the two major agencies, *Rossotrudnichestvo* and *Russkii mir*, is not always clear.

Furthermore, soft power efforts are often undercut by other Kremlin actors. During the so-called year of friendship between Russia and the Netherlands in 2013, the image of Russia took a negative turn in connection with an official

⁵⁸ Russian International Affairs Council (2012): *Postulates on Russia's Foreign Policy*, Report 4, 20 September, http://russiancouncil.ru/en/inner/?id_4=838#top, p. 31.

diplomatic quarrel over a physical attack on a Dutch diplomat in Moscow.⁵⁹ The potential attractiveness of Russia's Winter Olympics in Sochi 2014 was tarnished beforehand by public scandals involving corruption and excessive costs. The detention of Greenpeace activists in the autumn of 2013 also created a lot of negative press in the West.

In sum, it is clear that Russia will try to use the concept of soft power – in its own understanding of the concept – and is willing to expend greater resources on it. In doing so, Russia wants to have influence without being influenced. This echoes the observation of Isaiah Berlin, who in 1946 identified that “[Russia] is ready to take a part in international relations, but she prefers other countries to abstain from taking an interest in her affairs: that is to say, to insulate herself from the rest of the world without remaining isolated from it”.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Reuters (2013): ‘Dutch diplomat beaten in Moscow by unknown assailants’, 16 October, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/10/16/us-russia-diplomat-beating-idUSBRE99F0BA20131016>.

⁶⁰ Berlin, Isaiah (1946), ‘Why the Soviet Union Chooses to Insulate Itself’, *The Isaiah Berlin Virtual Library*, <http://berlin.wolf.ox.ac.uk/lists/nachlass/whysovunfull.pdf>, p. 1.

3 Russian Soft Power and Non-Military Influence: The View from Estonia

Anna Bulakh, Julian Tupay, Karel Kaas, Emmet Tuohy, Kristiina Visnapuu and Juhan Kivirähk, International Centre for Defence Studies, Tallinn

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the use of Russian “soft power” in Estonia, considering each major sector in which it is pursued. It pays special attention to the specific institutions through which Moscow attempts to gain and maintain influence, while also providing contextual information about the situation of the Russian-speaking minority in the country.

3.2 Russia’s Evolving Foreign Policy Strategy of Influence in its “Near Abroad”

Together with its fellow Baltic states, Latvia and Lithuania, Estonia has successfully pursued a difficult path of transition towards a liberal democracy with a functioning market economy marked by transparency and respect for the rule of law. At times, however, this transition process has been threatened or slowed by elements of the Soviet legacy, from poor-quality (and Moscow-centred) energy and transport infrastructure to weakened civil society and inexperienced local government. Yet, arguably the most significant challenge has come from the *demographic* legacy of the period, during which large populations of workers from Russia and other Soviet republics moved or were transferred to the Baltic region. Most saw little need to learn the language and integrate with the culture of the host society. The resulting lack of societal cohesion, together with the other factors mentioned above, has kept open a window of opportunity for the Kremlin to exercise influence in the Baltic states.

In order to accomplish this objective Russia has been looking past traditional instruments and tools of “hard power”, such as coercion by the use of military means, to more contemporary tools which could be categorized as soft power. As was discussed in the previous chapter, Russia’s tactics in the Baltic region are often covert and coercive, and seek to combine their soft power and non-military influence through extensive networks of ethnic Russians living in the Baltic states, and public and private sphere figures loyal to the Kremlin.

In the Baltic states, Russia has used soft power in a number of ways, most notably its advocacy for the minority of ethnic Russians which has increased the

appeal of Russian culture among people of Russian origin. This has been conceptualized by Moscow as the “humanitarian dimension” of its foreign policy.⁶¹ This concept identifies four priority areas: (1) the defence of human rights; (2) protecting the interests of compatriots living abroad; (3) consular matters; and (4) partnerships in the cultural and scientific sectors.⁶²

The Russian Foreign Policy Concept of 2008, mentioned in chapter 2 above, argues that:

“[...] increasing global competition and the growing crisis potential sometimes create a risk of destructive and unlawful use of ‘soft power’ and human rights concepts to exert political pressure on sovereign states, interfere in their internal affairs, destabilize their political situation, and manipulate public opinion, including under the pretext of financing cultural and human rights projects abroad.”⁶³

Ironically, Russia’s conduct towards Estonia and other states fits quite well with its own definition of the “destructive and unlawful use of ‘soft power’”. In essence, Russia’s use of soft power would more fairly be described as *influence operations*. In its 2012 annual review,⁶⁴ the *Kaitsepolitsei* (KaPo or Security Police, officially known in English as the Estonian Internal Security Service) provides the following definition and assessment:

[Influence operation] activities that are aimed at changing another country’s target group’s (such as state authorities, voters or the media) decisions, behaviour and attitudes. The area of operation is much wider than in the case of soft power and includes diplomacy, information, military power, economic influence, covert operations by special services as well as any other means of gaining influence including offering money. Thus soft power and influence operations are in their means as well as goals clearly very different concepts. [...] it must unfortunately be concluded that the new concepts and wordings are nothing more than attempts to hide and legitimize Russia’s traditional, KGB-style influence operations.

Russia has tried to take advantage of the opportunities offered by its strategic place and political heritage. The desire to strengthen its geopolitical role on the

⁶¹ Hanson, Zachary (2013): *Russia’s Energy Diplomacy in the Baltic States*, Auctus, October, : http://www.auctus.vcu.edu/PDF/SOSCI_1_HANSON.pdf.

⁶² For official expressions of the humanitarian dimension in this period, see Ministerstvo Inostrannykh Del, (2007) *Obzor Vneshney Politiki Rossyskoy Federatsii*, March 27, http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/3647DA97748A106BC32572AB002AC4DD; President of Russia (2008), *The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation*, July 12, <http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/docs/2008/07/204750.shtml>

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Internal Security Service (2012)–Annual Review 2012, pp 7-8.

Eurasian continent, especially in territories that once belonged to the Soviet Union – the collapse of which President Putin famously referred to as “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century”⁶⁵ – has been high on the agenda of the Kremlin for the past decade and a half. For Moscow, it is not merely a matter of prestige to sustain a leading role in the region, but a way of securing its stability against external threats to its self-defined national interests.⁶⁶ Russia’s National Security Strategy, published in May 2009, sparked a discussion on the security challenges that Moscow faces. The document highlighted a shift in Russia’s security strategy from conventional hard security issues to a soft dimension of national security. It delineates specific objectives in three sub-programmes and sets the budgets for these objectives until 2020.

The national security strategy noted the need to develop an attractive image of the Russian Federation and Russian culture abroad by “acknowledging the primary role of culture in the rebirth and preservation of cultural-moral values” and “reinforcing...the international image of Russia as a country with a very rich traditional and dynamically developing contemporary culture”, among other measures.⁶⁷ Russia has allocated a remarkable amount of funding to implement the strategy in the latter period – resources directed to “international humanitarian cooperation” will reach RUB 7 billion (EUR 138 million/SEK 1.2 billion) by 2020 (see Table 1).

⁶⁵ Poslaniye Federalnomu Sobraniyu Rossyskoy Federatsii, April 25, 2005, available at http://archive.kremlin.ru/appears/2005/04/25/1223_type63372type63374type82634_87049.shtml .

⁶⁶ Sophia Dimitrakopoulou and Andrew Liaropoulos (2010): “Russia’s National Security Strategy to 2020: A Great Power in the Making?” *Caucasian Review of International Affairs* 4:1 (Winter), pp. 35-42, http://www.cria-online.org/10_4.html

⁶⁷ See *Russia's National Security Strategy to 2020*, <http://rustrans.wikidot.com/russia-s-national-security-strategy-to-2020>.

Table 1: The sums allocated to Foreign Policy Activity, 2013–2020 (1000 RUB)⁶⁸

	Overall volume of the Foreign Policy Activity program	Third sub-program: international humanitarian cooperation	
		For fulfilling existing obligations	Additional resources
2013	64,239,819.8	2,045,913.1	0
2014	64,610,936.4	2,090,364.5	1,921,424.2
2015	66,644,150.3	1,921,424.2	2,053,175.2
2016	68,319,041.3	2,037,650.4	4,091,159.0
2017	71,241,845.1	2,145,381.1	4,566,716.0
2018	74,846,772.6	2,275,647.5	5,212,639.7
2019	76,767,593.6	2,357,806.5	6,622,932.8
2020	77,798,468.2	2,408,803.9	7,070,532.9

3.3 Russia's Compatriots Policy and its Consequences

3.3.1 Russia's Compatriots Policy

Russia maintains its presence and influence in the Baltic states by the creation of Russia-friendly networks, to which it successfully outreaches through its Compatriots Policy. Moscow has succeeded in building a strong legacy on Soviet times and sentiments of common history among the Russian minority population in Estonia as well as promoting Russian language and culture. Russia's activities achieve plausible results due to the significant number of Russians living in its near abroad. The Russian minority in Estonia comprises 25.2 per cent of the population, far exceeding other groups (see Table 2). None of the other groups exceeds 1 per cent. Moreover, many individuals who identify ethnically as Ukrainians or Belarusians also have strong identities as Russian speakers. These considerable numbers therefore open a window of opportunity for Russia to influence the internal status quo in Estonian society.

⁶⁸ The sums are taken from the State programme of the Russian Federation entitled Foreign Policy Activity, [http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/activity.nsf/0/70c680302caf0cc744257b4000450bf3/\\$FILE/foreign_policy_activity.pdf](http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/activity.nsf/0/70c680302caf0cc744257b4000450bf3/$FILE/foreign_policy_activity.pdf) [originally in Russian].

Table 2: Estonia's population, by ethnic origin (2000)⁶⁹

	Total	Estonians	Russians	Ukrainians	Belarusians	Other ethnic nationalities <1% of total population
2013						
Whole country (male and female)	1 286 479	898 845	324 431	22 368	12 327	28508
%	100%	69,9%	25,2%	1,7%	1%	2,2%

The controversy over Russia's humanitarian policies in its near abroad has demonstrated that decades after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia can cross the line of non-interference in the internal affairs of a foreign country. The promotion of culture and language at times prompts direct investment in compatriot institutions and the use of compatriots as a political tool of influence. Therefore, it is important to understand the process of evolution of the Compatriots Policy into an umbrella for such tools as NGOs, language councils, activists' movements, media portals, and so on.

Russia's Compatriots Policy developed relatively recently, in 2007, with the goal of encouraging unity within the Russian-speaking diaspora while bringing it under the influence if not control of the Russian government itself. According to the Foreign Policy Concept, Russia's priority is to protect the rights and legitimate interests of compatriots living abroad on the basis of international law and treaties concluded by the Russian Federation, while considering the numerous Russian diaspora to be a partner in expanding and strengthening the space for Russian language and culture. Russia will support the consolidation of organizations of compatriots to enable them to effectively uphold their rights in their countries of residence while preserving the cultural and ethnic identity of the Russian diaspora and its ties with the historical homeland, and provide conditions to facilitate voluntary relocation to the Russian Federation of compatriots wishing to do so.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ See *Statistics Estonia*, <http://www.stat.ee/en2012>. The figures are based on the 2000 Population Census and the 2011 Population Census 2012.

⁷⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2013): *Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation*, February 12, available at http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/76389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D

Russian compatriots have become the main link between Russia and the local civil society and elites. A report by the Internal Security Service regards the core goal of Russia's Compatriots Policy to be the establishment of organized groups linked to Russia capable of influencing another country's sovereign decisions without obvious intervention by Russia.⁷¹ It estimates that Russia will use the consolidation of compatriots to encourage them to stand up for their rights in the future in order to legitimize themselves as influential civil society players who can influence local power structures and decision-making.

To get a picture of the extent to which the Compatriots Policy is influential, an overview of the naturalization process of the Estonian population after the collapse of the Soviet regime is required. Grasping the level of integration of ethnic minorities and a deeper analysis of the Russian-speaking diaspora will provide a better understanding of how successful Russia might be in reaching out to its compatriots and solidifying its image.

3.3.2 Russian Compatriots in Estonia: Who are They?

When, in February 1992, the 1938 Citizenship Act, based on the principle of *ius sanguinis* (blood relationship), was re-introduced and re-enforced in Estonia, people were divided into citizens by succession (68 per cent) and non-citizens (32 per cent). Non-citizens could obtain Estonian citizenship through a naturalization process. At the same time, all Estonian residents who had been Soviet citizens had the right to register themselves as citizens of Russia, the Soviet Union's successor state.

Estonia was criticized for not granting citizenship to all permanent residents – the so-called blanket citizenship option. Estonia passed a law to restore citizenship only to citizens of the Estonian Republic of 1918–1940. This meant that the Russian population without citizenship could not vote in the country's first national election or participate in political life. The failure to process naturalization automatically led to accusations, especially from the Russian government. The Helsinki Commission examined the state of naturalization of Russians in Estonia after the country regained its independence in 1991 and recommended removing the source of anxiety for the Russian population, clarifying the procedures for obtaining citizenship and guaranteeing the economic and political rights of non-citizens.⁷²

Estonia replied that citizenship cannot be imposed on anyone. It was applying the principle of the legal continuity of the Estonian Republic. It had refrained from

⁷¹Estonian Internal Security Service (2012): *Annual Review 2012* (Tallinn: 2012), p. 6, https://www.kapo.ee/cms-data/_text/138/124/files/kapo-aastaraamat-2012-en.pdf

⁷²Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (1992), *Russians in Estonia: Problems and Prospects*, Washington, September.

automatic naturalization and, thus, citizenship was a matter of each individual's choice. The principle of legal continuity carried strong ethnic connotations due to the psychological, social and political consequences of its implementation.⁷³ Moreover, the threat of any possible hindrance to Estonia's post-independence development played its part. Resistance movements and the United Council of Work Collectives had acted actively against Estonian independence and supported the preservation of Soviet Union. Current leaders of organizations of Russian compatriots in Estonia include various individuals who opposed Estonia's independence in 1991, such as a member of the World Coordination Council of Russian Compatriots and of the Coordination Council of Compatriots in Estonia, Andrey Zarenkov, an ex-KGB officer, Vladimir Ilyashevich, and a council member of the Pushkin Institute, Andrey Krasnoiglasov.⁷⁴

Many Russian-Estonians received citizenship during the first half of the 1990s, when it was granted under favourable conditions to those people who had supported the campaign to regain independence, particularly to those who had registered for citizenship before 1 March 1990. However, in 1995, the *Riigikogu* adopted a new and more stringent citizenship act, increasing the required residence period from two to five years, and adding a separate examination on the Constitution and the Citizenship Act to the existing language test requirement. Unsurprisingly, the number of naturalizations decreased in the following two years—a figure that can also be explained in part by Moscow's decision to simplify the procedures for stateless persons to obtain Russian passports. Some preferred Russian citizenship for practical reasons, for example, people who lived near the border in north-east (*Narva*) or south-east (*Setomaa*) Estonia or had relatives in Russia. It was much easier and cheaper to travel from Estonia to Russia for a person with Russian citizenship.

There was much greater interest in obtaining Estonian citizenship after Estonia's accession to the European Union. However, when the EU granted the right to visa-free travel to all permanent residents – an alien's passport given to non-citizens is recognized by the EU as valid for visa-free travel according to Regulation 1932/2006/EC – this interest dwindled. Moreover, in a Presidential Decree dated 17 June 2007, Russia allowed its compatriots living in Estonia and Latvia to enter Russia without a visa, which decreased the interest in determining citizenship even further. Consequently, those who have a Russian or an alien's passport in Estonia can currently enjoy visa-free travel to both the EU and

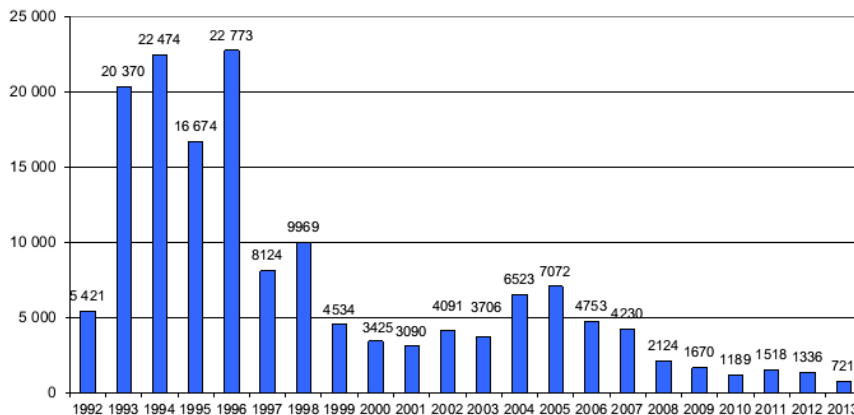
⁷³ Kruusvall Juri, Vetik Raivo, Berry W. John (2009): *The Strategies of Inter-Ethnic Adaptation of Estonian Russians*, Studies of Transition States and Societies, Vol 1.

⁷⁴ Juhan Kivirahk, Nerijus Maliukevičius, Dmytro Kondratenko, Olexandr Yermeev, Radu Vrabie, Nana Devdariani, Mariam Tsatsanashvili, Nato Bachiashvili, Tengiz Pkhaladze, Gatis Pelnēns, Andis Kudors, Mārtiņš Pāparinskis, Ainārs Dimants, Ainārs Lerhis (2009): *The "Humanitarian Dimension" of Russian Foreign Policy Toward Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and the Baltic States*, Riga.

Russia, while Estonian citizens who want to go to Russia have to apply for a visa and pay a fee.⁷⁵

More than 155,000 people were granted Estonian citizenship through the naturalization process in the first two decades after the restoration of Estonian independence. The proportion of citizens in the population rose from 68 per cent to 84 per cent, and the number of stateless persons residing in Estonia therefore fell from 32 per cent to 6.7 per cent. As of June 2013, the number of stateless persons in Estonia was 90,190. A majority (53 per cent) of non-Ethnic Estonians are now Estonian citizens, about one-fifth are Russian citizens, and one-fifth are stateless. In 1991, almost all these people, more than one-third of the population, were stateless non-citizens.⁷⁶ This successful integration process is not insignificant.

Diagram 1: Estonian citizenship by naturalization, number of individuals⁷⁷



The question of the integration of the Russian-speaking population into Estonian society is not limited to the issue of citizenship vs. statelessness. Estonian policies undertook the formation of a common national identity and a population that trusts and is loyal to the state of Estonia. A Praxis/Tartu University report, *Integration Monitoring 2011*, elaborates a new approach to measuring integration, developing indices to measure three dimensions of integration – linguistic, political and social, and conducting a cluster analysis. From the

⁷⁵ Embassy of Russian Federation in Tallinn, available at: < <http://rusemb.ee> >

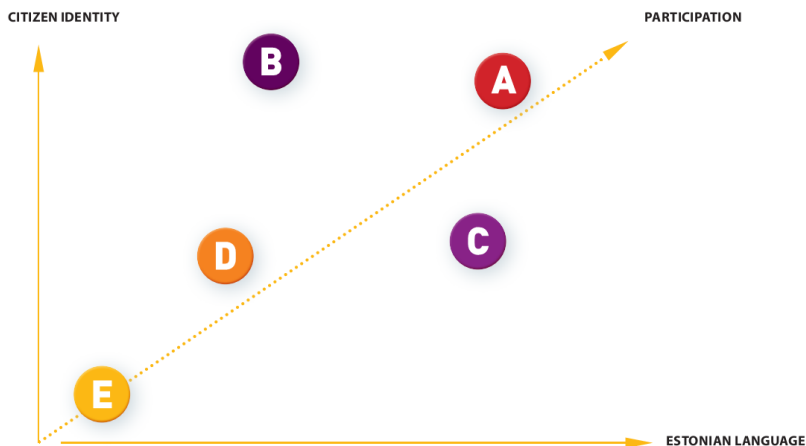
⁷⁶ See *Estonian Integration Monitoring 2011*,

http://www.praxis.ee/fileadmin/tarmo/Projektid/Valitsemine_ja_kodanike%C3%BChiskond/Artiklid/Integratsiooni_monitooring_2011_ENG_lyhiversioon.pdf .

⁷⁷ Estonian Police and Border Guard Board, available at < www.politsei.ee/dotAsset/61217.pdf >

combinations of these three indices, so-called integration clusters were formed to describe five different integration patterns. The resulting clusters describe the different levels and dimensions of integration. The positions of the clusters in relation to each other and in the three dimensions of integration are illustrated below.

Figure 1: The positions of integration clusters on a three-dimensional integration field⁷⁸



- **Cluster A, “successfully integrated”** describes an evenly strong integration in each dimension and includes **21 per cent of respondents**.
- **Cluster B, “Russian-speaking Estonian patriot”** is centred on strong civic relations, such as expresses strong integration in the legal-political dimension, in combination with weaker linguistic integration; **16 per cent of respondents** fell into this cluster.
- **Cluster C, “Critically minded Estonian speakers”**, represents a group with good language skills but weak citizen identity and includes **13 per cent of respondents**. Members of this group are characterised by a critical stance on both Estonian and Russian politics and stronger-than-average political participation through public meetings, rallies, hearings, online petitions, and so on.
- **Cluster D, “little integration”**, mainly describes respondents with undetermined citizenship and weak language skills who participate

⁷⁸ See *Estonian Integration Monitoring 2011*, http://www.praxis.ee/fileadmin/tarmo/Projektid/Valitsemine_ja_kodanike%C3%BChiskond/Artiklid/Integratsiooni_monitooring_2011_ENG_lyhiversioon.pdf.

actively only on a local scale. This included **28 per cent of respondents**.

- **Cluster E, “no integration”**, largely includes older people with Russian citizenship – **22 per cent of respondents**.

The typology above shows that approximately half of the Russian-speaking inhabitants of Estonia are either marginally or not at all integrated. An insufficient command of the Estonian language and weak involvement in Estonian society makes these people particularly susceptible to Russia’s propaganda and influence. A Russian-speaking diaspora as compatriots who are loyal to Russia, and an Estonia that aims to integrate its Russian-speaking population into Estonian society are competing concepts – a fact that the designers of Russia’s Compatriots Policy are well aware of. Thus, the segregation of the Russian-speaking population within its country of residence became a factor in the successful execution of Russia’s Compatriots Policy. Geri Nimmerfeldt (2011) emphasises that the major obstacle to feeling a strong sense of belonging in Estonia is the perception of assimilative pressure. Throughout Europe, immigration as a source of cultural, religious and linguistic diversity has become a threat to the homogeneity of the nation state and social cohesion based on a shared national identity. A considerable proportion of immigrants do not have the same the sense of national belonging as natives, while the desire among the receiving country to restore homogeneity often results in policies of assimilation as opposed to policies of integration. Such an approach often leads to ethnic divisions and undermines greater social cohesion.⁷⁹

Yet the high degree of Russia’s criticism of the integration process in Estonia emerged after the considerable advances that minorities in Estonia have made in the field of integration, including acquiring enough of the state language, continuing studies in Estonian institutions of higher learning, participating in the protection of the state and increased public participation in areas linked to Estonia’s development as a part of the European Union.⁸⁰ This conduct by Russia is undoubtedly an important challenge to Estonia’s integration policy, implementation of which needs to consider realistic opportunities and the existing information environment. Pressure to assimilate can become particularly problematic and counterproductive when the country of origin of the ethnic minority is in the neighbourhood of the country of residence and is actively disseminating subversive information.

⁷⁹ Nimmerfeldt, Gerli (2011): *Identificational Integration: Conceptualisation and Operationalisation on the Example of Second Generation Russians in Estonia*, Tallinn University, Dissertations on Social Sciences No 51,

⁸⁰ Estonian Internal Security Service (2012), *Annual Review 2012*.

3.3.3 The Central Actors Behind Russia's Compatriots Policy in Estonia

The success of Russia's Compatriots Policy directly depends on the active work of the central actors responsible for the efficient delivery of its policy goals. The year after the concept was announced, Russia established the Estonian branch of the *Russkii mir* Foundation and *Rossotrudnichestvo*, a Russian federal agency. The Russian Federation uses diplomatic missions in its near abroad, actively giving embassies responsibility for running annual Coordination Councils of Russian Compatriots, which coordinate the agenda of an extensive network of institutions implementing policy abroad. One objective of the central actors is to try to *shape the perceptions* of these compatriots by means of the Russia-controlled information space. According to the head of *Rossotrudnichestvo*, Russia's efforts to foster its positive image abroad coincide with its major goal of increasing its authority in the international arena.⁸¹ Compatriots can be used as a tool for implementing the Kremlin's foreign policy goals. Therefore, the need to protect the rights of the Russian population can be used as a pretext to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries.

Since 2009, *Rossotrudnichestvo* has coordinated its activities with *Russkii mir*, the Foundation focused on the promotion of the Russian world, its culture and history. This consolidation strengthened Russia's activities in Estonia considerably as *Russkii mir* was established in Tallinn on the premises of the Pushkin Institute in 2008. Today, there are two such centres in the United States but five in the Baltic states.⁸² Given that there are 4–6 million possible Russian compatriots living in the USA, the decision to open additional *Russkii mir* centres in the Baltic states indicates the importance of the Compatriots Policy in the Baltic region.

The Fund for the Legal Protection and Support of Russian Federation Compatriots Living Abroad has broader functions, such as monitoring violations of the rights of Russian compatriots living abroad and reporting the information.⁸³ The target area of the fund's activities is defined as Russia's near abroad, and it plans to create a network of legal protection centres throughout the CIS and the Baltic states. The Fund receives most of its financing from the Russian state budget.

Russian federal actors coordinated the establishment of the fund, including the financial side of its activities which represent the main interest in the fund's

⁸¹ See Kosachev, Konstantin, *Soft Power in the Right Place*, *Russkii mir*, <http://www.russkiimir.ru/russkiimir/en/publications/articles/article0354.html>.

⁸² See <http://russkiimir.ru/en/rucenter/catalogue.php>.

⁸³ Office of the President of Russian Federation, Press Release, *Executive order on establishing a foundation for supporting and protecting the rights of compatriots living abroad*, available at <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/2267>.

existence. According to the Estonian Internal Security Service, the fund's management board has influenced the development of a number of centres in Estonia through the allocation of funds, including the Legal Information Centre for Human Rights in Tallinn, whose director, Alexei Semjonov, is a member of the Compatriots Coordination Commission run by the Russian Federation's Embassy in Tallinn. The fund provided financial support to the Estonian resident Anton Gruzdev in order to compensate him for the material damage during mass unrest in Jõhvi in 2007, in connection with removal of the Bronze Soldier in Tallinn.⁸⁴ Moreover, the fund directly finances World Without Nazism (*Mir bez Natsisma*, MBN). With the help of the fund, MBN managed to be represented at OSCE conferences and its General Assembly in Strasbourg in October 2012.⁸⁵ This active financial assistance has played a crucial role in developing the international reputation of MBN, creating favourable conditions for the legitimacy of its messages and activities.

Among other projects financed by the fund is the "Russian Ombudsman" in Estonia, who deals with issues related to the non-citizen status of the Russian minority in Estonia. It was initially discussed in September 2004 by the lawyer and human rights activist, Sergei Seredenko. In April 2005, the project was unveiled at the conference on "Political elites of the former Soviet Union", held at the Diplomatic Academy of the Russian Foreign Ministry. Simultaneously, an Internet presentation on the project was made available on the website of the Russian Institute in Estonia. The project was put on hold for five years but restored in 2010, after a vote held at the conference at the Russian School in Estonia, when Seredenko accepted a proposal to lead the office.⁸⁶ The Russian Ombudsman has found a probable long-term financial supporter in the Fund for the Legal Protection and Support of Russian Federation Compatriots Living Abroad, and continues its work on protecting the rights of non-citizens in Estonia. Particular concern has been raised about the status of children born to families with "grey passports" (6.5 per cent of population of Estonia currently has undetermined citizenship).⁸⁷ Estonia has addressed these concerns by simplifying the process of naturalization for children educated in Estonia, but the decision lies with parents and they may be influenced by the messages coming from local politicians.

⁸⁴ Postimees.EE (2013): *Integration Causing Concern for Russian Compatriot Ideologists – Estonian Security Police*, April, <http://news.postimees.ee/1200610/integration-causing-concern-for-russian-compatriot-ideologists-estonian-security-police>.

⁸⁵ Internal Security Service (2012): op. cit. pp. 6-7.

⁸⁶ See Slavia, Russian Culture Centre, *Russian Ombudsman*, available at http://slavia.ee/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5687&Itemid=223.

⁸⁷ Dolgov, K. (2014): *Russian Ombudsman condemns unprecedented non-citizen status of people in East Europe*, January, http://voiceofrussia.com/news/2014_01_27/Dolgov-condemns-unprecedented-non-citizen-status-of-people-in-East-Europe-8289/.

According to the Legal Information Centre for Human Rights in Estonia, the political situation does not require an increase in support for the promotion of education in Russian, which is a foreign language in the country. The Russian Federation emphasizes the problem of discrimination against Russian citizens in Estonia in connection with the availability of education in their native language. Thus, the Compatriots Policy focuses on the language question, the promotion and preservation of the Russian language abroad, leading to a rapidly expanding institutional network of Russian Language speakers across Europe. In 2013, Russia's prime minister announced the creation of an official Russian Language Council. According to its founding statutes, the council is an advisory body with the objectives of "reviewing key issues regarding state support for and cultivation of the Russian language," and "developing proposals to improve public policy in this area". The information service of *Russkii mir* reports that the main research centre of this Council will be the Pushkin State Institute for the Russian Language, which already has considerable experience of teaching Russian to non-native speakers. The main activity of the Council will be the creation of an overseas network of Pushkin Institutes as centres of Russian language and culture. One such centre was established in Tallinn in 2008 on the premises of *Russkii mir*. The central aim of the centre is to promote language and culture within the framework of the Russian Language Programme, with a financial allocation of approximately RUB 2.5 billion (over EUR 61 million) from the Russian government.⁸⁸

The preservation of the Russian language space is a key component of Russia's Compatriots Policy. Efforts to promote the Russian language and Russian culture in Estonia are not negative per se. However, a strong campaign to preserve a foreign language entails risks of undermining the position of Estonian as the official language in a small country.⁸⁹

It is important to trace the interconnection of all the institutions that actively promote Russia's culture, language, history and ideology, and their concentration in the Baltic region. Such a strong network creates solid ground for the Kremlin to promote loyal supporters of its foreign policy.

⁸⁸ Vedler, Sulev (2012), *Moscow's Spin Machine in Estonia*, March, available at: <http://www.rebaltica.lv/en/investigations/money_from_russia/a/608/moscow's_spin_machine_in_estonia_.html>

⁸⁹ Kivirähk, Juhan (2010): *How to Address the 'Humanitarian Dimension' of Russian Foreign Policy?* Diplomaatia, Tallinn, <http://www.diplomaatia.ee/en/article/how-to-address-the-humanitarian-dimension-of-russian-foreign-policy/>.

3.3.4 The Coordination Council of Russian Compatriots in Estonia

Coordination councils are meant to bring together the leaders of NGOs. The website of the Russian embassy in Estonia states that the embassy supports the activity of the Coordination Council of Russian Compatriots in Estonia. The Council made statements critical of Estonia's policies and actions during the crisis over the Bronze Soldier in 2007. A statement by the Council appeared on the official website of Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It attacked the actions of Tallinn officials, in breaking up what it described as "antifascist clashes", as "the desire of the Estonian authorities to hurt veterans' feelings and show disrespect for the rights of Russian-speaking Estonia".⁹⁰

The process by which the Coordination Council elects its members lacks transparency. The leaders of the Council are appointed by the Russian embassy and the council is run from the embassy, which makes the election of representatives to the World Congress highly centralized. Dmitry Kondrashov, editor-in-chief of the journal *Baltiskiy mir*, has offered an insight into the process by which representative bodies of Russian compatriots are appointed: "Russia chooses its partners by itself and no force or institution has the power to influence its choices".⁹¹ The sovereign right of the Russian Federation to choose its own partners and appoint its loyal representatives abroad shows that the compatriots whose interests the Kremlin's policy is allegedly protecting could be used as a tool for the realization of Russia's ambitions.

3.3.5 Russian-Language Education in Estonia and "Russian Schooling in Estonia"

The continuing debate over access to tuition in the Russian language has raised many controversial questions on both sides. Russia is making strenuous efforts to influence internal policy on the language question through its compatriots bodies, while Estonia is pursuing a policy of developing a coherent social order and preserving the state (Estonian) language. Estonia started the transition to partial teaching of subjects in Estonian in Russian upper secondary schools (years 10–12) in 2007. By 2011, nearly 60 per cent of the curriculum was being taught in Estonian. This transition aimed to tackle a problem in the labour market and offered guarantees of equal study and work opportunities for graduates from all

⁹⁰ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation (2007): *Statement by the Coordination Council of Russian Compatriots Living Abroad*, May, http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/brp_4.nsf/e78a48070f128a7b43256999005bcbb3/c387a51ee5b1188c32572de0044c1ea!OpenDocument>.

⁹¹ Kondrashov, Dmitry (2009): "Myths about Compatriots and their Exposure, Session One: The Myth of 'Appointees'" ["Mify o sootchesvennikakh i seansy ikh razoblacheniya," *Baltysky mir*], <http://baltija.eu/news/read/76>>.

state schools.⁹² The Russian-speaking population responded doubtfully to the ongoing changes in education policy, and their lack of trust was fuelled by the Russian mass media. The provision of upper secondary education in Estonian was perceived as a threat, potentially resulting in a worsening of students' performance, exam results and consequently job opportunities, leading to increased emigration. A non-governmental organization, Russian Schooling in Estonia, was founded in 2010 to challenge the Estonian-language policies.

Objections increased as students moving from primary schools had to adapt to tuition in the Estonian language in their secondary school. Many failed to acquire the language skills necessary before reaching upper secondary school, especially for understanding more complex subjects. Insufficient preparation for the transition to Estonian-language tuition left the Russian-speaking population feeling that the obligatory transition constituted pressure from the government. Many felt that they were being transformed into Estonians by force.

Russian Schooling in Estonia has matured and is today actively working in cyberspace. The official website – in Russian – provides a collection of legislative bases for Russian educational activities in Estonia, gathers petitions and publishes a weekly information bulletin.⁹³ A recent issue features an interview with an activist in *Nochnoi Dozor* (see below), which indicates the interconnectivity of the bodies promoting Russia's Compatriots Policy in Estonia.⁹⁴

Unfortunately, education and language policies have become important political tools for both Estonian politicians and representatives of the Russian Compatriots Policy in Estonia. Both have sought to use parents' sincere concerns about the quality of their children's education to their advantage. Estonian education officials have chosen the path of confrontation instead of trying to consider and assuage the fears of parents, while on the Russian side the question of language became part of the expanding Compatriots Policy activities. This confrontation played out in the Kremlin's favour, as a step to mobilize the Russian minority to exert its influence and to preserve its long-term interests in Estonia. In the light of escalating objections among Russian-speaking citizens, Russian Embassy officials met with locals opposed to secondary education in Estonian to offer cooperation from the Fund to Support and Protect the Rights of Compatriots Living Abroad.

A social divide over the question of the language of education caused an increase in anti-transitional activities in 2011. According to the Estonian Internal Security

⁹² Legal Information Centre for Human Rights (2010): *Russian Schools in Estonia*, Tallinn available at: <http://www.lichr.ee/main/assets/School-Eng.pdf>.

⁹³ *Russian Schooling in Estonia*, Official Website, <<http://www.venekool.eu>>.

