

**STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS, AND RELATED
PROGRAMS APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL
YEAR 2018**

TUESDAY, MARCH 7, 2017

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met at 2:17 p.m., in room SD-192, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Lindsey Graham (chairman) presiding.

Present: Senators Graham, Blunt, Boozman, Moran, Lankford, Daines, Rubio, Leahy, Durbin, Shaheen, Coons, Merkley, and Van Hollen.

**RUSSIA'S POLICIES AND INTENTIONS TOWARD SPECIFIC
EUROPEAN COUNTRIES**

STATEMENTS OF:

**HON. PAVLO KLIMKIN, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, UKRAINE
HON. PIOTR WILCZEK, AMBASSADOR, EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC
OF POLAND**

**HON. DAVID BAKRADZE, AMBASSADOR, EMBASSY OF GEORGIA
HON. ANDRIS TEIKMANIS, AMBASSADOR, EMBASSY OF THE RE-
PUBLIC OF LATVIA**

**HON. ROLANDAS KRIŠČIŪNAS, AMBASSADOR, EMBASSY OF THE
REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA**

HON. EERIK MARMEI, AMBASSADOR, EMBASSY OF ESTONIA

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM

Senator GRAHAM. The subcommittee will come to order.

I want to thank Senator Leahy for being such a good partner in this endeavor.

Our hearing today is on Russia's policies and intentions toward specific European nations. The one thing that we have in common with all of these countries: they are young, struggling democracies and they are friends of the United States.

Out of respect for your families, I will not pronounce any of your names. I will try to get your country right and you have an opportunity when you speak to tell us who you are.

We have the Foreign Minister from Ukraine, the Ambassador from Poland, the Ambassador from Georgia, the Ambassador from Latvia, the Ambassador from Lithuania, and the Ambassador from Estonia. I have met most of you on my travels, and I cannot thank you enough for coming to this hearing today, and to share with the

subcommittee, and the American people, what is going on in your backyard because you live in a very difficult neighborhood.

I would like to welcome to the subcommittee Senators Rubio and Van Hollen. Hopefully we can do things together that are good for the country.

I will make a short opening statement followed by Senator Leahy, and we will have 5-minute rounds of questions and answers. Again, to each of you, thank you very much for coming.

Very briefly, everybody talks about what happened in our election in 2016 and let me tell you my views.

The Russians tried to interfere in our election. I do not believe they changed the outcome, but it was the Russians who hacked into the Democratic National Committee. It was the Russians who compromised John Podesta's e-mails. In my view, it was the Russians who provided that information to WikiLeaks in an effort to interfere with our election.

It is my belief if we forgive and forget regarding our own election, we will invite future aggression by other countries. The Republican Party and Democratic Party should be one when it comes to foreign interference. An attack on one party should be considered an attack on all. I want this subcommittee to lead the way in terms of uniting our country to pushback against Russia's interference in democracy at home and abroad.

The goal is to find out from these countries what it is like to live in the shadow of Russia. What kind of interference do they face in their daily lives? What are the efforts, the tools, and the toolbox of Russia to undermine their democracies? The subcommittee needs to create a counter-Russia account, a soft power account.

This subcommittee has jurisdiction over foreign operations and I would like to try to convince Americans it is in our interest to put some money aside to help these emerging democracies because at the end of the day, democracy should be a goal of all of us simply because democracies tend not to go to war.

I want to make sure we can do whatever we can within reason. Money is tight, but it would be a good investment to have a counter-Russia account to put some money aside—and maybe cyber security assistance, maybe it is trade assistance, whatever it is—that we can help you withstand this assault on your democracies by Russia.

That is the goal: to understand what is going on and do something about it. To each of you, thank you for coming to the subcommittee. I think if we can come together and produce a product, history will judge us well.

Senator Leahy.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR PATRICK J. LEAHY

Senator LEAHY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am glad you are having this hearing.

I want to mention that Tim Rieser has always helped by giving me a phonetic pronunciation, but I will still mix it up. I think the fact that we have representatives of Estonia and Lithuania, Latvia, Georgia, Poland and Ukraine, places that many of us have visited; I know you have and I know Senator Durbin has.

We know the stakes involved. This is the second congressional hearing on Russia since the beginning of the new administration. I suspect we are going to have many more.

It is also the benefit of hearing directly from the representatives of countries that have experienced Russia's military aggression, and economic and political interference for many years.

We now count ourselves among those who are facing some of the same kinds of interference. We learned the Russian Government interfered in our elections to further its own interests and our new President has said virtually nothing about it.

He has made no secret of his admiration for President Putin. He has called the American news media the enemy of the people. That is something you might expect of President Putin, but not of the President of the United States.

We need an independent investigation into Russia's interference in our election. By knowing exactly what happened, we can take appropriate action. But at the same time, I think we need hearings, like Chairman Graham has called here, so the American public will know what Russia is doing in other parts of the world.

It is one thing when we see our leaders attacking the American media. I disagree with that. I disagree when nothing is said about Vladimir Putin's ruthless campaign to silence his critics, especially to silence the Russian press.

We have not heard any criticism from our President about Russia's invasion of Ukraine, annexation of Crimea, Russia's occupation of Georgian territory, the atrocities committed by Russian forces in Syria, their support for the Assad regime, or Russia's efforts to undermine stability and democracy across Europe.

I think I want you to know that not everybody in this country is praising Vladimir Putin. I do not. The chairman does not. I think that supporting the independence of our friends and allies when they are under a threat of attack is in the United States' national interest.

I will continue to work with Senator Graham. I want to ensure that U.S. assistance is made available for our partners in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

It is not because we are seeking a confrontation with Russia. It is because we recognize the importance of ensuring that our partners can maintain their sovereignty and provide for their people.

Do I agree with the President in saying we should have a constructive relationship with Russia rather than an adversarial one? Yes, if that is possible. But we cannot ignore the significance of the Russian Government's malignant activities toward us and our partners if we want to protect our own national interests.

So I thank you for having this hearing. I thank all of you for being here.

Senator GRAHAM. Thanks, Senator Leahy.

And we will start with the Foreign Minister of the Ukraine.

STATEMENT OF HON. PAVLO KLIMKIN, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, UKRAINE

Minister KLIMKIN. Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Leahy, Members of the subcommittee.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to testify before you today. And of course, it is great to sit in the line here with friends in front of the subcommittee.

Back in 1994, still as a young diplomat, I was involved in the process of strategic nuclear disarmament. While working on the Budapest Memorandum, I had already questioned its effectiveness and feasibility to ensure security of Ukraine.

Still, and I have to say it, it was beyond my imagination that in 20 years, one guarantor of our suzerainty and territorial integrity, a permanent U.N. Security Council member will invade Ukraine and occupy parts of its territory.

Why did it happen? Here is the key to understanding what is the root cause of Russian policies and intentions to all its European countries, particularly the Ukraine—for Putin, the collapse of the Soviet Union was the greatest catastrophe of the 20th century.

From the very beginning, he was and is still obsessed with restoring the former Russian greatness. Of course, it could be done in two ways. One way was to invest in building a strong democratic state with the rule of law and competitive market economy, honoring the international principle and order. But it was not the Russian choice.

Instead, the Kremlin resorted to aggressive expansionism in gross violations with the international law in different dimensions: breaking the U.N. Charter and Helsinki Final Act, undermining arms control and possibly violating the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) and New START treaties, aggressive with trade and energy pressure in contradiction to the W20 principles and, of course, blatantly violating human rights.

The Kremlin has developed the concept of hybrid warfare and launched it with the illegal annexation of Crimea and the invasion in Donbas. It is a highly sophisticated strategy which mixes conventional aggression with economy, and economic pressure with propaganda and misinformation, as well as direct interference in the internal affairs of other countries. It is waged daily against peaceful countries to undermine, disrupt, and sow dissent.

It is spearheaded and lying in ruins across the globe by the insidious television channel RT, which seeks not to promote any particular narrative, but to undermine that of the host.

In real terms, this hybrid war against Ukraine translates into a shocking number of Russian weaponry pumped into the occupied Donbas and Crimea. It is now about 4,200 regular troops and up to 40,000 militants. It is about more than 400 tanks and 800 armored vehicles. It is up to 1,000 artillery systems and over 200 multiple rocket launchers, and around 23,000 troops in the occupied Crimea.

Just a few hours ago, the Russian agent at the International Court of Justice made a completely ridiculous statement that the Russian-backed militants actually discovered all that weaponry had been hidden in the old Soviet coal mines. It is in this case just today. Can anyone believe it?

Kremlin's war against my country over the last 3 years has led to over 7 percent of the Ukraine being occupied, almost 10,000 of my fellow Ukrainians, both military and civilians, losing their lives with a further 23,000 being injured.