⁹⁴ See *Russian Schooling in Estonia*, Information Bulletin, #113, http://www.venekool.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Bulletin_140317-1.pdf

Service, Yana Toom – the Deputy Mayor of Tallinn responsible for educational and cultural issues – started pressuring Tallinn’s Russian schools to submit applications to the Tallinn City Council to call for the continuation of Russian-language education after 1 September 2011. As a result, 11 secondary schools in Tallinn applied to continue tuition in Russian. This set a precedent that was followed by five Russian-language high schools in Narva, which submitted similar applications.

After Yana Toom was elected to the Riigikogu, the new Deputy Major of Tallinn, Mikhail Kõlvart, continued to work against the transition.⁹⁵ He organized a signature-gathering campaign in support of Russian-language schools after he became a head of Russian Schooling in Estonia in the autumn of 2011. The petition gathered more than 35 000 signatures and was delivered to the government, the president and the Ministry of Education and Science in 2012.⁹⁶

The anti-transition movement was a blessing for the Centre Party in the local elections of 2012. Nonetheless, the Russian electorate is not unanimously opposed to the Estonian language education policies.⁹⁷

3.3.6 Compatriot Organizations: Dealing with History

The rewriting of history has become a central issue and evolved into a battlefield between the Baltic states and Russia. The legacy of Soviet occupation remains a source of tension between Estonian and Russian-speaking citizens. Russia’s perception is that liberating the Baltic states from Nazi Germany justifies the act of annexation and proves Estonian’s voluntary will to join the Soviet Union. Today, Estonia and Russia have sharply divergent perspectives on Soviet history and promote starkly differing interpretations of the history of the Second World War. This conflict has been simmering since 1991 and erupted in the 2007 Bronze Night incident, when Estonian officials took the decision to relocate the monument commemorating the Soviet defeat of Nazi Germany to a military cemetery outside the city centre. According to Russian officials, the crisis of the Bronze Soldier was fuelled by public meetings of Waffen SS legionnaires, the violation of war memorials, nationalistic youth marches and camps, the persecution of veterans, the equating of Nazi and Soviet crimes and attempts to portray Nazis and their local henchmen as heroes.⁹⁸ Therefore, the act of

⁹⁵ Security Police of the Republic of Estonia (2011), *Annual Review 2011*.

⁹⁶ Vedler, Sulev (2012), *Divide and Conquer in Estonia*, Rebalica, March, http://www.rebalica.lv/en/investigations/money_from_russia/a/610/divide_and_conquer_in_estonia.html.

⁹⁷ Leivat, Laas (2012), *Party Politics Hinders Estonian Language Acquisition by Russian Students*, Estonian Life N. 30, available at: <http://www.eesti.eu.ca/et/arvamus/kommentaar/105-estonian-life/opinion/opinion/laas-leivat/504-party-politics-hinders-estonian-language-acquisition-by-russian-students>

⁹⁸ Ibid.

dismantling the statue in 2007 would be seen by the Russian-speaking population as “an insult to the historic liberation and victory defeat of Nazism”.

The events of April 2007 evolved into two nights of rioting, an information war between Estonian and Russian officials, cyber-attacks and a political crisis. After the crisis, the Estonian government entered a new decade of security reforms and strategies, but the pro-Russian organizations established in the context of the conflict – *Nochnoi Dozor* and *Mir bez Natsizma* – came out stronger with a higher degree of support and popularity.

One of the active leaders of and participants in the riots and protests was *Nochnoi Dozor* (Night Watch), a group of mostly Russophone political activists living in Estonia set up in the summer of 2006. The topic of history was thus added to the arsenal of the compatriots organizations. *Nochnoi Dozor* refers to itself as an anti-fascist organization.⁹⁹ The group has made a number of public statements, dubbing various Estonian politicians Nazis and calling for their resignation. Such statements are often rapidly taken up by Russian language media channels. Following the relocation of the Bronze Soldier of Tallinn, the group was involved in organizing street riots in the city. The activities of the organization have now ceased, but its members are active in other organizations, in particular *Mir bez Natsizma*, (World without Nazism).

A self-proclaimed international legal rights movement, World Without Nazism has in recent years risen to become one of the most influential NGOs used to defend Russian foreign policy interests. The organization is led by Boris Shpigel, head of the Civil Society Committee of the Russian Federation Council. At the founding forum of World Without Nazism in Kiev on 22 June 2010, Andrei Zarenkov was elected to the organization’s presidium. Dmitri Linter and Maxim Reva were appointed as board members. Linter and Reva became widely known for orchestrating, with the help of Russian state-controlled media, massive disorder on the streets of Tallinn in 2007 as leaders of the *Nochnoi Dozor* movement.

On 28 March 2011, a new NGO, Nazi-Free Estonia, held its founding meeting in Tallinn. The organizer was Zarenkov and the leader of the Arnold Meri Public Union Against Neo-Nazism and National Hatred (the so-called Anti-Fascist Committee of Estonia). Prior to the meeting, Zarenkov changed the name of the organization and re-registered it as Nazi-Free Estonia, which fits better with the World Without Nazism umbrella organization concept.

According to the organization’s website, 14 organizations from Estonia have joined World Without Nazism. (These include *Nochnoi Dozor*, the Arnold Meri Public Union Against New Nazism and National Hatred, *Molodoye Slovo*, *Vmeste*, the Russian portal baltija.eu and the Russian-language television channel

⁹⁹ Nochnoy Dozor, available at” <http://www.dozor-ee.narod.ru>.

NTV.)¹⁰⁰ While this may seem like a large number, there is a lot of overlap in the membership of these organizations. Representatives of various anti-fascist organizations in Estonia and Finland establish such organizations with overlapping membership from among the same small, closely integrated group of pro-Moscow activists – but they lack a larger following in Estonia.¹⁰¹

3.3.7 The Legal Information Centre for Human Rights

The Legal Information Centre for Human Rights (LICHR) is another important organization that represents the interests of the Russian community in Estonia. The director of the LICHR is Alexey Semyonov, a social scientist, who is greatly respected in the Russian-speaking community. The LICHR cooperates with Amnesty International on a permanent basis. Amnesty International has criticized Estonia's policy on its Russian-speaking population. In June 2009, the Centre launched a fight against increased tuition in Estonian in Russian-speaking schools. *Russkii mir* supported the project for: "The creation of conditions for supporting continued education in the Russian language in Estonia through the implementation and use of European anti-discrimination principles".¹⁰²

The Estonian Security Police claims that the LICHR has close contacts with Russian diplomatic circles and intelligence services. Before the establishment of the Fund for the Legal Protection and Support of Russian Federation Compatriots Living Abroad, the LICHR received funds directly from the Russian Embassy in Tallinn. According to the Security Police, approximately EUR 400,000 was transferred to the Centre in donations in 2008–2010. The money was allegedly from *Russkii mir*, the Russian Embassy in Estonia, the City of Tallinn and the European Union.¹⁰³

3.3.8 Representation of the Compatriots Policy in Internet Sources

To promote inter-ethnic integration and the rights of the Russian and Russian-speaking population, as well as the preservation of the Russian language and Russian culture in Estonia, the Compatriots Policy reaches out to its audience through active representation online. The primary Internet resource for the Russian-speaking community in Estonia, the web portal Baltiya, was established

¹⁰⁰ ISS (2011), op. cit.

¹⁰¹ Kavkaz Center (2011): *Russia creates neo-Nazi groups in Europe, masked as antifascist committees*, April, available at: <http://www.kavkazcenter.com/eng/content/2011/04/18/14116.shtml>.

¹⁰² Vedler, Sulev (2012), "Moscow's Spin Machine in Estonia", *Re: Baltica*, March. http://www.rebaltica.lv/en/investigations/money_from_russia/a/608/moscow's_spin_machine_in_estonia.html

¹⁰³ Velder (2012), op. cit.

through the voluntary efforts of activists in 2008.¹⁰⁴ The portal provides information about events in the Russian-speaking community in Estonia. Particular attention is paid to coverage of Russian federal and regional structures in support of compatriots abroad, activities undertaken in support of education, the protection of the Russian language and preserving the memory of the heroism of people during the Great Patriotic War.

The portal is an official information partner of *Rossotrudnichestvo*, *Russkiy mir* and other bodies of the Compatriots Policy. In 2013, at the international conference on the “20th anniversary of the Constitution of the Russian Federation and compatriots: achievements, problems and prospects” in Moscow, the portal received an award for “best Internet project”.¹⁰⁵

3.3.9 Work with Youth: *Molodoye Slovo*

The leadership of *Russkii mir* as well as the leaders of *Rossotrudnichestvo* and officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs state that one of their current priorities is the activation of a Russian youth movement and the consolidation of the young within the compatriot community.¹⁰⁶ The number of youth organizations in Estonia is modest. Some alumni associations of various universities with Russian curricula, such as the ECOMEN alumni association, are worth mentioning, and there have been attempts to create umbrella organizations for the Estonian and Baltic recipients of the Luzhkov scholarship, but neither has been particularly active. A new way to consolidate young compatriots is the creation of youth organizations with a certain ideological background. One example is the non-profit organization *Molodoye Slovo*, registered in 2009, the members of which are dubbed ‘young Russian compatriots from Estonia’ in an Estonian Russian-language news portal. The leader of the organization is Anton Druzhkov.¹⁰⁷ *Molodoye Slovo* has been largely modelled after the Russian youth movement Nashi, beginning with the fact that both organizations’ logos feature the symbols of the Russian Empire.

In the summer of 2010, *Molodoye Slovo* organized the first Russian compatriots’ international summer sports camp at Lake Peipus, with guests from Latvia, sponsored by Zarenkov’s anti-fascist committee. Using the Russian-language media as its vehicle, *Molodoye Slovo* has been engaged in fighting against the so-

¹⁰⁴ Internet portal Baltija, available at: www.baltija.eu.

¹⁰⁵ “*Russian Century*”: the portal “*Baltija*” break the information blockade Russian community in Estonia [«Russky Vek»: portal «Baltiya» proral informatsionnyu blokadu Russkoy obshchiny Estonii], December 2012, available at: <http://www.baltija.eu/news/read/35099>.

¹⁰⁶ See *Resolution of the Youth European Forum of Compatriots Abroad, Russia in Colours*, [Rezolyutsiya Yevropeyskogo Molodezhnogo Foruma Sootechestvennikov za Rubezhem], November 2008, http://ricolor.org/rus/rus_mir/sootechestvenniki/emf/1/.

¹⁰⁷ See *Molodoe Slovo in Estonia remembers lessons of holocaust*, Baltija, [Molodoye Slovo v Estonii Pomnit Uroki Kholokosta], February 2011, available at: <http://baltija.eu/news/read/15474>.

called fabrication of history. Its message follows the views of Nashi and other well-known “history experts” approved by the Kremlin.¹⁰⁸

On 15 May 2013, a conference, For Courage and Military Prowess, was held at the Lindakivi Cultural Centre. The event was organized by the non-profit youth organization, Young Word, with the support of the Russian embassy in Estonia and the blessing of the head of the Estonian orthodox church, within the framework of the programme of the Youth Committee in Preparation for Victory Day in Estonia. The main objective of the conference was to educate the youth population of Estonia about Russian awards and the Soviet Order of Glory, as well as awards for personal bravery and courage on the battlefield.¹⁰⁹

In previous years, young Russian compatriots had had an opportunity to attend the Seliger camps.¹¹⁰ Seliger Youth Educational Forums or camps have been organized by the Nashi Youth Movement at Lake Seliger in Tver Oblast near the city of Ostashkov (370 km from Moscow) since 2005.¹¹¹ In 2017 Russia plans to hold an International Festival of Youth and Students. The Soviet Union held such events twice, each time to powerful propaganda effect: in 1957 when the Soviet leadership slightly lifted the Iron Curtain for the first time; and in 1985 when it held the first high-profile international publicity campaign for Perestroika.¹¹²

3.4 The Russian Authorities' Connections with Political Parties in Estonia

Russia's attention has been primarily focused on organizations that can be used to influence Estonian politics. Unfortunately, the political community in Estonia partly reflects the continuing linguistic divide in other areas of Estonian society. Formally, all the mainstream political parties in Estonia are multi-ethnic. Until recently, only one, *Keskerakond* (the Centre Party), has actively campaigned in the Russian language and featured mainly Russian-speaking candidates. At the same time, however, many smaller parties have campaigned on the basis of a “Russian identity”.

¹⁰⁸ Kiilo, Tatjana (2011): *Developments in Russia's Compatriot Policy*, [Arendud Venemaa Föderatsiooni Kaasmaalaste Poliitikas], ABVKeskus 2011/1, pp. 13–14

¹⁰⁹ See The Conference of the Molodoe Slovo in Tallinn: “For courage and military valor”, [Konferentsiya «Molodogo slova» v Talline: «Za khrabrost i voinskuyu doblest»], Baltija, May 2013, available at: <http://baltija.eu/news/read/31268>.

¹¹⁰ Official website Forum Seliger, available at: <http://www.forumseliger.ru>.

¹¹¹ Forum Seliger (2012): Putin visited Seliger, [Putin posetil Seliger 2012], available at: <http://www.forumseliger.ru/pressCenter/record/1454>><http://www.forumseliger.ru/pressCenter/record/1454>.

¹¹² Charnenko E. (2013): *From the Position of the Soft Power* [S Pozitsii Myagkoy Sily], Kommersant, January, available at: <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2105575>.

From 1995 until 2003, the parties for Russian-speaking people had their own faction in the Riigikogu. They also had their own role to play in local government elections, particularly in Tallinn and Narva.

Russia has financed the election campaigns of the parties for Russian-speaking people in Estonia. These parties have competed among themselves to gain approval and funding from Moscow. Their key election promises have centred on the introduction of official bilingualism in Estonia, the blanket citizenship option, and protection of the rights of Russian-speakers.

Since the 2003 parliamentary elections, however, the Russian parties have not passed the 5 per cent electoral threshold. In 2003, the Estonian United People's Party won 11,113 votes (2.2 per cent) and the Russian Party in Estonia got only 990 votes (0.2 per cent). Even if the two parties had joined forces for the elections, they would not have passed the electoral threshold. Since 1991, Russian parties have failed to find unity or strong leaders among themselves. Furthermore, political mobilization is traditionally rather low among Russians in Estonia. This is partly because only Estonian citizens are allowed by law to be members of political parties or vote in parliamentary elections.¹¹³ Even though so many Russians have been naturalized in recent years, this has not altered the situation.

Besides the question of ethnicity, the political views of these parties have differed quite a lot too. Even when it comes to the question of extending Estonian citizenship to Russians residing in Estonia, the parties have not been able to agree on the necessary procedures that should be put into place for attaining an Estonian citizenship or who should be given citizenship automatically.

This lack of unity can be seen in the number of votes Russian parties have managed to attain. The voting preferences of the Russian-speaking electorate demonstrate that support for purely Russian parties has decreased over the years. This is true even in periods when the Russian authorities are believed to have increased financial support for parties representing Russians in Estonia.

In 2007, the Constitution Party (previously known as the Estonian United People's Party) won 5464 votes (1.0 per cent) and the Russian Party in Estonia got just 1084 votes (0.2 per cent). The Estonian Internal Security Service claims that Russia offered considerable financial support to the Constitution Party that year, but the anticipated breakthrough did not occur.

Before the 2009 elections to the European Parliament, Russia increased its financial support and renewed its campaign efforts to secure a seat for a Russian-speaker. The aim was to follow the example of Latvia, where Tatyana Zhdanoka

¹¹³ Juhan Kivirahk, Nerijus Maliukevičius, et al. (2009): *The "Humanitarian Dimension" of Russian Foreign Policy Toward Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and the Baltic States*, Riga.

had been elected to the European Parliament in 2004 and was re-elected in 2009. A similar result was not achieved in Estonia, however, as the Russian Party in Estonia's frontrunner, Stanislav Tscherepanov, got only 1267 votes (0.32 per cent); the Estonian United Left Party's frontrunner, Georgy Bystrov, won 3519 votes (0.9 per cent) and Dmitry Klensky, an independent candidate involved in the Bronze Soldier riots of April, 2007, received 7319 votes (1.8 per cent).

Instead of voting for these specifically Russian candidates, Estonian Russian-speakers have tended to support the Centre Party, which polls have shown to be by far the most popular political group – 75 per cent support in 2012 – among non-Estonians.¹¹⁴ The lack of unity among the ethnic Russian parties is also seen in the fact that in 2012, the Russian Party in Estonia joined the Social Democratic Party. Thus, at the moment, there is no party in Estonia seeking to represent solely the interests of the Russian ethnic minority.

This has led to a situation in which virtually all the Russian electorate has turned to a party with a much broader platform — the Centre Party. Opinion polls before the most recent local elections showed that more than 80 per cent of the Russian-speaking electorate in Tallinn intended to vote for the Centre Party. It also got 60 per cent of the votes in the border city of Narva, where 96 per cent of the population is Russian-speaking. This comes as no surprise, since the Centre Party's efforts have been specifically targeted at the Russian-speaking population since it concluded a cooperation agreement with Russia's pro-Putin ruling party, United Russia.

Russia was already directing its attention to the Centre Party in the run-up to Estonia's 2011 general election. A controversy connected to the financing of the construction of a Russian Orthodox church in Lasnamäe – the only district in Tallinn that is populated by more Russians than Estonians – was brought to light before this election. At the end of 2010, the Internal Security Service alleged that Edgar Savisaar, the leader of the Centre Party, had asked Moscow for money.¹¹⁵ This incident became known as the Eastern Money Scandal. This hints at the widely acknowledged fact that most of the parties in Estonia have occasionally been affected by a financing scandal, but only the Centre Party's finances are known to be connected to Russia.

Apart from financial support, Russia is believed to support the Centre Party in more indirect ways. The most prominent example of this occurred shortly before the 2011 parliamentary elections, when Russia's *Tsent* television channel

¹¹⁴ Urmet Kook (2012): "Eestlaste lemmikpartei on Reformierakond, mitte eestlastel Keskerakond" [Estonians' Favourite Party is the Reform Party, Non-Estonians' the Center Party], *ERR Uudised*, September 23, available at <http://uudised.err.ee/v/eesti/6a81c352-372c-4360-a226-e2d400d48bbd>

¹¹⁵ Delfi (2010): "LOE: Kapo aruanne Savisaare rahaküsimuse kohta" [Security Police Report on the Savisaar Money Question"] *Delfi.ee*, <http://www.delfi.ee/news/paevauudised/eesti/loe-kapo-aruanne-savisaare-rahakusimise-kohta.d?id=37038965>

showed a propaganda film about Edgar Savisaar.¹¹⁶ People are able to watch *Tsentr* via satellite and cable in Estonia, but the channel itself is owned by Moscow's city administration. It is based in Moscow, does not have an office in Estonia and does not have a local programme for Estonia's Russian-speakers either. The decision to show a propaganda film about the Estonian opposition leader within days of the national elections is likely to have been taken in Moscow.

In addition to the Russian channels, the Baltic Media Alliance channel Pervõi Baltiiski Kanal (First Baltic Channel, PBK) has been closely associated with the Centre Party. Oleg Samorodnij, the former correspondent of *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, recently published a book on how the Kremlin is spreading its ideology in Estonia using the media, including PBK. He suggests that the question of whether the PBK supports the Estonian Centre Party is not that crucial, because it is obvious that it does. Instead, he raises two sets of questions: Who coordinates the activities, and how are they being coordinated between PBK and the Centre Party? Who made the decision that PBK will support the Centre Party and where was it made?¹¹⁷ According to Samorodnij, "I don't think that these decisions are being made by PBK in Estonia; and I also don't believe that decisions in Riga are made by BMA. I think these decisions are made in Moscow".¹¹⁸

3.5 The Russian Media Presence and Its Consequences

In Estonia, Estonians and non-Estonians live in different information spaces, often with contrasting content. They receive their information from different sources, in different languages and through different media channels. According to the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, Russia's priority is to ensure its objective perception in the world, develop its own effective means of information and influence on public opinion abroad and strengthen the role of the Russian mass media in the international information environment, providing them with essential state support. The opportunities offered by new information and communications technologies are widely used in these activities. Most of the Russian-speaking population derives its information and views on history and

¹¹⁶ Mikk Salu & Inga Springe (2012): "Who is the puppet and who is the master? - PBK, Edgar Savisaar, the Center Party and Russian influence in Estonian politics", *Baltic Times*, available at: http://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/31077/#.U4W_FUJLCKA.

¹¹⁷ Mikk Salu & Inga Springe (2012): "Who is the Puppet and Who is the Master?", *Re:Baltica*, April, http://www.rebaltica.lv/en/investigations/money_from_russia/a/688/who_is_the_puppet_and_who_is_the_master.html.

¹¹⁸ Springe, I., Benfelde, S. and Salu, M. (2012): "The Unknown Oligarch", *Re:Baltica*, April, http://www.rebaltica.lv/en/investigations/money_from_russia/a/686/the_unknown_oligarch.html

current events from Russian television channels that are directly subordinate to the Kremlin and can be used as a mechanism of propaganda.

This does not mean, however, that the information space of the Russian-speaking population in general is uniform and focused only on Russia. On the contrary, thanks to the increasing use of Estonian and to abundant opportunities to view global television channels in their Russian language version or with Russian subtitles, the information space of the Russian-speaking population is significantly more diverse than that of ethnic Estonians. In addition, a fairly large percentage of the Russian-speaking population, 20–30 per cent according to different studies, participates regularly in the Estonian language information space.¹¹⁹

According to Estonian Integration Monitoring (2011), Russian-speakers focus on information about Estonia to different degrees.¹²⁰ Regular newspaper readers make up 74.3 per cent of the population (Estonians, 76.3 per cent; Russian-speakers, 70.2 per cent) while 58.9 per cent (Estonians, 71.8 per cent; Russian-speakers, 32.2 per cent) read magazines regularly. Consumption of printed media is decreasing with the exception of regular newspaper reading by Russian-speakers.¹²¹ Three Russian-language newspapers are published in Estonia, as well as free local newspapers published in Tallinn (*Linnaleht*, *Stolitsa*) and Narva (*Gorod*). The Russian-language national dailies have by and large fallen victim to market competition and closed in recent years, except for the Russian-language version of *Postimees*, and *Den za Dnjom* (*Day After Day*) – a weekly owned by *Postimees*.¹²² *Postimees* is still published in Russian three times a week and *Den za Dnjom* on Saturdays, but they have the same Editor-in-Chief and a united staff. The weekly *MK-Estonia* belongs to one of the biggest Baltic media groups, Baltic Media Alliance, which is also the parent company of PBK.¹²³

Of the three nationwide Estonian television channels, two offer regular programming in Russian. The newscasts broadcast on PBK originate from Russia and are rebroadcast in all three Baltic states. They are mostly watched by the Russian-speaking population in Estonia. The Russian-language newscast by ETV

¹¹⁹ Estonian Integration Monitoring (2011), AS Emor, SA Poliitikauuringute Keskus Praxis, Tartu Ülikool.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Loit, Urmas (2010): *Media Landscape Estonia*, European Journalism Centre, http://ejc.net/media_landscapes/estonia.

¹²² Loit, Urmas & Andra Siibak (2013): *Mapping Digital Media: Estonia, Country Report*, Open Society Foundation, pp. 23-24.

¹²³ Latviski, Lasi (2012): “Money from Russia”, *Rebaltica*, available at: http://www.rebaltica.lv/en/investigations/money_from_russia.

lags far behind, as the audience share for Estonian-language channels among the Russian-speaking community is low.¹²⁴

Radio is a popular source of information for the Estonian population. Around 66 per cent of Estonians listen to the radio on a daily basis, with a minor language divide in listenership – the Russian population lags slightly behind. Five Estonian radio stations broadcast in Russian: Radio 4, a public radio station, and four commercial stations, Russkoye Radio and Sky Radio from the Sky Media Group, and Narodnoye Radio and D-FM from the Rahva Meedia group, part of the Trio LSL Media Group.¹²⁵ In 2010, 69.4 per cent of all radio programmes were broadcast in Estonian and 28.6 per cent in Russian. This is remarkably close to the corresponding percentages of Estonians and Russians living in Estonian.¹²⁶ A large number of Internet portals and web media publications are also available in Russian, rus.delfi.ee; rus.postimees.ee; dzd.ee; mke.ee; limon.ee, part of *Postimees*; novosti.err.ee; r4.err.ee; and dv.ee (dolovõje vedomosti), but the most popular channels are still the Russian ones – mail.ru and odnoklassniki.ru.

In October 2013, statistics showed that the country's population watched television on average for 3 hours and 41 minutes a day. Estonians spent three hours and 38 minutes in front of their television sets, while other ethnic groups spent three hours and 46 minutes a day watching television. The time Estonians spent watching television was mostly divided between Kanal2, TV3 and ETV, with 23, 22 and 19.7 per cent, respectively. Non-Estonians chose between PBK, NTV Mir and RTR Planeta, with 23.8, 12.5 and 10.6 per cent, respectively.¹²⁷

PBK is the most popular Russian television channel among Baltic Russians. The current goal of PBK's parent company, Baltic Media Alliance, is to become the leading media holding company in the Baltic states – and this is a realistic goal. PBK rebroadcasts popular Russian television channels.¹²⁸

Re:Baltica undertook an investigation in Latvia and Estonia to find out who owns the influential media concern and the secret of the company's success.¹²⁹ The investigation revealed controversial connections between the management of the channel and political parties. Lev Vaino, a member of the Centre Party which controls Tallinn, is in charge of the media for the City of Tallinn, and is employed to coordinate the portrayal of the city's activities in the Russian

¹²⁴ Loit, Urmas & Andra Siibak (2013): op cit., p. 25.

¹²⁵ See "Raadiod" [Radio Stations], Trio LSL Radio Group, available at <http://www.trio.ee/?pid=2&lang=1>

¹²⁶ Naaber, Meelis (2012): *The Media Landscape of Estonia*, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V, December 2011, p. 3.

¹²⁷ See *TV Monitoring of TNS Emor*, <http://www.emor.ee/teleauditooriumi-ulevaade-novembrikuus-2013/>

¹²⁸ See Latviski, Lasi (2012): op. cit.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

language media. His role as intermediary between the City of Tallinn and PBK makes him one of the most influential people in Estonia's Russian language politics. Before joining the Centre Party, he was a member of the Estonian Constitutional Party and was for a period a member of both parties at the same time. It should be noted that the Constitutional Party, although small and marginal, was one of the most radical parties in the Estonian political landscape. Its leader, Andrei Zarenkov, was one of the activists in the Bronze Night riots in Tallinn in 2007. Zarenkov and his party also received direct support from Russian officials, including Russia's ambassador in Estonia at the time who wrote letters to various Estonian business people requesting support for Zarenkov.¹³⁰

Lev Vaino also has a family connection to PBK. He is an uncle of Aleksandr Tšaplõgin, a media personality in the local Russian speaking community. Tšaplõgin is also the anchor man for one of the PBK programmes paid for by the City of Tallinn – *Russkij Vopros* (Russian Question).¹³¹

Different media channels have different reputations. Generally, the Russian-speaking audience has the highest trust in PBK and the Russian television channels. However, Estonian Russian-language radio channels are also quite important, as are the local newspapers and MK-Estonia. A higher than average level of trust is also shown in the Internet portal rus.delfi.ee.¹³²

3.6 Cultural Relations as Part of Soft Power

An article by Vladimir Putin published on 23 January 2012 in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (The Independent Newspaper) became a cornerstone of Russia's plan to unite its multi-ethnic society and promote the central importance of Russian culture in all the former-Soviet states. Putin addressed Russian people and culture as the binding fabric of this “unique civilization.”¹³³ Russia, as a “poly-ethnic civilization”, is united by a unique “cultural core”. Putin highlighted that many former citizens of the Soviet Union, “who found themselves abroad, are calling themselves Russian, regardless of their ethnicity”, and find that affiliation through language and culture. In the Kremlin's vision, the use of education, language and national history will eventually spread Russia's tradition of cultural dominance. This grand strategy can be achieved by means of culture, television, cinema, the Internet, social media, Christian Orthodoxy, pan-Slavism

¹³⁰ Mikk Salu & Inga Springe (2012): op. cit.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² See *Estonian Integration Monitoring 2011*, op. cit.

¹³³ Putin, V. (2012): *Russia: The Ethnicity Issue*, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's article for *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, <http://archive.premier.gov.ru/eng/events/news/17831/>.

and Russo-focused assimilation, which can be deployed to achieve strategic goals and shape public opinion.¹³⁴

Thus, Russia's soft power sphere of cultural relations has been based on the appeal of Soviet and Russian culture, and the financial and organizational support it has devoted to the promotion of its culture abroad since 2000. Russia's soft power can be seen in both high and popular culture, in education and in the media. The main vehicles for exporting and the main enablers for receiving Russian culture are the language, Russian minorities, the Soviet legacy and business networks.¹³⁵ In its foreign policy concept, Russia set a goal to promote a positive image worthy of the high status of its culture, education, science, sporting achievements and the level of civil societal development, as well as participation in programmes of assistance to developing countries, fashioning tools to improve its perception throughout the world, improving the application of soft power and identifying the best forms of activities in this area that take account of both international experience and national peculiarities and build on mechanisms of interaction with civil society and experts.¹³⁶

Partnerships in culture, science, and education are the aspects that most directly relate to the concept of soft power. Russia has set clear priorities in its National Security Strategy 2020 to strengthen its national security in the cultural sphere by "establishing government contracts for the creation of film and print production; television, radio and Internet resources; and likewise by using Russia's cultural potential in the service of multilateral international cooperation".

Russia's foreign policy concept outlines its commitment to universal democratic values, including human rights and freedoms. Its priorities envisage spreading the use of the Russian language as an integral part of the world of culture and an instrument of international and interethnic communication. Indisputably, the concept of promoting interethnic communication is an important policy in multicultural societies. However, a red line could be crossed in cultural spaces where historical memory shapes relations between minorities.

In many ways, though, cultural contacts between Estonia and Russia are intensive and thriving. The cultural ministries of the Republic of Estonia and the Russian Federation created an important institutional framework back in 1992, which was solidified through cooperation programmes.

Official cooperation developed further in 2008, when Estonian Minister of Culture Laine Jänes (now Randjärv) and Russian Minister of Culture Aleksander Sokolov signed a cooperation agreement in the areas of culture and mass

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Grigas, Agnia (2012): *Legacies, Coercion and Soft Power: Russian Influence in the Baltic States*, Briefing Paper, August (London: Chatham House).

¹³⁶ Bugajski, Janusz (2013): "Russia's Soft Power Wars", *The Ukrainian Week*, February, available at: <http://ukrainianweek.com/World/71849>

communication in Moscow. In 2012, the cultural cooperation programme was extended to 2014 by Deputy Minister of Culture of the Russian Federation Pavel Khoroshilov and Minister of Culture of the Republic of Estonia Rein Lang.¹³⁷

A long and common history of cultural ties between Estonia and Russia has borne fruit in the spheres of theatre, film, music and the visual arts, which are rooted in the same schools. In October 2013 a festival of the best of Russian theatre, Golden Mask Estonia, was held for the ninth time, demonstrating active cooperation in the field of theatre.¹³⁸ The luminaries of Estonian theatre have studied at the Russian University of Theatre Arts (GITIS), and it has become a trend for Estonian young actors and directors to go to Russia to acquire new experiences – the common denominator being the Stanislavski School. A large proportion of well-known Estonian film directors have obtained their education and skills at the Moscow Institute of Cinematography.

In 2011, the Russian television channels in Estonia were required to broadcast 74 programmes, the cost of each being approximately USD 30,000. The Russian Federation supports the active production of materials meant for both the domestic market and compatriots (film, television shows, history textbooks). In addition to the state budget, many films and much television entertainment are financed by the Patriotic Cinema Support Foundation, which in turn cooperates closely with the *Russkii mir* Foundation.¹³⁹ The Patriotic Cinema Support Foundation is a non-profit organization, founded on the basis of voluntary contributions. Its aim is to support patriotic cinematography and literature, and promote patriotic ideals with the assistance of the Presidential Administration of the Russian Federation, the State Duma, the Federation Council and the Russian government. The Russian Security Service allocates tens of millions of dollars in government grants.¹⁴⁰ Thus, while mutual cooperation is fruitful from a cultural perspective, Russia has access to a powerful tool to promote its culture and ideology, essentially making it possible to implement its soft power in practice.

3.7 Education

Every year, the Russian government awards study grants to Estonian students at Russian institutions of higher education. Before 2005, the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research shortlisted candidates. Since 2005, a non-profit organization, the Pushkin Institute, has dealt with the candidates. The decision

¹³⁷ See Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Estonia-Russia relations, Cultural relations, <http://www.vm.ee/?q=node/93#cultural>.

¹³⁸ Golden Mask, <http://eng.goldenmask.ru/stat.php?id=43>.

¹³⁹ Kiilo, Tatjana (2011): Developments in Russia's Compatriot Policy [Arendud Venemaa Föderatsiooni Kaasmaalaste Poliitikas], Centre for Baltic and Russian Studies, ABVKeskus 2011/1, http://www.ut.ee/ABVKeskus/sisu/paberid/2011/pdf/KMP_Kiilo.pdf.

¹⁴⁰ See www.patriotfilm.ru.

makers in the selection process – the Russian Embassy and the Pushkin Institute – have ceased to provide official information to the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research on the selection criteria and results.¹⁴¹ In the academic year 2013–2014, the Pushkin Institute facilitated the enrolment of 47 young people from Estonia in Russian universities.¹⁴²

3.8 The Russian Orthodox Church

The majority of Estonians – 54 per cent of the population aged 15 and over – does not feel any affiliation with any religion. Nonetheless, 19 per cent of Estonians and 50 per cent of the non-Estonian-speaking population are affiliated to a particular church, according to the data from the 2011 Population and Housing Census (PHC 2011).¹⁴³ The most prevalent religions are Orthodoxy (16 per cent) and Lutheranism.¹⁴⁴ Orthodoxy is of special importance among minorities in Estonia – 51 per cent of Belarusians, 50 per cent of Ukrainians, 47 per cent of Russians and 41 per cent of Armenians feel an affiliation with Orthodoxy.¹⁴⁵ In Estonia, Orthodoxy is represented by the Russian Orthodox Church, which was only officially registered in the Registry of Churches in April 2002. Russia actively supports its Orthodox Church in Estonia by financial means. In 2010, the Estonian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate received EUR 1.24 million to build a new church in Tallinn. According to a report by the Estonian Security Police, most of this funding (EUR 826,000) came formally from companies connected with Sergei Petrov, who is active in the transportation of Russian coal through Estonia. The Security Police believes Petrov was only a front man, and that the real decision to provide this support was made by Vladimir Yakunin – the head of Russian Railways. Yakunin is closely affiliated with compatriot organizations loyal to the Kremlin. He is a member of the board of trustees of *Russkii mir*, Chair of the committee of trustees of the Centre for the National Glory of Russia, which funds Orthodox Church-related projects, and President of the World Public Forum: Dialogue of Civilizations, an International NGO registered in Vienna.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ See Education in Russian Universities, [Obucheniiye v rossijskikh VUZakh], available at <http://pushkin.ee/ru/obuchenie-v-rossijskikh-vuzakh>.

¹⁴² List of Estonian Students enrolled in Russian Universities, 2013, available at: <http://www.rusemb.ee/files/news/pressreleases/spisok-2013.rtf>

¹⁴³ Population and Housing Census, PHC 2011: *Over a Quarter of the Population are Affiliated with a Particular Religion*, available at: <http://www.stat.ee/65352>.

¹⁴⁴ See Government Statistics, available at: www.stat.ee.

¹⁴⁵ See ERR (2013): “Ethnic Estonians Growing Even Less Religious, Census Confirms”, April, <http://news.err.ee/v/society/311dde5c-801c-4f44-823a-a4ad215b1f37>.

¹⁴⁶ Vedler, Sulev (2012): “Moscow’s Spin Machine in Estonia”, *Re: Baltica*, March, http://www.rebaltica.lv/en/investigations/money_from_russia/a/608/moscow_s_spin_machine_in_estonia.html.

A number of churches are dependent on funding from local business elites. Sergei Tšaplõgin, for example, an Estonian-Russian businessman, decided to build a Russian church in Paldiski at his own expense. The church's cornerstone was laid in October 2013.

One of the key undertakings in Russian church life in Estonia has been the establishment of a new Church (the Lasnamäe Church of the Icon of the Mother of God “Quick to Hearken”), the financing of which, as is noted above, was surrounded by controversy. The church's cornerstone was laid in 2003 by Patriarch Alexi II. Construction began in November 2006 and the church was opened in 2013, just before local elections in which Russia's Patriarch Kirill participated.¹⁴⁷ Russia's active engagement with the Russian-speaking population through the church gives the Kremlin a key role in forming a worldview that binds the nation and transforms nation and church into tools of influence on local politics in Estonia.

3.9 Economic Relations: Trade and Investment

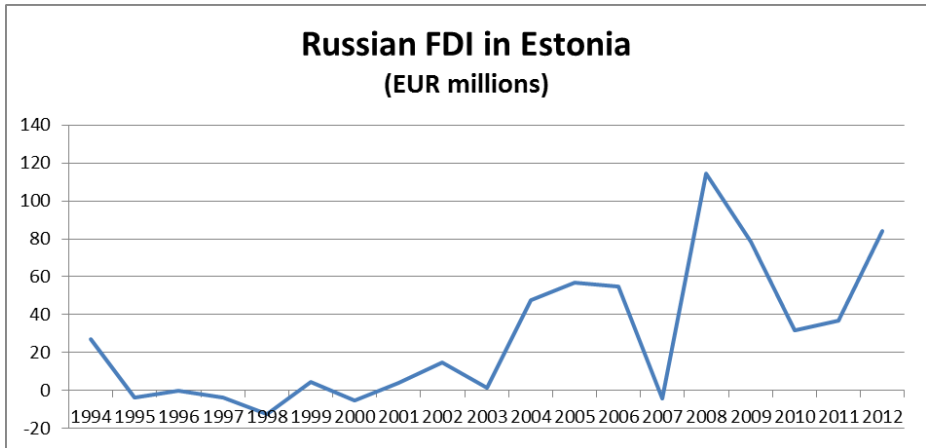
3.9.1 The Recent Historical Context

Since Estonia regained its independence, its economic relations with its largest neighbour have gone through four distinct phases.¹⁴⁸ The initial phase, between 1991 and 1994, saw a decoupling of the economies and witnessed a sharp decline in Russia's share of the Estonian economy. This divorce was followed by a long period of re-engagement, between 1995 and 2004, which saw a decrease in exports to Russia and the establishment of the transport sector as an important part of the new relationship. Russian FDI during that period was very low, with many years witnessing a net outflow of Russian capital (see Diagram 2). Arguably, the primary cause of this stagnation was the doubling of customs duties levied against Estonian imports.

¹⁴⁷ Karin Paulus (2013): “Areeni Kaanelugu: Lasnamäe uus kirik – hingerahu teenindusmaja” [Arena Cover Story: Lasnamäe's New Church—a Service Center for Spiritual Tranquility], *Eesti Ekspress*, October 13, <http://ekspress.delfi.ee/news/areen/areeni-kaanelugu-lasnamae-uus-kirik-hingerahu-teenindusmaja.d?id=66874847>

¹⁴⁸ Karmo Tüür and Raivo Vare (2012): “Estonia-Russia-Belarus: The Political Implications of Economic Relations”, in Andris Sprūds, ed., *The Economic Presence of Russia & Belarus in the Baltic States* (Riga: LIIA/CEEPS.), pp. 249–284.

Diagram 2: Russian FDI in Estonia



This period only came to an end when these duties returned to their previous level on 1 May 2004, when Estonia joined the EU. Diagram 3 illustrates that in the years 2004–2008, Estonian exports to Russia tripled from EUR 331 million in 2003 to EUR 1 billion in 2007. Imports from Russia doubled during the same period, from EUR 549 million to EUR 1.13 billion, although they peaked at EUR 1.45 billion in 2006. The abolition of the double taxation therefore had an immediate and sizable impact on bilateral trade.

Diagram 3: Estonia-Russia Trade



This positive trend, however, came to an end in 2007, with the events surrounding the relocation of a Russian wartime memorial from the centre of Tallinn. The nights of rioting are described above, and following the cyber-attacks on Estonia launched from Russian territory there was a noticeable worsening of bilateral relations which also affected bilateral trade. In 2007 Russian FDI in Estonia fell by EUR 58.6 million on 2006 levels, and the volume of bilateral trade decreased by 8 per cent in one year. However, it is worth noting that Estonian exports to Russia saw a slight increase in 2007.

The final phase of Estonian-Russian economic relations, as identified by the Estonian writers Karmo Tüür and Raivo Vare, is the normalization of trade relations following the events of 2007. Diagrams 2 and 3 show that bilateral trade has been improving since its nadir in 2009, which was primarily related to the world financial and economic crisis. One interesting observation is that since 2007, with the exception of 2009, the trade balance between Estonia and Russia seems to have reversed. Estonia was running sizable trade deficits with Russia before 2007, but it now has a trade surplus, in excess of EUR 800 million in 2012.

The dip in trade attributed to political tensions was minor compared to the hit that bilateral trade took during the global economic crisis. In 2009 trade between Russia and Estonia declined by 27.5 per cent.¹⁴⁹ Russia's trade relations with other European countries saw similar trends.¹⁵⁰ It is therefore factually incorrect to say that the dip in trade was caused by the so-called Bronze Night.

3.9.2 The Current Trading Environment

As is noted above, Estonia's accession to the EU was a great facilitator of Estonian-Russian trade and economic relations. Since May 2004, Estonia has been part of the single European market.

Russia is among Estonia's top five trading partners. After the economic crisis and the resulting dip in trade in 2009, trade with Russia grew at a higher than average rate, and as of 2011 Russia has risen to third place as a destination for Estonia's exports and in terms of the total volume of trade. In 2011, trade with Russia made up 9.6 per cent of Estonia's total trade. Nonetheless, Russia's share is several times smaller than that of the European Union (EU 27), the eurozone countries, smaller even than the share of Finland or Sweden and only barely higher than that of Latvia.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 254

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 255

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 259.

Trade between Estonia and Russia is primarily driven by close geographical proximity, facilitated by the fact that several strategic sectors of the Estonian economy are physically connected to equivalent structures in Russia. The transportation sector is arguably the biggest and most successful, despite being subject to political restrictions from the Russian side. Russia artificially limits the number of trains running to and from Estonia to less than half of capacity. It is not clear whether this restriction is aimed at punishing Estonia, or at boosting Russia's own ports and railways. The answer is likely to be a combination of both factors.

Table 3: Main export and import items

Main articles of export in 2011:

- Machinery and equipment, electrical equipment (37% of total exports)
- Chemical products (14.7%)
- Prepared food products, beverages, and alcoholic beverages (8.9%)
- Livestock, animal products (6.1%)
- Transportation vehicles (4.9%)

Main articles of import in 2011:

- Mineral products (70.7% of total imports)
- Wood and wood products (9.3%)
- Chemical products (5.9%)
- Metal and metal products (5.8%)

The food industry is another important area for trade between the two countries. Russia is Estonia's second-largest export market for foodstuffs. However, this sector also suffers from barriers – many artificial – set up by Russia. First, there is no free trade agreement between the two countries. Second, Russia does not accept the health and safety certificates of Estonian producers. Instead, these producers are required to submit to visits by Russian inspectors, who grant or withhold certificates at their own discretion. This increases costs and fosters corruption. Further market obstacles are long delays at land borders and the generally difficult process of customs clearance. Frequent payments are required, a company representative must be present at all times during the process, and few aspects are automated or carried out in accordance with agreements.¹⁵²

Another economic sector in which Russia is growing in importance is tourism. Despite periodic Russian media campaigns against visiting Estonia – especially in the aftermath of the 2007 events, when the Internet portal Regnum.ru posted the slogan “Visiting Estonia equals Betraying the Motherland” – the number of

¹⁵² Ibid., pp. 275–6.

Russian tourists has been steadily rising for the past decade. There was a year-on-year increase of 43 per cent in 2011. Russia is the second-largest source of foreign tourists to Estonia, as well as the second-most-popular destination for Estonian tourists going abroad (Finland occupies first place in both categories).

3.9.3 The Investment Environment

In 2012, FDI by Russia in Estonia amounted to approximately EUR 600 million, putting Russia in fourth place as a source of FDI behind Sweden, Finland and the Netherlands. FDI from Estonia in Russia was nearly EUR 280 million, putting Russia in fifth place as a destination for Estonian FDI after Lithuania, Latvia, Cyprus and Finland.¹⁵³

However, the exact amount and type of Russian investment in Estonia's economy is difficult to assess, because such investment can come through third countries, concealing its origin from regular economic data analysis. Since it is generally known that Russian businesses routinely use other jurisdictions for their investments at home and abroad,¹⁵⁴ it is safe to assume that the real figures will differ from those available in the Estonian National Bank's statistical database.

For example, certain key transportation and logistics infrastructure projects are widely acknowledged to have been financed by Russian investment, even if the official source of the funds is different.¹⁵⁵ One such example is the Port of Muuga just outside Tallinn, one of the largest terminals for oil products, coal processing, and fertilizer distribution in the Baltic basin. The share of Russian capital in this project has been estimated at between 50 and 100 per cent. In recent years, information has been circulating about Russian capital investment in real estate in the capital and its vicinity, especially in high-end properties. Some experts claim that Russian individuals or entities own up to 10 per cent of the luxury properties in and around Tallinn.¹⁵⁶ By contrast, Estonian FDI in Russia's economy is much more transparent, and concentrated in sectors such as manufacturing, machines and equipment, professional services, and scientific and technical activities and services.

¹⁵³ Estonian Bank [Eesti Pank] (2013): *Estonia's Balance of Payments 2012*, Tallinn.

¹⁵⁴ Jesse Drucker et al. (2014): "How Russia Inc. Moves Billions Offshore, and a Handful of Tax Havens May Hold Key to Sanctions", *Bloomberg News*, 15 May, available at <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-05-05/russia-knows-europe-sanctions-ineffective-with-tax-havens.html>.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 263.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 264-5.

3.10 Russia's Influence on Energy Policy

For primarily historical reasons, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are still linked to Russia by common electricity grids and gas pipelines. Most of the current infrastructure was built during the Soviet era, when the network was designed as a single whole with Russia at its core. The situation has changed little in the two decades since. Russia remains the sole exporter of gas and the dominant exporter of oil to the Baltic states. Unlike any other EU country (with the partial exception of Finland), the Baltic states are largely disconnected from the rest of Europe. They have been labelled “energy islands” by the European Commission. Perceptions gained from past experience of Russia’s power politics¹⁵⁷ and decades of repression under the Soviet Union make the Baltic states sceptical about doing business with Russia. They prefer to move closer to demonstrably more reliable EU member states. This definitively shapes the policies and economic approaches of the Baltic states to their common neighbour.

When discussing the role of Russia in the Estonian energy sector, it is important to note the comparative aspect. Compared to its Baltic neighbours, Estonia is much less dependent on Russian energy and thus less vulnerable to political exploitation. This is mainly because Estonia generates most of its energy domestically – 70 per cent from local oil shale – while imports from Russia account for more than half of consumption in Latvia and Lithuania. In Estonia, fossil-fuel imports from Russia represented 18.1 per cent of the total energy supply in 2013 (9.5 per cent oil and 8.6 per cent gas), while renewable sources accounted for 14.6 per cent of total energy supply. Estonia is also connected to Finland through the Estlink 1 (350 MW capacity) and Estlink 2 (650MW). The latter began operations in 2014.

Nevertheless, there are still some aspects of energy dependency about which Estonia, as well as the Baltic states in general and the European Union, are rightly concerned. The Baltic states are fully dependent on Russia for natural gas, and almost 100 per cent of the oil consumed in the three countries is imported from Russia. Furthermore, the companies that sell and distribute gas in the Baltic states are owned, at least to some extent, by Gazprom, which in turn is controlled by the Russian state. Moreover, all the Baltic states import Russian electricity, albeit in varying proportions, and are synchronized with the Russian electricity grid as opposed to that of the rest of the EU.

¹⁵⁷ Natural Gas Europe (2013): *Reconciling “Crazy Russians” vs. “Crazy Europeans”*, December, available at: http://www.naturalgaseurope.com/south-stream-alan-riley-russia-europe?utm_source=Natural+Gas+Europe+Newsletter&utm_campaign=fd9bf9f478-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c95c702d4c-fd9bf9f478-307768685.

3.10.1 Gas

Russian influence over energy policy in Estonia and the Baltic states is most apparent when it comes to the gas sector. Like Finland, they are all completely dependent on Russian imports (see Table 3).

Table 3: Gross consumption of natural gas and imports from Russia in the Baltic states and Finland, billion cubic meters (bcm)¹⁵⁸

	2011		2012	
	Consumption	Imports	Consumption	Imports
Estonia	632	632	658	657
Latvia	1,604	1,755	1,508	1,716
Lithuania	3,398	3,407	3,318	3,320
Total Baltic states	5,634	5,794	5,484	5,693
Finland	4,106	4,060	3,681	3,612
Total	9,740	9,854	9,165	9,305

Since Russia has a monopoly over gas supplies, the prices in the region are determined by Gazprom. At times this has had a considerable impact on the Baltic states, as Russia has tried to use gas prices to influence politics.

The European Commission's Directorate General for Competition has launched a formal investigation into what it calls violations of EU antitrust laws by Gazprom in Central and Eastern Europe. Gazprom was accused of dividing European gas markets by hindering the free flow of gas across member states, preventing diversification of the gas supply and imposing unfair prices on its customers by

¹⁵⁸ See Statistics Estonia, Lithuanian Official Statistics Portal, Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, EIA.

linking the price of gas to that of oil.¹⁵⁹ If the Commission is unsuccessful and Gazprom maintains the oil price link, the Baltic states will be at an even bigger disadvantage – cut off from the rest of Europe as it moves to a more competitive and resilient hub-based pricing system.

In addition to fluctuations in gas prices, dependency on a single monopolistic gas supplier can lead to supply interruptions, which in the dead of winter can prove politically disastrous for national leaders and even deadly for consumers. In Estonia, for example, during peak winter gas demand, restrictions on the Russian side of the transmission system can leave the Narva and Värskä cross-border points inactive as Gazprom strains to meet demand in St Petersburg and north-west Russia and as a result, gas stops flowing into Estonia. According to the contract between Gazprom and Eesti Gaas (Estonia's gas importer and distributor), under such circumstances Estonia is forced to rely exclusively on the underground gas storage (UGS) facility at Incukalns, Latvia, in which Gazprom also holds a significant stake that affords it effective control. Since the facility has limited capacity during times of peak demand, and since the gas connection between Latvia and Estonia cannot deliver more than 6 or 7 million cubic meters (mcm) per day, Estonian consumers could face power cuts when they are most vulnerable. This came close to occurring in 2006, when freezing weather pushed Estonian gas demand to almost 7 mcm/day.¹⁶⁰

To lessen Russia's leverage on the Baltic states, the three countries have aligned their priorities with those of the European Commission's energy policy. These priorities include diversification and ensuring the security of energy sources, increasing the competitiveness of domestic energy markets and widening the use of sources of renewable energy. In order to achieve these goals, steps have been taken to improve the region's energy infrastructure and better integrate the Baltic energy systems into the European energy network. For instance, there are plans to build liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals and gas pipelines. A local LNG terminal at Klaipėda in Lithuania will be fully operational by the end of 2014, and Finland and Estonia are still negotiating the details of a major regional facility. An gas pipeline between Estonia and Finland will be connected to the chosen site of the regional LNG terminal, and another is planned between Lithuania and Poland.

Diversifying supplies and fostering a spot market for natural gas in a region highly dependent on Russian oil-indexed pipeline imports will enhance energy security in the region while, ideally, lowering gas prices too. The EU's support for these projects, provided as part of the Baltic Energy Interconnection Plan

¹⁵⁹ European Commission (2012): *Antitrust: Commission opened proceedings against Gazprom*, Press-release, Brussels, September, available at: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-12-937_en.htm

¹⁶⁰ Bryza & Tuohy (2013): op. cit.

(BEMIP), is invaluable, especially but not only in terms of financing. Even though the European Commission has recently listed BEMIP as a priority under its Multiannual Financial Framework 2014–2020, the completion of a single European energy market remains in the distant future with much work to be done beyond 2020.¹⁶¹

3.10.2 Oil

In addition to the Baltic states' dependence on Russian gas, Estonia and its neighbours also import virtually all the oil they consume from Russia. Even though in theory the countries are able to import non-Russian sources of oil as well, for historical reasons Baltic oil terminals (Muuga, Paldiski and Paljassaare in Estonia; Ventspils and Liepaja in Latvia; and Lithuania's Butinge) primarily serve as transit centres for the westward export of Russian oil. This does not give the Baltic states any real leverage over Russian oil flows to Western Europe, however, since the Baltic Pipeline System (BPS), which bypasses the Baltic states, was completed in 2001. This makes it theoretically possible for Russia to cut off the supply of oil to the Baltic states without affecting its exports to the rest of the EU.

This worries the Baltic states because of their historical experience with Russia. Across all the former-Soviet space, Russia has resorted to politically motivated gas and oil cut-offs more than 40 times in the period 1991–2004.¹⁶² All three of the Baltic states have been on the receiving end of such tactics, most recently in Estonia in 2007 when the Estonian government decided to relocate the monument commemorating the Soviet defeat of Nazi Germany. In response Russia cut off all oil exports to the country, claiming that urgent track repairs were needed. The incident was brief and did not change the course of Estonian politics in any way. The relatively minor importance of oil to the countries means that oil sanctions do not threaten the Baltic economies nearly as much as disruptions in gas flows.

3.10.3 Ownership

Russia also has influence over Estonia and its neighbours' domestic and economic policy through the ownership of various energy-related businesses in the region. These include national gas companies and grid operators. Gazprom, together with E.ON Ruhrgas, currently has shares in all the Baltic gas grid

¹⁶¹ Oreskovic, Luka (2013): "Towards a Baltic Winter of Discontent", *Moscow Times*, November, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/blogs/472490/post/towards-a-baltic-winter-of-discontent/489666.html>.

¹⁶² Larsson, Robert L. (2012), *Russia's Energy Policy: Security Dimensions and Russia's Reliability as an Energy Supplier*, Swedish Defence Research Agency, http://www.foi.se/ReportFiles/foir_1934.pdf.

operators, which control transmission, distribution and supply businesses. For example, in Estonia AS Eesti Gaas has a dominant position in gas distribution and transmission. The company supplies gas to over 90 per cent of the retail market. Moreover, all the remaining gas sold by other entities is initially purchased from Eesti Gaas. The company also owns EG Võrguteenused, the gas distribution system operator, which is why the Estonian Parliament recently adopted a law requiring the unbundling of transmission services from supply by 2015. The lack of a properly functioning gas market poses a significant risk in terms of security of supply, according to the International Energy Agency's 2013 review of Estonia.¹⁶³ Gazprom has a 37 per cent stake in Eesti Gaas and E.ON almost 34 per cent. Currently, smaller shareholders, such as Latvian/Russian Idera and Finnish Fortum, can still block major corporate decisions if required. Gazprom's influence might grow in the near future, however, since E. ON has decided to pull out of the Baltic states. This means that there is a chance that Gazprom might purchase the German firm's shares, thereby becoming the majority shareholder.

3.11 Russian Soft Power in Estonia: General Conclusions

Russia is used to promoting its foreign policy goals using hard power, and it tries to use its soft power in a similar fashion. The multitude of Russia-based or Russia-financed actors in Estonia that convey essentially Russian messages in various ways is one indication of this. The Compatriots Policy has not been overly effective, however, as is shown by the fact that the percentage of stateless persons – primarily former citizens of the Soviet Union – has decreased dramatically from 32 per cent of the population in 1992 to less than 7 per cent today. Furthermore, a substantial proportion of Russian-speaking Estonians have been successfully integrated and there seems to be little traction for Russian actors' attempts to influence compatriots in Estonia.

The role of the Russian media is harder to measure. It is obvious that Estonians and Russian-speaking Estonians live in different media and information universes, where most Russian-speakers get their information from Russian media outlets – and put most trust in these.

Cultural contacts between Estonia and Russia are a by-product of tradition and history, and not detrimental per se. However, to the extent that cultural avenues are used to convey political messages, this can amount to a negative aspect of Russian soft power.

¹⁶³Energy Policies Beyond IEA Countries, OECD, available at: http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/energy/energy-policies-beyond-iea-countries_23070897.

Russia is unquestionably an important trading partner for Estonia and a decrease in bilateral trade would have a significant impact on the Estonian economy. However, Russia has failed to leverage this economic clout into the kind of influence it is generally seeking in the region. The determining factors for this development have been the relatively low dependence on Russian energy, the relative openness and lack of corruption in the Estonian economy and political system, and the absence of oligarchs, which is arguably a direct result of the way in which the privatization process was handled in Estonia after regaining independence.¹⁶⁴ Hence, Russia's political influence on Estonia by means of its economy has – at least thus far – been negligible.

Given Estonian society's mostly sceptical attitude to Russia's intentions and trustworthiness, there is probably no real reason to fear that Russia's psychological and information operations could be successful in Estonia as a whole. However, the local Russian-speaking population is in Russia's sphere of influence and in that sense could be affected. Resistance to Russia's Compatriots Policy should not, however, influence the integration policies aimed at the Russian-speaking population in Estonia.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 282-3.

4 Russian Soft Power and Non-Military Influence: The View from Latvia

Andis Kudors, Centre for East European Policy Studies, Riga

4.1 Introduction

Prior to the 2012 referendum on the official state language of Latvia, a significant proportion of Latvian society was not concerned about the current state of Latvia's national identity and language. The referendum, which was initiated by the Russian diaspora, served as a wake-up call and led to a reassessment of Russia's non-military influence in Latvia and more active discussion on whether Russian non-military influence can be described as "soft power". The most common arguments can be divided into three groups. Some argue that Russian media and cultural influence can be called a soft power exercise; others, that manipulation of public opinion, propaganda and bribery is not a *soft* power tool; and some believe Russia's influence should not be feared, but one should study the impact of Russia's influence in-depth in order to evaluate the positive and negative aspects. This chapter is empirical rather than theoretical. It identifies the most important Russian non-military tools of influence, and examines their impact on processes in Latvia.

The soft power theorist, Joseph Nye, pointed out that China's and Russia's authorities, unlike those in the US, were trying to control all of their own soft power influence. Nye noted that this approach was not very efficient because "the best propaganda is not propaganda".¹⁶⁵ When criticizing the Russian government's approach, Nye argued that US influence was produced by civil society in the hands of players that were independent of the government.¹⁶⁶ This paper is not directly based on Joseph Nye's theory, as it goes beyond the limitations of the concept of soft power. In addition to "pure" soft power resources such as the use of culture and the attractiveness of values, this study examines non-military power tools: energy, trade and economic cooperation.

Although the Russian authorities are trying to control a wide range of interactions with Latvia, not all the cases in this chapter can be attributed directly to operations by the Russian authorities. For example, a large part of the cultural cooperation between Latvia and Russia is carried on separately from the

¹⁶⁵ Nye, J. S. (2013): "What China and Russia Don't Get About Soft Power", *China-US Focus*, 1 May, <http://www.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/what-china-and-russia-dont-get-about-soft-power/>.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

government. That said, it is useful to keep in mind the idea of the political scientist Barry Buzan: a state with a large and dominant culture can affect a neighbouring small country even without specific intent.¹⁶⁷

In an interview for the Latvian television channel LTV-1, the political scientist Sergei Karaganov, who has close ties with the Russian government, was asked what Russia's policy towards the Baltic states was. His answer was that "there is no such policy".¹⁶⁸ His words were an exaggeration, but the fact that neither a Russian president nor a prime minister – or even a foreign minister – has visited Latvia since 1991 indicates that the Baltic states are not among the top priorities for Russia's foreign policy. Nonetheless, in foreign affairs both taking action and not taking action can be considered part of a country's "policy".

President Valdis Zatlers' official visit to Russia in 2010 was a positive incentive for an improvement in bilateral relations. This visit took place partly due to Russia's desire to improve relations with the EU – in support of modernizing Russia. However, the visit would not have been possible without Zatlers' efforts to make a positive change in Latvian-Russian relations. During the three-day visit, Zatlers met Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, the Chairman of the Federation Council, Sergei Mironov, and municipal and religious leaders. It was the first high-level official visit in the history of Latvian-Russian relations.

Russia's official foreign policy documents on Latvia usually refer to particular issues related to the Russian-speaking diaspora in Latvia, issues which according to the Russian authorities arise in the areas of legislation on citizenship and language in Latvia. Despite Russia's criticisms of Latvia, bilateral economic relations have been developing well. Since 2004, the Latvian-Russian economic interaction curve has been going upwards. Nonetheless, alongside the optimism over increased sales there is growing public concern about the asymmetrical character of economic interdependence that could be used to increase Russia's political impact.

A subject of even greater concern in Latvian society are the soft power tools of Russia's Compatriot Policy and its media influence. In recent years, both Latvian and international scholars have published a number of works that examine Russia's soft power and its use of economic instruments in relations with neighbouring countries, including Latvia. A Centre for East European Policy Studies (CEEPS) study on "Outside Influence on the Ethnic Integration Process

¹⁶⁷ See Buzan B. (1991): *People, States, and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, pp.118-123.

¹⁶⁸ See "Evening's interview" with Russian expert Sergei Karaganov, 15 December 2003, *LTV 1*, 21:55, <http://www.delfi.lv/archive/vakara-intervija-ar-krievu-politologu-sergeju-karaganovu.d?id=7023423>, accessed 12 January 2014.

in Latvia”,¹⁶⁹ concluded that the Russian media and Russia’s Compatriot Policy were hindering social integration processes in Latvia. In 2008, a group of scholars led by Nils Muiznieks, director of the Advanced Social and Political Research Institute (ASPRI) of the University of Latvia,¹⁷⁰ published a research paper, “Manufacturing Enemy Images? Russian Media Portrayal of Latvia”, which found that the Russian media portrayed Latvia’s internal affairs in a biased light.¹⁷¹ In 2009, CEEPS, together with five foreign think tanks, published a book on the “Humanitarian Dimension” of Russian Foreign Policy on Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and the Baltic states. The book was a comparative analysis of the execution of Russia’s Compatriots Policy and the influence of Russian media on neighbouring countries.¹⁷²

In August 2012, Chatham House published *Legacies, Coercion and Soft Power: Russian Influence in the Baltic States*, in which Agnia Grigas noted that Moscow’s approach to soft power significantly differed from the current understanding in the West. In particular, Russia’s practice focuses on cleavages rather than unity and is “a source of concern, rather than giving comfort”.¹⁷³ Grigas pointed out that the West had to take off its rose-tinted spectacles to see that the integration of the Baltic states into the West could be affected and was not irreversible. Imbalances in the capacity of the economy, the media and public diplomacy between the Baltic states and Russia create the need for Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia to receive the backing of their peers in NATO and the EU. This chapter examines both the above-mentioned papers and the works of other Latvian and foreign researchers on Russia’s non-military influence in Latvia.

4.2 Russia’s Compatriots Policy and Its Consequences for Latvia

One of Russia’s foreign policy areas that occasionally produces a strong resonance in Latvian society is Russia’s policy on Russian compatriots living abroad – its Compatriots Policy. The official goal is to help Russians living abroad to maintain ties with their historical homeland. Ethnic Latvians and the Latvian authorities are supportive, as this policy is meant to preserve ethnic

¹⁶⁹ Lerhis A., Indans I., Kudors A., (2008): *Outside Influence on the Ethnic Integration Process in Latvia*, Riga: CEEPS, (2nd edn).

¹⁷⁰ Nils Muiznieks was Minister of Social Integration Affairs in Latvia from 2002 to 2004. Since 2012 Muiznieks has served as Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights. See The Commissioner, Biography, <http://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/biography>.

¹⁷¹ Muiznieks N., (ed.) (2008): *Manufacturing Enemy Images? Russian Media Portrayal of Latvia*, Riga: Academic Press of the University of Latvia.

¹⁷² See http://www.geopolitika.lt/files/research_2009.pdf.

¹⁷³ Grigas, Agnia (2012): *Legacies, Coercion and Soft Power: Russian Influence in the Baltic States*, Briefing Paper, Chatham House, <http://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/papers/view/185321>.

identity and the enjoyment of Russian cultural achievements. The anxiety occurs when within the framework of Russia's Compatriots Policy there are attempts to influence Latvian legislation and domestic political processes.

Two thoughts from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Sergei Lavrov, best describe Russia's policy towards Russian compatriots living abroad. The first is Lavrov's comment in *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* in October 2008, that Russia would form its relationship with compatriots living abroad based on the principles of soft power.¹⁷⁴ The second comment was made in an interview with the online newspaper *Pomni Rossiyu* (Remember Russia). When answering a question about how the Russian diaspora abroad could help Russia, among other things he mentioned that "the diaspora is our mighty resource, and it must be employed to full capacity".¹⁷⁵ Thus, Russia's foreign policy towards its compatriots abroad has two goals: to acquire loyalty to Russia among compatriots living abroad with the help of soft power; and to use these consolidated diaspora groups as a means to achieve Russia's foreign policy goals.¹⁷⁶

4.2.1 Conflicting History as a Component of Russia's Compatriots Policy

The Compatriots Policy is being actively implemented in Latvia, but perhaps as important is the dissemination of Russia's specific interpretation of history. There is fairly favourable soil in Latvia for the dissemination of Russia's official views on history. The social memory of Latvians and that of Russians living in Latvia differ. The scholar, Brigita Zepa, has pointed out that the collective memory of Russians living in Latvia was formed during the 70 years of the Soviet Union. This period consisted of three new generations, which is sufficient to maintain the continuity of social memory in an informal environment.¹⁷⁷ Meanwhile, ethnic Latvians possess living memories of the free state of Latvia and the way it was before the Soviet occupation in 1940. For many Russians living in Latvia, it is difficult to recognize the Soviet occupation as a fact because, to some extent, this would require taking moral responsibility for

¹⁷⁴ Interview with S.Lavrov, minister of foreign affairs of Russia, *Rosiyskaya Gazeta*, 30 October 2008, available at <http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/ns-dgpch.nsf/bab3c4309e31451cc325710e004812c0/432569ee00522d3cc32574f2002d1ca0!OpenDocument>, last accessed on 1 November 2013.

¹⁷⁵ Lavrov S. (2011): *About Compatriots*, available at <http://www.pomnirossiu.ru/about/obraschenie-lavrov/index.htm>.

¹⁷⁶ Kudors A. (2012): 'Latvia between the Centres of Gravitation of Soft Power: the USA and Russia', in Indans I. (ed.) *Latvia and the United States: A New Chapter in the Partnership*. Riga: CEEPS, p.104, available at http://www.appc.lv/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Latvia_USA_2012.pdf.

¹⁷⁷ Zepa B. (2011): 'What is National Identity?', in Zepa B., Klave E. (eds.) *Latvija. Pārskats par tautas attīstību 2010/2011: Nacionālā identitāte, mobilitāte, rīcībspēja*. Riga: LU SPPI, p.18.

indirect participation in the crimes against Latvia.¹⁷⁸ After 1991, Russians living in Latvia continued to be alienated from Latvian culture and history. Vita Zelce, a professor at the University of Latvia, stated that “official Soviet history together with the history of modern Russia still served as the main instrument for Russian social memory, including the falsifications and omissions of the Soviet abuse of the conquered lands and people”.¹⁷⁹

According to Leo Dribins, a researcher specializing in social integration processes, the “social integration process was significantly affected by historical circumstances rooted in our recent past; those have also caused the fragmented and contradictory understanding of the recent history of Latvia”.¹⁸⁰ This was confirmed in a study, *Ethno-political Tension in Latvia: Looking for the Conflict Solution*, carried out by the Baltic Institute of Social Sciences (BISS) in 2005. This study emphasized that “ethnic conflicts in Latvia were based on language policy and interpretation of history”.¹⁸¹

Russia’s policy towards its compatriots living in Latvia is built on its idea of Latvia as a newly founded state created in 1991, rather than as a continuation of the state that existed before the Second World War. However, the doctrine of the continuity of the Republic of Latvia was the legal and political basis for the citizenship policy in Latvia after 1991. The doctrine of continuity states that the Republic of Latvia was founded on 18 November 1918 and has continued its *de jure* existence uninterrupted in spite of the occupation and annexation of 1940.¹⁸² These divergent views persist as a confrontation between Russia’s policy towards compatriots living abroad and the official position of Latvia on citizenship and language legislation. Russia’s foreign policy implementers are trying to highlight the opinion that Russians were not migrants to Soviet Latvia, but part of the indigenous nation. In addition, if an occupation did not take place it would be necessary to implement the zero option for citizenship.

Russia’s official interpretation of 20th century history is being disseminated in Latvia through various channels. One is the foundation, *Russkii mir*, which was established in 2007 by a decree of President Putin. The foundation’s board consists of a number of prominent persons in Russia and its activities are largely

¹⁷⁸ Kaprznis M. and Zelce, V. (2010): Identity, Social Memory and Cultural Trauma, in *State research program “National Identity”*. Riga: LU SZF SPPI, p.17.

¹⁷⁹ Zelce V. (2009): ‘History – responsibility – memory: Latvian experience’, in Rozenvalds J., Ijabs I. (eds.) *Latvija. Pārskats par tautas attīstību, 2008/2009: Atbildīgums*. Riga: LU SPPI, p.46.

¹⁸⁰ Dribins L. (2007): ‘Latvian history as factor of social integration process’, pp. 44–64, In *Pretestība sabiedrības integrācijai: cēloņi un sekas*. Riga: LU FSI.

¹⁸¹ Zepa B., [ed.] (2005): *Ethnopolitical tension in Latvia: looking for the conflict solution*. Riga: BISS, p.17, http://s3.amazonaws.com/politika/public/article_files/1086/original/etnospriedz_EN.pdf?1326902968.

¹⁸² See Levits E. *The 4th May Declaration in the Latvian Legal System*, available at www.ltn.lv/~ap-klubs/index.htm.

based on Russian state funding. In the context of the Compatriots Policy, the name *Russkii mir* is revealing as it coincides with the concept of the “Russian world” which serves as the underlying idea for the merger of the diaspora and Russia mentioned by the head of the *Rossostrudnichestvo*, Konstantin Kosachev. Therefore, the fact that a state-supported foundation is called “*Russkii mir*” means that Russia intends not to respond to the needs of the Russian diaspora in specific countries on an ad hoc basis, but to unite all of the Russian diaspora to achieve common foreign policy objectives.