Just in the last 6 weeks, the Russians and their proxies launched a fierce attack against our troops and civilian population in Avdiivka. Russia has recognized the passports and documents issued by illegal entities in Donbas, and have also completed the introduction of the Russian ruble as the currency in the occupied territory.

Furthermore, Russia has also ordered the illegal expropriation of the key enterprises in the occupied territory. All this is nothing but the clear breach of each and every point of the Minsk Peace Agreement.

The only viable way to negotiate with Russia is from a position of strength and international solidarity. And no new agreements should be made with Russia until such time as they have delivered on their provisions and commitments.

So let me thank all of you for the enormous support which the United States has given to Ukraine, in particular over the last 3 years in our fight against the resurgent Russia. And all the signals from the new U.S. administration give us great hope that the United States' support for the Ukraine will continue and increase. And this continued support is not just in the interest of the Ukraine. It is in the interest of the United States, and the freedom and stability of the wider transatlantic alliance.

So I am asking the subcommittee for its explicit support in a number of areas. Defensively, we have been supplied by the United States, and continued military and technical support would make a powerful statement to the Kremlin and improve significantly Ukraine's ability to defend its territory against the Russian army. This support has already shown its effectiveness.

The battalion of the 73rd Brigade, trained by U.S. instruction, was one of the most effective in repelling the Russian attacks in Avdiivka. The units prepared by the U.S. instructors appeared to be very effective on the frontline. That is why we believe this kind of support and training is very important and should be continued.

So I would like to ask you to support the appropriation of funds authorized for security assistance to Ukraine in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) 2017. And please support the appropriation of funds for enhanced assistance to Ukraine in the U.S. fiscal year 2017 budget and, of course, forthcoming 2018 budget.

Ukraine also needs a long term security arrangement for closer partnership and cooperation on defense and security. The involvement of the United States will be key for any such arrangement to work. Of course, we need U.S. support in re-launching the negotiations of the signatory of the Budapest Memorandum. The United States should play a key role in the negotiation, both on Donbas and Crimea.

And finally, until Russia gets off Ukrainian land, there must be no easing up of sanctions. If anything, they should be increased.

Dear Senators, the Ukraine is on the frontline and currently the only country fighting and dying to hold off Russia. And Ukraine does not simply ask for support. We currently spend 6.6 percent of

our GDP on defense. At the same time, it is obvious that we need the U.S. and transatlantic solidarity with Ukraine and Ukrainian people.

A strong, stable, and democratic Ukraine able to defend its borders against Russian expansionism is a crucial ally for the United States in the region and globally.

Thank you.

[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF PAVLO KLIMKIN

Let me thank you for giving me this opportunity to share with you our assessments and related first-hand information on Russian policies towards a big European country—towards Ukraine.

The current policies of Russia towards Ukraine can be expressed in one word—the war.

It has been already 3 years since Russia launched a military aggression against Ukraine on 20 February 2014. The appalling number of victims highlights the immorality of Kremlin's war against the Ukrainian people: over 9,800 Ukrainian citizens have been killed, about 23,000 wounded and almost 1.8 million have become internally displaced persons. 7.2 percent of Ukrainian territory has been seized by Russia and millions of Ukrainian citizens live there under occupation and endless terror.

Two years after the Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements was signed, none of its provisions has been fulfilled by the Kremlin and its proxies, including the very first step—comprehensible and sustainable ceasefire.

—In 2016 there were about 16,000 ceasefire violations, including about 5,000 ceasefire violations with prohibited artillery and large-caliber mortars.

—In 2017 the OSCE SMM has recorded a notable increase in the use of weapons proscribed by the Minsk agreements, including multiple launch rocket systems and artillery.

The recent spike in violence in and around Avdiivka is an eloquent example of controlled escalation strategy and a clear indication of Russia's blatant disregard of its commitments under the Minsk Agreements.

I would like to thank our partner the United States for training provided to the Ukrainian military, which have already shown its effectiveness. The battalion of the 72nd brigade trained in Yavoriv by the U.S. instructors was one of the most effective in repelling the Russian-control attacks on Avdiivka.

The units prepared by the U.S. instructors appear to be very effective on the frontline and they demonstrate the lowest level of losses in manpower, better joint maneuvers and tactics implementation.

That is why we believe this kind of training and support in enhancing Ukraine's defense is very important and should be continued.

Moscow's attempts to make security on the ground conditional on implementation of its political demands breach the Minsk Agreements and further exacerbate the dire situation of civilians in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

The sustained attacks of the Russian hybrid forces would not be possible without continued logistic support.

Russia keeps sending weapons, ammunition and manpower to Ukraine through the 409.7-km of uncontrolled segment of the Ukrainian-Russian state border. Heavy flamethrower TOS-1 "Buratino", radar jamming system "Zhytel", drone Orlan-10—all manufactured in Russia and used exclusively by the Russian Army—have been registered by the OSCE SMM in Donbas over the past year and in 2017.

Russia continues to cover up the reinforcement of its proxies as "humanitarian aid".

On February 28 the Kremlin dispatched its 61th so-called "humanitarian convoy" without consent and inspection by the Ukrainian authorities and ignoring the coordinating role of the ICRC as well as principles of international humanitarian law.

Political settlement on the East of Ukraine is possible only if adequate security preconditions are provided by Russia.

No political settlement on the East of Ukraine is possible while there is constant shelling, wide presence of Russian troops and mercenaries, weapon supply from Russia and no control by Ukraine over its border.

Russia is imposing by brutal force a model of hybrid elections—without termination of aggression, without legal institutions and law enforcement agencies, with-

out environment for return and expressing their position through vote of over 2 million displaced persons, without disarmament of illegal armed formations exercising terrorism.

The Kremlin's Decree of February 18, 2017 on recognition of so-called documents issued on the territories of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, confiscation of Ukrainian assets (public and private enterprises) and introduction of the "ruble zone" are yet another evidence of Russian occupation of the part of Donbas as well as a clear violation of international law and the Minsk Agreements.

Russia is also trying to water down the trilateral format of the Minsk talks by granting the illegal "representatives of Donetsk and Luhansk" full member status in the process of consultations.

Moscow is willing to disclaim all liability for the developments in Donbas by insisting on its mediator status. Russia hopes that such an approach will help it to mitigate or even to get rid of sanctions.

The developments in the humanitarian sphere require every strong consolidated effort to unblock this important track of the Minsk Agreements. The civilian population continues to suffer from restrictions, deprivation and hardships inflicted upon them by the Russian hybrid forces.

Despite Kremlins' commitments to put additional pressure on the illegal armed formations to grant the international humanitarian organizations, including the ICRC, access into the region, the situation on the ground has not seen even the slightest change.

During the previous month, the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine faced increased restrictions on freedom of movement for the monitors and other impediments to its activities in non-government-controlled areas.

Such actions carried out by the Russian and Russia-backed militants in areas under their control are meant to disrupt the OSCE SMM mandated activities, particularly those aimed at monitoring and verifying withdrawal of heavy weapons, as envisaged by the Minsk Agreements.

According to the latest OSCE SMM daily reports covering the period of 1–28 February 2017, the OSCE monitors registered over 130 incidents of impeding the SMM's activities by the illegal armed formations.

The international solidarity and consistency of international policy of non-recognition of the annexation of Crimea is very important.

The illegal annexation of Crimea and the city Sevastopol has imposed very serious challenges to the international security and to human rights of people remaining in Crimea. The occupied Crimea has become a "grey zone" where the militarization, repression and political persecution are in growing progress.

The atmosphere of fear, intimidation, physical and psychological pressure forced about 35–40 thousand Ukrainian citizens (including over 20 thousand Crimean Tatars) to leave occupied Crimea and settle in other areas of Ukraine. Today the Crimean Tatars, having survived a genocide of the Soviet deportation in 1944, once again face severe repressions.

We witness murders, tortures, harassment, illegal detentions, enforced disappearances, intimidation, raids and searches, attacks on property and arrests under fabricated charges, and the persecution of journalists, human rights defenders and activists.

The Russian authorities use such methods to eliminate any public opposition to the occupation of Crimea and to the current government. For the same reasons local independent media and journalists have nearly all been co-opted, forced to flee, or run out of business.

Russia has designated the militarization of Crimea as a top priority. The aim is to make the peninsula a powerful military base to ensure full control over adjoining regions thus to counterbalance NATO forces in the Black Sea region.

Comparing to the pre-occupation period, Russia has more than doubled personal strength of its military in Crimea (from 12,500 before the occupation to 29,300 as of October 2016). In the near future (2020–2025) it should further increase up to 43,000.