The Baltic Centre for Investigative Journalism, “ReBaltica”, published a study in 2012, *Spreading Democracy in Latvia, Kremlin Style*. It highlighted *Russkii mir*'s relatively active support for distributing Russia's official interpretation of the history of Latvia. ReBaltica estimated that since 2008 *Russkii mir* in Latvia had approved grants in excess of EUR 170,000.¹⁸³ This money had been used to organize cultural events and conferences, publish textbooks, and make films promoting the grandeur of the Russian nation and questioning the concept of the occupation of the Baltic states. Although *Russkii mir* is positioning itself as a cultural organization, among its beneficiaries are well known Russian politicians and public figures in Latvia. Among the benefactors are organizations whose members include Jakovs Pliners, Valerijs Buhvalovs and Tatjana Zdanoka (all three represent the political party “For Human Rights in United Latvia”),¹⁸⁴ Nils Usakovs,¹⁸⁵ the leader of Harmony Centre,¹⁸⁶ and Aleksandrs Gaponenko,¹⁸⁷ one of the initiators of the language referendum.¹⁸⁸ Notably, the films and CDs about history sponsored by the foundation are being distributed directly to schools that use the Russian language, thereby stimulating the divergence of view on history between Latvian and Russian-speaking pupils in Latvia.

¹⁸³ See *Spreading Democracy in Latvia, Kremlin Style*,

http://www.rebaltica.lv/en/investigations/money_from_russia/a/606/spreading_democracy_in_latvia_kremlin_style.html.

¹⁸⁴ The political party “For Human Rights in United Latvia” represents interests of ethnic Russians in Latvia. From 2002 until 2005 it was represented in Latvia's parliament with 25 (out of 100) seats. From 2006 till 2010 – only 6 (out of 100) seats. J.Pliners, V.Buhvalovs and T.Zdanoka are the most visible leaders of the party. Notably, Tatjana Zdanoka, who was elected as one of nine EU parliament members from Latvia, during years 1989 to 1991 actively worked against the restoration of Latvia's independence and for conservation of the USSR. The FHRUL name was changed to the Union of Latvian Russians in January 2014.

¹⁸⁵ Nils Usakovs is the most popular political figure among ethnic Russians in Latvia; he has been the mayor of the Riga City Council since 2009.

¹⁸⁶ The centre-left political party Harmony Centre is the most popular party among ethnic Russians living in Latvia; one of its core political principles is building closer ties with Russia.

¹⁸⁷ Aleksandrs Gaponenko was one of the initiators of the referendum on Russian as the second official language in Latvia. A.Gaponenko maintains close ties with Russia and is one of the most visible activists for the rights of the Russian diaspora in Latvia.

¹⁸⁸ *Spreading Democracy in Latvia, Kremlin Style*. Available at

http://www.rebaltica.lv/en/investigations/money_from_russia/a/606/spreading_democracy_in_latvia_kremlin_style.html.

Other areas besides history are used in Russia's Compatriots Policy to create pressure on Latvia on issues such as the Russian language and compatriots' rights. When any of these themes are brought up by the implementers of Russia's Compatriots Policy and their supporting NGOs in Latvia, most result in political claims about the Latvian language and citizenship laws. Russia's political activity on historical matters prevents the creation of a similar historical viewpoint among Latvians and Russians living in Latvia, undermining the integration of society and the social peace required for the normal and democratic development of the country. There is a need for further research on how effective Russia's use of money to sponsor the activities of compatriots' NGOs really is. Nonetheless, it is obvious which goals the Russian authorities want to support in Latvia. Some of these goals, such as the dissemination of Russia's specific historical perspective, divide Latvian society.

4.2.2 Rights Advocacy as a Theme in Russia's Compatriots Policy in Latvia

The legal defence of Russia's compatriots is among the most often mentioned topics in the federal three-year policy documents and also appears in the speeches of Russian politicians and diplomats.¹⁸⁹ In order to understand who the people whose rights Russia is willing to defend are, it is important to understand the underlying perception of the Russian authorities of the concept of compatriots living abroad. This concept has undergone a certain evolution during the development of compatriots policies.

A section in the Russian Federation's 2007 *Foreign Affairs Review* on compatriots' interests abroad states that the collapse of the Soviet Union left tens of millions of "our people" across national borders.¹⁹⁰ Thus, compatriots' interests are a natural Russian foreign policy priority. Russia wants to present its activities surrounding the Compatriots Policy as a moral responsibility towards its people. The Review is a unique document in that no similar reviews have been published since. Structurally, it resembles a foreign policy concept, but it is more detailed and devotes more attention to the practical implementation of foreign policy goals. This idea of a "divided nation" (meaning Russians who stayed to live in a number of other countries after the collapse of the Soviet Union) has affected the mood and spirit of the development and implementation of the Compatriots Policy.

Russia has faced difficulties in the development of its national identity since 1991. This in turn has been reflected in difficulties in defining who "compatriots living abroad" are. There is no unified opinion on this in Russia. It should be

¹⁸⁹ See e.g. Compatriots Policy Program 2012–2014, available at <http://rs.gov.ru/taxonomy/term/186>.

¹⁹⁰ See Russian Federation's Foreign Affairs Review 2007, http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/3647DA97748A106BC32572AB002AC4DD.

noted that according to the definition in the Compatriot Law of 1999, around 28 per cent of the population of Latvia was eligible for the status of *Russian compatriot*. In 2010 the definition of a *compatriot* was clarified in law, stating that compatriots had to show their connection to Russia by promoting its culture and values.¹⁹¹ In reality, a large proportion of Russians living abroad do not see themselves as belonging to Russia. However, the size of the population that Russia declares as “its people” gives an indication of the specific style and ambition of Russia’s foreign policy.

On 28 December 2011, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a report “On the Situation with Human Rights in Certain States”.¹⁹² The report contained criticism of the United States and the United Kingdom. The authors of the report also indicated that the Russian-speaking information and cultural-educational space in the Baltic states was being reduced. In the international arena, Russia has often portrayed the situation of the Russian diaspora in Latvia in a dramatic light. Processes in Latvia have been compared to apartheid and to ethnic cleansing. According to Nils Muiznieks, the apogee of such portrayals were accusations by Yuri Luzhkov, the mayor of Moscow at the time, that the Latvian authorities were carrying out genocide and comparing Latvia with Cambodia at the time of Pol Pot.¹⁹³

4.2.3 The Language Issue

Promotion of the Russian language abroad has an important position in the Compatriots Policy, along with the interpretation of history and the defence of compatriots’ rights. A notable milestone in the promotion of the Russian language abroad was achieved in 2005–2007, when the first federal three-year programme¹⁹⁴ of Russia’s Compatriots Policy and the Russian language support programmes¹⁹⁵ were launched, and *Russkii mir* was established. One of the foundation’s objectives is the promotion of the Russian language.

Russia’s Foreign Policy Concept of 2008 states that Russia will defend the rights of compatriots, perceiving “the multimillion Russian diaspora – the Russian world – as a partner, including in expanding and strengthening the space of the

¹⁹¹ Federal Law (1999): “Russia’s policy towards its compatriots living abroad“, 24 May, № 99-FZ, <http://rs.gov.ru/node/658>.

¹⁹² See http://www.drc.mid.ru/old/Human_Rights_Report.pdf.

¹⁹³ Kudors A., The guards of interests, *IR*, September 28, 2010. It should be noted that despite his previous statements, Luzhkov asked for a residence permit for Latvia and was ready to move there to live after a conflict with the then President of Russia, Dimitri Medvedev, in 2010.

¹⁹⁴ See *Compatriots Policy Program 2006–2008*, <http://www.ruvek.ru/?module=docs&action=view&id=62>.

¹⁹⁵ See the Federal program “Russian Language (2006-2010)”, <http://old.mon.gov.ru/work/zakup/program/22/>.

Russian language and culture”.¹⁹⁶ Russia’s Foreign Policy Concept of 2013 continues the theme of the Russian language. It mentions “promoting the Russian language and strengthening its positions in the world” and “consolidating the Russian diaspora abroad” among its foreign policy goals.¹⁹⁷ These goals are being implemented in Latvia, but they encounter difficulties as Latvians have a different perception of history and anxieties about the worrying stance on the Latvian language, as one of the most important but endangered components of Latvia’s national identity.

After 1991 there was a change in status between Latvians and Russians living in Latvia, which should be noted when assessing the Latvian language policy. In the Soviet Union, Russians could consider themselves the majority, while Latvians had minority status. After Latvia regained independence, Latvians became the majority and Russians the minority.¹⁹⁸ However, Latvians often do not feel themselves to be in the majority, partly due to the fact that the Latvian language has still not fully regained its rightful position as the national language. Latvia has yet to overcome the consequences of russification by the Soviet Union. Therefore, any initiative to enhance the status of the Russian language is received very nervously among Latvians.

The Latvian researcher, Vineta Porina, took part in a study initiated by the European Commission on “Intercultural Dialogue for a Multicultural Europe”. Porina’s research conclusions were published in Latvia in 2007.¹⁹⁹ The study showed that although it has been almost 20 years since the restoration of independence, speakers of the state language in Latvia still faced psychological discomfort.²⁰⁰ In practice, this occurs in communication between Russians living in Latvia and Latvians. Russians often do not use the Latvian language. Porina pointed out that the Western scholars who participated in the study were very surprised about this situation.²⁰¹

The status of the Latvian language as the only official language is secured in the constitution. Nonetheless, from time to time various events raise concerns in Latvian society. One such occasion was the referendum on the potential adoption of the Russian language as a second official language in Latvia, which took place on 18 February 2012. As a result, 821,722 voters, or 75 per cent of those who

¹⁹⁶ See *Foreign Policy Concept of Russian Federation*, July 2008, <http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/docs/2008/07/204750.shtml>.

¹⁹⁷ See *Foreign Policy Concept of Russian Federation*, 12 February 2013, http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/76389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D.

¹⁹⁸ Zepa B. (2011): ‘What is National Identity?’ In Zepa B., Kļave E. (eds) *Latvija. Pārskats par tautas attīstību 2010/2011: Nacionālā identitāte, mobilitāte, rīcībspēja*. Rīga: LU SPPI, p.18.

¹⁹⁹ Poriņa V. (2007): “Valodas izvēle kultūru komunikācijā Latvijā. Grām.”, *Latviešu valoda-pastāvīgā un mainīgā*. Rīga: Valsts valodas komisija, pp. 147–157.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ Porina V. (2010): “Discrimination of Latvian speakers. What do linguistic studies show”, *Latvietis* No. 93, 9 June, <http://www.laikraksts.com/raksti/raksts.php?KursRaksts=324>.

took part, voted against changes to the constitution, while 273,347 (25 per cent) voted in favour.²⁰²

Russia's Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, commented on the organization of the referendum at a press conference in Moscow in January 2012: "I do not undertake to predict the outcome of the referendum, but it is important that people want to be heard. They want to have their right to speak, think and raise their children in their native language [and] to be respected".²⁰³ Lavrov ignored the fact that in government-funded primary schools in Latvia, Russian pupils can learn all subjects in Russian until grade nine. In addition, the future of the Russian language is secure due to the large number of Russians living in Latvia. The reaction of Latvia's Foreign Affairs Minister, Edgars Rinkevics, followed a few days later: "For those people in Russia who are very worried about what is happening in Latvia, I recommend reading a text by their own presidential candidate Mr Putin, in which he quite clearly indicates that the issues affecting national identity and nation-building in the Russian Federation are based on the language. Mr Lavrov should pay attention to what is happening at home".²⁰⁴

4.2.4 Russian NGOs

Russia actively cooperates with Russian NGOs registered in Latvia in the areas of legal rights and language issues. *Russkii mir* financially supports Russian NGOs, including some in Latvia. The *Russkii mir* website states that nearly 100 NGOs based in Latvia are Russian compatriots' organizations.²⁰⁵ Among them are organizations run by politicians representing the party Harmony Centre, such as Igors Pimenovs²⁰⁶ from the Association for the Support of Russian Language Schools in Latvia. This organization has received funding from the Russian Embassy in Latvia. Moreover, Harmony Centre candidates for the 10th Saeima²⁰⁷ (parliamentary) election – Valerijs Kravcovs,²⁰⁸ Sergejs Mirskis,²⁰⁹ Igors

²⁰² See CVK (2012): *Grozījumi Latvijas Republikas Satversmē" pieņemšanu* » "Provizoriskie rezultāti", Tn2012.cvk.lv.

²⁰³ See Lavrov's comments on Russian language referendum in Latvia, January 18, 2012, available at <http://vz.ru/news/2012/1/18/554493.html>.

²⁰⁴ See the Latvian foreign affairs minister's reaction to Lavrov's comments, <http://nra.lv/latvija/politika/64637-rinkevics-mudina-lavrovu-iepazities-ar-putina-uzskatiem-par-valodas-lomu-nacionalaja-identitate.htm>.

²⁰⁵ See Catalogue, Russkii mir Foundation, <http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/en/catalogue/>.

²⁰⁶ Igors Pimenovs is perceived as a moderate politician who had been trying to find common ground with ruling coalitions. He was a member of Latvia's National Front (LNF) in the 80s. The LNF stood up for the restoration of Latvia's independence. Pimenovs did not support Russian as the official language in Latvia when signatures were gathered to initiate referendum in 2012.

²⁰⁷ Latvia's Parliament's (Saeima) 10th term began its work on 2 November 2010 and ended on 16 October 2011. In the referendum that took place on 23 July 2011, the 10th Saeima was revoked and new elections were announced.

²⁰⁸ Valerijs Kravcovs was a member of Saeima from 2010 till 2011. He had gained media attention when working in parliament and not being able to communicate freely in Latvian.

Pimenovs and Riga City Council member Svetlana Savicka²¹⁰ – have all taken part in the Russian Compatriots’ Organizations Coordination Council, which was established by the Russian Embassy in Latvia in 2007.²¹¹ The Coordination Council is concerned with the allocation of financial support from Russia to compatriots’ organizations in Latvia. A number of Russian-speaking Latvian politicians participate in the work of the Coordination Council. This situation symbolically and practically blurs the boundaries between the two countries, merging Russia’s Compatriots Policy and Russian-speaking activists in Latvia.

It should be noted that not all of the NGOs that receive financial support from Russia should be seen as Russia’s foreign policy partners. Many of these organizations have a small membership base and cannot affect social processes in Latvia. Some others which deal with social issues and Russian folklore are a benefit rather than a problem for Latvia. However, some of these organizations have set political objectives that go hand in hand with Russia’s foreign policy, which aims to increase Russia’s political influence in Latvia.

If Russia’s Compatriots Policy focused solely on supporting compatriots’ rights to maintain their ethnic identity, Latvia would have no objections. However, reality has shown that Russia’s Compatriots Policy is focused on influencing public opinion and internal processes in Latvia as well as promoting discrimination against Latvia in the international arena. Russian culture and language in Latvia are self-sufficient and already widely used, so there is no need to change Latvia’s legislation in order to support it.

A Latvian Constitution Protection Bureau report of 2012 states the following:

“[T]he hidden objective of Russia’s foreign policy is to discredit Latvia worldwide by: reproaching Latvia for the rebirth of fascism and rewriting history, attributing to Latvia the image of a failed state, and emphasizing discrimination against the Russian-speaking population. [This] is the dominant national security risk for Latvia created by the Compatriots Policy”.²¹²

The Security Police in Latvia issued a report in 2012 stating that: “if Latvia’s policy for the integration of society is focused on the integration of minorities,

²⁰⁹ Sergejs Mirskis is an *HC* member and a member of Saeima (2006, 2010, 2011).

²¹⁰ Svetlana Savicka was assistant to the member of Saeima Nils Usakovs from 2006 till 2009. She is an *HC* member and Riga City Council member (2009, 2013). Since 2008 Savicka is a chairman of the board of the “9may.lv” (NGO).

²¹¹ See Coordination Council of Russian Compatriots in Latvia, <http://www.latvia.mid.ru/ks.html>.

²¹² See “Minister of Interior Affairs: money came from Russia”, *NRA*, 2012, <http://nra.lv/latvija/politika/71815-iekšlietu-ministrs-krievu-valodas-referendumam-nauda-naca-ari-no-krievijas.htm>.

then...the Russian Federation's Compatriots Policy poses risks to the development of society in Latvia".²¹³

Factors such as Russia's promotion of values, and its specific interpretation of the history of Latvia and Russia, as well as Russia's support for enhancing the status of the Russian language further widen the divergence between Latvians and Russians living in Latvia.

4.3 The Russian Authorities' Connections with Latvian Political Parties

4.3.1 The Establishment of Harmony Centre

In building relations with Latvia, representatives of the Russian authorities have been communicating with both official Latvian institutions and particular political forces, one of which is the political association Harmony Centre.

Harmony Centre was set up in 2005. It managed to unite a number of left and centre-left political parties in Latvia. One of the co-creators of Harmony Centre was the leader of the left of centre *People's Harmony Party*,²¹⁴ Sergejs Dolgopolovs.²¹⁵ In 2004–2005, Dolgopolovs was seeking allies in Latvia and support from Russia. The Latvian Socialist party joined Harmony Centre in December 2005. The chairman of the Latvian Socialist party is Alfreds Rubiks, who was a member of the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist party during the Soviet period. He actively supported the preservation of the Soviet Union in 1991 and was against the independence of Latvia. Other political forces in Harmony Centre are not that left-minded. They defend the interests of ethnic Russians in Latvia and support closer ties with Russia.

According to media sources, the association's leaders have repeatedly visited Russia and the association's creation was supported by the Kremlin.²¹⁶ In February 2005, the Russian Presidential Administration set up a Department for Inter-Regional and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, making Modest Kolerov its head. The department was tasked with preventing "coloured revolutions" in neighbouring countries still under Russia's influence, and as far as possible renewing influence in the rest of the post-Soviet space, including

²¹³ See the Security Police Report 2011, available at http://www.iem.gov.lv/files/text/DP_2011_p.pdf.

²¹⁴ The *People's Harmony Party* was established in 1994. The party's ideology was based on a centre-left stance, social democratic values and the protection of minority interests and closer cooperation between Latvia and Russia. The *People's Harmony Party* won six of the 100 seats in parliament in the elections of 1995.

²¹⁵ Dolgopolovs is a Russian-origin politician; he had been a member of parliament, a member of Riga City Council for a number of terms and the Vice-Chairman of Riga City Council.

²¹⁶ Kudors A. (2010): The Guards of Interests, *IR*, September 28, <http://www.ir.lv/2010/9/28/aeiropa>.

Latvia. To restore its hold, the Kremlin had to find a political force on the one hand ready to support Russia's interests, but on the other hand moderate enough to take power. In the autumn of 2005, a number of interviews with Dolgopolovs were published in the Russian media, including on the Kremlin political technologist Gleb Pavlovsky's web page www.kreml.org.²¹⁷ Latvia's media reported that Pavlovsky together with Kolerov were planning to set up Harmony Centre as a political party.²¹⁸

In October 2005, Dolgopolovs met Kolerov in Moscow.²¹⁹ Journalists reported that it was decided at that meeting to nominate Nils Usakovs for the leadership of Harmony Centre.²²⁰ On 29 October, Usakovs was elected as the association's chairman.²²¹ In November 2005, Kolerov arrived in Latvia to meet the leaders of political and public organizations and evaluate possibilities for cooperation.²²²

Since the consolidation process in 2010 and 2011, the Harmony Centre bloc now includes the social democratic party *Harmony* and the *Latvian Socialistic party*. Harmony Centre is the most popular political force among ethnic Russian voters in Latvia. Moreover, many ethnic Latvians vote for it. The Harmony Centre won 17 of the 100 seats in the Saeima in the elections of 2006, 29 seats in 2010 and 31 seats after early elections in 2011. In 2014, it went down to 24 seats. Nonetheless, it has not formed a part of a governing coalition.

It is not possible to say with absolute certainty that the Russian authorities played a direct role in the creation of Harmony Centre, but politicians from Latvia had close communications with representatives of the Russian authorities during its formation.

4.3.2 United with United Russia

United Russia, the political party in power in Russia, has shown interest in the political process in Latvia. On 20–21 October 2009, a United Russia congress was held in St Petersburg with Harmony Centre leaders Usakovs and Janis Urbanovics present. On 21 November, Urbanovics and Boris Grizlov, the Chair of the Supreme Council of United Russia, signed a cooperation agreement between the two parties.²²³ Urbanovics told journalists that this had been at the

²¹⁷ Interview with Dolgopolovs, available at <http://www.kreml.org/interview/101001704>.

²¹⁸ Murniece, I. (2013): Who has the roots in the PBK, available at <http://www.tvnet.lv/zinas/latvija/203026>.

²¹⁹ Kudors A. (2010): The Guards of Interests, *IR*, September 28, <http://www.ir.lv/2010/9/28/aeiropa>.

²²⁰ Murniece, I. (2013): Who has the roots in the PBK, available at <http://www.tvnet.lv/zinas/latvija/203026>.

²²¹ See "Harmony Centre elects a new chairman; does not hurry to cooperate with Socialists", *LETA* news agency, 29 October 2005.

²²² Kudors A. (2010): The Guards of Interests, *IR*, 28 September, <http://www.ir.lv/2010/9/28/aeiropa>.

²²³ Grizlov was the Chairman of the State Duma 2003–2011.

initiative of United Russia, and that the offer had been standing for three years before a decision was made. Urbanovics mentioned that such political cooperation between the parties might create opportunities for meetings between high-ranking politicians and step up cooperation in the economic sphere.²²⁴ When thinking about United Russia as a partner, it is worth remembering that its 2003 manifesto, “The Party of National Success”, stated that: “at the end of the previous century, most of us saw the collapse of the Soviet Union as a personal tragedy”.²²⁵ In 2009, Boris Grizlov stated that United Russia’s ideology is based on “Russian conservatism”, which protects Russia from both stagnation and revolutions.²²⁶ In the most recent parliamentary elections, in 2011, United Russia won 238 of the 450 seats in Russia’s Duma. Since May 2012, United Russia’s chairman has been Russia’s Prime Minister, Dmitry Medvedev. Although in recent years Vladimir Putin has maintained some distance from United Russia in the public domain, the party cannot be viewed separately from Putin and the interests of the current presidential administration.

4.3.3 Financial Support from Russia: a Lack of Transparency

It is difficult to assess Russian financial support for political forces in Latvia due to the sometimes non-transparent financing processes of some political parties in Latvia. In 2006, the Parliamentary National Security Committee head, Indulis Emsis, a former prime minister, stated that there were indications that Russia might have provided USD 1 million to Harmony Centre, transferred through compatriots’ organizations.²²⁷ The Latvian Constitution Protection Bureau indirectly supported his statements, indicating that Russian state institutions and NGOs had been active in trying to influence the results of Latvian elections.²²⁸ When Harmony Centre nominated its candidate for the presidency in 2007, the then President of Latvia, Valdis Vīķe-Freiberga, commented that “the candidate has been nominated by one of the parties, [...] but, being the president, I possess confidential information on its financial resources that causes concern about the party’s loyalty to the interests of the state of Latvia”.²²⁹ Although Harmony

²²⁴ See “Urbanovics: we’ve considered agreement with “United Russia”, <http://www.tvnet.lv/zinas/viedokli/295410>.

²²⁵ See United Russia, “Manifesto 2003”, <http://www.gazeta.ru/parliament/articles/19345.shtml>.

²²⁶ See “Congress of United Russia party a weathervane of Russian politics”, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-11/24/content_12527418.htm.

²²⁷ Indulis Emsis represents the Greens’ and Farmers’ Union. He was appointed minister for the environment in a number of cabinets. On 9 March 2004 he became Latvia’s Prime Minister and assembled a centre-right minority cabinet.

²²⁸ See “CPB approved Russia’s intention to influence elections’ results”, *Apollo*, <http://www.apollo.lv/portal/fun/articles/66978>.

²²⁹ Sloga G. (2007): “President's speech on election raises confusion”, 30 May 2007, *Diena*, <http://www.diena.lv/sabiedriba/prezidentes-izteikumi-par-velesanam-raisa-neizpratni-16999>.

Centre requested evidence from Vike–Freibergera, the president replied that this was her personal view based on classified information not available to the public.

Russia's support could be observed not only in the early years after Harmony Centre was established, but also later. The "TV-3" programme "Nothing Personal" on 4 September 2011 broadcast material indicating that United Russia consultants led training for Harmony Centre propagandists at one of the culture centres in Daugavpils City. The Corruption Prevention Bureau²³⁰ examined the engagement of United Russia consultants to undertake training for canvassers in Daugavpils. Harmony Centre party leaders were unable to provide convincing answers about who engaged these experts. The problem was that these consultants were connected with Russia's ruling party, and it was unclear who had paid for the advisers.²³¹

4.3.4 Riga City Council's Cooperation with Russia after the Municipal Election of 2009

In principle, and according to legislation in Latvia, the municipality of Riga should not implement its own foreign policy, especially if it differs from the country's foreign policy priorities. Nonetheless, after Harmony Centre won municipal elections in Riga, Nils Usakovs, the new Mayor, rushed to show his main priority in external relations – cooperation with Moscow. It is important to keep in mind that Yuri Luzhkov, the mayor of Moscow at the time, was an outspoken supporter and promoter of the Compatriots Policy. In addition, he held extremely critical views on Latvia's state policies. The Riga City Council website reported that the city had 29 "twin cities" in different countries, and Moscow was among them. Thus, in line with his party's priorities, Usakovs focused directly on Moscow.

The city of Riga has the right to encourage relationships that bring potential economic benefits to the city, and in that sense the city of Moscow is not a bad choice. However, when Luzhkov visited Riga in 2009 he showed his support for Russian language activists. Thus, he violated political neutrality and reached beyond the economic cooperation framework. Latvia's foreign policy priorities are related to the EU and NATO countries. Latvia is also vulnerable as a small country that has a large neighbour with regional ambitions. Riga is home to nearly a half of all Latvia's residents. Thus, Riga municipality's activities outside

²³⁰ The Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau (KNAB) is the leading specialised anti-corruption authority of Latvia. Its aim is to fight corruption in Latvia in a coordinated and comprehensive way through prevention, investigation and education. See <http://www.knab.gov.lv/en/knab/>.

²³¹ See "Harmony Center leader denied access to state secrets", BNN, 16 January 2012, <http://bnn-news.com/urbanovich-denied-access-state-secrets-46802>.

the country are very important and can to some extent compete with the state's foreign policy discourse.

A month after the municipal elections of 2009, Latvia's Russian Compatriots Conference was held in Riga. At the conference, a letter of greeting was delivered from the Russian Ambassador to Latvia, Aleksandr Veshnyakov. It expressed appreciation of Harmony Centre coming to power on Riga City Council.²³² On 10 July 2009, Riga City Council was visited by a Moscow Mayoral Office delegation led by the Moscow Government Minister, Vladimir Malishkov. He delivered Usakovs a letter of greeting from the mayor of Moscow and invited him to visit Moscow. In the talks, Malishkov mentioned that cooperation between Riga and Moscow had been quite good in the past decade, but this mainly depended on the political force ruling in Riga City. With the coming to power of Harmony Centre, a still better relationship could be expected. Malishkov's visit was quite symbolic, with the aim of demonstrating that Harmony Centre's leading position in Riga would secure successful contact with Russia. On 2–6 September 2009, a Riga Council delegation led by Mayor Usakovs arrived in Moscow. During the visit, Usakovs met Luzhkov and signed a programme of cooperation between Riga City Council and the Moscow government for 2009–2011.²³³

For years Russia has demonstrated a selective approach in its relations with Latvia. Moscow has shown that good relationships will be maintained only with politicians – ethnic Russians or Latvians – who are pro-Russia minded. Usakovs's victory in Riga once again confirmed this observation. Western countries sometimes take a similar approach when dealing with non-democratic countries; for example, paying particular attention to opposition leaders. However, an explicitly sectional approach by Western countries cannot be observed in relationships with democratically elected governments.

4.3.5 The Baltic Forum

The Baltic Forum is one of the platforms representatives from Russia use to spread their opinions in Latvia. One of the main leaders of Harmony Centre, Janis Urbanovics, is President of the Baltic Forum, which its organizers present as the most important platform for the development of the Latvian-Russian relationship. Igor Yurgens, a board chairman of the Russian Modern Development Institute, is the Chair of the forum. The Baltic Forum cooperates closely with Russian institutions. Although it is presented as a platform for

²³² Russia's compatriots: the course to the parliamentary election. Newspaper *Latvijas Avīze*, 13.07.2009.

²³³ Usakovs has been invited to Moscow, available at http://www.tvnet.lv/zinas/latvija/216053-usakovs_septembra_sakuma_aicinats_doties_vizite_uz_maskavu_papildinata, last accessed on October 13, 2013.

constructive discussions, in reality it is dominated by solutions offered by Russia, while Latvia's representatives just listen to their Russian colleagues and the media popularizes presentations made by guests from Russia to their Russian speaking audience. The Russian Foreign and Defence Policy Council has been a Baltic Forum cooperation partner from the very beginning.²³⁴ Urbanovics was made "Person of the Year in Russia" by the Russian Bibliography Institute.²³⁵ This award has been made in various categories since 1993. Urbanovics became a laureate in the category International Relations. An award in this category was also given to the then President of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich.²³⁶

Usakovs, the current leader of Harmony Centre, was a member of the Baltic Forum shortly before entering politics. His official CV states that he was a Baltic Forum board member in 2004–2005.²³⁷ The Baltic Forum was the official organizer of the visit to Latvia by Modest Kolerov, the head of Russia's Department for Inter-Regional and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, which coincided with the formation of Harmony Centre.

4.4 The Russian Media Presence and its Consequences for Latvia

The influence of the Russian media in Latvia could be seen as one of Russia's most powerful tools. The significant population of Russians in Latvia²³⁸ and the widespread knowledge of the Russian language among ethnic Latvians enable the Russian media to reach a wide audience. Three Russian television channels were among the most popular in Latvia in 2011:²³⁹ RTR, First Baltic Channel (*Pirmais Baltijas kanāls*, in Latvian; *Perviy Baltiskiy kanal*, in Russian, PBK)²⁴⁰ and NTV Mir. All three are either directly or indirectly controlled by the Russian state. This fact determines their content, which is made up of what an

²³⁴ See Researches and Publications, available at <http://www.baltforums.lv/petijumi.htm>, and www.svop.ru.

²³⁵ The Russian Bibliography Institute is an NGO whose prime goal is research on Russia's society and elite. See "Russkii biograficheskiy institut", <http://www.whoiswho.ru/about/>.

²³⁶ The nomination "Action for State" (*gosudarstvennaya deyatel'nost'*) in 2010 was awarded to president Medvedev and Prime minister Putin.

²³⁷ See Harmony Centre, <http://www.saskanascetrns.lv/lv/people/1>.

²³⁸ Latvia's demographic statistics 2013 show that Latvians compose 61.1% and ethnic Russians 26.2% of all inhabitants, respectively. Data available at http://www.csb.gov.lv/sites/default/files/skoleniem/iedzivotaji/etniskais_sastavs_mb.pdf.

²³⁹ Kudors A. (2012): "Latvia Between the Centers of Gravitation of Soft Power: the USA and Russia" in Indans I. (ed.), *Latvia and the United States: A New Chapter in the Partnership*, Riga: CEEPS, p. 99.

²⁴⁰ PBK is registered in Latvia, but 70% of its content is translated from ORT, so in this study PBK is perceived as a Russian television.

authoritarian state power needs. Russian television channels have completely dominated the viewing of ethnic Russians in Latvia for many years.

The content of most of the Russian television channels available in Latvia is primarily focused on Russia's internal audience, but this affects the audience in Latvia. Russian channels also provide separate content aimed at residents of neighbouring countries. For example, REN television Russia broadcasts both Russian and foreign (including Hollywood) movies in the evenings, while its derivative REN television Baltic almost exclusively shows movies and series produced in Russia. More than half the shares in REN television are owned by Bank Rossiya. Its largest shareholder is Yuri Kovalchuck, a close friend of President Putin.²⁴¹

In most of the television channels owned by the holding company Baltic Media Alliance (BMA), content is created in a similar way and retransmitted from Russia. BMA has 11 subsidiaries in the three Baltic states, and is one of the largest media companies in the Baltic states. The central office of BMA is in Riga and it has branches in Vilnius and Tallinn. Its television channels are the most important business for BMA. They include PBK, REN television Baltija/Estonia/Lithuania, First Baltic Music Channel and NTV Mir Baltic/Lithuania, as well as the weekly newspaper *MK Latvija*.²⁴²

A 2011 survey by the public opinion polling company SKDS showed that people who use the Russian language in their family home prefer Russian television channels. The most popular television channels were First Baltic Channel, RTR Planeta and NTV Mir.²⁴³ The SKDS poll was part of a study by the Centre for East European Policy Studies on outside influence on the ethnic integration process in Latvia. The survey asked: "Which TV channels do you trust and believe that the information they convey is objective?". Of the respondents who use the Russian language in their family home, 36.1 per cent said the First Baltic Channel, 14.6 per cent RTR Planeta and only 8.9 per cent LTV1 (Latvian Society channel).²⁴⁴ The popularity of Russian television channels in Latvia remains stable. PBK, NTV Mir and Rossiya-RTR were among the most popular television channels in Latvia in 2013.²⁴⁵

²⁴¹ See Forbes (2013): *Billionaires*, March, <http://www.forbes.com/profile/yuri-kovalchuk/>.

²⁴² See "Baltic Media Alliance", <http://1bma.lv/lv/par-holdingu/par-mums/>.

²⁴³ Kudors A., (2012): "Latvia Between the Centers of Gravitation of Soft Power: the USA and Russia", in Indans I. (ed.), *Latvia and the United States: A New Chapter in the Partnership*, Riga: CEEPS, p. 99.

²⁴⁴ Lerhis A., Indans I., Kudors A., (2008): *Outside Influence on the Ethnical Integration Process in Latvia*, (2nd ed.), Riga, CEEPS, p. 65.

²⁴⁵ See "Most viewed TV channels in October, 2013, November 5, 2013", *Latvijas reitingi*, <http://www.reitingi.lv/lv/news/zinatne/85054-tv-kanalu-auditorijas-2013-gada-oktobri.html>.

4.4.1 Support for Harmony Centre

Since the establishment of Harmony Centre, PBK has been its main media supporter among Russian speaking voters. PBK is the most popular channel, with an audience of 20 per cent of Latvia's population and 60 per cent of ethnic Russians.²⁴⁶ PBK retransmits Russia's First Channel²⁴⁷ in the Baltic countries, placing commercials and news programmes from each of the Baltic countries.²⁴⁸ PBK has been involved in several scandals, and accused of a tendentious interpretation of historic events, violations of the language law and publicizing untruthful information.²⁴⁹ PBK, as a part of the BMA, is owned by two Russian citizens: Oleg Solodov and Alexei Plyasunov.²⁵⁰ Plyasunov lives in Moscow and is a member of the *Spravedlivaya Rossiya* political party. In reality, the media business is managed by Oleg Solodov.²⁵¹

Hidden advertisements are broadcast during the pre-election period, more attention is paid to Harmony Centre politicians and stories related to Harmony Centre are incorporated into the news broadcasts. Harmony Centre's Chair, Nils Usakovs, worked as the head of the Baltic news section of the First Baltic Channel from March 2004 to January 2005. Some other representatives of the channel were also on the Harmony Centre candidate list for the parliamentary elections of 2006. The First Baltic Channel provided media support for the association, including extensive use of concealed advertising. According to a high-ranking Latvian official, Indulis Emsis, head of the Parliamentary National Security Commission, the advertising was sponsored by Russia.²⁵² Before the municipal elections of 2009, PBK extensively covered the activities of Nils Usakovs's association, 9 May, enabling Usakov to be seen frequently on television screens.²⁵³

According to experts and politicians, commenting on the results of the parliamentary election of 2006, PBK's support for Harmony Centre was a decisive factor in the party's support increasing from only by 2.5 per cent three months before the election to win 17 of the 100 seats in the *Saeima* (Latvian

²⁴⁶ Lerhis A., Indans I., Kudors A., (2008): op. cit. p. 65.

²⁴⁷ See Perviy Kanal, <http://www.1tv.ru/>.

²⁴⁸ PBK is registered in Latvia, but 70% of its content is translated from ORT, so in this study PBK is perceived as a Russian TV.

²⁴⁹ Springe I., Benfelde S., Miks Salu M. (2012): The Unknown Oligarch, *Re:Baltica*, http://www.rebaltica.lv/en/investigations/money_from_russia/a/686/the_unknown_oligarch.html.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Murniece I., (2006): *Who owns the Baltic Channel*, February 9, <http://www.tvnet.lv/zinas/latvija/203026>.

²⁵³ Springe I., Benfelde S., Miks Salu M., (2012): op. cit.

Parliament).²⁵⁴ Aivars Freimanis, Director of the polling company Latvijas Fakti, indicated that the activities of the First Baltic Channel had been decisive.²⁵⁵

Latvian society directed great attention to the case of the hacking of Usakovs's email correspondence. This exposed his alleged reporting to the Russian Embassy on event organization and aligning reporting on news stories with the First Baltic Channel.²⁵⁶ In November 2011 the web-portal *kompramat.lv* published Usakovs's correspondence with Alexander Khapilov, an official at the Russian embassy who later had to leave Latvia suspected of espionage.²⁵⁷ Usakovs stated that part of this correspondence was fake, without explaining which part he was referring to. As of January 2013, the litigation process over hacking and publishing Usakovs's e-mail was still ongoing. In March 2012 the journalist Leonids Jekabsons, who published Usakovs's e-mail correspondence, was attacked and hospitalized. The police investigation stated that the main reason for this attack was likely to be Jekabsons's professional activities, but the investigation process has still not been completed.²⁵⁸

4.4.2 The Influence of Russian Media Companies on Social and Political Processes

Russian television channels in Latvia operate as both commercial enterprises, which aim to raise revenue from the sale of advertising, and opinion leaders among their audience. Russian channels offer a wide range of high-quality entertainment programmes, which often out-compete the programmes on Latvian channels. However, Russian channels are not just trying to entertain their audience. They have tried to influence a specific event and process: the 2012 referendum on making Russian the second official language in Latvia.

Immediately after the referendum, in the spring of 2012, Latvian journalists and security services underlined Russia's possible connection to the financing of the initiation of the referendum. On 19 February 2012, in the LTV1 broadcast "De facto", the Chief of the Security Police in Latvia, Janis Reiniks, said that the origin of the funding for gathering signatures to initiate the referendum was uncertain. Reiniks noted the support provided by Russian media for donations to

²⁵⁴ See The Central Election Commission of Latvia: *Statistics*, <http://www.cvk.lv/cgi-bin/wdbcgiw/base/saeima9.GalRezS9.vis>, p. 3.

²⁵⁵ See http://www.arcis.lv/10_06r.html.

²⁵⁶ Jakobsons L., (2013): "The truth about Nils Usakovs", May 30, *IR*, <https://www.ir.lv/2013/5/30/patiesiba-par-nilu-usakovu>.

²⁵⁷ Blass R. (2013): "The case of Usakovs is going to the court this week2, 27 June, *IR*, <https://www.ir.lv/2013/6/27/usakova-e-pastu-publiskosanas-lietu-sonedel-nodod-tiesai>.

²⁵⁸ See "Journalist Jekabsons is cooperating with police", *TVNET/ BNS*, 19 July 2012, http://www.tvnet.lv/zinas/kriminalzinas/429702-uzbrukuma_cietusais_zurnalists_jakobsons_patlaban_sadarbojas_ar_policiju, last accessed on 12 January 2014.

the association “Mother Tongue” (*Dzimta valoda*), which organized the collection of signatures to initiate the referendum. He singled out PBK, which devoted considerable air time – estimated to be worth more than LVL 100,000 – to the signature-gathering campaign.²⁵⁹ On the TV 3 programme *Neka Personiga* on 13 May 2012, Rihards Kozlovskis, the minister of the interior, clearly stated that the referendum organizers had received money from Russia.²⁶⁰

The two other Russian television channels in Latvia, REN TV Baltic and NTV Mir, are registered in the United Kingdom rather than Latvia, and therefore subject to Ofcom (UK) regulation. Ofcom is the independent British media regulator and the competition authority for the British communications industries.²⁶¹ On 24 September 2012 Ofcom published a bulletin stating that it acknowledged the fact that the Russian channels in Latvia had violated British media regulations. Both were registered under a UK broadcasting licence by BMA.²⁶² In the autumn of 2011 the two channels broadcast videos calling on people to sign up for the language referendum. The regulator concluded that the two channels were not respecting political neutrality; and that there was no clear distinction between advertising and media content, which misled the audience.

Both channels used their prime time slots before the referendum to broadcast an appeal: “On the CVK website www.cvk.lv, find the nearest place where signatures for Russian language as the second official language are being collected, and give your vote. By saving time, you will lose the right to speak your native language. Only till November 30”. Neither channel indicated who the client for the advertisement was. Hence, it passed it off as the editorial opinion of the channel. This attempt to interfere in the political process raised concerns among a large part of the population of Latvia, and an understanding that Russia is not a neutral observer of the political process in Latvia.

4.4.3 The Russian Media and the Clash of Values

In addition to entertainment and coverage of contemporary events, the Russian media promotes certain values in foreign countries, including Latvia. One of the topics related to such values in the Russian media is the idea that the victory of the Soviet Union in 1945 is evidence of Soviet/Russian power and muscle. Another preferred subject is the Russian Orthodox Church and its traditional

²⁵⁹ See “Latvian Security Police: referendum could be financed by Russia”, http://www.tvnet.lv/zinas/latvija/411425-dp_referenduma_finansejums_varetu_but_nacis_no_krievijas.

²⁶⁰ Interior affairs minister: money came from Russia too, available at <http://nra.lv/latvija/politika/71815-iekslietu-ministrs-krievu-valodas-referendumam-nauda-naca-ari-no-krievijas.htm>.

²⁶¹ See “What is Ofcom?”, <http://www.ofcom.org.uk/about/what-is-ofcom/>.

²⁶² See *Ofcom Broadcast Bulletin*, no. 214, 24 September 2012, <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/enforcement/broadcast-bulletins/obb214/obb214.pdf>.

cultural values as an alternative to the ideals of liberal democracy. The concept of the “Russian world” broadens the goals of the Compatriots Policy by linking it to the transcendent mission of the Russian people to defend and disseminate concrete values.²⁶³ It is important to note that the clash of values does not take place so much in the ethnic aspect (i.e. Russians vs. Latvians) as within the framework of values (authoritarianism vs. democracy, “Eurasianists” vs. “Atlantists”, traditional values vs. secular liberalism).

The international organization Freedom House in its annual edition of *Nations in Transit* rates the democratic transition process in 29 countries in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia. In its 2012 rating, Latvia was included in the group of the most democratic countries, “consolidating democracy”.²⁶⁴ Latvia also received the third-highest rating for achievements in implementing democracy, just behind Slovenia and Estonia. Russia was ranked in the least democratic group of countries, “Consolidated authoritarian regimes”.²⁶⁵ Notably, the Latvian media faces no political censorship and there is competition between different media outlets. It is therefore possible to obtain alternative information in the Latvian language. However, Russia’s television channels, which are popular among Russians in Latvia, are not considered to be free. They tend to express views that are consistent with those of Russia’s ruling elite.

During the Soviet occupations of 1940–1941 and 1945–1991, Latvia was altered not only in terms of economic management and political structure, but also in terms of identity and values. Attempts to build democracy and economic freedom in the period 1918–1934²⁶⁶ were resumed in the late 1980s, and this process is continuing today. The same applies for the restoration of Latvia’s identity as a European nation state. Overcoming the Soviet ideological heritage and the Soviet-era Russification process is hampered by Russia’s desire to explain the Soviet period as a clearly positive era for the development of Latvia. The contemporary Russian leadership’s authoritarian style is hailed by Russian television channels in Latvia as an effective way of management.

Russia is capable of maintaining a uniform interpretation of processes and ensuring similar views on all television channels over the medium term, under its daily and longer term strategic communications frameworks. The Centre for East European Policy Studies (CEEPS) study, *Outside Influence on the Ethnic*

²⁶³ Kudors A., (2010): “‘Russian World’—Russia’s Soft Power Approach to Compatriots Policy”, *Russian Analytical Digest No 81*, 16 June, <http://www.res.ethz.ch/kb/search/details.cfm?lng=en&id=117631>.

²⁶⁴ See Freedom House (2012): “Nations in Transit”, Table 10, Democracy Score, 2012 Rankings by Regime Type, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2012%20NIT%20Tables.pdf>.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Karlis Ulmanis took power in a coup in 1934.

Integration Process in Latvia (2007),²⁶⁷ and a study by the Advanced Social and Political Research Institute (ASPRI),²⁶⁸ *Manufacturing Enemy Images? Russian Media Portrayals of Latvia* (2008),²⁶⁹ show empirically how Russia implemented this means of strategic communication. The CEEPS study highlights how in the period 2004–2006, news programmes on Russia’s television channels focused on a small number of topics about Latvia: education reform, the occupation, an interpretation of the results of the Second World War, a “revival of fascism in Latvia” and the alleged discrimination against Russian compatriots living in Latvia.²⁷⁰ The ASPRI study indicates that in stories broadcast about Russian-speakers in Latvia, the Russian media also projected a certain image of Russia. Russia was depicted as an influential country that can resolve the problems of its compatriots.²⁷¹

Russia’s official view of history is somewhat “securitized”, that is, related to current security policy issues. This is demonstrated in *Russia’s National Security Strategy to 2020*. Its section on culture contains the statement that “Negative influences on the state of national security in the cultural sphere are intensified by attempts to revise perspectives on Russia’s history, its role and place in world history”.²⁷² As a solution, the strategy offers cooperation between the security services and civil society and the “development of a unified humanitarian and information area in the territory of the CIS and neighbouring regions”.²⁷³ The Baltic states are part of such a region, where a common information environment with Russia is seen as possible.

In March 2012, in response to Russia’s initiatives to explain the “correct history of Latvia”, Latvia’s Foreign Minister, Edgars Rinkevics, had to declare two Russian historians, Alexander Dyukov and Vladimir Simindei, undesirable persons (*persona non grata*) in Latvia and include them on the list of persons to whom entry to Latvia was prohibited. Dyukov and Simindei were linked to the distribution of propaganda and biased writing about Latvian history that, among other things, sought to justify Soviet repression of the civilian population. According to Uldis Neiburgs, a researcher at the Occupation Museum of Latvia,

²⁶⁷ See Lerhis A., Indans I., Kudors A., (2008): *Outside Influence on the Ethnic Integration Process in Latvia*, (2nd edn), Riga: CEEPS.

²⁶⁸ See “About ASPRI”, <http://szf.lu.lv/eng/petnieciba/spp-instituts/>.

²⁶⁹ See Muiznieks N. (2008): *Manufacturing Enemy Images? Russian Media Portrayal of Latvia*, Riga, LU ASPRI.

²⁷⁰ Lerhis A., Indans I., Kudors A., (2008): op. cit.

²⁷¹ Petrenko D. (2008): “How Does the Russian Community Live in Latvia?”, in *Manufacturing Enemy Images? Russian Media Portrayal of Latvia*. Riga: Academic Press of the University of Latvia, p. 77.

²⁷² See *Russia’s National Security Strategy to 2020*, <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/99.html>.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

such views have little to do with science or history.²⁷⁴ Ainars Lerhis, a senior researcher at the Institute of History at the University of Latvia, indicates that Russian researchers sometimes use references to documents from the FSB Central Archive that cannot be accessed by other researchers, thereby excluding other scientists from the possibility of testing the veracity of their conclusions.²⁷⁵

Simendei had been a diplomat at the Russian embassy in Latvia for several years. He and Dyukov currently run the NGO *Istoricheskaia Pamiat* (Historical Remembrance). The Russian historian, Alexei Miller, has noted that it is not clear where it gets its money from.²⁷⁶ In the context of the securitization of history, *Istoricheskaia Pamiat*, in collaboration with the Russian Institute of Strategic Studies (RISS), publishes books about Latvian history that are widely regarded as biased. The director of RISS, Leonid Reshetnikov, is a former general in the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service.²⁷⁷ The Latvian Constitution Protection Bureau has highlighted the adverse impact of Russian media on Latvia. A report in 2012 stated that the television company, TV Centre, and *Istoricheskaia Pamiat* contribute to Russia's propaganda campaigns.²⁷⁸

Article 10 of the "Programme of Work with Compatriots Living Abroad, 2012–2014", defines the task of helping "Russian-speaking foreign media to get objective information about Russia and its policy towards compatriots".²⁷⁹ One might ask whether Russia's current rulers really disseminate objective information about what is happening in Russia. Russian citizens living in Latvia regard United Russia more positively than voters in Russia. In Russia's parliamentary election in 2011, Daugavpils city Russian residents gave about 85 per cent of their votes to United Russia.²⁸⁰ In Russia, the party achieved better results only in Dagestan, Chechnya and Mordovia.

Nils Muiznieks, the former Latvian government minister responsible for social integration matters, argues that "the Russian media systematically manufactured an enemy image of Latvia with regard to some, but not all topics."²⁸¹ As expected,

²⁷⁴ Veidemane E (2013): "Historian Neiburgs: the war in Latvia has ended," *NRA.lv*, 2013/03/15, <http://nra.lv/latvija/91038-vesturnieks-neiburgs-latvija-kars-ir-beidzies.htm>.

²⁷⁵ See Lerhis A. (2012): "With *non grata* against Russia's 'descent of history'", 14 March, <http://www.delfi.lv/news/comment/comment/ainars-lerhis-ar-non-grata-pret-krievijas-vestures-desantu.d?id=42204938>.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁷ See Leonid Reshetnikov, director RISI, <http://www.riss.ru/index.php/jomsocial/profile/613-reshetnikov-leonid-petrovich>.

²⁷⁸ See "CPB Report 2011", <http://www.sab.gov.lv/index.php?lang=lv&nid=284>.

²⁷⁹ See *Compatriots Policy Program 2012 - 2014*, <http://www.mid.ru/bdmp/ns-dgpcn.nsf/215bdcc93123ae8343256da400379e66/68076fc0d640a7764425794300255428!OpenDocument>.

²⁸⁰ Voting Protocol, <http://www.latvia.mid.ru/news/ru/5155.pdf>.

²⁸¹ See Muiznieks N., [ed.] (2008): *Manufacturing Enemy Images? Russian Media Portrayal of Latvia*, Riga: Academic Press of the University of Latvia.

the most pronounced negative portrayal concerned Latvia's treatment of Russian-speakers, Latvia's approach to history, and Latvia's accession to NATO.²⁸² Russians living in Latvia mainly consume Russia's state-controlled television broadcasts. Hence, the information obtained gives an embellished and airbrushed picture of what is happening in Russia. Latvia's priority is further integration into Western structures: the EU and NATO. To the extent that Russian television channels distribute anti-NATO and anti-US, and sometimes anti-EU, messages, they are dividing Latvian society.

4.5 Cultural Relations as Part of Soft Power

In the minds of most Latvians, the presence of Russian culture as a part of the world's cultural heritage in Latvia is a positive factor that enriches the country. However, concerns arise when Russian policymakers in certain situations try to use cultural issues to achieve foreign policy goals that are hostile to Latvia.

Russia's *Foreign Affairs Review* of 2007 states that "culture has to become an effective tool for our country to implement its foreign policy and economic interests and build a positive image".²⁸³ Russia's high and popular culture are widely represented in Latvia. Gatis Pelnens notes that the content of culture in its practical expression exhibits several different aspects of Russia's culture: (1) the deep-rooted traditions of Russian "high culture"; (2) historical identification with the Soviet Union; and (3) a modern, developing and in some sense "Westernized" culture with particular qualities specific to Russia.²⁸⁴

4.5.1 Russian Popular Culture in Latvia

Russian popular culture in Latvia is disseminated in a number of ways: through television broadcasts, cinema, radio broadcasts, and performances by Russian artists. Russian popular culture is most present in television: through Russian television programmes and films.²⁸⁵ Russian television channels provide content for a wide audience – news, fashion, sports, programmes for children, and so on. This represents different aspects of Russian culture, from nostalgia about Soviet times to popular culture in contemporary Russia. The major Latvian-language commercial channels, LNT and TV3, also broadcast Russian television shows and movies.²⁸⁶ The content provided by Russian television is underpinned by two

²⁸² Pelnens G., [ed.] (2010): The 'Humanitarian Dimension' of Russian Foreign Policy toward Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and the Baltic States", (2nd edn). Riga: CEEPS, p. 190.

²⁸³ See *Russian Foreign Policy Review 2007*, http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/3647DA97748A106BC32572AB002AC4DD.

²⁸⁴ Pelnens G., [ed.] (2010): op cit.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., p.173.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

associations with Russian popular culture: historical nostalgia for Soviet-era films and television shows, and simplicity in narration.²⁸⁷

The Russian music market in Latvia is directed primarily at Russian-speaking audiences. Several commercial radio stations broadcast Russian music daily, thereby sustaining its permanent presence in Latvia. These include Mix FM, Hiti Rosii, Jumor FM, Europa Plus, Radio PIK, Novoe Radio, and SWH+.²⁸⁸

An important music-related venue is The New Wave, a contest for performers of popular music that was founded in 2002 by the Russian composer Igor Krutoy and the Latvian composer and pianist Raimonds Pauls. The festival is hosted in Jurmala, a coastal resort popular with Russian tourists since the Soviet era. Representatives of most of the post-Soviet countries participate in the contest.²⁸⁹ The New Wave is broadcast in Russian on one of the biggest Russian television stations: *Rossiia-RTR*.

The commonly used title for this programme is “Russia’s young performers’ competition in Jurmala”. The symbol of the festival is a wave in the colours of the Russian flag. Jurmala municipality’s local businesses, restaurants and hotel owners earn money, but for the Latvian audience the competition creates negative emotions as it has associations with the Soviet times. Moreover, the staging of this competition has been repeatedly used to make offensive remarks about the Latvian language and awkward jokes centred on singing the Latvian national anthem and the use of Latvian costume. Historical experience sometimes causes an emotional response to jokes made by Russian representatives, whereas the same jokes made by Lithuanians or Estonians would not have such a negative reaction among Latvians.

4.5.2 The Russian Orthodox Church

The Latvian Orthodox Church forms part of Russian culture in Latvia due to its semi-autonomous position within the Eastern Orthodox Church under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Moscow. It is the third biggest church in Latvia, with approximately 370,000 members in 121 parishes.²⁹⁰ According to Nils Muiznieks, the Orthodoxy in Latvia is an important social phenomenon and serves as a means for Russia to exercise its soft power.²⁹¹ Orthodox values can be a source of soft power. In recent years, the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) has become an active actor in Russia’s foreign policy. That is not to say that the

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., p.174.

²⁸⁹ Pelnens G., [ed.] (2010): op cit., p.175.

²⁹⁰ On reports that religious organizations provided for the Latvian Ministry of Justice during the year 2010, see <http://www.tm.gov.lv/lv/search/pareiztic%C4%ABgo%20skaits>.

²⁹¹ Muiznieks N. (2011): *Latvian-Russian Relations: Dynamics Since Latvia’s Accession to the EU and NATO*. Riga: University of Latvia Press, p.63.

Latvian Orthodox Church would allow itself be used as a means for the implementation of Russian foreign policy in all situations.²⁹² In the above-mentioned study, Muiznieks points out three major events in Latvia related to the Orthodox Church: the exhibition of the Tikhvin icon of the Mother of God in Riga in 2004, the ROC Patriarch Alexy II's visit to Latvia in 2006 and the inclusion of Metropolitan Alexander, the head of the Latvian Orthodox Church, in the official delegation of the President of the Republic of Latvia for a presidential visit to Russia in 2010.²⁹³ The third, however, is an example of the use of Latvia's soft power towards Russia rather than the other way around.

In recent years, a number of senior Latvian officials have shown symbolic support for the Orthodox community in Latvia – for example, the arrival of the Tikhvin icon in Latvia in June 2004 was supported by President Vaira Vike-Freiberga, Alexy II received a warm welcome during his visit to Latvia in 2006 and President Valdis Zatlers greeted believers at the Orthodox Christmas.²⁹⁴ The visit of Alexy II took place at the invitation of President Vaira Vike-Freiberga.²⁹⁵ Before the visit, Modest Kolerov, the head of the Russian presidential administration's Department for Inter-Regional and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, stated that Russia would evaluate the Patriarch's agenda for his visit to Latvia as it would set Latvia's priorities in its bilateral relations with Russia.²⁹⁶ This showed that Russia's foreign policy implementers were using the Patriarch's visits as a diplomatic tool.

The political party, For Human Rights in a United Latvia (FHRUL),²⁹⁷ led by Tatjana Zdanoka, organized an exhibition in 2008 on Russians in Latvia, which was held in the Moscow House in Riga – a building owned by Moscow City Council. One of its financial backers was Moscow City Council. Part of the exhibition was devoted to the history of Old Believers in Riga. The Old Believers, followers of an older form of Russian Orthodox beliefs, arrived in Latvia in the 17th century to avoid repression caused by a schism in the Russian Orthodox Church. A proclamation by the Republic of Latvia in 1918 strengthened the legal position of Old Believers.²⁹⁸ The Old Believers are loyal to the Republic of Latvia and enrich Riga and Latgale (Eastern Latvia) with their unique cultural-religious heritage. Tatjana Zdanoka explained that she wanted to

²⁹² Kudors A. (2012): 'Orthodoxy and Politics in Latvia', in Pkhaladze T. (ed.): *Religion as the Instrument of Russian Foreign Policy towards Neighbouring Countries: Georgia, Latvia, Ukraine*. Tbilisi: ICGS, pp.101–114.

²⁹³ Muiznieks N., (2011): op. cit. p. 63.

²⁹⁴ Kudors A., (2012): op. cit. pp.101–114.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Delfi (2006): "Russia will assess the program for Patriarch Alexy II's visit in Latvia", *Delfi*, 26.05.2006, <http://www.delfi.lv/news/world/other/krievija-izvertes-patriarha-aleksija-ii-vizites-programmu-latvija.d?id=14555830>.

²⁹⁷ See *supra* note 30.

²⁹⁸ Kudors A. (2012): Orthodoxy and Politics in Latvia, in Pkhaladze T. [ed.] op. cit. pp.101–114.

organize an exhibition to show that Russians are an indigenous people in Latvia who have made a significant contribution to Latvian culture, art and science. The FHRUL's motives in supporting the Orthodoxy and Old Believers in Latvia are related to justifying its claims for a change in the language and citizenship policies. Such claims are in line with Russia's policy on compatriots living abroad.²⁹⁹

4.5.3 The Continental Hockey League

The Continental Hockey League (KHL) is another example of Russia's efforts to influence cultural life in Latvia.³⁰⁰ It was founded in 2008, based on the Russian Superleague, by adding a small number of teams from the countries of the former-Soviet Union. Three teams, from Belarus, Kazakhstan and Latvia, were initially invited to participate and four more have since been added. Since the re-establishment in 2008 of the Latvian team, Dinamo Riga, it has taken a central place on the Latvian sports scene. However, the KHL and Dinamo Riga were established in the context of nostalgia for Soviet ice hockey traditions, as well as ice hockey's popularity and cultural interaction.³⁰¹ The establishment of the KHL began at the political level. Vladimir Putin, Russia's prime minister at that time, stated: "I am not just supporting the KHL, I was its initiator, I invented it because I thought that hockey has lost a lot since the end of competition between Canadian and Soviet hockey".³⁰² This fact is highlighted by how the project was funded: most of the teams and the league itself are financed by Russia's regional governments or state-owned enterprises. It should be noted that the launch of Dinamo Riga was made possible by financial support from Itera, a Russian gas company.³⁰³ Putin has pointed out that the KHL is a project that "[...] allows thinking seriously about the renewal of a common humanitarian space on post-Soviet territories – to unite people from former Soviet countries on the basis of common interests".³⁰⁴

The impact of the KHL on contemporary Latvia can be assessed in several ways. On the one hand, it is a political project by Russia aimed at integrating the post-Soviet space. On the other hand, both Latvians and Russians are united in the Dinamo home arena in Riga, and therefore, to some extent, it serves as a tool for the integration of society in Latvia. Another aspect is the economic lobbying carried out by the Russian gas company, *Itera Latvia*. As Dinamo Riga is

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ See KHL, <http://www.khl.ru/>.

³⁰¹ Pelnens G., [ed.] (2010): op. cit. p. 176.

³⁰² See "Putin hopes that KHL will be all-European league", <http://sport.rian.ru/sport/20090720/178015244.html>.

³⁰³ Pelnens G., [ed.] (2010): op. cit. p. 176.

³⁰⁴ "Vladimir Putin wants enlargement of KHL", *Kommersant* № 183. 9 October 2008, <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=1037967>.

financially supported by the company, this gives its CEO Juris Savickis the opportunity to meet and communicate with Latvia's political leaders, who attend the games in the VIP area.

4.5.4 The Results of the Implementation of Soft Power

It is not easy to distinguish between the positive effects of Russia's cultural presence in Latvia and the impact of the use of culture as a component of Russia's foreign policy. Joseph Nye suggests the use of opinion polls as a method of measurement to show changes in the attractiveness of particular countries over different time periods. This depends on the skilful use of all available resources to assess whether soft power is changing the actions or opinions of a particular country or part of society.³⁰⁵ If it is not possible to use soft power against the entire society of a particular country, at least that power can be directed towards part of the society or a specific social group. This aspect is also important when analysing Russian foreign policy successes in Latvia.³⁰⁶

A research project conducted by the public opinion research company SKDS in 2010 showed a difference in attitudes to Russia depending on the language spoken by the respondent's family. According to the survey, 32.6 per cent of Russian-speakers have a "very positive", and 55.7 per cent a "somewhat positive" attitude to Russia. At the same time, 8 per cent of Latvian-speakers had a "very positive" and 38.6 per cent had a "somewhat positive" attitude to Russia.³⁰⁷ Nils Muiznieks argues that this confirms the fact that Russian soft power works more effectively among Russian-speakers. He points out that "Russian soft power is far greater among Russian-speakers, who not only have ethnic, linguistic and historical links to Russia, but also consume Russian media products to a far greater extent than Latvians".³⁰⁸

According to Joseph Nye's theories, one source of soft power can be national political values. The specific interpretation of history in contemporary Russia attempts to justify authoritarianism and to legitimize Putin's administration both inside and outside Russia. Does this interpretation of history have any impact on the audience in Latvia? A number of recent studies confirm that it does. In 2008, the Secretariat of the Special Assignments Minister for Social Integration³⁰⁹

³⁰⁵ Nye, J.S. (2013): "Think Again: Soft Power", *Foreign Policy*, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2006/02/22/think_again_soft_power.

³⁰⁶ Kudors A., (2012): "Latvia Between the Centers of Gravitation of Soft Power – the USA and Russia", in Indans I. [ed] op. cit.

³⁰⁷ Muiznieks, N. (2011): "Russian 'Soft Power' in Latvia: Culture, Sports, religion, Education and the Media" in Muiznieks, N.: *Latvian–Russian Relations: Dynamics Since Latvia's Accession to the EU and NATO*. Riga: University of Latvia Press, p.66.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ The Secretariat of the Special Assignments Minister for Social Integration was created in 2002 as the lead institution for matters of integration of society; its operations were ceased in 2008.

commissioned a “Quantitative and qualitative study of social integration and current aspects of citizenship”.³¹⁰ It covered citizens’ and non-citizens’ attitudes to the Victory Day celebration of 9 May. The survey data showed that no other celebration was perceived so differently in Latvia. When looking at this celebration from an ethnic context, it was mostly celebrated by Russians (54 per cent) and other ethnicities (41 per cent) but by very few Latvians (only 5 per cent).³¹¹

A survey of school pupils in Latvia in *The Resistance to Integration of Society: Causes and Consequences* asked: “Did the Soviet army occupy Latvia for a second time in 1944–1945?” In Latvian schools, 82 per cent agreed, while in Russian schools just 18 per cent agreed.³¹² This indicates major differences in the perception of historical events between Latvian and Russian pupils. Similar divergences occur when assessing the Soviet period. In a survey in 2010, 42.2 per cent of Latvians and 71.2 per cent of ethnic Russians regarded Soviet times in Latvia in a positive light.³¹³

Opinion polls can highlight trends, but cannot necessarily be regarded as an instrument for measuring soft power. Nonetheless, it is evident that part of Latvian society is susceptible to the relatively large Russian influence.

4.6 Economic Instruments: Trade and Investment

In recent years, Latvian foreign policy has experienced an “economization” that will further affect its pursuit of economic viability in terms of relations with Russia and other former-Soviet states. Since the border agreement between Latvia and Russia was signed in 2007, relations between the countries have slowly improved. As was mentioned above, Valdis Zatlers, the then president of Latvia, made a state visit to Russia in 2010. The biggest ever Latvian business forum abroad took place as part of the visit, attended by 120 business leaders from Latvia.³¹⁴ Several bilateral agreements were signed during Zatlers’ visit, including an agreement on avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of

³¹⁰ See *Research about social integration* (2013), Riga: AC Konsultācijas Ltd, 2008, p.41, http://izm.izm.gov.lv/upload_file/jaunatne/petijumi/Cela_uz_pilsonisku_sabiedribu_06112008%5B1%5D%5B1%5D.pdf.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Dribins L., (ed.), *Pretestība sabiedrības integrācijai: cēloņi un sekas*. Rīga: LU FSI, 2007, p. 54.

³¹³ Kaprans, M. & Zelce, V. (2011): ‘National Identity, History and Social Memory’, in Zepa, B., Klave, E. [eds.]: *Latvija. Pārskats par tautas attīstību 2010/2011: Nacionālā identitāte, mobilitāte, rīcībspēja*. Riga: LU SPPI, p. 43.

³¹⁴ Valdis Zatlers (2010): *Report 2010*, http://www.president.lv/pk/content/?cat_id=8693.

tax evasion.³¹⁵ Despite the intensification of economic relations, certain concerns have increased regarding Latvia's asymmetric dependence on Russia.

These concerns have been raised in the media and in public discussions. In the everyday practice of politics and business, however, the dominant opinion is that the opportunities offered by economic cooperation with Russia should be taken.

4.6.1 Trade

Trade between Latvia and Russia has not been particularly influenced by political relations and it has been growing since 2004. About 70 per cent of Latvia's economic relations are with other EU member states, but Russia still plays an important role in Latvia's foreign trade. Statistical data from 2012 indicate that Russia was the second-biggest export and third-largest import partner for Latvia. Exports to Russia constitute 12.4 per cent of total Latvian exports. Meanwhile, the import of goods and raw materials from Russia amounted to 10.7 per cent of total imports.³¹⁶ Latvia's main exports to Russia in 2012 were food products, machinery, and mechanical and electrical equipment. The main imported goods from Russia in 2012 were mineral products, including oil and gas (49.2 per cent), and metals and metal products (23 per cent).³¹⁷ Recently, the number of tourists from Russia visiting Latvia has increased. In February 2013, the State Enterprise Register of Latvia registered 4033 Russian companies with investment in stock capital. Russia is ranked sixth in the volume of investments in stock capital in Latvian companies.³¹⁸

For several years, Russia's representatives have been giving hints that bilateral relations, especially in the area of economic cooperation, would rapidly improve if pro-Russian political parties were included in the government coalition. The pro-Russian Harmony Centre was close to entering the government coalition at the end of 2011. Although this did not happen, economic relations developed at a relatively good pace. Latvia has often been criticized for not fully taking advantage of its geographical location and not getting the most out of cooperation with Russia. A study by two economists, Vjaceslavs Dombrovskis and Alf Vanags, *Latvian-Russian Relations: Domestic and International Dimensions*, states that despite the political rhetoric, in reality there have been

³¹⁵ See Bilateral Agreements, available at <http://www.am.gov.lv/lv/Arpolitika/bilateral/>, last accessed on October 13, 2013.

³¹⁶ See *Latvian and Russian bilateral relations*, <http://www.am.gov.lv/lv/Arpolitika/divpusejas-attiecibas/Krievija/#ekonomika>.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

fairly normal economic relations between Latvia and Russia, and there is no evidence of any “missing trade”.³¹⁹

4.6.2 Russia’s Investments in Latvia

Officially, Russia is far from being a dominant partner when it comes to investment in Latvia. The cumulative share of Russia’s FDI in Latvia declined from 20 per cent in the 1990s to a mere 3.5 per cent in 2010. Nonetheless, Russia’s influence on Latvia’s economy might be underestimated.³²⁰ Until the financial crisis of 2008, sectors such as energy, transport and heavy industry enjoyed a considerable amount of Russian investment. The crisis and overall improvements in political relations eased barriers for Russia’s companies running businesses in Latvia. After 2008, more Russian capital has been allocated to Latvia’s banking, food production and real estate sectors. A number of companies that have strategic significance for Latvia’s economy are based on Russian capital (Latvijas Krajbanka, Rigas Piena Kombinats, Valmieras Piens, etc.) or are relatively dependent on Russian capital (airBaltic).³²¹

Latvijas Krajbanka was a commercial bank in Latvia that was closed by the Financial and Capital Market Commission in November 2011 because it was found to have a shortage of funds. The bank was owned by a Russian citizen, Vladimir Antonov, whose poorly thought-out management caused a loss of savings for a large portion of Latvia’s population. This case cannot be related to the Russian government as the problems were caused by Antonov’s attitude to running the bank. Rigas Piena Kombinats and Valmieras Piens produce dairy products and have been owned by Russian businessmen since 2011. Both have leading roles in the sector in Latvia. In circumstances where Lithuanian milk producers create tough competition for Latvian producers, the new owners aimed to boost sales of Latvian dairy products in Russia and the CIS countries, which could benefit the dairy sector in Latvia as a whole. A 2012 study by CEEPS and the Latvian Institute of International Affairs (LIIA) stated that: “if the deal would really boost the export of Latvian milk products eastward, this case may serve as an example of how Russian investment can contribute to solving structural problems in some sectors of the Latvian economy”.³²²

³¹⁹ Muiznieks N. [ed.] (2006): *Latvian-Russian Relations: Domestic and International Dimensions*. Riga: LU, p.107.

³²⁰ Spruds A., [ed.], (2012): *The Economic Presence of Russia and Belarus in the Baltic States: Risks and Opportunities*, Riga: CEEPS, LIIA, p. 294.

³²¹ Zeltins A., (2012): Business Interests in the Latvia-Russia economic relationship, in Spruds A. [ed.], *The Economic Presence of Russia and Belarus in the Baltic States: Risks and Opportunities*. Riga: CEEPS, LIIA, p.139.

³²² *Ibid.*, p.135.