Russia also has substantially reinforced and modernized its Crimean military land, air and naval components. Since January 2014 it has increased:

- a number of tanks from 0 to 40
- armed combat vehicles from 92 to 583
- artillery systems of the caliber more than 100 mm from 24 to 162
- combat aircraft from 22 to 101
- combat helicopters from 37 to 56
- anti aircraft systems from 0 to 16
- combat ships from 26 to 30
- submarines from 2 to 5

Particularly dangerous are the Russian actions to prepare Crimean military infrastructure for deployment of nuclear weapons, including refurbishing of the infrastructure of Soviet-era nuclear warheads storage facilities. Potential carriers of nuclear weapon, such as warships, short-range missile systems and combat aircraft, have been already deployed in the Crimean Peninsula.

In fact, Russia turns Crimea into a “grey zone”, which is de-facto not covered by the existing multilateral arms control agreements.

Crimea has been already used by Russia for its outreached activities (in Syria). Such role for military facilities in Crimea might be developed in the future.

The militarization of Crimea complicates the process of its de-occupation and poses serious threats both to the national security of Ukraine and regional security.

The only effective response to aggressive actions of Russia should be international solidarity with Ukraine and strengthening political, diplomatic and economic pressure on the aggressor. Russia must fully implement the Minsk Agreements and restore the territorial integrity of Ukraine, including de-occupation of Crimea. Unless so done, the imposed sanctions must be not only preserved but enhanced.

I am also confident that Ukraine can effectively retaliate the Russian aggression only when its defense is strong and Kremlin understands that further hostilities will be even more costly. Appeasement and concessions made to the aggressor would only encourage it for further aggression.

In this regard, we highly value the bicameral and bipartisan unity and support of the U.S. Congress on the issue of utilizing sanction policy against Russia.

We are grateful for your advocacy of an increased U.S. security assistance to Ukraine, including through provision of defensive weapons.

I would like to ask you to support the appropriation of funds authorized for security assistance to Ukraine in the NDAA, 2017.

The NDAA, 2017 reaffirms once again the high level of continued bicameral and bipartisan support in the U.S. Congress for Ukraine fighting the ongoing Russian aggression.

It is also important that the U.S. security assistance to Ukraine does not decrease in the forthcoming 2018 budget.

We are grateful that the United States has already provided \$3 billion in loan guarantees to Ukraine.

We also very much appreciate the fact that the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2017 cleared by this subcommittee has authorized providing of U.S. loan guarantees to Ukraine in fiscal year 2017 budget.

I would like to ask you to support the appropriation of the necessary funds for the above purposes in the fiscal year 2017, and, possibly, fiscal year 2018 budgets.

I would like to draw special attention to the situation with humanitarian needs of Ukrainian people affected by the Russian aggression. The horrors of war and its terrible consequences are daily reality for millions of people, with no hope for a quick end to their suffering. Totally Ukraine has 3.8 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, including 1.7 million—in need of an immediate assistance.

According to U.N. estimates, there is a need of at least \$214 million in additional humanitarian aid for 2017 with a critical requirement of \$127 million. Ukraine’s huge budget resources alongside assistance from our Western partners are being spend on humanitarian aid, but all these joint efforts are not able to meet existing challenges. The United States is a lead donor of humanitarian assistance to conflict-affected Ukrainians with more than \$49 million provided last year. At the same time, given the scope of urgently needed help we would appreciate a decision of the U.S. Government to extend humanitarian aid programs in Ukraine.

Given the large scope of challenges faced by Ukraine because of Russian aggression, we count on increased U.S. financial assistance for Ukraine that will help us implement the comprehensive reform agenda and ensure Ukraine’s economic sustainability.

Let me convey our strong belief that the Congress of the United States will remain united in supporting Ukraine defending its independence and choice for free and democratic future.

I thank you.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you very much. If you could, please try to keep your statements to 5 minutes. We have questions where you can tell us anything on your mind, but time is of the essence in the Senate. So thank you very much.

Mr. Ambassador.

**STATEMENT OF HON. PIOTR WILCZEK, AMBASSADOR, EMBASSY OF
THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND**

Ambassador WILCZEK. Mr. Chairman, Members of the subcommittee.

Thank you for inviting me to testify before the Senate subcommittee. It is an honor to be here and I am pleased to be able to provide the view of Poland's Government on Russia's policy in Europe and the challenges originating from it.

The Kremlin has a chief strategic objective: restore the superpower status lost after the fall of communism. The way to achieve this goal seems straightforward, altering the security architecture in Europe, thus impeding post-Soviet countries from integrating with the Euro-Atlantic community.

First, the current situation, while pursuing its foreign policy objectives, Moscow largely relies on force, intimidation, and economic extortions trying to impose on other countries an autocratic and oligarchic form of government.

Russia invaded Georgia, harassed Moldova, meddled in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, and violated international law by annexing Crimea.

Finally, the Kremlin masterminded and keeps fueling the conflict in eastern Ukraine. Although Moscow signed the ceasefire agreements—Minsk I and Minsk II—it did not withdraw from the region which is the point of departure to achieve a political solution. Even worse, during the last weeks, we have seen increasing military clashes in the Donbas.

Second, Russia is a growing military threat. President Putin embarked Russia on a large scale modernization of its armed forces. The introduction of new types of equipment was coupled with the reform of military doctrine. The threshold for the usage of nuclear weapons has been lowered.

Kaliningrad, bordering Poland and Lithuania, became the most militarized region in Europe. Russia equipped the exclave with Anti-Access Area-Denial capabilities. This A2/AD bubble aims at limiting NATO's freedom of maneuver and action on Allied territory. It covers an area spanning from northeastern Poland to the Baltic States.

Moreover, Kaliningrad is equipped with Iskander systems nuclear capable missiles able of hitting targets in Estonia, Latvia, Poland, and even in eastern parts of Germany.

Moscow conducts large scale snap exercises with openly aggressive scenarios. We also observe an unprecedented number of military incidents provoked by Russia, but the most alarming issue is Russia's ability to take prompt and deceptive actions. We saw that in Crimea.

Third, the hybrid dimension, the challenges posed by Russia's actions go beyond the conventional military realm. We see them in the cyber, informational, and energy domains.

Russia deliberately employs hybrid means to act below the threshold of a military conflict. Moscow often acts by exploiting national vulnerabilities and sensitivities. This might involve actions in the cyber domain, frequently backed by a fierce propaganda effort. Ukraine is a case in point.

While countries in Central Europe try to diversify their import routes, Russia promotes the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, creating divisions among EU member states. Should this project go ahead, Russia could effectively hinder the diversification efforts of the whole region. Increased gas supplies from Russia would inevitably affect the economic viability of LNG projects in Central and Eastern Europe.

Fourth, our response, two words—uncertainty and insecurity—best describe the current security situation we operate in. Such conditions and challenges call for an adequate answer. NATO is the best platform to provide it. It is a unique force multiplier.

Deterring all those threats and challenges requires a swift and full implementation of the decisions taken at the Summit in Warsaw in 2016. Furthermore, my government believes that the Special Meeting of Heads of States and Governments should be an important milestone in the process of adapting the Alliance's defense and deterrence posture.

As the challenges we face are here to stay, the Enhanced Forward Presence of Allied troops on the eastern flank of the Alliance should have a long term character. Poland is very grateful for those actions. It would be impossible to achieve the Warsaw's Summit decisions without American leadership.

In this context, I would also like to thank you for the deployment of your troops to our region under the NATO flag. A long term American commitment to the Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) is absolutely essential. I would like to add that the presence of American soldiers in Poland, as part of Operation Atlantic Resolve, is of equal and paramount importance. Further congressional support for the European Reassurance Initiative would be greatly appreciated.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished Members of the subcommittee, a fair burden-sharing among allies is a must. Poland meets the 2 percent defense spending target along NATO guidelines. More than 20 percent of our 2017 military budget will be spent on military equipment. Our soldiers serve in missions in Afghanistan and Kosovo. Poland contributes to collective defense. A Polish tank company has been deployed to Latvia under the framework of the EFP. Our vessel commands the Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 operating on the Aegean Sea.

Poland has always been ready to deal with the terrorist threat. Polish and American soldiers were brothers-in-arms during the missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Altogether, more than 40,000 Polish troops took part in both operations. Nowadays, Poland is an active member of the Global Coalition Against Daesh.

Moreover, our efforts go beyond the military domain. Last year saw the opening of an import LNG terminal in Poland. It could become a gateway for U.S. made LNG destined for clients in Central Europe. Delivering gas supplies to Ukraine via Poland would send a powerful political message, whilst providing business opportunities for American firms.

Moscow orchestrated the conflict in the Ukraine and Moscow has all the means to end it. Moscow signed ceasefire agreements, Minsk I and Minsk II, but does not respect their provisions. More-

over, Russia decided to recognize the documents produced by the so-called Donbas Republics.

To sum up, taking into account Russia's actions, we see no ground to ease the sanctions or to change our policy vis-à-vis Moscow. Congressional support for maintaining transatlantic unity and solidarity on this issue is indispensable.

A couple of weeks ago, General James Mattis said at NATO headquarters, "Europe and North America need to work together stronger than ever in times of turmoil and unpredictability." I firmly believe that the political and military engagement of the United States is necessary for preserving peace and stability in Europe.

Let me stress that we remain open to dialogue with Moscow. However, such dialogue needs to be conditional on Russia changing its current policies and its stance towards international law.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today, and I look forward to taking your questions.

[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. PIOTR WILCZEK

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for inviting me to testify before the United States Senate Committee on Appropriations, State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Subcommittee. It is an honor to be here and I am pleased to be able to provide the view of my government on Russia's policy in Europe and the challenges originating from it.

Let me start by briefly outlining Russia's policy goals. Following that, I would like to highlight four points for you to consider.

The Kremlin has a chief strategic objective: restore the superpower status lost after the fall of communism. The way to achieve this goal seems straightforward: altering the security architecture in Europe, thus impeding post-soviet countries from integrating with the Euro-Atlantic community.

First. The current situation.

While pursuing its foreign policy objectives, Moscow largely relies on force, intimidation and economic extortions, trying to impose on other countries an autocratic and oligarchic form of government. Russia invaded Georgia, harassed Moldova, meddled in the Nagorno Karabach conflict and violated international law by annexing Crimea. Finally, the Kremlin masterminded and keeps fueling the conflict in eastern Ukraine. Although Moscow signed the ceasefire agreements—Minsk I and Minsk II—it did not withdraw from the region what is the point of departure to achieve the political solution. Even worse, during the last weeks we have seen increasing military clashes in the Donbas.

The Russian aggression against Ukraine ended the period of a post-Cold War stability. Moscow decided to undermine the European security architecture, enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act.

All these actions have been heralding the course of President Putin's Russia. Having left the path of dialogue and democratic change sparked in the early 1990s, it evolved into a dark residue of the Soviet menace. Yet again, military power became the Kremlin's chief tool for pursuing its policy objectives.

Second. Russia is a growing military threat.

President Putin embarked Russia on a large-scale modernization of its armed forces. The introduction of new types of equipment was coupled with the reform of the military doctrine. The threshold for the usage of nuclear weapons has been lowered. Newly created military units have been deployed to the western parts of the country.

Kaliningrad, bordering Poland and Lithuania, became the most militarized region in Europe. Russia equipped the exclave with anti-access/area-denial capabilities. This A2/AD "bubble" relies on a combination of sophisticated anti-aircraft, anti-shiping and electronic warfare systems. It aims at limiting NATO's freedom of maneuver and action on Allied territory. It covers an area spanning from North-Eastern Poland to the Baltic states.

Moreover, Kaliningrad is equipped with “Iskander” systems. These short-range ballistic missiles are nuclear-capable and able of hitting targets in Estonia, Latvia, Poland and even in eastern parts of Germany.

Moscow conducts large-scale snap exercises with openly aggressive scenarios. The last snap military drills took place in Kaliningrad this February. We also observe an unprecedented number of military incidents provoked by Russia with Russian airplanes and warships violating Allied airspace and waters.

But the most alarming issue is Russia’s ability to take prompt and deceptive actions. We saw that in Crimea.

Third. The hybrid dimension.

The challenges posed by Russia’s actions go beyond the conventional military realm. We see them in the cyber, informational and energy domains.

Russia deliberately employs hybrid means to act below the threshold of a military conflict. Moscow often acts by exploiting national vulnerabilities and sensitivities. This might involve actions in the cyber domain, frequently backed by a fierce propaganda effort. Ukraine is the case in point.

Take energy. Russia largely relies on oil and gas sales for its exports revenues. This is a simplification. In 2013 oil and petroleum products were responsible for 54 percent of the Russian gross exports sales. Gas accounted for 14 percent. These are all EIA figures. From the Russian perspective, it was not only easy, but also not so costly to use gas as a political weapon.

Nowadays countries in Central Europe largely rely on Russia for their energy imports. Moscow uses energy resources as a tool in foreign policy. Countries cooperating with Russia benefit from large discounts on their energy bills. Those seeking integration with the West end up paying high prices or are threatened with being cut off from supplies. Just look at Ukraine.

Today, while countries in Central Europe try to diversify their import routes, Russia promotes the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, creating divisions among EU member states. Should this project go ahead, Russia could effectively hinder the diversification efforts of the whole region. Increased gas supplies from Russia would inevitably affect the economic viability of LNG projects in Central and Eastern Europe.

Fourth. Our response.

We have been living in a changed security environment for more than 3 years. Two words—uncertainty and insecurity—best describe the current security situation we operate in. Such conditions and challenges call for an adequate answer. NATO is the best platform to provide it. It is a unique force multiplier.

Deterring all those threats and challenges requires a swift and full implementation of the decisions taken at the Summit in Warsaw. Furthermore, my government believes that the Special Meeting of Heads of States and Governments scheduled to take place in Brussels later this year should be an important milestone in the process of adapting the Alliance’s defense and deterrence posture.

As the challenges we face are here to stay, the enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) of Allied troops on the Eastern flank of the Alliance should have a long-term character. Poland is very grateful for those actions. It would be impossible to achieve the Warsaw’s Summit decisions without American leadership.

In this context I would also like to thank you for the deployment of your troops to our region under the NATO flag. A long-term American commitment to the eFP is absolutely essential. I would like to add that the presence of American soldiers in Poland as part of Operation Atlantic Resolve is of equal and paramount importance. Further congressional support for the European Reassurance Initiative would be greatly appreciated.

Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee,

Before concluding allow me to underline that we take our commitments seriously. A fair burden-sharing among Allies is a must. Poland meets the 2 percent defense spending target along NATO guidelines. More than 20 percent of our 2017 military budget will be spent on military equipment. Our soldiers serve in missions in Afghanistan and Kosovo. Poland contributes to collective defense. A Polish tank company has been deployed to Latvia under the framework of the eFP. Our vessel commands the Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 operating on the Aegean Sea.

Poland has always been ready to deal with the terrorist threat. Polish and American soldiers were brothers-in-arms during the missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Altogether, more than 40 thousand Polish troops took part in both operations. Now-

adays, Poland is an active member of the Global Coalition against Daesh. Our F-16 fighter-jets are flying over Iraq.

Moreover, our efforts go beyond the military domain.

Together with our Danish and Norwegian partners we are working on a big-scale diversification project: the Baltic Pipe. A natural gas pipeline linking the Norwegian fields with Poland via Denmark. It would allow direct imports of natural gas from Norway to Poland. It could also be used to ship re-gasified LNG from Poland to Denmark.

Last year saw the opening of an import LNG terminal in Poland. It could become a gateway for U.S.-made LNG destined for clients in Central Europe. Delivering gas supplies to Ukraine via Poland would send a powerful political message, whilst providing business opportunities for American firms.

Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee,

Moscow orchestrated the conflict in Ukraine and Moscow has all the means to end it. It signed ceasefire agreements, Minsk I and Minsk II, but does not respect their provisions. Moreover, Russia decided to recognize the documents produced by the so-called Donbas republics.

Is it a proof of good will?

To sum up, taking into account Russia's actions, we see no ground to ease the sanctions or to change our policy vis-à-vis Moscow. Congressional support for maintaining transatlantic unity and solidarity on this issue is indispensable.

Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee,

A couple of weeks ago General James Mattis said at the NATO HQ that "Europe and North America need to work together stronger than ever in times of turmoil and unpredictability"—I couldn't agree more with his statement. I firmly believe that the political and military engagement of the United States is necessary for preserving peace and stability in Europe.

Let me stress that we remain open to dialogue with Moscow. However, such dialogue needs to be conditional on Russia changing its current policies and its stance towards international law.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today, and I look forward to taking your questions.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you. And to those who stick to 5 minutes, your chance of assistance goes up. [Laughter.]

Thank you very, very much.

The Ambassador from Georgia.

STATEMENT OF HON. DAVID BAKRADZE, AMBASSADOR, EMBASSY OF GEORGIA

Ambassador BAKRADZE. Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen.

I am here today to remind you that before Ukraine, Georgia was invaded in 2008, and 20 percent of our country remains under Russian occupation.

Despite ongoing Russian aggression, with the support of the United States, Georgia has made tremendous strides in strengthening democratic institutions and fostering economic development to solidify an irreversible pact towards Europe and Euro-Atlantic integration. I am also here to tell you that we need a stronger America in Georgia and the region.