In 2012, accumulated FDI from Russia in Latvia was EUR 285.3 million, while Latvia's accumulated FDI in Russia was EUR 32.6 million.³²³ The biggest share of investment from Russia was in the energy sector (27.4 per cent), while 26.3 per cent of Russia's investment in Latvia was in financial services and 14.9 per cent in real estate.³²⁴ In comparison, Russia's FDI in the industrial sector accounted for only 9.4 per cent of total investment.³²⁵

The biggest companies/investors in Latvia's economy are major companies in the energy sector and financial services. Cooperation in the energy sector has its origins in the connected oil and natural gas infrastructure of Soviet times, while Latvia's membership of the EU has stimulated the interest of Russian banks.³²⁶ According to official statistics, the share of Russia's cumulative investment in Latvia is about 3.5 per cent of total investment. With the exception of Latvijas Gaze, Russian investors have played a minor role in the privatization process in Latvia. At the same time, there is some indirect evidence to suggest that investment flows between Russia and Latvia are partly conducted through third countries.³²⁷

The attempt by the Russian company Sveza to buy Latvijas Finieris is a recent case of undesirable investment from Russia in the light of its economic strategy towards the Baltic states. Sveza is a private company that is considered to be the world leader in birch plywood manufacturing. The company is co-owned by Leveret Holding (Austria), a closed joint stock company, Severgrupp, FINKOM Ltd and Russian citizens.³²⁸ The Deputy Director General of the Sveza Group company, Sveza-Les, is Boris Frenkel, who worked for the Russian government as assistant to the prime minister in 2000–2006.³²⁹ Shareholders in Latvijas Finieris argued that the Russian company had no intention of developing infrastructure or improving its financial performance, but was aiming to move

³²³ See *Latvian and Russian bilateral relations*, <http://www.am.gov.lv/lv/Arpolitika/divpusejas-attiecibas/Krievija/#ekonomika>.

³²⁴ See *Latvia's Economic Cooperation with Russia*, http://www.liaa.gov.lv/uploaded_files/EKSPORTETAJIEM%20sadala/Krievija/2012.03.LV_Krievija_ekon_LIAA.pdf.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Zeltins A. (2012): 'Business Interests in the Latvia-Russia economic relationship', in Spruds A., [ed.], *The Economic Presence of Russia and Belarus in the Baltic States: Risks and Opportunities*. Riga: CEEPS, LIIA, p. 119.

³²⁷ Jakobsons A. (2012): 'The economic dimension of bilateral relationships between Latvia, Russia and Belarus – past and present', in Spruds A. [ed.], *The Economic Presence of Russia and Belarus in the Baltic States: Risks and Opportunities*. Riga: CEEPS, LIIA, p. 31.

³²⁸ See "Sveza postuchit po derevu", 12 July 2013, *Kommersant*, <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2231401>.

³²⁹ See Frenkel, Boris, *Deloiaia Rossia*, <http://www.deloros.ru/main.php?mid=249&doc=24202>.

Latvian technologies to Russia.³³⁰ Sveza intended to buy the brand and gain access to the EU market, but to move manufacturing to Russia.

Latvijas Finieris is an important company to the entire Latvian economy. The business magazines *Capital*, *IBS Prudentia* and *NASDAQ OMX Riga* ranked Latvijas Finieris 27th on a list of the 101 most valuable Latvian companies.³³¹ From its start as a plywood production company, Latvijas Finieris has grown into a substantial group with 18 subsidiaries, seven of which are located in Latvia. Today, Latvijas Finieris products are sold in more than 50 countries. Latvijas Finieris buys timber and logs from the Latvian forestry industry. Thus, its transfer to Russia would affect the entire forestry industry in Latvia. The Latvian government, in the form of the company JSC Latvia's State Forests,³³² bought a considerable stake in Latvijas Finieris to prevent the takeover. This move was successful in keeping its ownership under Latvian control. However, this is an exceptional case, as the Latvian government and state-owned enterprises cannot interfere in every attempt to take over a Latvian enterprise of strategic importance.³³³

4.6.3 The Banking Sector

The Latvian banking sector has been an object of active Russian interest in recent years. Latvian banks can provide access to Western financial markets for Russian companies. A number of financial experts in Latvia have described Russian interest in the Latvian banking sector as an invasion, but sometimes Russian capital inflows into Latvia's finance sector are assessed positively. In 2005, two Latvian banks, VEF Banka and Multibanka, faced accusations of money laundering. Since this scandal, Latvia's banking system has become more stable and transparent.³³⁴

When analysing the role of Russian bankers in Latvia, it is important to take into account their relationship with the Russian political elite. Since 2008, Severny Morskoy Putj (SMP), formerly Multibanka, has been owned by Arkady and Boris Rotenberg from St Petersburg. Arkady Rotenberg has been an acquaintance of Vladimir Putin for more than 40 years, since they attended the same judo training group.³³⁵ In the summer of 2011, Andrei Molchanov, a billionaire from St Petersburg, acquired Latvijas Biznesa Banka. Some weeks

³³⁰ See "Sveza implements wild capitalism" *Financenet.lv*, 24 October 2010, http://www.financenet.lv/viedokli/351216-sveza_isteno_rupju_mezoniga_kapitalisma_uzbrukumu.

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² See Latvijas valsts meži (*JSC Latvia's State Forest*).

³³³ Zeltins A., (2012): op. cit. p. 135.

³³⁴ Ibid., p. 130.

³³⁵ Interview with Arkady Rotenberg, *Kommersant*, April 28, 2010, <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/1361793>.

later he was fined LVL 80,000 by the Financial and Capital Market Commission of Latvia for procedural breaches in the takeover process. Molchanov is also a member of the Federal Council of St Petersburg. In the early 1990s, his stepfather, Yuri Molchanov, was Putin's colleague on the St Petersburg City Council. Another Russian businessman, Igor Ciplakov, bought the US-owned GE Money Bank (currently Rigensis Bank), replacing US capital with Russian. Until 2007, he was a shareholder in Nomos Bank in Russia.³³⁶

Russian bankers perceive the Latvian banking sector as a fairly saturated market dominated by Scandinavian banks. Russian banks therefore focus on expanding their client base from Russia. According to Arvils Zeltins, the Rotenberg brothers are prominent business figures in Moscow and St Petersburg with good connections to Russia's political elite. This emphasizes that political connections are desirable when opening even a medium-sized bank in Latvia.³³⁷ None of them aim to develop a significant commercial structure in Latvia, but see Latvia as a window for financial transactions between Russia and the EU member states.³³⁸

Even though a number of bankers have links with Russia's political elite, one should not see Russian-owned banks in Latvia as political, but simply speak of a financial escape from Russia, passing through Latvian banks to other European countries. At worst, as in the case of Latvijas Krajbanka, which was purchased by Vladimir Antonov, funds from Russia should be seen as high-risk money. Andris Spruds, the director of the Latvian Institute of International Affairs, notes that "[s]ome positive experiences notwithstanding, Russian investment may be adventurist, speculative, or short-term, as the case of Latvijas Krajbanka in particular demonstrates".³³⁹

4.6.4 Political Risks Related to Economic Issues

When examining the political risks that may arise in the context of economic relations with Russia, Latvian anxiety mostly arises from two factors: Latvia's asymmetric economic dependence on Russia and the import of Russia's business culture. Karlis Bukovskis notes that: "the size of the Russian economy is asymmetric to Latvia's, and Russian businesses could acquire a significant part of the Baltic State's economy".³⁴⁰ Because part of the business elite in Russia is

³³⁶ Zeltins A. (2012): op. cit. p. 132.

³³⁷ Ibid., p.133.

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ Spruds A., [ed.] (2012): *The Economic Presence of Russia and Belarus in the Baltic States: Risks and Opportunities*, Riga: CEEPS, LIIA, p. 296.

³⁴⁰ Bukovskis K., (2012): 'State institution, interdependence and perceptions in Latvia's economic relation with the Russian Federation and Belarus', in Spruds A. [ed.], *The Economic Presence of Russia and Belarus in the Baltic States: Risks and Opportunities*. Riga: CEEPS, LIIA, p. 113.

connected with Russia's political elite, there is a fear that under certain conditions excessive economic dependence could be leveraged to achieve Russia's political goals in Latvia.

Zeltins points out that Russian capital tends to promote an "offshoring of Latvia". Transparency issues could also be highlighted in the light of the corruption associated with particular investments. Transparency International published the *Bribe Payers Index* in 2011. It states that Chinese and Russian firms are the most likely to pay bribes while operating abroad.³⁴¹ Another characteristic of Russian business culture is that a successful business almost cannot exist without the participation of political mediators – big business goes hand in hand not only with bribes but also with politics.³⁴²

One way for Russia to support its interests in Latvia is to establish relations with economic groupings that have close ties with political parties in Latvia. Before the parliamentary elections of 2010, three political parties had direct links with the Latvian tycoons or oligarchs who, according to press reports, had deep business interests in Russian businesses in Latvia or Russia itself.³⁴³ If political processes are affected by private business interests, there is the potential for political corruption. Meanwhile, if political influence is used to promote Russia's (or its businesses') interests in exchange for personal gain, this should be treated as a concern for national security. Safeguards and restrictions at the institutional level are sometimes avoided because of the close links between politicians and the economic elite, thereby intensifying the risk of corruption and damaging the role of institutions in economic interactions.³⁴⁴

4.7 Energy Policy and the Gazprom Lobby

Latvia's dependence on Russian natural gas supplies makes its economy vulnerable and limits its foreign policy options. Nonetheless, in relations between Latvia and Russia there have been no serious conflicts connected to energy issues.

After the economic crisis in Russia in 1998, Latvia quickly redirected its external trade towards the EU member states, but this was not possible in the energy sector. Latvia, like the other Baltic states, is an energy island that is still separated from the EU energy supply network. This is true for both electricity

³⁴¹ Transparency International (2011): *Bribe Payers Index 2011*, October 2011, http://www.transparency.org/news/pressrelease/20111025_launch_bpi_2011.

³⁴² Spruds A., [ed.] (2012): *The Economic Presence of Russia and Belarus in the Baltic States: Risks and Opportunities*, Riga: CEEPS, LIIA, p. 296.

³⁴³ Pelens G. & Potjomkina D. (2012): 'The Political implications of Latvia's economic relations with Russia and Belarus', in Spruds A., (ed.), *The Economic Presence of Russia and Belarus in the Baltic States: Risks and Opportunities*, Riga: CEEPS, LIIA, p.187.

³⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 188.

and natural gas supplies. The construction of a second power unit at the Riga TEC-2 thermoelectric power plant, completed in December 2013, means that Latvia is now capable of fully providing itself with electricity. Although the new capacity from TEC-2 makes it possible not to buy electricity from neighbouring countries, it generates electricity using natural gas purchased from Russia. This situation is not satisfactory from an energy security perspective. There is a risk that the lack of alternatives might be used in pricing policy and as a means of political pressure.

The Latvian government has so far not been very active in searching for alternative natural gas suppliers. One reason for this is that the 20-year agreement between Latvia's national gas company, Latvijas Gaze (LG), and Gazprom, signed in 1997, specifies that Gazprom has a monopoly over the natural gas infrastructure and supplies to Latvia. The contract runs to 2017. Until then, it grants LG exclusive rights to purchase gas, and to ensure gas transmission, storage, distribution and sales. A major factor inhibiting Latvia's gas market liberalization is the Gazprom lobby.³⁴⁵

Since the final privatization of LG in 2002, the company has been owned by three major shareholders: Gazprom (34 per cent), E.ON Ruhrgas International GmbH (47.2 per cent) and Itera Latvia (16 per cent). Itera Latvia allegedly sells gas from Turkmenistan to Gazprom Export – a daughter company of Gazprom. Latvia's plans for the liberalization of the gas market are consistently opposed by Gazprom and Itera Latvia, despite the fact that such reforms are needed to bring Latvia in line with EU directives known as the Third Energy Package (TEP). Latvia has limited control over its natural gas sector and its regulations cannot prevent a monopoly. Only implementation of the TEP can resolve this situation.³⁴⁶

4.7.1 Gas Market Liberalization in Latvia

The issues of energy security and Latvia's excessive dependence on Russian gas and oil became particularly important topics in the light of the Russian-Ukrainian gas conflict of 2006–2007 and during the 2009 gas dispute. The discussion sprang up again in the spring of 2013, when the requirement to implement the EU TEP provided a chance to liberalize Latvia's gas market. According to the TEP, Latvia had to liberalize its gas market by April 2014. Latvijas Gaze should split its gas transportation and storage functions from its gas supply and marketing. In addition, market participants must be given access to pipeline networks.

³⁴⁵ See "CPB: Gazprom has been preparing for hindering of natural gas market liberalisation in Latvia", *TVNET/BNS*, 8 March 2013, http://www.tvnet.lv/zinas/latvija/456445-sab_gazprom_ilgi_gatavojies_pret_gazes_tirgus_liberalizaciju_latvija.

³⁴⁶ Zeltins A. (2012): op. cit. p.129.

The implementation of the TEP could make the Baltic gas market more resistant to possible Russian political pressure and discriminatory pricing policies. However, in contrast to their Lithuanian colleagues, Latvian politicians have been hesitant about implementing the TEP and argued that Latvia needs alternative gas supplies in place before it can deal with the infrastructure monopoly. The opinions of politicians go hand in hand with the call by Latvijas Gaze to postpone the resolution of the issue until there are realistic alternative gas supplies from other countries. Such an alternative to Russian gas could arise only after the opening of the Lithuanian-Polish gas pipeline or the construction of a liquefied natural gas terminal, about which the Baltic states and Finland currently cannot agree.

The issue of gas market liberalization should, according to EU rules, be resolved by the government. Nonetheless, on 27 February 2013, the Economic, Agricultural, Environmental and Regional Policy Committee of the Saeima decided to move amendments to the Energy Law. The amendments proposed postponing gas market liberalization until the creation of efficient interconnections with third countries in addition to Estonia, Lithuania and Finland. From the discussions surrounding this decision, it was evident that not only traditional Russian supporters such as Harmony Centre, but also the prime minister's party, Unity, favoured a slower pace for market liberalization.

In the media, some argued that Harmony Centre might have struck an agreement with Unity, offering not to push for a referendum on the adoption of the euro. Janis Urbanovics of Harmony Centre denied that there was any kind of agreement between HC and Unity, claiming that the proposal for the suspension of gas market liberalization had no linkage with lifting Harmony Centre's calls for a referendum on euro adoption. The web portal Pietiek.com wrote that several sources unofficially confirmed that the LG shareholder and gas supplier Gazprom had made certain offers in different formats. Gazprom was said to have offered Latvia a 20 per cent discount on gas supplies in exchange for assurances that Latvia would postpone gas market liberalization beyond 2014.³⁴⁷ The media associated the ruling party's stance on gas market liberalization issues with Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis meeting with Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev in April 2013. Dombrovskis, however, explained that until Latvia has alternative gas suppliers, the liberalization would exist "on paper"

³⁴⁷ See Margevica A. (2013): "Agreement with Gazprom and Dombrovskis-Medvedev meeting", *Pietiek.com*, http://www.pietiek.com/raksti/no_vienosanas_ar_gazprom_atkariga_gan_gazes_cena_gan_dombrovskis_un_medvedeva_iespejama_tiksanas.

only. He said that even in the case of market liberalization, the Latvian choice would be “to buy from Gazprom or to buy from Gazprom until 2017”.³⁴⁸

The centrepiece of the discussion about reducing Latvia’s dependence on Gazprom is the question of whether there are genuine alternative natural gas supplies. The most popular argument for opponents of gas market reform is that Latvia should not tease Gazprom with theoretical liberalization, and then be forced to accept higher gas prices and international litigation because there are no alternative suppliers in the near future.³⁴⁹ Gazprom has already made unofficial hints that it could take legal action against Latvia if necessary.³⁵⁰ However, Lithuania has a different position: it is working hard to create alternative solutions by constructing an LNG terminal LNGT in Klaipeda.³⁵¹

The Latvian government has stated that its priority is a common regional LNG terminal for the Baltic states, which would be co-financed by the European Commission. Strategically, the LNG terminal project aims to start importing LNG from other countries, which would end Gazprom’s monopoly on natural gas deliveries to the Baltic states.³⁵² However, the Lithuanian government was not prepared to wait for the construction of the regional terminal and launched its own local project. At first, Latvia tried to persuade its neighbours to build a common LNG terminal in Latvia, but this attempt failed in large part due to a lack of confidence in Lithuania and Estonia, which believe that Latvia has traditionally succumbed to Gazprom’s lobby.³⁵³

Thus far, the Baltic countries have failed to reach an agreement on the location for a common LNG terminal. The European Commission had to step in as an arbitrator. EU involvement should help to base the decision on an assessment of the project’s economically viability. Itera Latvia has hinted about its desire to participate in the construction of the terminal, but it is clear that this proposal would not be supported by any of the Baltic states. The chief of Itera Latvia, Juris Savickis, has said that the terminal project is of interest to a group of like-minded individuals, which includes Savickis but not Gazprom or Itera. Such a group of like-minded people, however, would not escape suspicion of Russian involvement in the project.

³⁴⁸ See “Dombrovskis: Liberalisation of natural gas market is geopolitical issue”, *LETA*, 4 March, 2013, available at http://financenet.tvnet.lv/viedokli/455800-premjers_gazes_tirgus_liberalizacija_ir_geopolitisks_jautajums.

³⁴⁹ Brauna A. (2014): “Gas market. Is it really opened?”, *IR*, 2-8 January 2014, pp.18–20.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁵¹ See “Lithuanian President: Klaipeda LNG Terminal to Be Launched by End of 2014”, *LNG World News*, 5 November 2013, <http://www.lngworldnews.com/lithuanian-president-klaipeda-lng-terminal-to-be-launched-by-end-of-2014/#.UtuSLrSxXIU>.

³⁵² See “Dombrovskis: Liberalisation of natural gas market is geopolitical issue”, *LETA*, 4 March, 2013, available at http://financenet.tvnet.lv/viedokli/455800-premjers_gazes_tirgus_liberalizacija_ir_geopolitisks_jautajums.

³⁵³ Brauna A. (2014): *op. cit.*

The issue of the liberalization of the natural gas market in Latvia remains unresolved. The gas monopoly results in high energy prices in Latvia, which is a sort of a duty that people in Latvia are being forced to pay to a state that uses gas as an instrument of geopolitical influence. Latvia remains isolated from European gas and electricity markets and continues to pay higher prices for energy, thereby reducing its competitiveness.

4.8 Conclusions

Although more than 20 years has passed since the Soviet Union collapsed and Latvia regained its independence, Russia's regional ambitions continue to affect social and political processes in Latvia. Soft power has become a recognized tool of influence. A big part of this is the Compatriots Policy, which has been increasingly important since 2006–2007 when a number of federal programmes were launched to promote and consolidate the Russian diaspora and use it as a means to further foreign policy objectives.

Russia's Compatriots Policy in Latvia is being implemented in several directions: to increase the popularity of the Russian language and fight for its status, to promote Russian culture and its presence in Latvia, for the dissemination of Russia's official views on history, to promote the Orthodox Church among Russian speakers, to support compatriots on legal matters and support the Russian-language media in Latvia. These aims are implemented through financial support for Russian NGOs in Latvia from *Russkii mir*, funding several NGOs from the Russian Embassy in Latvia, including those run by Harmony Centre or For Human Rights in United Latvia, and organizing various conferences and seminars in the Moscow House in Riga.

Among the most problematic issues is the propagation of biased historical viewpoints and discrimination against Latvia in the international arena by blaming Latvia for the mistreatment of Russian-speaking Latvians. A recent example is a report on the human rights situation in the European Union published by the Russian Foreign Ministry in January 2014.³⁵⁴ The radically divergent interpretations of historic events by Latvians and Russians living in Latvia hinder the social integration process and increase political loyalty to Russia's government and the Russian authorities instead of the Republic of Latvia.

Russia's foreign policy implementers are trying to influence the political process in Latvia using contacts between the Russian media, politicians, political advisers and politicians from Harmony Centre, as well as NGOs in Latvia which are

³⁵⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia (2014): Report on the human rights situation in the European Union, 14 January 2014, <http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/nsdgpch.nsf/03c344d01162d351442579510044415b/44257b100055de8444257c60004a6491!OpenDocument>.

actively involved in socio-political processes. The goal of this influence is to foster a change of direction in Latvia's foreign policy in favour of Russia's interests and strengthening Russia's regional influence. The concept of a "Russian world" is being promoted in order to keep Russian-speaking people in Latvia within Russia's intellectual, cultural, media and values space. The Russian world links the Compatriots Policy and the implementation of Russia's soft power to a wider context, and in addition involves the Russian Orthodox Church as an actor in public diplomacy.

Russia's television channels are very popular among Russians living in Latvia. Moreover, commercial Latvian television channels often broadcast programmes produced in Russia that are not only entertaining, but also ideologically saturated. Local Latvian commercial television channels are mostly guided by commercial rather than political motives. Russian television series are often cheaper than those produced in EU countries. Unlike the majority of local television channels in Latvia, the most popular Russian television channels available in Latvia are under the control of Russia's authorities and distribute one-sided information about political processes in Russia and abroad.

The sheer volume of Russian advertisements in Riga shows just how intensive are cultural connections between Russia and Latvia. These are asymmetrical due to the size of the two countries – many Russian musicians, comedians and actors perform on stage in Riga. According to Joseph Nye's theories, popular culture is a source of soft power. Under certain conditions and with a mastery of the use of public diplomacy, it can be used to increase Russia's attractiveness and influence processes in Latvian society. Survey data show that in the eyes of Russians living in Latvia, Russia's attractiveness has increased in recent years. Among young Russians in Latvia there is a growing positive attitude towards the Soviet era. This can be explained by the fact that since 2005, Russia's television channels have been portraying the Soviet-era in a very positive light. The "securitization" of history within Russia's National Security Strategy to 2020 requires vigilance regarding the popularization of Russia's interpretation of history in Latvia and other neighbouring countries.

Latvia has pursued fairly pragmatic relations with Russia. The economization of foreign policy has borne fruit, and overall economic relations with Russia can be considered good. The volume of mutual trade has been growing since 2004. However, concerns remain about the lack of transparency surrounding investments from Russia. There is reason to believe that the real volume of investment from Russia is higher than the official statistics show, as quite often incoming investment from countries such as Cyprus and the Netherlands has its origins in Russia. Russian investment mostly goes into real estate and the financial services sector, which is not the best scenario for the sustainable development of the Latvian economy. Concerns persist about the influence of Russian business culture and corruption caused by investors from Russia. These

factors are not related to Russia's political goals, but are the consequences of a specific way of doing business.

Important issues surrounding Latvia's energy security remain unresolved, as Latvia still purchases all its natural gas from Gazprom. Discussions on gas market liberalization have shown the influence of Gazprom lobbyists on politicians from the ruling coalition. Russia is and will remain an important partner in the Latvian economy and an influential regional player.

There is no evidence that Russia's non-military influence and soft power could drastically turn Latvia's foreign policy away from further and ever deeper integration into the EU, NATO and other Western structures. However, Latvia's vulnerability to ethnic issues and increasingly asymmetrical economic dependence on Russia, as well as the large presence of Russian state-controlled media are risks that under certain circumstances could affect its internal political development and foreign policy choices.

5 Russian Soft Power and Non-Military Influence: The View From Lithuania

Dr Nerijus Maliukevičius, Institute for International Relations, Vilnius University

5.1 Introduction

In August 2013, Lithuania marked 20 years since the withdrawal of the Soviet Army from its territory. On this occasion, President Dalia Grybauskaitė stated that “speaking with one voice, Lithuania secured a historic victory without using arms. [...] This event is a history lesson on how much countries achieve when at a critical moment their citizens are united by principles one cannot violate, sell and betray”.³⁵⁵ This statement underlines how much the President cherished the political unity of that time and the non-military path to Lithuanian independence. On the other hand, it illustrates the anxiety that the lack of a similar political mobilization in contemporary Lithuanian politics generates. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Kremlin has lost direct political and military control of the region but, during the decades of Lithuanian independence, it has begun to master the tools of non-military influence by exploiting the lingering weaknesses of Lithuania: growing internal political divides, social and economic discontent, problems related to the ethnic Polish and Russian minorities, and prevailing energy and information dependencies. Russia’s non-military pressure and the Kremlin’s desire to use and abuse Lithuanian political and social divides became particularly evident in the second half of 2013, when Lithuania took up the Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The realization that a non-military strategy in the Baltic states was important for Russia built up gradually. Back in 1992, *Diplomaticheskii Vestnik*, a magazine published by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, set out the so-called Karaganov Doctrine. Sergei Karaganov – an expert and long-time chairman of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy (SVOP) – encouraged the use of Russian compatriots for foreign policy purposes in Russia’s so-called near abroad.³⁵⁶ This doctrine was based on an interest in maintaining Russian influence in the Baltic states. This was to be achieved by hindering the

³⁵⁵ See “Lithuania marks 20 years since withdrawal of the occupation army”, *Lithuanian Tribune*, 2013-08-31, <http://www.lithuaniantribune.com/49197/lithuania-marks-20-years-since-withdrawal-of-the-occupation-army-201349197>.

³⁵⁶ Karaganov S. (1992): Problemy interesov rossysko-oriyentirovannogo naseleniya v blizhnem zarubezhye, *Diplomaticheskyy vestnik* (№ 21-22)

integration of ethnic minorities in the Baltic states and by facilitating the ability of Russian-speakers to stay in the near abroad, in the hope of using them as a tool for implementing Russia's interests. The concepts of the Compatriots Policy and the near abroad became the driving force behind Russian foreign policy in the Baltic states. However, when Vladimir Putin came to power, he started to concentrate on the so-called humanitarian dimension of Russian foreign policy in the region. This idea was based on the principle of controlling the post-Soviet region by non-military, but nonetheless quite aggressive means of shady investments, energy blackmail and media manipulation.³⁵⁷ As is noted above, the outline of this policy was included in the 2008 Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation.³⁵⁸ The 2013 equivalent states that Russia sees its goals as "protecting the rights and legitimate interests of compatriots living abroad."³⁵⁹ The important aspect of the new Foreign Policy concept is that it also emphasizes the use of soft power.

These Russian foreign policy developments have affected Lithuanian political and security thinking too. The 2012 Lithuania National Security Strategy specifies those external risks, dangers and threats which must be given particular attention. Among them are, in order of priority: (a) economic and energy dependence, or dominance of the economic entities of other states in the economic sectors of strategic importance to national security, that is, energy, transport, finance and credit; (b) negligence of international nuclear energy safety standards in the development of nuclear energy in the region, (c) efforts to exert pressure on the political system, military capabilities, social and economic life, and cultural identity of the Republic of Lithuania; (d) information attacks, actions by state and non-state entities in the international and national information space aimed at spreading biased and misleading information, shaping public opinion in respect of the national security interests of the Republic of Lithuania; and (e) cyber attacks.³⁶⁰ Lithuania's intelligence institutions – the State Security Department and Second Investigation Department under the Ministry of Defence – have recently begun to publish annual reviews. In the 2012 review, the Lithuanian State Security Department specifically states that some countries – with Russia in mind – are not just using traditional power to promote their national interests. Lithuanian security risks include: "the control of economic and energy resources, the creation and support of influence groups in Lithuania, [...] active informational, ideological policy

³⁵⁷ Pelnens, Gatis [ed.] (2009): *The "Humanitarian Dimension" of Russian Foreign Policy toward Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and the Baltic States*, Riga.

³⁵⁸ See *The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation*, (2008-07-12), <http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/text/docs/2008/07/204750.shtml>.

³⁵⁹ See *The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation*, (2013-02-12) <http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/text/docs/2008/07/204750.shtml>.

³⁶⁰ See *National Security Strategy of Lithuania* (2012-06-26), http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=433830.

and ‘history rewriting’, [...] fostering ethnic and political discord, weakening the integration of ethnic minorities into Lithuanian society, promoting distrust in the democratic political system of Lithuania, [and] supporting specific political forces in the country’.³⁶¹ The review specifically warned that all these aggressive means of non-military pressure would intensify during the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. It is no surprise that, faced with such complex Russian non-military pressure, the Baltic states are gradually establishing NATO centres of excellence in areas where the respective governments perceive the security risks to be most serious. In 2008 a NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence was set up in Tallinn, and in 2013 a NATO Energy Security Centre of Excellence was established in Vilnius. A NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence was established in Riga in 2014.

This chapter outlines Lithuania’s experience of Russia’s non-military influence and soft power in a number of areas: (a) the Russian authorities’ connections with Lithuanian political parties and organizations; (b) the Compatriots Policy, its goals and consequences for Lithuania; (c) the Russian media presence and activities in the Lithuanian information space; and (d) energy security dilemmas and economic pressure in the context of the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Additional attention is paid to the complex Russian pressures that Lithuania faced during its 2013 Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The research draws its conclusions from past studies in this field, such as the Lithuanian geo-cultural values survey,³⁶² the multinational study on the “humanitarian dimension” of Russian foreign policy,³⁶³ and an analysis of Russian soft power.³⁶⁴ The chapter traces developments that have taken place in Lithuania since those studies were concluded.

5.2 Russia and Lithuanian Political Parties and Organizations

Lithuania stands out as an exception from the other Baltic states in terms of the relations of Lithuanian political parties and their linkages with the Russian authorities. Latvia and Estonia both have significant Russian minorities, which demonstrate effective political mobilization and organized electoral behaviour in support of Russian-speakers’ political parties. Strong political ties with Russia

³⁶¹ See *Yearly review of the State Security Department (2013-06-07)*
http://www.vsd.lt/vsd_ataskaita_20130607.pdf.

³⁶² Ramonaitė, A., Maliukevičius N., Degutis, M.(2007): *Tarp Rytų ir Vakarų: Lietuvos visuomenės geokultūrinės nuostatos*. Vilnius: Versus aureus.

³⁶³ Pelens, Gatis [ed.] (2009): op. cit.

³⁶⁴ Maliukevičius, N. (2012): *(Re)Constructing Russian Soft Power in Post-Soviet Region*. Vilnius: VU TSPMI.

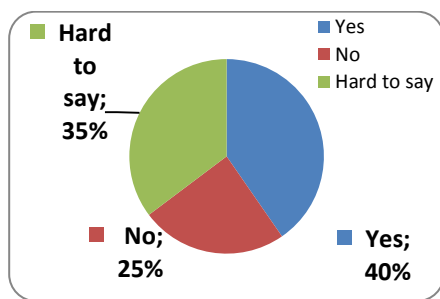
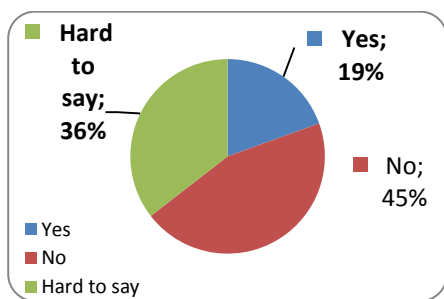
and its political organizations are perceived positively by the Russian-speakers in these countries. As is noted above, the Centre Party in Estonia even has a cooperation agreement with the pro-Kremlin ruling party in Russia, United Russia.³⁶⁵ In Lithuania, the political mobilization of Russian-speakers is quite weak and is mostly represented by two parties: the Union of Russians and the Russian Alliance. On the other hand, a strong Polish political party – the Electoral Action of Poles (EAP) – plays an important role in the Lithuanian political landscape.

Political ties with Russia are a delicate issue in Lithuanian politics, as is reflected in the diagrams below. Political parties, political organizations and NGOs therefore try to keep a low profile on any such relations. On the other hand, other political parties deliberately use anti-Russian rhetoric or accuse political opponents of such ties.³⁶⁶ It is difficult to analyse or rationally discuss the connections between Lithuanian political organizations and the Russian authorities in such an environment.

Diagram 4: Ties with Russia or USA and potential effects on electoral behaviour³⁶⁷

Say you have a favourite party/politician for whom you plan to vote and you are informed that this party/politician has close ties with Russia. Would you still vote for this party/politician?

Say you have a favourite party/politician for whom you plan to vote and you are informed that this party/politician has close ties with the USA. Would you still vote for this party/politician?



³⁶⁵ Pelnens, Gatis [ed.] (2009): op. cit. p. 69.

³⁶⁶ See “A. Paulauskas apie pasikeitusį požiūrį į Uspaskichą: buvo noro kerštauti”, *Lrt.lt* (2013-10-29), http://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/28342/a._paulauskas_apie_pasikeitusi_poziuri_i_v._uspaski_cha_buvo_noro_kerstauti.

³⁶⁷ Ainė Ramonaitė, Nerijus Maliukevičius, Mindaugas Degutis, *Tarp Rytų ir Vakarų: Lietuvos visuomenės geokultūrinės nuostatos*. Versus Aureus, 2007.

The Russian diaspora is a potentially strong factor in Russian policy not only in the post-Soviet space, but also globally. It is estimated that there are 30 million Russians living outside Russian territory.³⁶⁸ In the Baltic states alone, there are over one million Russians. However, Lithuania – the biggest of the Baltic states by population – has the smallest Russian minority. According to the latest census, there are about 177,000 Russians in Lithuania,³⁶⁹ some 324,000 in Estonia³⁷⁰ and about 531,000 in Latvia.³⁷¹ This means that Russia potentially has a very strong political ally in Latvia and Estonia, but that the situation is different in Lithuania. The Russian minority is not even the largest minority in the country. There are about 200 000 Poles in Lithuania.

Table 4: Population of Lithuania, by ethnicity, statistical indicator and year³⁷²

	1979	1989	2001	2011
Total				
Population at the beginning of the year (000)	3 391.5	3 674.8	3 484.0	3 043.4
Percentage of total population	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Lithuanians				
Population at the beginning of the year (000)	2 712.2	2 924.3	2 907.3	2 561.3
Percentage of total population	80.0	79.6	83.5	84.1
Russians				
Population at the beginning of the year (000)	303.5	344.5	219.8	176.9
Percentage of total population	8.9	9.4	6.3	5.8
Poles				
Population at the beginning of the year (000)	247.0	258.0	235.0	200.3
Percentage of total population	7.3	7.0	6.7	6.6

It is not just the comparatively small and gradually shrinking size of the Russian minority that is important. There are no strong linkages between Russian policies and Lithuania's Russian-speaking community. Lithuania has not one, but several

³⁶⁸ Intervyu direktora Departamenta po rabote s sootchestvennikami MID Rossii A.V. Chepurina. "Vneshneekonomicheskiye svyazi" (March 2006).

³⁶⁹ See <http://www.stat.gov.lt/>.

³⁷⁰ See <http://www.stat.ee/>.

³⁷¹ See <http://www.csb.gov.lv/>.

³⁷² See Department of Statistics to the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, <http://www.stat.gov.lt/en/>.

competing Russian-speakers' political parties. If they were represented by a single party, the result might be different, but this fragmentation makes their electoral performance quite poor. In the 2008 parliamentary elections, the Union of Russians in Lithuania received only 11,357 votes. Many candidates from Russian political parties in Lithuania decided to join the lists of candidates of other parties for the parliamentary elections in 2012. Members of the Union of Russians in Lithuania joined the Labour Party – which was created in 2003 by Viktor Uspaskich, at the time a businessman in the gas sector – while members of the Russian Alliance cooperated with the EAP in the most recent parliamentary elections. This lack of civic mobilization among the Russians in Lithuania stands in sharp contrast to that of the Polish minority, which has its own strong political party – the above-mentioned EAP – and a strong leader, Voldemar Tomashevski, who was even a candidate for President in the 2009 elections and won a seat in the European Parliament in the same year. In the 2008 parliamentary elections, the EAP received 4.79 per cent of the votes, and in 2012 it achieved 5.83 per cent, securing eight seats in parliament and becoming a coalition partner in the government.³⁷³

In many ways, the Russian political agenda in Lithuania is often represented by the rhetoric and actions of the EAP and its leader. This could be explained by a statement by Aleksandr Dugin, a Russian expert on geopolitics who has a controversial image in the West but enjoys the attention of the Russian state media. In 1997, Dugin noted the following:

“[I]n Lithuania the main geopolitical partners of Eurasia are forces that insist on a non-Catholic political orientation – supporters of secular “social-democracy”, “neopagans”, “ethnocentrists”, protestant and Orthodox religious circles, and ethnic minorities. Ethnic tensions between Lithuanians and Poles are an especially valuable asset and should be used or, whenever possible, these tensions should be deepened”.³⁷⁴

It appears that the Kremlin is following Dugin's recommendation with respect to the Polish minority. In November 2013, the Lithuanian media leaked information from a secret report by the State Security Department, which stated that, among other risks to national security, representatives of the EAP visited the Presidential Directorate for Interregional Relations and Cultural Contacts with Foreign Countries in Moscow just before the 2012 parliamentary elections.³⁷⁵ From 2005 to 2007, this Directorate was headed by Modest Kolerov – now *persona non grata* in all the Baltic states because of the aggressive and disruptive actions of

³⁷³ See <http://www.vrk.lt/>.