The conflict, which started in the early 1990's, reached its peak in 2008 with the Russian invasion of Georgia and the occupation of our territories. As the international community failed to effectively respond to early warning signs, Russia continues its occupation with up to 10,000 Russian military, security, and the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB) border guard personnel. The Russian occupation forces have no legal mandate, and are in stark violation of international law of the August 12, 2008 ceasefire agreement.

In 2009, Russia began installing razor wire fences and other artificial obstacles along the occupation line. The total length of the trenches across both occupation lines is more than 62 miles. We greatly appreciate the interest of Congress, both its bodies and its representatives, who are frequently visiting the occupation line.

In further violation of the ceasefire agreement, Moscow has signed so-called treaties with the occupational regimes. These documents represent a step towards annexation of Georgia's occupied regions as they provide a foundation for full integration into social, economic, administrative, and most importantly, military and security institutions of the Russian Federation.

Georgia is pursuing an engagement and reconciliation process with the people in the occupied territories. We make all benefits, which are available to Georgian citizens, also accessible to our compatriots residing on the other side of the occupation line—free healthcare, educational, cultural, scientific programs, and other benefits of Georgia's European path such as visa liberalization.

Since regaining its independence, and to undermine Georgian sovereignty and territorial integrity, Georgia has been subject to different forms of unconventional hybrid warfare.

Russian propaganda in Georgia—in addition to an economic embargo of 2006, energy cuts, and the cyber attacks in 2008—seeks to challenge and derail Georgia's European and Euro-Atlantic integration aspirations. It builds on fears that exist in different societies, creating myths, and communicating through different forms of media.

A recent example is the spreading of false information that through a well-deserved visa-free travel decision for Georgian citizens to Europe came at the expense of building refugee camps in Georgia.

The Georgian Government has been effective in its strategic communication efforts through a coordinated approach, dismantling myths, but also countering anti-Western narratives by bringing tangible results to Georgian citizens such as a free trade agreement, an association agreement with Europe, and visa liberalization. As a result, we have managed to maintain strong support toward Georgia's EU and NATO aspirations within 70 to 75 percent.

Overall, despite Russia's vicious efforts, for a small nation, Georgia makes an outsized contribution in international security efforts by allocating more than 2 percent of our GDP for defense spending. We are a committed partner in the fight against terrorists and we are one of the largest contributors to the Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan. With one of the highest number of 870 servicemen, Georgian soldiers are proudly standing shoulder to shoulder with allies in the most dangerous parts of the world.

In recent years, we have made progress in building strong and effective state institutions ensuring democracy, human rights, and rule of law because we believe that our political and economic progress will ultimately serve as a potent antidote to Russia's expansionist design.

For the last decade, Georgia—as the most reliable and democratic ally of the United States in a very tough region—has been a great example of American taxpayers' money wisely spent. Therefore, I want to invite the Members, and the staff of this sub-

committee, to visit and see firsthand the transformational power of U.S. assistance.

Last year, we signed a memorandum on a deepening of security and defense partnership between our two nations, and we successfully launched the Georgia Defense Readiness Program. Further improvements of these programs, and elevation of our security partnership, is of vital importance as we believe Georgia remains an essential part of the Euro-Atlantic security architecture.

When the Cold War ended and the Soviet Union dissolved, the United States and its allies sought to build Europe whole, free, and at peace. Today, when one of the basic foundations of security and peace—respect for national borders—is violated, a new transatlantic leadership is needed to fortify and enlarge the alliance.

We believe a comprehensive, long term engagement strategy by the new administration will include the strengthening of Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty, improving bilateral trade, economic investment relationships, and supporting the democratic choice of the Georgian people to integrate with Euro-Atlantic institutions.

All these measures will make Georgia stronger and more resilient. That is important because a stronger Georgia is in the United States' interest, as much as a stronger America is in Georgia's interest.

Thank you.

[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. DAVID BAKRADZE

RUSSIA'S MEDDLING IN GEORGIA—A BRIEF HISTORY

Georgia was under Russian colonial occupation between 1801 and 1991, with prior independent statehood of more than 3,000 years. For a brief period between 1918 and 1921 Georgia reclaimed independence, only to face massive Soviet invasion and another 70 years of occupation.

In 1991, as the Soviet Union collapsed, Georgia regained its independence and began a state-building process. Georgia's stated aspirations to European and Euro-Atlantic integration and its commitment to democratic progress and economic growth have since then provided a counterpoint to the new-imperialist intentions of the Russian Federation to keep Georgia and other former-Soviet states under its direct political influence and domination.

U.S. support has been critical to Georgia's ability to continue on its path toward progress, despite regional challenges. In return, Georgia has been America's closest ally in a tough neighborhood. For a small nation, we make an outsized contribution to international security efforts with an allocation of more than 2 percent of our GDP to defense spending. We are also a committed partner in the fight against terrorism. We remain the largest per capita contributor to NATO's Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan with 870 Georgian servicemen. Georgian soldiers stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the U.S. and allies in the most dangerous parts of the world, 32 Georgian soldiers lost their lives in the fight against terrorism.

The U.S.-Georgia alliance remains vital in the face of ongoing Russian provocations, which have been going on for decades. The first demonstration of Russia's imperialist intensions—in what it likes to refer to as its “near abroad”—came shortly after Georgia's independence, when Russia sponsored separatist movements in Georgia in the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia in 1991 and the Abkhazia region in 1992. Situations in both regions escalated to armed hostilities, where Russian-backed separatist forces and so called ‘Russian mercenaries’ defeated the newly-formed weak and fragmented Georgian military forces, resulting in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of ethnic Georgians from those regions.

Throughout the 1992–1993 conflict, the ethnic Georgian population was subject to atrocities including acts of murder, torture, rape and pillage. The U.N. Secretary-General-mandated fact-finding mission, which visited Abkhazia, Georgia in 1993,

described various episodes of the conflict where such acts occurred on a large scale.¹ To escape the atrocities, the entire ethnic Georgian population of approximately 260,000 was forced to flee from the Abkhazia region by 1994.² However, an estimated 35,000 Georgians remained in the region.

The population that remained in the Abkhazia region soon was subject to forced passportization. As described by the EU-mandated Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, “after the ethnic cleansing of Georgians in these two regions in early 1990s, en masse distribution of Russian passports to the remaining civilian population represented a deliberate and well-constructed policy aimed at establishing a pretext of the military intervention of the Russian Federation on the territory of Georgia [in August 2008].”³

RUSSIA-GEORGIA WAR IN AUGUST 2008 AND SECURITY SITUATION ON THE GROUND AFTER 8 YEARS

The Russian military aggression and invasion of Georgia in August 2008 brought a new wave of massive ethnic cleansing of the Georgian population from the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia. The widespread violence against Georgian civilians included acts of killing, torture, rape, looting and burning of people’s houses.⁴ All Georgian villages in the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia with a total ethnic Georgian population of approximately 35,000 were burned down and destroyed in order to preclude any return of the expelled population.

August 12, 2008 Ceasefire Agreement between the Russian Federation and Georgia calls for the withdrawal of Russian troops to the places held prior to the outbreak of hostilities. However, Russia continues to occupy both Georgian regions through the presence of approximately 10,000 Russian military and security personnel and the so-called FSB border guards. The Russian occupation forces have no legal mandate and are in stark violation of international law. There is neither host country consent from Georgia to have Russian troops on Georgian soil, nor any agreement that would permit Russian military presence. Moreover, the Russian state has direct control over both regions given that top decision-makers in both the Tskhinvali and Abkhazia regions are Russian citizens.

In addition to the personnel presence, Russia has illegally built and fortified military infrastructure in the occupied regions. In August 2010, the military base located in the Abkhazia region was fortified with the S-300 type surface-to-air (anti-aircraft) missile system. In December 2010, Russia installed a multiple-launch rocket system artillery battalion (so-called “Smerch” units) at the Tskhinvali base. In January 2011, this base was further reinforced with the tactical-operational missile launch system “Scarab B,” also known as “Tochka U,” with an operational range of 120 km, and capability of being equipped with conventional and nuclear warheads.