³⁷⁴ Dugin A.G. (1997): *Osnovy geopolitiki*. M.: Arktogeya, p. 373.

³⁷⁵ See “Kubilius: The representatives of the Electoral Action of Poles visited Kremlin”, *Lithuanian Tribune* (2013-11-18), <http://www.lithuaniantribune.com/57102/kubilius-the-representatives-of-the-electoral-action-of-poles-visited-kremlin-201357102/>.

this institution in the region (see above).³⁷⁶ The main focus of the activities of the Directorate follows the recommendations laid down in the above-mentioned Karaganov Doctrine – to keep the ethnic tensions in the Baltic states high and use this as foreign policy leverage. In Latvia and Estonia the focus is on the Russian minority. In Lithuania, it is on the Polish minority: Voldemar Tomashevski was even a member of the public council of *Baltiskij Mir*, a leading magazine for Russian compatriots in the Baltic states.³⁷⁷

The Russian and Polish minorities are concentrated in certain regions in Lithuania (see below) and this is an important factor in municipal elections. The EAP has especially strong support in the capital and Vilnius county, where in some districts (e.g. Šalčininkai) Poles make up a significant majority. This situation even led to a sarcastic comment by Tomashevski when discussing Polish integration problems in Lithuania: “Lithuanians have to integrate in the Vilnius region, not vice versa”.³⁷⁸ Russian speakers’ political parties, such as the Russian Alliance, perform well in such cities as Klaipėda and Vilnius in cooperation with the EAP. The town of Visaginas is an exception. Even though there is a majority of Russians there, they usually vote for traditional Lithuanian parties, which are made up of Russian-speaking politicians in this city.

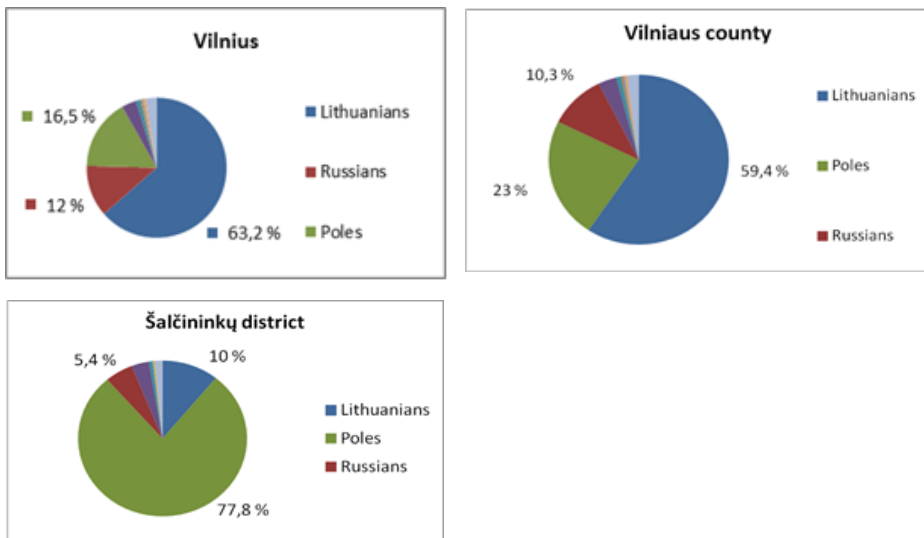
³⁷⁶ See “SVR nashli pomoshchnika” *Kommersant* (2012-09-05), <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2015359>.

³⁷⁷ <http://ruvek.ru/?module=issues&action=view&ids=4&id=198>.

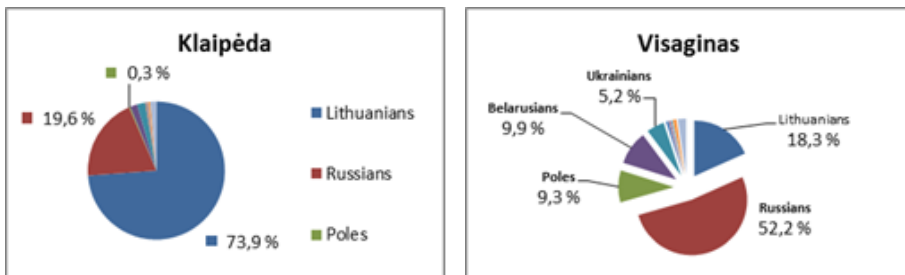
³⁷⁸ See <http://www.lrytas.lt/-13020769341301348003-v-toma%C5%A1evskis-tai-j%C5%ABs-turite-%C5%A1itame-kra%C5%A1te-integruotis-papildyta-13-val-34-min.htm#.UplGsQW01Y>.

Diagram 5: Ethnic strongholds³⁷⁹

Polish electoral strongholds (composition by ethnicity)



Russian electoral strongholds (composition by ethnicity)

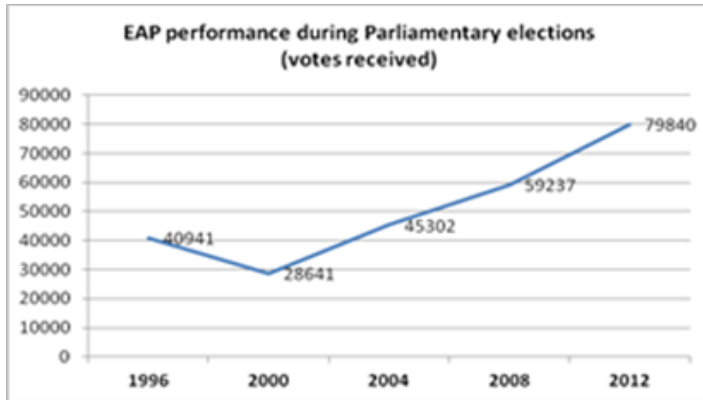


Since the 2012 parliamentary elections, when the EAP performed historically well, the party has been a member of the coalition government and has its say on questions of national strategic importance. In 2013 Voldemar Tomashevski was sceptical about Lithuania’s official goal of adopting the euro by 2015, and stated

³⁷⁹ See 2011 census data, <http://www.stat.gov.lt/en/>.

that the date needs to be reconsidered.³⁸⁰ His anti-euro stance was officially presented to the government's Coalition Council.

Diagram 6: EAP electoral performance³⁸¹



Its electoral performance was due not just to the traditional political mobilization of Poles, but also to other important factors. The EAP cooperated not only with one of the Russian-speakers' political parties – the Russian Alliance – but also with the Lithuanian People's Party, the party established by former Prime Minister Kazimira Prunskienė at the end of 2009 after the unsuccessful performance of her previous party – the Lithuanian Popular Peasants' Union. At the Lithuanian People's Party founding congress, its leaders openly declared an alliance with Russia, even describing the party as “pro-Russian”.³⁸² It was no surprise when Kazimiera Prunskienė soon went even further, adopting the path of the Russian speakers' parties in Latvia and Estonia in signing an official cooperation agreement with the Kremlin's United Russia Party. This agreement stated that “the parties agree to consult each other and exchange information about Lithuania's and Russia's situations, bilateral and international relations, and familiarize each other with their experience in various areas. Parties have agreed to regularly exchange delegations at various levels, organize expert meetings and other bilateral events, actively develop international and regional

³⁸⁰ See “EAPL leader: Lithuania could be last EU nation to adopt euro”, *Lithuanian Tribune* (2013-08-14), <http://www.lithuaniantribune.com/47551/eapl-leader-lithuania-could-be-last-eu-nation-to-adopt-euro-201347551/>.

³⁸¹ See *The Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Lithuania*, <http://www.vrk.lt>.

³⁸² See “A new political party openly declared its allegiance to Russia”, *Lithuanian Tribune* (2009-12-05), <http://www.lithuaniantribune.com/827/a-new-political-party-openly-declared-its-allegiance-to-russia-2009827/>.

relations”.³⁸³ When the Lithuanian People’s Party joined the list of candidates of the EAP for the 2012 parliamentary elections, the leader of United Russia, Boris Gryzlov, stated that now their partners in Lithuania “are part of the Government coalition”,³⁸⁴ although he failed to mention that no members of the Lithuanian People’s Party on this list were elected to parliament.

The other Russian speakers’ party, the Union of Russians in Lithuania, chose to cooperate with Viktor Uspaskich’s Labour Party, and in 2012 two members of this party were elected to parliament on the Labour Party electoral list. The Labour Party, and especially its leader, has declared good relations and close ties with Russia to be a priority ever since the party was established at the end of 2003. Uspaskich’s business experience includes joint gas projects with Gazprom and he brought this experience into a political asset – the Labour party, which he founded. The party performed very well in the 2004 and 2012 parliamentary elections, and is now part of the Coalition Government.

A party that does not even try to conceal its ties with Russia, but on the contrary makes its pro-Kremlin stance deliberately very public, is the Social People’s Front Party, headed by Algirdas Paleckis. He participates actively in the Kremlin’s organized network of so-called Anti-Fascist Committees in the Baltic states. Algirdas Paleckis has recently become very active in propagating the conspiracy theory transmitted by Russian television channels that during the events of January 1991, the Sąjūdis people started shooting at their own – not the Soviet soldiers.³⁸⁵ The Estonian authorities have declared Algirdas Paleckis *persona non grata*.³⁸⁶

In 2007, the Civic Society Institute conducted a public opinion survey in Lithuania that demonstrated that political parties such as the Labour Party and the Union of Lithuanian Peasants and Peoples had the biggest pro-Russian and pro-Soviet electoral sentiment among the Lithuanian population.³⁸⁷ It is therefore quite logical that some Russian-speakers’ parties chose to join them and later, when the Union of Lithuanian Peasants and Peoples was reorganized, to increase their cooperation with the Labour Party. Another Russian-speakers’ party – the Russian Alliance – chose to join the ranks of the EAP, which has demonstrated steady electoral performance and good potential for political mobilization over

³⁸³ See “Putin’s party fellow Prunskiene is unable to find political support in Lithuania”, *Lithuanian Tribune* (2011-10-09), <http://www.lithuaniatribune.com/8466/putins-party-fellow-prunskiene-is-unable-to-find-political-support-in-lithuania-20118466/>.

³⁸⁴ See “Gryzlov pozdravil s yubileyem lidera Narodnoy Partii Litvy” (2013-02-06), <<http://er.ru/news/2013/2/26/gryzlov-pozdravil-s-yubileem-lidera-narodnoj-partii-litvy/>>

³⁸⁵ See “Algirdas Paleckis found guilty of denying Soviet aggression”, *15min.lt* (2012-06-12), <http://www.15min.lt/en/article/in-lithuania/algirdas-paleckis-found-guilty-of-denying-soviet-aggression-525-225836>.

³⁸⁶ See “Frontas Party members refused entry to Estonia”, *Lithuanian Tribune* (2010-04-21), <http://www.lithuaniatribune.com/1550/frontas-party-members-refused-entry-to-estonia-20101550/>.

³⁸⁷ See Ramonaitė, A., Maliukevičius N., Degutis, M.(2007): op. cit.

the years. It is possible to compare the performance of the Russian-speakers' parties in Estonia and Latvia with the political behaviour of the EAP in one important respect: success depends on exploiting the divisions between the majority and the ethnic minorities in society, thereby escalating cultural conflicts and countering the integration process.

5.3 The Compatriots Policy in Lithuania

The Russian minority in Lithuania, although not so numerous as in Latvia and Estonia, is still significant. However, the concept of Russian compatriots does not limit itself to ethnic Russians living outside Russia. In Lithuania, the example of the EAP proves just that. The core of the concept is the Russian language: "to speak Russian means 'to think Russian', which in turn means 'to act Russian'".³⁸⁸ This idea was echoed by Vladimir Putin in his speech to the First Congress of Compatriots:

"The concept of *Russkii mir* has for centuries transcended the geographical borders of Russia and even the borders of the Russian ethnos. [...] Tens of millions of people who speak, think and – what is even more important – feel Russian live outside the borders of the Russian Federation".³⁸⁹

Taking just the Russian language as a factor, Russia has a considerable resource in Lithuania. At the time of the 2001 Census, 60.3 per cent of the population of Lithuania spoke Russian, whereas only 16.9 per cent spoke English. By the 2011 Census there had been a slight decrease in terms of command of Russian (60 per cent), but a significant increase in the command of English (30.4 per cent).³⁹⁰

Despite the significant increase in English language skills, Russian remains the dominant foreign language in Lithuania. However, interesting tendencies can be observed among different age groups (see below). There has been a dramatic shift among the younger population of Lithuania, more of whom speak English than Russian. This was just starting to show in the 2001 census results. In 2008, a survey by *Russkii mir* concluded that there was a crisis in Russian language competencies among young people. It included Lithuania among those post-Soviet countries where the Russian language was in the worst position, that is,

³⁸⁸ See *Russkii Mir: vosstanovleniye konteksta* (September 2001).

http://www.archipelag.ru/ru_mir/history/history01/shedrovitsky-russmir/

³⁸⁹ See *Vystupleniye na otkrytii Kongressa sootchestvennikov* (2001-10-11)

<http://archive.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2001/10/28660.shtml>.

³⁹⁰ See <http://www.stat.gov.lt/>.

where young people not only had poor knowledge of Russian, but also showed little inclination to learn it.³⁹¹

Diagram 7: Lithuanian Census 2001.³⁹²

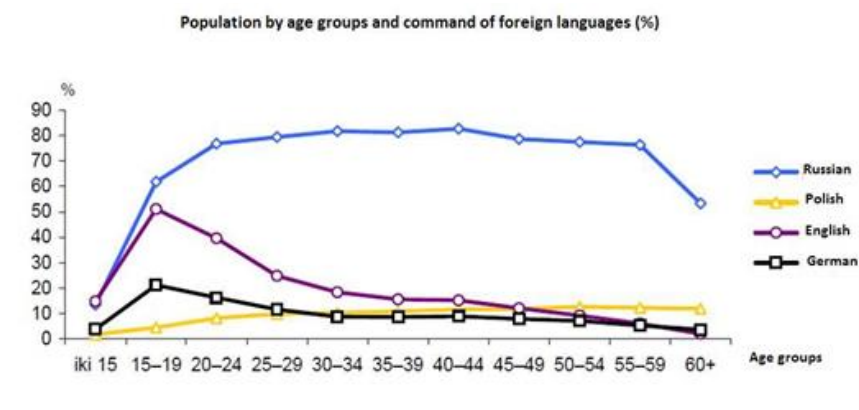
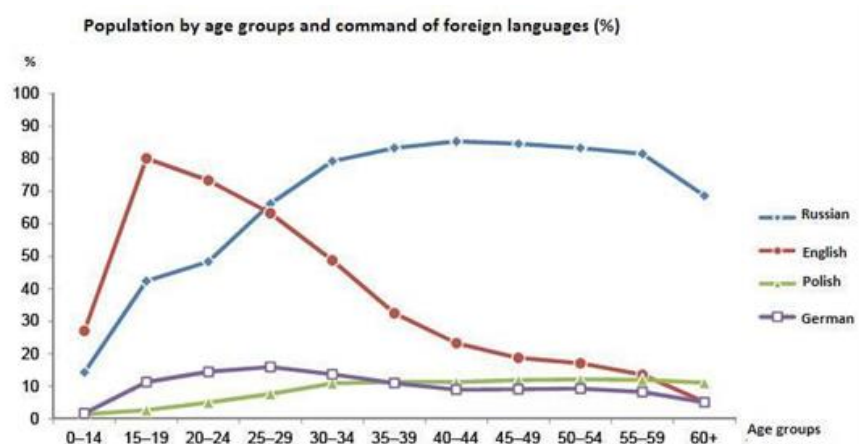


Diagram 8: Lithuanian Census 2011.³⁹³



Russia’s Compatriots Policy therefore does not limit itself to ethnic Russians. Ethnic Ukrainians, Belarusians, Poles and other minorities in Lithuania are

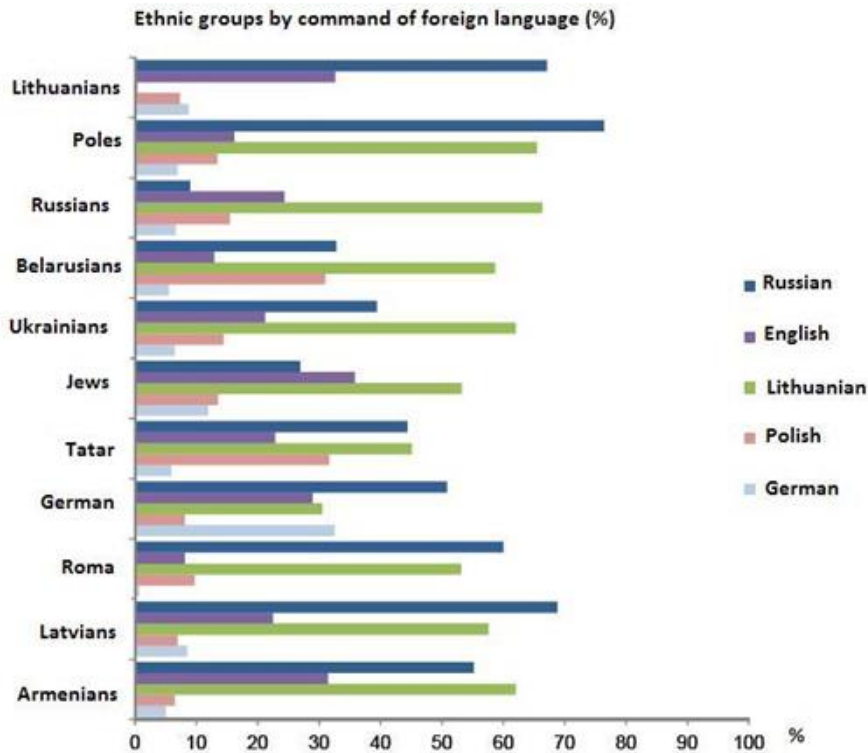
³⁹¹ See „*Russky yazyk v novykh nezavisimykh gosudarstvakh*”, www.fundeh.org/xml/t/library.xml?s=-1&lang=ru&nic=library.

³⁹² See Census 2001; Census 2011, <http://www.stat.gov.lt>.

³⁹³ Ibid.

interpreted as Russian compatriots because of their common fluency in the Russian language. Poles in Lithuania, for example, speak Russian better than Lithuanians (see Diagram 9).

Diagram 9: Command of languages among ethnic groups³⁹⁴

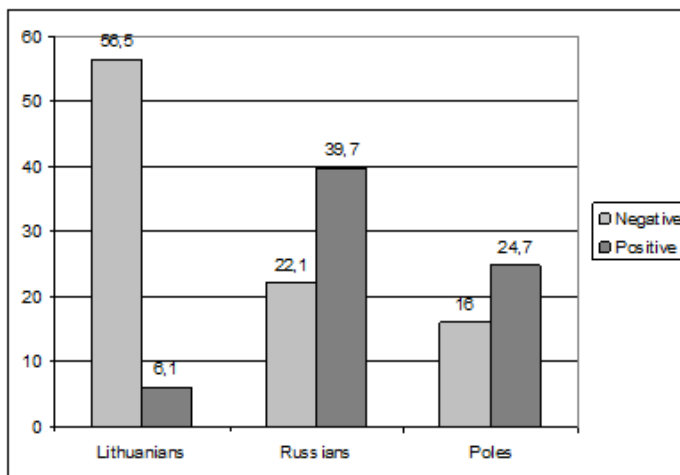


More generally, the Russian Compatriots Policy targets the common post-Soviet legacy, including nostalgia and symbols of the past that transcend political boundaries. A 2007 survey by the Civil Society Institute showed that a positive or negative attitude to the Soviet Union, modern Russia and Belarus depended on the ethnicity of the respondents. Lithuanians saw the political systems of the Soviet Union, Russia and Belarus more negatively, while ethnic Russians and Poles in Lithuania thought rather positively of the former-Soviet regime and the political systems of Russia and Belarus.³⁹⁵

³⁹⁴ See *Census 2011*, <http://www.stat.gov.lt>.

³⁹⁵ Ramonaitė, A., Maliukevičius N., Degutis, M.(2007): op. cit. p 24.

Diagram 10: Evaluation of Russia's political system by ethnicity (positive vs. negative, in per cent).³⁹⁶



The policy also tries to mould a positive perception of Russian political reality among different ethnic minorities. This includes igniting anti-EU, anti-NATO and more generally anti-Western feelings among these minorities. In this way, the Kremlin attempts to create a kind of loyalty to contemporary Russia, which can vary from soft loyalty, such as cultural ties, the Russian language and a common understanding of history, to hard loyalty, through compatriots' cards, citizenship and participation in the Russian-controlled network of NGOs.

An effective network of NGOs has become a priority of the Compatriots Policy strategy. The aim is to create a functioning social networking system which can be used to achieve specific Russian policy goals. This organizational process received a new push in 2001, when the First World Congress of Compatriots was held in Moscow and the Government Commission for the Affairs of Compatriots Abroad was set up to oversee specific programmes. The third Program of Work with Compatriots Abroad is currently in place (the first covered 2006–2009 and the second 2009–2011) and a programme on the Russian language has been adopted for the period 2011–2015. The Worldwide Coordination Council of Russian Compatriots Living Abroad was set up as an umbrella institution to consolidate the numerous compatriots' organizations abroad.³⁹⁷

The institutional network for Russia's Compatriots Policy has experienced several setbacks in Lithuania. The Moscow House in Vilnius, for instance, a

³⁹⁶ Ramonaitė, A., Maliukevičius N., Degutis, M.(2007): op. cit.

³⁹⁷ See *Programma raboty s sootchestvennikami, prozhivayushchimi za rubezhom, na 2012 - 2014 gody* <http://rs.gov.ru/node/29369>.

Russian cultural centre set up at the initiative of the city of Moscow, was intended to be fully functional by 2009,³⁹⁸ but the project has stalled and is still a “ghost” that functions only online.³⁹⁹ Therefore, the compatriot organizations operating in Lithuania have to arrange accommodation in the Polish Cultural House in Vilnius, which once again binds Polish and Russian NGO activities under the logic of Russia’s Compatriots Policy.

The official manual for Russian compatriots abroad (2012–2013), prepared by Russia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, names Andrei Fomin as the representative for Lithuania’s compatriots in the Worldwide Coordination Council of Russian Compatriots Living Abroad. He is also the regional editor of the Russian compatriots’ journal in the Baltic states, *Baltiskij Mir*.⁴⁰⁰ On the other hand, there are other organizations and institutions which tend to describe themselves as representing compatriots and want to take part in or tender for different Russian compatriots’ projects. *Russkii mir*, for example, publishes a list of more than 80 compatriot organizations actively working in Lithuania.⁴⁰¹ The traditional forum for such NGOs used to be the Department of National Minorities and Lithuanians Living Abroad. This department was reorganized in 2010, however, at the same time as Russia intensified its compatriots’ projects in Lithuania. If current trends continue, Russia will gradually include these Lithuanian NGOs in its compatriots’ organizational network.

The compatriots’ organizations in Lithuania have several priorities: (a) information and media support; (b) protecting the rights of compatriots; and (c) the need to include youth and young activists in all their activities. The Compatriots Policy in Lithuania is supported by a number of virtual projects where activists and their sympathizers can exchange their views, find information and browse Internet media outlets. There are a number of virtual centres for compatriots’ NGOs. “Rusorg.lt” is a virtual list of Lithuanian Russian-speakers’ NGOs. It is also one of the journals for compatriots – *Compatriots’ Digest*.⁴⁰² “Rusmir.lt” is a kind of Lithuanian virtual model of the *Russkii mir* concept. It is regularly updated and has information about conferences and current tenders. The portal distributes *Baltiskij Mir*.⁴⁰³ When the Department of National Minorities and Lithuanians Living Abroad and its programmes were closed or reorganized, the demand for projects and networking was met by the above-mentioned Russian supply.

³⁹⁸ See „V Vilnyuse sostoyalas torzhestvennaya zakladka Doma Moskvyy”, *Lenta.ru*, (2008-06-06) <http://realty.lenta.ru/news/2008/06/06/haus>.

³⁹⁹ See <http://www.mkdc.lt/>.

⁴⁰⁰ See “V pomoshch rossyskomu sootchestvenniku za rubezhom 2012 – 2013 (*Spravochnoye izdaniye*)”, <http://www.materik.ru/upload/iblock/210/210725212794020711ca1d1e6c497dc9.pdf>.

⁴⁰¹ See <http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/ru/catalogue/>.

⁴⁰² See <http://www.rusorg.lt/>.

⁴⁰³ See <http://rusmir.lt/>.

The protection of Russian speakers' rights in the Baltic states remains a huge priority for Russia's Compatriots Policy. Even though a 2008 survey by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights found that Russians living in Lithuania felt the least vulnerable to discrimination compared to other ethnic groups in the European Union,⁴⁰⁴ Russia portrays Lithuania as having a poor record on human rights. It is especially interesting that those NGOs which fight for the Russian-speakers' rights have chosen to include the fight for the rights of the Polish minority on their political agenda in Lithuania.⁴⁰⁵

The history of this fight for human rights goes back to Soviet times, when the issue was internationalized through a network of controlled human rights movements such as the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (VOKS) and the Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (SSOD). The journalist Edward Lucas called this strategy "whataboutism", the tactics of replying to any Western criticism with the question "What about?" apartheid in South Africa, or jailed trade unionists in the US or the Contras in Nicaragua, and so on.⁴⁰⁶ Soviet propagandists mastered this tactic, and now there seems to be a trend for "neo-whataboutism" emerging that focuses on the fight for the rights of Russian-speakers in the Baltic states.

Another trend in the Compatriots Policy has its roots in the Soviet experience. During the Cold War, the Soviets mastered the use of so-called innocents' clubs – the use of organizations and NGOs fighting for moral causes, such as peace and nuclear disarmament or against racism, for the benefit of Soviet foreign policy. There has been a rise of similar types of NGO in the Baltic states and specifically in Lithuania, which Russia has started to use as "neo-innocents' clubs". Such organizations voice their concern for the environment or promote green energy, but are in fact being used by the Kremlin to counter strategic energy projects that threaten the interests of Gazprom or Rosatom in Lithuania. For example, the Latvian security services have revealed that one of the activists in the green movement in Lithuania, Tomas Tomilinas, was coordinating activities with Russian NGOs in Latvia against the Lithuanian Nuclear Plant Project.⁴⁰⁷ Another example relates to Chevron, which had to withdraw its plans to research the potential for shale gas in Lithuania because of protests by local activists and their organizations, which in turn benefited from the "Lietuvos dujos" investments – with Gazprom as one of its major shareholders until 27

⁴⁰⁴ See *EU-MIDIS: European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey 2009*, http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/eu-midis/eumidis_output_en.htm.

⁴⁰⁵ See *Etnicheskiye konflikty v stranakh Baltii v postsovetsky period. Conference material*, <http://www.aif.ru/onlineconf/6139>.

⁴⁰⁶ See "Europe view: Whataboutism", *The Economist* (2008-01-31).

⁴⁰⁷ See "Tikslas – paralyžuoti valdžią Baltijos šalyse", *Lrt.lt* (2013-11-03), http://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/28677/tikslas_paralyziuoti_valdzia_baltijos_salyse.

June 2014.⁴⁰⁸ Thus, civil organizations formed by regular Lithuanians for decent, “normal” causes – such as environmental protection – are used by Russian companies for the interests of the latter.

5.4 The Russian Media Presence and its Activities in the Lithuanian Information Space

The popularity of the Russian language, positive attitude to Russian culture and symbols, and widespread nostalgia for the Soviet era create a highly favourable environment for the Russian media in Lithuania.⁴⁰⁹ The State Security Department has warned about the potential for aggressive information attacks orchestrated from Rubaltic.ru (previously Regnum.ru), an Internet news portal in Kaliningrad.⁴¹⁰ Regnum.ru was created and owned for some time by Modest Kolerov, who later became the Kremlin official responsible for the post-Soviet region.⁴¹¹ This portal has played an active role in aggressive campaigns against the Baltic states. However, it is not individual Russian Internet portals that are the biggest concern for Lithuania, but the traditional media environment – specifically the television environment, Russian television channels on Lithuanian cable networks and Lithuanian television channels that are overflowing with Russian productions.

The dominance of Russian productions in the Lithuanian media environment has been extensively analysed.⁴¹² However, the economic crisis of 2008 and the cancellation of tax privileges for the press in the same year hit the Lithuanian media hard. This occurred in the context of a constantly decreasing share of the audience for the major Lithuanian television channels, especially the two biggest players in the Lithuanian television market – LNK and TV3 (see diagram 11).

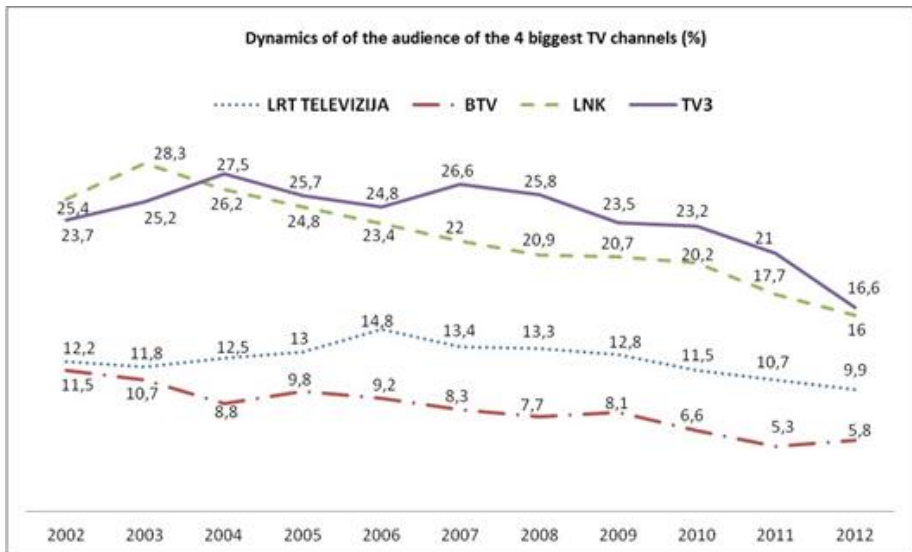
⁴⁰⁸ Skalūnų dujų gavybos priešininkai gavo solidžias kompensacijas iš rusiškų dujų importuotojų? *Delfi.lt* (2013-07-11), <http://www.delfi.lt/verslas/energetika/skalunu-duju-gavybos-priesininkai-gavo-solidzias-kompensacijas-is-rusisku-duju-importuotoju.d?id=61838139>.

⁴⁰⁹ See Ramonaitė, A., Maliukevičius N., Degutis, M.(2007): op. cit.

⁴¹⁰ See “SSD warns of Russia’s new information attacks against Lithuania”, *Lithuanian Tribune* (2013-10-31), <http://www.lithuaniantribune.com/55569/ssd-warns-of-russias-new-information-attacks-against-lithuania-20135569/>.

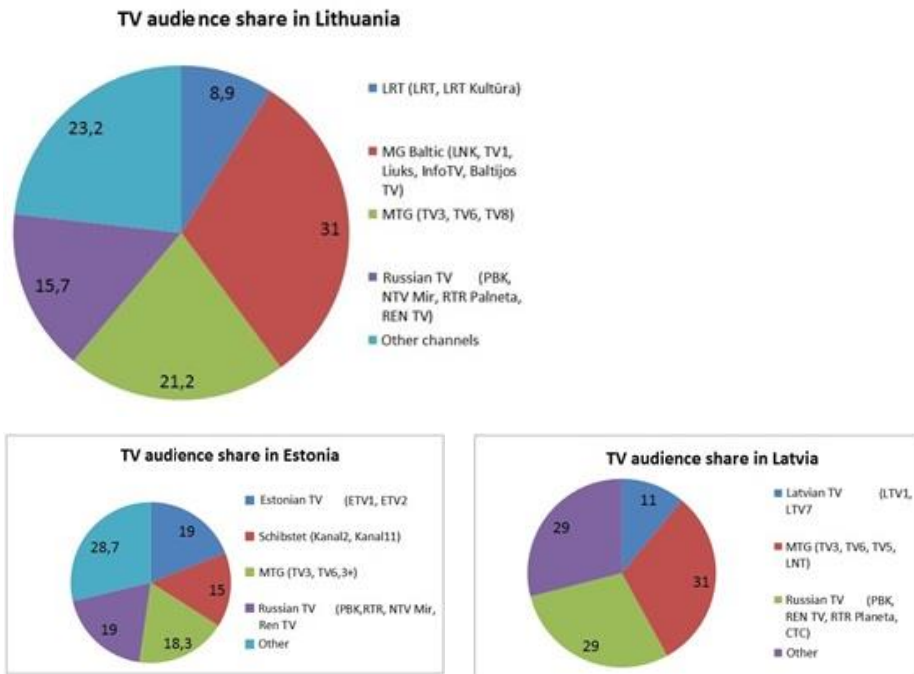
⁴¹¹ See “Russia’s Baltic policy is too soft — Kolerov”, *Regnum.ru* (2010-02-09), <http://www.regnum.ru/english/1321525.html>.

⁴¹² See Maliukevičius, Nerijus (2007): *Russias Information Policy in Lithuania: The Spread of Soft Power or Information Geopolitics?* (Vilnius: BSDR).

Diagram 11: Dynamics of the audience for the biggest television channels⁴¹³

In addition, a 2012 television reform introduced digital television platforms. More and more viewers are now watching IPTV and digital cable television networks that offer alternative television channels, including in Russian. Media expert Kęstutis Petrauskis conducted research on television audiences in the Baltic states in 2013 that showed an audience share for alternative television channels of more than 23 per cent, and for Russian television channels of almost 16 per cent (see Diagram 12).

⁴¹³ See TNS, <http://www.tns.lt/>.