Despite the explicit calls of the international community to end the occupation and withdraw its military forces⁵ as called for by the EU-mediated Ceasefire Agreement signed after the August 2008 war, Russia has intensified both military build-up and grave human rights violations in the occupied regions. For instance, in 2015, the illegal military base in the Tskhinvali region was further fortified with modernized missile systems, such as the ballistic missile system “Iskander,” multiple BM-21“Grad” rocket launchers, and the surface-to-air missile system “Strela 10,” as well as tanks and UAVs.⁶

CREEPING ANNEXATION AND EFFORTS OF GOG

First in summer 2009 and then in April/May 2011, the Russian occupation forces started the installation of razor wire fences and other artificial obstacles along the occupation line in the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions; the process has further expanded since January 2013 and continues today. The total length of the trenches across the Abkhazia region’s occupation line is around 48 km. The total length of

¹U.N. Sec. Council, Report of the Secretary-General’s Fact-Finding Mission to Investigate Human Rights Violations in Abkhazia, Republic of Georgia, ¶17, U.N. Doc. S/26795, (Nov. 17, 1993).

²See UNHCR data at: <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e48d2e6>.

³IIFMCG Report, Volume II, at 187.

⁴See for example “Human Rights Watch, Up in Flames: Humanitarian Law Violations and Civilian Victims in the Conflict Over South Ossetia” (Human Rights Watch 2009), at 127–194; “Amnesty International, Civilians in the Line of Fire: The Georgia-Russia Conflict” (Amnesty International Publications, 2008), at 34–45.

⁵These include: NATO, EU, Council of Europe, Resolutions of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, Lithuanian Seimas, Czech Senate, Romanian Senate, etc.

⁶Available at: http://dyn.function.mil.ru/news_page/world.htm?objInBlock=25&blk=10323761.

artificial barriers along the occupation line in the Tskhinvali region is around 52 km, affecting around 200 local families, by leaving their houses behind the new barriers. Some of them were compelled to flee their places of residence, thus creating a further wave of IDPs.

In parallel, Russian occupation forces are installing so-called “border” sign posts along the occupation line in the Tskhinvali region. As a result of the so-called “borderization” process, local families have found themselves cut off from agricultural lands, potable and irrigation water systems, religious sites and cemeteries; they are deprived of their fundamental rights, including the rights to free movement, education, and social and health services. This situation creates an imminent threat of further waves of displacement. The arrest of Georgian citizens for so-called “illegal border crossing,” kidnappings for ransom, robberies, partial murders, attacks on civilians, discrimination against ethnic Georgians and violations of the Georgian central government-controlled air space by Russian helicopters and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) continue to pose challenges for the State Security Service of Georgia (SSSG). Since 2010, 915 civilians have been detained for so called “illegal border crossing.”

In a further grave violation of the August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement, Moscow signed the so-called “treaty on alliance and strategic partnership” with the Sokhumi occupation regime on 24 November 2014 and the so-called “treaty on alliance and integration” with the Tskhinvali occupation regime on 18 March 2015. Although similar Russian-led initiatives have been undertaken in the past, these documents represent a factual annexation of Georgia’s occupied regions, as they provide for full integration into the social, economic, administrative and—importantly—military and security institutions of the Russian Federation. Among others, the documents envisage the de-facto abolishment of the segment of the Georgia-Russia border in the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions, whereas the occupation line with the rest of Georgia will be further fortified. The documents also envisage: (1) the creation of “common security and defense space;” (2) the establishment of a Joint Coordinating Centre for law enforcement agencies, imposing the FSB system on both the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions; (3) the simplification of procedures necessary for obtaining Russian citizenship; (4) the equalling of pensions and salaries to the equivalent level of allowances for residents of the Russian Federation’s Southern District. The document signed with the Tskhinvali region contains certain differences, which speak of full de facto annexation of the region into the Russian Federation. The title—“alliance and integration”—points to the genuine intention and ultimate goal of the document. The occupation regime in the Tskhinvali region confirms this by making explicit the necessity of becoming a Federal subject of Russia. The so-called “President” Leonid Tibilov recently announced a decision to initiate a referendum on the integration of South Ossetia into the Russian Federation.⁷ Follow-up field “agreements,” which have been already signed or are in the pipeline, will factually turn Georgia’s regions into Federal parts of Russia.

It is worth mentioning that, in November 2011, then President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev made a statement that Russia’s military aggression against Georgia was intended to counter Georgia’s NATO ambitions and thus Georgia’s sovereign choice to integrate into the Euro-Atlantic community.⁸ Furthermore, on August 8, 2012, on the fourth anniversary of the Russia-Georgia War, the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin confessed that since 2006, Russia had developed a plan to invade Georgia. He also revealed that Moscow had been training militias of the Tskhinvali regime to directly participate in the military operations.⁹

The policy of creeping annexation exercised by Russia against Georgia, coupled with the alarming developments in the region, demonstrate that Russia does not accept the sovereign choice of independent states and is attempting to restore zones of influence in the region.

While advancing its Euro-Atlantic integration, Georgia remains firmly committed to the peaceful resolution of the conflict and the de-escalation of tensions with Russia based on respect for Georgia’s territorial integrity. Georgia has taken concrete steps in this direction. In November 2010, Georgia undertook a non-use of force pledge against the Russian Federation, which was further reiterated by the Parliament of Georgia in March 2013. While the international community lauded Georgia’s pledge on the non-use of force, Russia explicitly refuses to reciprocate it. In November 2011, Georgia agreed on Russia’s accession to World Trade Organization, thus completely removing the barriers for Russia’s membership in the WTO.

⁷ Available at: <http://cominf.org/node/1166506480>.

⁸ Statement of D. Medvedev is available at: <http://www.rg.ru/2011/11/21/prezident-site.html>.

⁹ Statement of the President of the Russian Federation is available at: <http://www.kremlin.ru/transcripts/16180#sel=30:1,32:21>.

In February 2012, the Government of Georgia unilaterally abolished the visa regime for Russian citizens. In November 2012, the Prime Minister of Georgia appointed a Special Representative for Relations with the Russian Federation and launched a direct channel with Moscow, thus once again reaffirming the political will to mend economic, cultural and humanitarian ties with Russia. In the meantime, the Geneva International Discussions, co-chaired by the UN, EU and the OSCE, remain the only format for discussing outstanding political and humanitarian issues with the Russian Federation. In February 2014, the Georgian national team participated in the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, while the Government of Georgia expressed readiness to cooperate with relevant Russian structures on security-related issues.

The above constructive initiatives have been met with further provocations, the installation of artificial barriers on the territory of Georgia, and steps towards the annexation of the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions. Despite Georgia's tireless efforts at constructive engagement, Russia continues to obstruct agreement on establishing an international security presence in the occupied regions, and for the safe and dignified return of IDPs and refugees.

Russia's efforts to legitimize its occupation of territories of a sovereign state include the illegal "recognition" of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali as independent states, and furthermore, the coercion of other nations, including through political and financial pressure, to do the same. After failing to achieve progress in this regard at the political level,¹⁰ the Russian Federation has been resorting to other instruments in order to legitimize the so-called "independence" and thus its illegal actions on the ground.

The Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions remain inaccessible for the international community. The EU Monitoring Mission, which is an extremely important instrument to ensure security and stability on the ground, is still prevented from fully implementing its mandate by not being allowed to access the occupied regions. Notwithstanding, the EUMM is the only international mechanism capable of monitoring the situation in close proximity to the occupied regions. The latest report by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the Human Rights Situation in the Occupied Regions of Georgia is attached (<http://mfa.gov.ge/getattachment/fe17def2-cd11-48b6-b9ad-d0535e49e6fa/MFA-4-report-2016-fin.docx.aspx>).

In a recent development: Russian occupation regime in Tskhinvali scheduled a referendum on 9 April on changing the name of one of the oldest Georgian regions into the one similar to the Federal subject of the Russian Federation. This referendum is a step intended to lay a ground for illegal annexation of the occupied region.

The international society should urge the Russian Federation to respect sovereignty and territorial integrity of its neighbors and comply with its international obligations. The firm stance and consolidated efforts of international society is crucial to prevent another act of annexation in Europe. We appreciate a firm stance of the U.S. State Department on this issues as expressed in the Statement of the Embassy of USA in Georgia. Meanwhile, we remain open for constructive negotiations in the format of Geneva International Discussions. Last year was marked by the restoration of the Gali Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism.

As concerns the relations with our compatriots living in the occupied territories, the ethnic Abkhaz and Ossetians, are an integral part of our common history and future, despite the current artificial barriers. There is no alternative to the return of the IDPs and refugees to their homes and to the full re-integration of all ethnicities into a vibrant society where human rights and individual freedoms as well as cultural and linguistic diversity of different communities are the Georgian State's top priorities.

We firmly pursue the engagement, confidence building and reconciliation process with the people living in the occupied territories. We are offering all benefits which are open to Georgian citizens. We stand ready to offer all the progress we will be having on our development path. The Universal free healthcare, free education, benefits of Georgia's European integration path—Visa liberalization, educational, cultural, scientific programs are available for our citizens residing on the other side of the occupation line. (Main directions of the reconciliation and engagement policy of the Office of the State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality is attached)

¹⁰ Despite Russia's illegal policy, only three states have recognized the so called "independence" of Georgia's occupied regions—Venezuela, Nicaragua and Nauru. Tuvalu and Vanuatu have withdrawn the recognition and established diplomatic relations with Georgia based on the principle of the latter's sovereignty and territorial integrity within the internationally recognized borders.

HYBRID WARFARE

It is worth noting not only the persistence of Russia's efforts to undermine Georgian sovereignty and territorial integrity, but also the nature of those efforts. Since regaining its independence, Georgia has been subject to different forms of unconventional, hybrid warfare. The blackmailing and intimidation has been in the Russia's toolkit. The economic embargo of 2006, energy cuts, cyber-attacks in 2008 and after were parts of Russia's policy to attain its desired political results, to derail Georgia from its sovereign choice of European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

For the last several years, Russian propaganda has become visible and stronger not only in Georgia, but in the wider region. The approach differs not only from country to country, but from region to region, serving the goal it wants to achieve in each location. In Georgia's case Russia is defying and confronting Georgia's European and Euro-Atlantic path. It builds on fears and challenges that exist in different societies, creating myths and communicating through different forms of social media, using newly established NGO's or media organizations, like radio "Sputnik", Internet trolls etc.

The Georgian Government has been successful in its strategic communications, through a coordinated approach that dismantles myths. The policy is not fighting propaganda with propaganda, but with truthful information and the policies, that deliver. Last 4 years have been successful for Georgia's European integration, bringing tangible results for its population, through European instruments, like Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement, the Association Agreement and Visa Liberalization, that will be available for the citizens of Georgia by the end of this month. These deliverables are important to counter Russian propaganda that aims to showing futility of the reforms approximating with European legislation.

We have managed, despite increased propaganda and an open media environment, through effective strategic communications and coordinated information campaigns, to maintain high support for Georgia's European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations. According to the recent polls, the Georgian population expressed 73–78 percent support for Georgia's membership in the EU and NATO.

We have strengthened traditionally emotional support for European integration with knowledge-based support, something that cannot be easily challenged through propaganda efforts. An informed society cannot be easily influenced by misinformation. Coordination of the Government's activities with civil society (23 NGOs) efforts not only in the capital Tbilisi, but in the most exposed regions as well, is implemented by communication with the most vulnerable parts of society, through information providers, like regional media, municipality workers, teachers, clergy.

We highly appreciate good cooperation with NATO's Center of Excellence on Strategic Communication since the day of its establishment in Riga, as well as with the EU EastStratComm unit in Brussels. We look forward to more initiatives from the U.S. Congress.

STRONGER UNITED STATES FOR STRONGER GEORGIA

To summarize, despite the Russia's vicious efforts, Georgia has persisted on its path toward democratic progress and economic growth. We have made great progress in building strong and effective state institutions, ensuring: a free civil society; free media; free markets; social cohesion; and the rule of law. This past fall, we held free and fair parliamentary elections, cementing our democratic progress. Meanwhile, the 2017 Index of Economic Freedom named Georgia the 13th freest economy in the world, ensuring openness and integration into the global market and equal opportunities for all people interested in doing business in Georgia.

We are confident that our political and economic progress will ultimately serve as potent antidotes to Russia's expansionist designs. Moreover, Russia's aggression and occupation of Georgian territories, its attempts to derail us from our pro-western path, made Georgia even more determined to resist Russian domination and pursue further integration with EU and NATO.

Our viability, persistent and resilience could not be achieved without the United States continued and vital support for the last 25 years. This coming April we will be celebrating 25 years of establishing diplomatic relations. During these years the U.S. has been one of the most important economic and security partners of Georgia. The U.S. is the largest bilateral donor, having provided several billion dollars since 1991. This support has always enjoyed bipartisan backing. Since 2009, we have institutionalized our relations and friendship through a Strategic Partnership charter, pledging to further Georgia's democratization, economic development, sovereignty, and territorial integrity.

For the last decade Georgia has become the best example of the American Taxpayers money wisely spent, being the most reliable, consistent, credible democratic

ally for the U.S. in a tough neighborhood. We have shown valor and commitment to our American partner during its most difficult times. We have always supported the U.S. in the fight against terrorism contributing to the U.S. and NATO led missions like an ally.

Last year we have signed with U.S. memorandum on the deepening security and defense partnership, committing “to strengthen the self-defense capabilities of Georgia’s Armed Forces . . . improving readiness and supporting a resilient force that is capable of providing its own defense and contributing to that of others”, we have successfully launched Georgia Defense Readiness Program. Sustainability and further improvement of these programs and elevation of our security partnership to the new level is of vital importance, as we believe Georgia remains an essential piece of the Euro-Atlantic security architecture, as NATO is seeking to protect its allies from Russia’s expansion.

When the cold war ended, and the Soviet empire dissolved, the United States and its allies sought to build Europe whole, free, and at peace. Nowadays, when the empire strikes back and one of the basic foundations of security and peace—respect for national borders—is violated, new transatlantic leadership is needed to fortify and enlarge the alliance. We believe the new administration shall soon develop a comprehensive long-term engagement strategy for the region and Georgia, which will include the strengthening of Georgia’s territorial integrity and sovereignty, improving bilateral trade and investment relationship and supporting the democratic choice of the Georgian people to integrate further with Euro-Atlantic institutions, including NATO. All these measures will make Georgia more resilient and stronger and, we believe that stronger Georgia is in the United States’ interest as much as stronger United States is in Georgia’s interest.

Attachments:

—*Attachment 1*: Quarterly Report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia on the Human Rights Situation in the Occupied Regions of Georgia.

—*Attachment 2*: Main directions of the reconciliation and engagement policy of the Office of the State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality.

ATTACHMENT 1

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF GEORGIA

Fourth Quarterly Report (October–December 2016) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia

on the Human Rights Situation in the Occupied Regions of Georgia

I. INTRODUCTION

AIMS OF THE REPORT AND METHODOLOGY APPLIED

1. In January 2015 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia started preparation of quarterly reports aiming at assessing the human rights situation in the occupied regions of Georgia. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia prepared four such reports in 2015. This is the fourth quarterly report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia for the year 2016 covering the period of October-December 2016. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia will further continue the preparation of such reports on a quarterly basis. This reporting exercise aims to contribute to the provision of regular and updated information to the international community, to states as well as to international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, on the human rights situation in the occupied regions of Georgia.

2. As for the applied methodology, this reporting exercise consolidates and assesses existing information from various open sources, national and international, on violations of human rights in the occupied regions of Georgia. Due to limitations on its length, the report does not aim to collect/contain information on all cases of violations of human rights in the occupied regions of Georgia; it aims to consolidate and assess only some of the most known examples of violations. The methodology applied does not provide for the conduct of fact-finding visits to the occupied regions of Georgia, nor to the conduct of interviews. Therefore the methodology applied does not enable this reporting exercise to collect and produce new data on the human rights situation in the occupied regions of Georgia.

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE OCCUPYING POWER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

3. The territories of two regions of Georgia—Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali Region, Georgia are occupied by the Russian Federation and human rights situation in these regions of Georgia remains alarming. The Russian Federation as the occupying power, exercises effective control over Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali Region, Georgia. These two regions still remaining under unlawful foreign military occupation, constitute above all dangerous “black holes” in terms of holding the human rights violators accountable. The occupying power, exercising effective control, has been preventing numerous international organizations from entering Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali Region, Georgia.

4. During the reporting period, “EU Statement on the Secretary General’s 14th Consolidated Report on the Conflict in Georgia”¹ was made at 1271st Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Meeting.² According to the statement, “the human rights situation on the ground remains worrying”. It should be emphasized that in the same statement, “[t]he EU calls on the Russian Federation to . . . provide the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM) with access to the Georgian regions.” According to the statement, “[t]he EU regrets that the Secretariat delegation and the CoE Human Rights Commissioner have not been granted access to the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia. The EU calls on all the concerned parties to facilitate access to the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia for the relevant bodies of the CoE. The CoE should be able to fully and effectively use its instruments to ensure monitoring of the human rights situation in all conflict affected areas and for the benefit of all persons in need of human rights protection. No obstacles should be created to the work of international partners in this field.”³

5. During the reporting period “Statement of the Group of Friends of Georgia on the Conflict in Georgia” was adopted at the 2016 OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting in Hamburg, held on 8–9 December 2016. In the Statement, delegations of Canada, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States of America expressed “deep concern over the continuous discrimination against ethnic Georgians residing in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia” and “condemn[ed] the gross violations of rights related to freedom of movement, residence, property, as well as right to education in one’s native language and underline[d] that the placement of artificial obstacles, including barbed and razor wire fences along the occupation line, further aggravates the humanitarian situation on the ground.” It should be emphasized that the Statement called upon “the Russian Federation to enable access by international human rights monitoring mechanisms to the occupied territories of Georgia.”⁴

6. During the reporting period, namely on 13th October 2016, at the session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), Mr Frank-Walter Steinmeier, then Foreign Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany stated the following: “I support all the Council of Europe’s efforts to secure regular access to Crimea for its monitoring bodies to observe the human rights situation. This is about not only Crimea, but South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Transnistria and Nagorno-Karabakh. There should be no blank areas on our continent where human rights are not observed.”⁵

7. It should be recalled here that during the reporting period of the second quarterly report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia covering the period of April–June 2016, namely on 19 May 2016 Mr. Giga Otkhozoria, was murdered by so called “border guards” deployed along the occupation line with Abkhazia. The murder was committed in the village of Khurcha, Zugdidi district, located in the ter-

¹Consolidated Report on the Conflict in Georgia, Council of Europe (April 2016–September 2016), 2016, SG/Inf (2016) 37.