Diagram 12: Television audience shares in the Baltic states⁴¹⁴

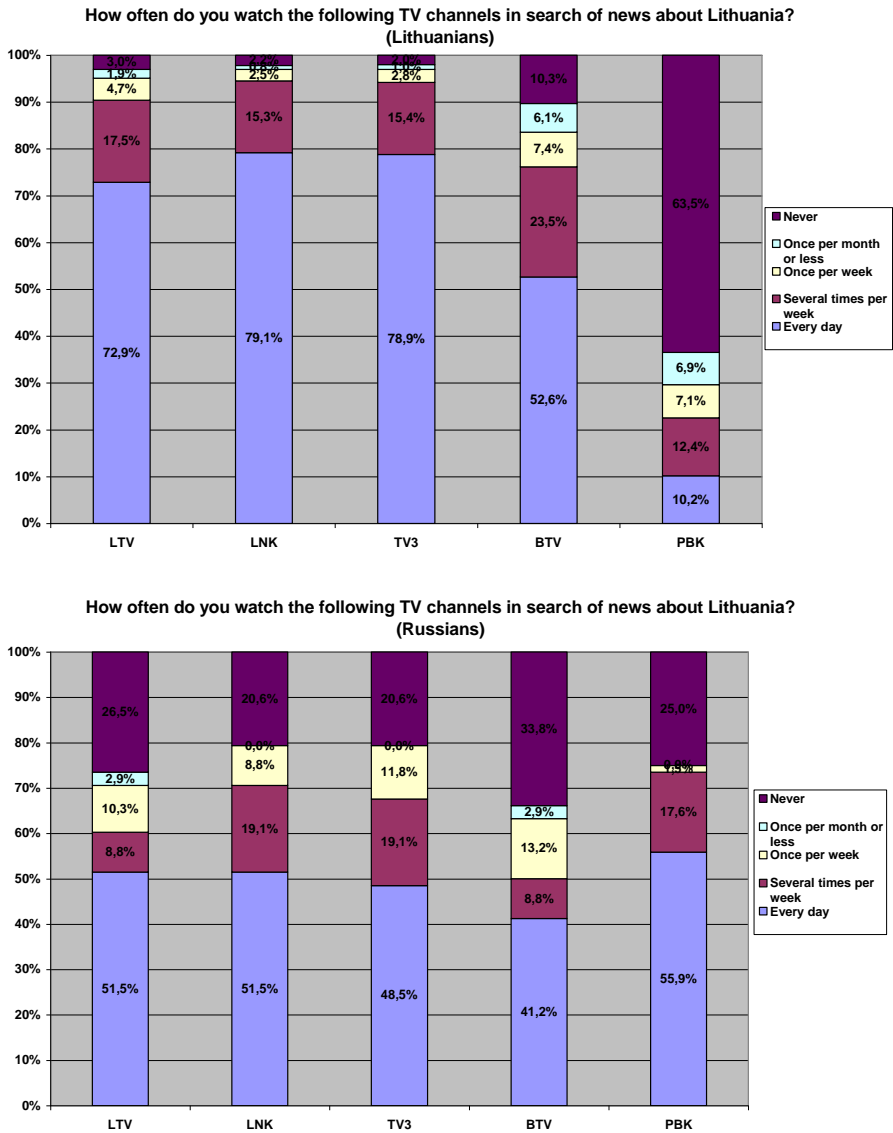
This is less than in Latvia and Estonia where the audience share for Russian television channels is 29 per cent and 19 per cent, respectively. The Lithuanian media environment is different from the other Baltic states in another respect: one of the major television owners in Lithuania is a local and non-Western business group. MG Baltic owns LNK, one of the most popular channels.

It is not just a matter of Russian television channels taking a share of the audience in the Lithuanian information environment. Russian media production makes up a considerable portion of the television programmes on the major Lithuanian television channels, such as LNK and TV3. When their revenues dropped significantly after the 2008 crisis, they started to increase the share of Russian production in their programming because the price of Russian entertainment programmes was lower. The Russian media has become a major player in the Lithuanian media market. A large portion of the population receives not just entertainment, but also news about the world and the post-Soviet region

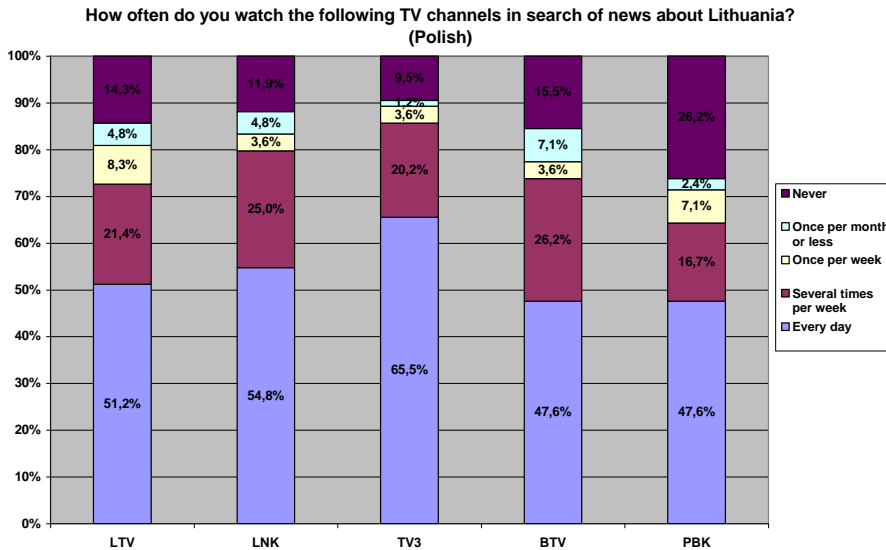
⁴¹⁴ See “K. Petrauskis: viešąją erdvę Rusijos įtakai dovanojame patys”, <http://www.universitetojournalistas.kf.vu.lt/2013/06/k-petrauskis-viesaja-erdve-rusijos-itakai-dovanojame-patys/>.

through the Russian media. A survey conducted in 2007 showed interesting trends in news-watching by nationality (see Figure 5.10).

Diagram 13: News watching by nationality⁴¹⁵



⁴¹⁵ See Nerijus Maliukevičius (2008): *Rusijos informacijos geopolitikos potencialas ir sklaida Lietuvoje* (VUL), p. 102.



The general trend is clear: the Russian minority in Lithuania considers the PBK channel to be the best media outlet for receiving news about Lithuania, and it is also a popular source of news for the Polish minority. Thus, the media sources for Russians and Poles in Lithuania are quite different compared to those for Lithuanians. This split in the information environment is not so dramatic as in Estonia and Latvia, but it exists nonetheless.

The Russian language press published in Lithuania is in sharp decline.⁴¹⁶ In 2008, however, the most popular Russian daily, *Komsomolskaja Pravda*, tailored as a weekly for the Lithuanian audience, entered the media market.⁴¹⁷ This has made the future of the Lithuania-based Russian language press even more difficult and challenging. Russian radio is very popular in the major cities of Lithuania, where a large portion of the Russian speakers reside. Russkoje Radijo Baltija is the leading radio station in Vilnius and Radio Raduga is second in Klaipėda.

Current Russian policy in Lithuania – as in the other Baltic states – has a clear competitive advantage in the media environment. The important question is: What messages are transmitted and reinforced through these communication channels? The Kremlin’s media strategy focuses mainly on the topic of history,

⁴¹⁶ Maliukevičius, Nerijus (2008): *Rusijos informacijos geopolitikos potencialas ir sklaida Lietuvoje* Vilnius: VUL.

⁴¹⁷ See Kavaliauskas, Tomas (2007): “Sugrįžta Komjaunimo tiesa”? *Lrt.lt* 2007-04-02., www.delfi.lt/archive/article.php?id=12731538, and „Komsomolskaya pravda” dlya Severnoy Yevropy i Pribaltiki budet pechatatsya v Talline, 2006-11-28, www.mediaatlas.ru/items/?id=3230&cat=analitics.

distant as well as more recent, as is illustrated in the list of “pseudo-documentaries” or books in Table 4.⁴¹⁸

Table 4: Documentaries in Russian, 2003–2013

Year	Media	Title	Author(s), sponsors or producers
2003	Internet	„Fashistskiye nastroyeniya v Latvii, Estonii i Litve” (<i>Fascist sentiment in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania</i>) ⁴¹⁹	IA „Regnum”
2004	Book	„Pribaltika mezhdu Stalinym i Gitlerom” (<i>Baltic states between Stalin and Hitler</i>)	Mikhail Krysin, „Veche”
2005	Documentary	„Natsizm po-Pribaltski” (<i>Nazism Baltic style</i>)	Boris Chertkov, Aleksandr Tkachenko, „Tretiy Rim”, „TV Tsentr”, Obshchestvo izucheniya istorii otechestvennykh spetssluzhb ⁴²⁰ , Oleg Matveyev ⁴²¹
2005	Internet contest of caricatures	„Smert fashistskim okkupantam!” (<i>Death to the fascist invaders!</i>) ⁴²²	IA „Regnum”, Caricatura.ru
2006	Collection of documents	„Prestupleniya natsistov i ikh posobnikov v Pribaltike (Estoniya, 1941–1944” (<i>Crimes of the Nazis and their collaborators in the Baltic states (Estonia, 1941–1944)</i>)	„Obshchestvennyy soyuz protiv neofashizma i mezhnatsionalnoy rozni” (Tallin, Estoniya) ⁴²³
2006	Book	„Latyshsky legion SS: vchera i segodnya” (<i>Latvian SS legion:</i>	Mikhail Krysin, „Veche”

⁴¹⁸ This list is based on analysis since 2003 conducted by Nerijus Maliukevičius.

⁴¹⁹ See www.regnum.ru/dossier/273.html.

⁴²⁰ See „Obshchestvo izucheniya istorii otechestvennykh spetssluzhb”, an organization established by the Federal Security Service of RF, http://www.lubyanka.org/veteranskie_organizacii/obwestvo_izucheniya_istorii_otchestvennykh_specluzhb/prezident_obwestva.

⁴²¹ He is a representative of the Archive Department of Federal Security Service of RF. See Soldatov, Andrey; Borogan, Irina. Chekistsky zakaz na mify, www.moscowuniversityclub.ru/home.asp?artId=4682.

⁴²² See “Smert fashistskim okkupantam!” <caricatura.ru/konkurs/dfo/rules>

⁴²³ The Estonian security service KaPo named this organization a threat to national security in its 2005 review. See Estonian Security Police (2005): *Annual Review 2005*, p. 11, www.kapo.ee/yearbook_2005_ENG.pdf.

		<i>Yesterday and Today)</i>	
2006	Documentary	„Estoniya – perekryostok istorii” (<i>Estonia: a crossroads of history</i>) ⁴²⁴	NKO „Monument”, Tvorcheskaya gruppa „WILL”, Obyedineniye sotsialno-ekonomicheskikh i politologicheskikh issledovaniy ⁴²⁵
2006	Collection of documents	„Latviya pod igom natsizma” (<i>Latvia under the yoke of Nazism</i>) ⁴²⁶	Izdatelstvo: Yevropa, Fond sodeystviya „Svobodnaya Yevropa”
2006	Collection of documents	„Estoniya: krovavy sled natsizma” (<i>Estonia. The Bloody Face of Nazism, 1941–1944</i>) ⁴²⁷	Izdatelstvo: Yevropa, Fond sodeystviya „Svobodnaya Yevropa”
2006	Collection of documents	„Tragediya Litvy: 1941–1944 gody” (<i>The Tragedy of Lithuania: 1941–1944</i>) ⁴²⁸	Izdatelstvo: Yevropa, Fond sodeystviya „Svobodnaya Yevropa”
2007	Collection of documents (in English)	“Latvia Under the Nazi Yoke”	Fond sodeystviya „Svobodnaya Yevropa”
2007	Collection of documents (in English)	“Estonia. The Bloody Face of Nazism: 1941–1944”	Fond sodeystviya „Svobodnaya Yevropa”
2007	Collection of documents (in English)	“The Tragedy of Lithuania, 1941–1944”	Fond sodeystviya „Svobodnaya Yevropa”
2007	Collection of documents	„Prestupleniya natsistov i ikh posobnikov v Pribaltike (Latviya) 1941–1945” (<i>Crimes of the Nazis and their collaborators in the Baltic states (Latvia, 1941–1945)</i>)	Viktor Gushchin, „Obshchestvennyy soyuz protiv neofashizma i mezhnatsionalnoy rozni” (Tallin, Estoniya) ⁴²⁹ ; Baltyskiy tsentr istoricheskikh i sotsialno-politicheskikh issledovaniy (Riga, Latviya) ⁴³⁰
2007	Book	„Pribaltyskiy fashizm” (<i>Baltic fascism</i>)	Mikhail Krysin, “ <u>Veche</u> ”

⁴²⁴ See Rossyskoye posolstvo v Estonii: kritiki antifashistskogo filma zanimayut predvzyatuyu pozitsiyu, www.regnum.ru/news/755581.html.

⁴²⁵ See Ingvor Byarenklau, Kremlevskiye dengi pronikayut v estonskuyu politiku, veneportal.ee/politika/02/07020701.htm.

⁴²⁶ See <http://militera.lib.ru/docs/da/latviya/index.html>.

⁴²⁷ See <http://militera.lib.ru/docs/da/eesti/index.html>.

⁴²⁸ See <http://militera.lib.ru/docs/da/lietuva/>.

⁴²⁹ The Estonian security service KaPo named this organization a threat to national security in its 2005 Review. See Estonian Security Police (2005) *Annual Review 2005*, p. 11, www.kapo.ee/yearbook_2005_ENG.pdf.

⁴³⁰ This is a Latvian organization similar to the one in Estonia. See “V Latvii izdan sbornik dokumentov o prestupleniyakh natsistov”, [Regnum.ru <www.regnum.ru/news/827206.html>](http://www.regnum.ru/news/827206.html)

2007	Documentary	„Pribaltika: nevyuchennyye uroki” (<i>Baltic states: unlearned lessons</i>)	Vadim Gasanov, „Leks film”; Telekanal „Rossiya”, Viktor Bylinin, Aleksandr Zdanovich ⁴³¹ , Yanis Dzintars
2009	Documentary	„Pribaltika. Istoriya odnoy okkupatsii” (<i>Baltic states: The story of one occupation</i>)	Boris Chertkov, Aleksandr Tkachenko ⁴³² , „Tretiy Rim”, „TV Tsentr”, Fond “Istoricheskaya pamyat”, “Tsentr sotsialnykh initsiativ”
2013	Documentary	„Chelovek i zakon ” (<i>The Man and The Law</i>)	Aleksey Pimanov
2013	Documentary	„Skrytaya istoriya Pribaltiki” (<i>The hidden history of the Baltic</i>)	Maksim Reva

These pseudo-documentaries and books convey a message of Lithuania as a state based on aggressive nationalistic values, and with a fascist past and present. The Soviet period, by contrast, is shown as something glorious and nostalgic. These information campaigns are usually orchestrated before or during memorable national anniversaries or during electoral cycles in Lithuania.

These examples could be seen as extreme cases in an aggressive media strategy in the Baltic states, but history dominates even in Russian entertainment productions. Films and television series set during the Second World War or in the Soviet Union are given prime time slots on Lithuanian television channels. Historical interpretations beneficial to the political goals of the current Russian regime are later echoed during compatriots’ events, seminars and conferences, and repeated in the compatriots’ organizations’ media. In 2012, Lithuania was given a more organized format for discussion about history and politics – Format-A⁴³³ – introduced by a Russian journalist working in Estonia, Galina Sapozhnikova.⁴³⁴ This discussion club specializes in inviting Russian “experts” to speak to Lithuanian audiences about the collapse and crisis in the EU, NATO and the West in general.

In the autumn of 2013, the Russian television channel, Pervij Kanal (PBK), ran a pseudo-documentary, *Chelovek I zakon* (“The Man and The Law”) about recent

⁴³¹ Aleksandr Zdanovich is Lieutenant General of the Russian Federal Security Service and president of „*Obshchestvo izucheniya istorii otechestvennykh spetssluzhb*”. See http://www.lubyanka.org/veteranskie_organizacii/obwestvo_izucheniya_istorii_otchestvennyh_s_petsluzhb/prezident_obwestva/.

⁴³² Both authors directed the 2005 documentary „*Natsizm po-Pribaltyski*”.

⁴³³ See <http://www.format-a3.ru>.

⁴³⁴ Vedler, Sulev (2012): “Moscow’s Spin Machine in Estonia”, *Re:baltica*, http://www.rebaltica.lv/en/investigations/money_from_russia/a/608/moscow%E2%80%99s_spin_machine_in_estonia.html.

Lithuanian history – the bloody events in Vilnius of January 1991. It concentrated on a conspiracy theory that argues that it was the activists in the Lithuanian independence movement, Sąjūdis, and not the OMON (Soviet Ministry of Interior special police forces) soldiers who started shooting at the crowd and the Soviet military. This theory has also been put forward by the Lithuanian politician, Algirdas Paleckis. The film created a wave of fury in Lithuanian society, but it was local media companies and not the regulatory institutions that reacted first. The television cable network company, Cgates, suspended PBK transmissions on its network and some advertisers suspended campaigns on the channel. This could be interpreted as a serious shift by the Lithuanian media business community when dealing with what amounts to Russian media attacks in the Lithuanian information environment. The aggressive tactics of the Russian media backfired, and Lithuanian media companies began to view Russian media productions as a serious risk to their business reputation.

5.5 Energy Security Dilemmas and Economic Pressure

The strong Russian position in the Lithuanian information sphere and the Kremlin's Compatriots Policy create highly favourable conditions for Russian soft power in Lithuania. On the other hand, the contemporary Russian regime also practices non-military power policy in spheres such as oil, gas and electricity. This aspect of Russian foreign policy in the Baltic states has been analysed extensively in a recent study by Agnia Grigas.⁴³⁵ Although Lithuania was formally included in the political geography of the EU and NATO in 2004, it is still dependent on Russian oil pipelines, gas supplies and energy grids, and Russia is eager to use and abuse this tool of influence. It has stepped up its pressure and started to invest in new energy markets: local heating utilities and even green energy.⁴³⁶

Lithuania's dependency on Russia in the energy sector takes several forms:

- Until recently, Russian was the only option for Lithuania. It was also dependent on a single gas transit system owned by *Lietuvos dujos*. Until June 2014, the major shareholders in this company were Gazprom, E.ON Ruhrgas and the Lithuanian state through the state-controlled company group Lietuvos Energija UAB. However, after that date, Lietuvos Energija became the only major shareholder, giving the Lithuanian state full control of its gas transit system. On 21 August,

⁴³⁵ Grigas, A. (2013): *The Politics of Energy and Memory between the Baltic States and Russia*, London: Ashgate Publishing.

⁴³⁶ See <http://www.ekonomika.lt/naujiena/inter-rao-isigijo-vejo-jegainiu-parka-lietuvoje-10357.html>.

2014, Litgas, a gas supplying company controlled by Lietuvos Energija, reported that it had signed a contract with Statoil for the supply of LNG. This will reduce, but not eliminate, Lithuania's dependency on Russian gas.⁴³⁷

- Dependency on Russian oil supplies to the Lithuanian oil refinery, Mažeikių Nafta.
- The pressing need to build new installations to produce electricity, such as a new nuclear power plant after the existing one was closed, and to connect the Lithuanian electricity system with Western systems.

The problems in the energy sector were inherited from Soviet times but they are exacerbated by Russia's determination to use energy-related, non-military power means. All Lithuanian steps to avoid or minimize the above-mentioned risks are met with Russian pressure. Lithuania's decision to implement the Third Energy Package and its strategy to unbundle the gas transit system in Lithuania have resulted in Lithuania having to pay the highest market price for Gazprom's gas in Europe. The strategic decision to sell Mažeikių Nafta to Poland's PKN Orlen was met with harsh measures – the oil flow to Mažeikių Nafta was stopped in 2006 and the Druzhba pipeline remains dry to this day.

There is a clear understanding of the risks in this field. To counter these risks, Lithuania established a NATO-certified Energy Security Centre of Excellence in Vilnius in 2013.⁴³⁸ Lithuania's strategy is based not on eliminating Russia from the energy sector, but on counterbalancing its presence. The strategy also includes the securitization and externalization of Lithuanian energy vulnerabilities, because most of the pressing energy security problems can be resolved only with the help of partners, a common strategic European approach and large-scale investment in the sector.⁴³⁹ Lithuania, as an individual country, is short of big strategic finance.

On the other hand, the traditional Russian power strategy in the energy sector has witnessed some new and interesting twists: major projects that could enhance energy security in Lithuania – the new nuclear power plant in Visaginas, the LNG terminal and a shale gas exploration tender – have become targets of aggressive information and media campaigns. Russia and Gazprom used their local business and political assets as well as new tools. “Neo-innocence clubs” organized “pro-environment” and “anti-nuclear” media campaigns, which culminated in a referendum that resulted in a negative vote on the NPP, and

⁴³⁷ This paragraph has been written by Mr. Tomas Malmjöf, FOI, as a way of updating the text of this chapter.

⁴³⁸ See <http://www.enseccoe.org/>.

⁴³⁹ See *National Security Strategy of Lithuania* (2012-06-26), http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=433830.

encouraged local communities in Žygdaičiai to campaign against shale gas exploration.⁴⁴⁰ The Russian media was active in providing publicity for these campaigns and during the referendum. It also organized aggressive political reporting on the LNG terminal project, which forced reactions from Norway's ambassador and business representatives.⁴⁴¹

It is therefore no surprise that when, in the autumn of 2013, Lithuania experienced additional economic pressure – a transport blockade on the Kaliningrad border and a temporary Russian ban on the import of Lithuanian dairy products – the first reaction was to link it with the ongoing negotiations between Lithuania and Gazprom.⁴⁴² The State Security Department in Lithuania had warned, however, in the summer of 2013 of the possibility of aggressive tactics by Russia against Lithuania during its Presidency of the Council of the European Union.⁴⁴³ The first signs came with Russia's pressure on Moldavian wine and Ukrainian chocolate producers.

The entire Russian strategy during Lithuania's Presidency could be described as a political "effects-based operation". This military concept, although criticized by the military, can be borrowed by the political realm to illustrate and explain what Lithuania experienced during the second half of 2013. Such operations first outline the end-goal and then use alternative, non-military means to achieve it. These could be economic, media-related or logistical to cripple, demoralize and confuse the opponent.

During its presidency, Lithuania witnessed a whole complex of pressure by Russia, which started with a joint Russian-Belarusian military drill. Zapad 2013, on the Lithuanian border, which played out a fairly aggressive scenario.⁴⁴⁴ It continued with pressure in the economic spheres where Lithuania is most dependent on Russia: the transportation of and trade in dairy products. Lithuanian vehicles were stopped at the border with Kaliningrad and it was announced that all trucks would go through a special checking procedure. This

⁴⁴⁰ The results of the referendum were 62.7% against the construction of the NPP, and 34% in favour. See http://www.enmin.lt/en/activity/veiklos_kryptys/strateginiai_projektai/Visaginas_npp.php?clear_cache=Y.

⁴⁴¹ "Interview with the CEO of Hoegh LNG", *Lithuanian Tribune* (2013-11-04), <http://www.lithuaniatribune.com/55782/interview-with-the-ceo-of-hoegh-lng-201355782/>.

⁴⁴² See "Opinion: Why is the ruling coalition so afraid to win the arbitration against Gazprom?", *Lithuanian Tribune* (2013-09-06), <http://www.lithuaniatribune.com/49807/opinion-why-is-the-ruling-coalition-so-afraid-to-win-the-arbitrage-against-gazprom-201349807/>.

⁴⁴³ See *National Security Strategy of Lithuania*, op. cit.

⁴⁴⁴ Karlis Neretnieks (2013): "Opinion: Zapad 2013 – observations and perspectives", *Lithuanian Tribune* (2013-10-15), <http://www.lithuaniatribune.com/53648/opinion-zapad-2013-observations-and-perspectives-201353648/>.

halted Lithuania's logistics business in the eastern direction.⁴⁴⁵ Later, it was declared that Lithuanian dairy products fell short of meeting Russian standards and the trade was suspended.⁴⁴⁶ This economic bullying led the Lithuanian foreign minister to discuss a taboo issue in Lithuanian-Russian relations – a possible blockade of Kaliningrad by Lithuania.⁴⁴⁷ Soon after, the media smear campaign began on Russian television channels that meddled with the facts about events in Vilnius in January 1991. Before the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius, which could be described as the target of Russia's political effects-based operations, the President of Lithuania, Dalia Grybauskaitė, told Ukraine: “[O]ur experience is to never give in to any pressures. And that is my advice to the Ukrainian government”.⁴⁴⁸

5.6 Conclusions

In recent years, soft power has become a trendy term in the Russian political and academic discourse. President Putin wrote about it in his pre-election article in the *Moscow News*,⁴⁴⁹ the then new head of *Rosstrudnichestvo*, Konstantin Kosachev, declared it to be his priority for action in his new position.⁴⁵⁰ However, the Kremlin has a way of transforming Western concepts and making them suit Russian realities. Gazprom money interlinks with politics in the Baltic states. This in turn hinders projects aimed at enhancing energy security in the region. The competitive advantage that Russia has in the Lithuanian media environment is used not so much to improve Russia's image as to fight historical and political battles. The Compatriots Policy is based on the traditional idea of “divide and conquer”. In Lithuania it centres on deepening divides between the majority and the Polish minority.

The contemporary Russian regime is still a master of hard power tactics, as Vladimir Putin has quite rightly stated: “our diplomats are well versed in the traditional and familiar methods of international relations, if not masters in this field, but as far as using new methods goes, soft power methods, for example,

⁴⁴⁵ See “Cars from Lithuania to Russia fall 90% in a month. Trucks by 100% in a week”, *Driveeuropenews* (2013-09-18), <http://driveeuropenews.com/2013/09/18/cars-from-lithuania-to-russia-fall-90-in-a-month-trucks-by-100-in-a-week/>.

⁴⁴⁶ See “Russia halts Lithuanian dairy imports before EU summit”, *Reuters* (2013-10-07), <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/10/07/us-russia-lithuania-dairy-idUSBRE99604Y20131007>.

⁴⁴⁷ See “Lithuania threatens to take Russian region hostage, demands changes in foreign policy”, *Russia Today* (2013-10-02), <http://rt.com/politics/lithuania-threats-kaliningrad-road-638/>.

⁴⁴⁸ See “EU chair says Ukraine trade decision will cost Russia dearly”, *Reuters* (2013-11-26), <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/11/26/uk-ukraine-eu-lithuania-idUKBRE9A9OC320131126>.

⁴⁴⁹ See Putin, Vladimir. *Rossiya i menyayushchysya mir. Moskovskije novosti*, (2012-02-27), <http://mn.ru/politics/20120227/312306749.html>.

⁴⁵⁰ Kosachev, Konstantin (2012): „Rossii nuzhny novyye podkhody k “myagkoy sile”. *Rossyskaya gazeta*, (2012-03-01), <http://www.rg.ru/2012/03/01/kosachev-site.html>.

there is still much to reflect on”.⁴⁵¹ Lithuania had a very early experience with such “traditional methods”. When Lithuanian independence was re-established, the country had to deal with a total economic and energy blockade imposed in an attempt to generate second thoughts in Lithuania about its historic decision. This long experience of Russian power tactics in the non-military realm has made Lithuania more immune to and less naive with respect to traditional Russian arguments: the Druzhba pipeline was closed because it needed repairs; Lithuanian trucks were lined-up at the border due to new customs procedures; Lithuanian milk was not good enough for the Russian market, and so on. Russian non-military pressure on Lithuania reached its peak during the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. It shows how important modern foreign policy tools are to the Kremlin and how high it perceived the stakes before the Vilnius Summit. The pressure on Lithuania was a show of strength meant to provoke fear not so much in Lithuania as in the Eastern Partnership countries – especially Ukraine – which were considering their strategic Western choices.

⁴⁵¹ See *Soveshchaniye poslov i postoyannykh predstaviteley Rossii*. (2012-07-09), <http://kremlin.ru/transcripts/15902>.

6 Conclusions and Implications for Further Research

Dr Mike Winnerstig, FOI

6.1 General Conclusions

The empirical chapters on Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in this report are, as was noted above, “written from within”, i. e. written by analysts in the Baltic states. This means that the views presented should be considered as “first cuts”, and that other studies on these topics can be made from other perspectives.

That said, however, a number of general conclusions can be drawn from this comprehensive overview of the issue of Russian soft power and non-military influence in the Baltic states. First and foremost, Russian actors – normally financed or directly governed by the Russian federation itself – are engaged in the implementation of a strategy of soft power, in the Russian sense, in all the three Baltic states, wielding non-military power and influence in a number of areas. Primarily, this relates to the so-called Compatriots Policy, which entails supporting all Russian-speaking people outside Russia proper. The emphasis here is on language rather than ethnicity.

Second, all three Baltic states see themselves as the target of strategies devised by ideologues such as Alexander Dugin and theorists such as Sergei Karaganov, and implemented by activists such as Modest Kolerov and establishment figures such as Konstantin Kosachev – with the full backing of the Kremlin. These strategies apparently aim not only to promote the Russian-speaking minorities in the Baltic states but also to undermine the Baltic states as political entities, as well as the self-confidence of their non-Russian populations and confidence in the ability of the EU and NATO to assist the Baltic states in the event of an external crisis.

Third, Russia’s strategy involves substantial interference in the domestic political systems of the Baltic states. The linkages between the United Russia party in Russia, on the one hand, and the Estonian Centre Party, the Latvian Harmony Centre and the Lithuanian Electoral Action for Poles in Lithuania, on the other, are just one sign of this. Non-transparent forms of Russian economic support for these Baltic political parties is another.

Fourth, all the Baltic states have been the target of Russian accusations regarding their allegedly “fascist” past and their alleged current attachment to “fascism”. These accusations form a broad base from which Russian or Russia-related actors in the Baltic states seem to work to undermine the political credibility of

the Baltic states. This tactic is interestingly also the major form of Russian political attack on the current government in Ukraine.

Fifth, Russian media companies and their broadcasting services work essentially in tandem with the Russian political authorities, at least in the sense that they convey political messages coherent with the latter actors' views in their news services in the Baltic states.

Finally, cultural exchanges seem to play a minor role in the strategy – as there is an inherent interest in and affection for Russian culture in the Baltic states, without negative connotations. Other issues, however, such as sporting events, are promoted in a way clearly reminiscent of the Soviet-Russian past. A typical example is the Continental Hockey League.

Taken as a whole, the entire Russian strategy toward the Baltic states in this regard amounts to using soft power and non-military means of influence as tools of destabilization. This is not a form of warfare per se, but is something that is done for purposes that might be useful both in peacetime and in a future traditional conflict. To have weak and domestically unstable states as neighbours seems to be a preferred option for Russian policymakers.

In terms of the effects of all the above, it seems fair to say that most of the Russian efforts against the Baltic states in this regard seem primarily to affect the Russian-speaking minorities in these countries. The majority populations are affected – in terms of being or becoming pro-Russian – to a much lesser degree. Russia's actions against Ukraine have also caused increased polarization among the Russian-speaking minorities in Estonia and Latvia, between those who support Putin's policies and those who do not.

Russian soft power policies, however, are not alone. All three Baltic states have active integration and cultural policies directed at their own minorities. These policies, together with general societal development, affect the attitudes of such minorities to the societies and nations in which they live. There are also signs of increased and better integration of Russian-speaking minorities into the Baltic societies, for example, in terms of increased naturalization of citizens in Estonia in particular but also to some extent in Latvia and Lithuania. In this sense, the Russian Compatriots Policy is a failure. The Russian-speaking minorities could in the long run develop a new identity as Russian-speaking but otherwise loyal Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians. Such a development, however, is far from certain.

Another observation that can be made is that economic issues per se do not seem to be of central importance to the Russian soft power strategy in the Baltic states. There are a number of exceptions, but in general it seems fair to say that the economic field – the energy sector aside – is not a major motivation for Russian actions against the Baltic states. There are signs, however, that the influx of Russian capital, especially to Latvia, has caused corruption and economic

dependence that could have a destabilizing influence on markets and society, in addition to other forms of Russian soft power.

6.2 Country-Specific Conclusions

Turning to more country-specific issues, there are a number of differences between Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania not only in terms of how Russian soft power affects them, but also – and perhaps more fundamentally – in terms of inherent differences between the countries themselves. In the case of Estonia, the lack of a political party composed primarily of and for ethnic Russians is made up for by the existence of the Centre Party, which successfully caters to Russian-speaking Estonians even though it is led by ethnic Estonians. In Estonia, the issue of Russian as an educational language has led to an intense debate over human rights that is heavily underscored by Russian actors. At the same time, Russian-speaking Estonians seem to be integrating increasingly well in Estonia.

In Latvia, the local dominance in Riga of the Harmony Centre – which is essentially led by and caters for ethnic Russians in Latvia – complicates the political landscape, as the party has not been allowed by the other parties to be part of any governmental coalition at the national level. This seems to have provided fertile ground for Russian soft power policies, not least through media outlets. The effect of these policies seems to be that Latvian public opinion is the most positive in terms of its views on Russia. Around 90 per cent of the Russian-speaking minority and around 46 per cent of the ethnic Latvian majority hold positive or somewhat positive views on Russia. The fact that a sitting Latvian president has been allowed to make a state visit to Moscow – in contrast to the Estonian and Lithuanian equivalents – seems to underline this relationship. In the economic field, however, it is apparent that Russian economic interests partly serve as levers for Russian political goals in Latvia.

In Lithuania, the domestic minority situation is very different compared to the other two Baltic states. The linkage between the EAP and the small Russian ethnic minority in Lithuania is apparent, and as such exclusive to Lithuania. This complex situation seems to have been used by Russian actors not only to divide the Polish minority from the Lithuanian majority, but also to generate divisions between Poland and Lithuania. However, the Russian Compatriots Policy also seems to be losing in Lithuania in the long term, as younger Lithuanians do not speak Russian to the same extent as their parents did. The Compatriots Policy is based to a large extent on the Russian language community, which means that it will face fundamental challenges in a country like Lithuania.

6.3 Implications for Future Research

As this report primarily presents views from the three Baltic states, and is somewhat limited in terms of perspectives, all the issues raised in this study would benefit from further research. There are, however, a few specific issues that are worth singling out.

First and foremost, the role of economic and energy issues across the entire field of Russian soft power in the Baltic states is not altogether clear. The recent changes in Lithuania concerning ownership issues in the natural gas sector are a case in point. Thus, more research on economic issues seems to be necessary.

Secondly, the use of hard power – such as the Russian military aggression in Ukraine – can have severe consequences for an actor’s possibility to wield “soft power” in the original sense, i.e. as the power of attraction. The wielding of hard power, in short, might severely limit the actor’s “soft power”. To what extent the Russian actions in Ukraine will affect the attitudes toward Russia in the populations of the Baltic states – both the majorities and the Russian-speaking minorities – is something that should be studied further.

Third, this report does not cover the issue of corruption within the Baltic states, either from a simple criminological perspective or from the more strategic problem of Russian bribery affecting Baltic officials. Analysing this highly complex issue would be a worthwhile endeavour in order to understand more fully the security policy challenges of the Baltic Sea region.

Finally, there is a need to look deeper into the issue of ethnic identity and loyalty to societal and state institutions in the Baltic states. Since independence, new generations of Russian-speakers have grown up under the influence of both the Russian media and Western popular culture. Anyone under 40 years of age has been active in the economic sphere of the independent Baltic nations for all of their adult lives. All this creates mixed identities and loyalties, which can be affected by domestic as well as international factors. This should attract deeper attention and analysis in order to understand the inner dynamics and prospects for the future effective integration of ethnic Russians, and the potential effectiveness of Russian destabilization and revanchist policies towards the Baltic states.

7 About the Authors

Dr Mike Winnerstig is a deputy director of research at the Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI) and currently the leader of the Security in the Baltic Sea Area project.

Dr Gudrun Persson is a deputy director of research at FOI and currently a senior scholar within the Russian Studies Programme at FOI.

Anna Bulakh is a Junior Research Fellow at the International Centre for Defence Studies (ICDS), Tallinn.

Julian Tupay is a former ICDS Junior Research Fellow.

Kaarel Kaas is the Editor-in-Chief of *Diplomaatia*, a journal published in Tallinn.

Emmet Tuohy is an ICDS Research Fellow.

Kristiina Visnapuu is a former ICDS Research Assistant.

Juhan Kivirähk is a former ICDS Senior Research Fellow.

Andis Kudors is the Executive Director of the Board of the Centre for East European Policy Studies, Riga and Tallinn.

Dr Nerijus Maliukevičius is a Lecturer and Scientific researcher at the Vilnius University Institute of International Relations and Political Science.