²EU Statement on the Secretary General’s 14th Consolidated report on the Conflict in Georgia, 1271st Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Meeting—16 November 2016.

³EU Statement on the Secretary General’s 14th Consolidated report on the Conflict in Georgia, 1271st Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Meeting—16 November 2016.

⁴Statement of the Group of Friends of Georgia on the Conflict in Georgia, “The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia”, 9 December 2016, available at <<http://www.mfa.gov.ge/News/%E1%83%94%E1%83%A3%E1%83%97%E1%83%9D-%E1%83%A8%E1%83%98-%E1%83%A1%E1%83%90%E1%83%A5%E1%83%90%E1%83%A0%E1%83%97%E1%83%95%E1%83%94%E1%83%9A%E1%83%9D%E1%83%A1-%E1%83%9B%E1%83%94%E1%83%92%E1%83%9D%E1%83%91%E1%83%90%E1%83%A0%E1%83%97%E1%83%90-%E1%83%AF%E1%83%92%E1%83%A3%E1%83%A4%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1-%E1%83%A5%E1%83%95%E1%83%94%E1%83%A7%E1%83%9C%E1%83%94%E1%83%91%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1-%E1%83%94%E1%83%A0%E1%83%97.aspx?lang=en-US>>.

⁵The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), 13 October 2016, available at <<http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/Records/2016/E/1610131000E.htm>>.

ritory controlled by the Government of Georgia. The murderer of Mr. Giga Otkhozoria has been identified—Mr. Rashid Kanji-Ogli. After committing the murder Mr. Rashid Kanji-Ogli and his accomplices immediately fled to the occupied territory of Abkhazia. In May 2016, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia issued a statement “concerning the fact of murder committed in the village of Khurcha, Zugdidi District, on May 19, 2016.” According to the statement “this criminal act once again demonstrates the highly alarming situation in the occupied region of Abkhazia, Georgia and the full responsibility for it lies with the Russian Federation as with the power in effective control of the region.”⁶ In May 2016, the Prosecutor’s Office of Georgia filed charges against Mr. Rashid Kanji-Ogli for the premeditated murder of Mr. Giga Otkhozoria and criminal prosecution was launched under the Criminal Code of Georgia.⁷ In July 2016, Mr. Khajimba publicly declared that Mr. Rashid Kanji-Ogli would not be handed over to the Georgian authorities.⁸ During the reporting period, namely in December 2016, Zugdidi District Court found, *in absentia*, fugitive Mr. Rashid Kanji-Ogli guilty of the charges filed against him and sentenced him to deprivation of liberty for a term of 12 years.⁹ However under the existing circumstances, Mr. Rashid Kanji-Ogli and his accomplices still remain unpunished. The above situation with regard to the violation of the right to life of Mr. Giga Otkhozoria once again demonstrates that the occupied territories of Georgia remain “black holes” in terms of holding the violators of human rights accountable. The above situation further reaffirms the need of immediate, unhindered and continuous access of international human rights monitoring mechanisms in the occupied territories of Georgia.

OCCUPATION LINE AND INSTALLATION OF BARBED WIRE FENCES AND OTHER ARTIFICIAL OBSTACLES

8. The occupation line along the administrative boundary line (ABL) with Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region separates Georgia from its two occupied territories. The process of so called “borderization” was commenced in 2011. Currently, the total length of razor wire and barbed wire fences and other artificial obstacles along the occupation line in Tskhinvali Region is nearly 52 km (overall length of the occupation line is more than 350 km) and along the occupation line in Abkhazia is 48 km (overall length of the occupation line is around 145 km).

9. According to “EU Statement on the Secretary General’s 14th Consolidated Report on the Conflict in Georgia”, made on 16th November 2016 at 1271st Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Meeting, “the EU is deeply concerned about the illegal activities of “borderization” that divide families and communities and impedes the people on the ground, depriving them from fundamental rights, including education in the native language, property rights and freedom of movement, including in the context of so called border crossing, which, inter alia, may lead to fatal incidents. The EU calls on the authorities exercising effective control to remove the fences and other obstacles to the freedom of movement and to investigate all allegations of all crimes and human rights violations on the ground.”¹⁰

10. During the reporting period, an article was published in *The New York Times* which describes problems created by the occupation line and installation of barbed wire fences along the Tskhinvali region.¹¹ According to the article, the village of Jariasheni is “[m]arked in places with barbed wire laid at night, in others by the sudden appearance of green signs declaring the start of a “state border” and else-

⁶ *Statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia concerning the fact of murder committed in the village of Khurcha, Zugdidi District, on May 19, 2016*, 19 May 2016, available at <<http://www.mfa.gov.ge/News/%E1%83%A1%E1%83%90%E1%83%92%E1%83%90%E1%83%A0%E1%83%94%E1%83%9D-%E1%83%A1%E1%83%90%E1%83%A5%E1%83%9B%E1%83%94%E1%83%97%E1%83%90%E1%83%A1%E1%83%90%E1%83%9B%E1%83%98%E1%83%9C%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1%E1%83%A2%E1%83%A0%E1%83%9D%E1%83%A1-%E1%83%92%E1%83%90%E1%83%9C%E1%83%AA%E1%83%AE%E1%83%90%E1%83%93%E1%83%94%E1%83%91%E1%83%90-2016-%E1%83%AC%E1%83%9A%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1-1.aspx?CatID=5&lang=en-US>>.

⁷ *The Prosecutor’s Office Launches Criminal Proceedings on the Murder of Giga Otkhozoria*, “Prosecutor’s Office of Georgia”, 21 May 2016, available at <http://pog.gov.ge/eng/news?info_id=932>.

⁸ *Abkhazia will not hand over to Georgia border guard suspected in murder*, “Ria Novosti”, 6 July 2016, available at <<https://ria.ru/world/20160706/1459757274.html>>.

⁹ *Court Finds Rashid Kanji-Ogli, Accused of Giga Otkhozoria’s Murder, Guilty*, Prosecutor’s Office of Georgia, 28 December 2016, available at <http://pog.gov.ge/eng/news?info_id=1095>.

¹⁰ *EU Statement on the Secretary General’s 14th Consolidated report on the Conflict in Georgia*, 1271st Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Meeting—16 November 2016.

¹¹ *In Russia’s ‘Frozen Zone,’ a Creeping Border With Georgia*, Andrew Higgins, *The New York Times*, 23 October 2016, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/24/world/europe/in-russias-frozen-zone-a-creeping-border-with-georgia.html?_r=1>.

where by the arrival of bulldozers, the reach of Russia keeps inching forward into Georgia with ever more ingenious markings of a frontier that only Russia and three other states recognize as real.” The article states that “[t]he green border signs that first appeared last year and now keep popping up along the zigzagging boundary warn that “passage is forbidden” across what is declared to be a “state border.” According to the article, “Kestutis Jankauskas, the head of the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia, said it was hard to know where this boundary line exactly runs. It was never recognized or agreed upon, and its location depends on which maps are used. Russia, he said, is using a map drawn by the Soviet military’s general staff in the 1980s. It demarcates what in the Soviet era was an inconsequential administrative boundary within the Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia but what is now hardening into a hazardous frontier. The fitful movement of the boundary seems to be driven mostly by Russia’s desire to align what it sees as a state border with this old Soviet map. So far, the movement has always been forward, often by just a few yards but at other times by bigger leaps.”¹²

NEW SO CALLED “LAWS” AND NEW WAVE OF SO CALLED “PASSPORTISATION”

11. As a result of a reaction of the international community on the issue of adoption of so called new “laws” and so called “passportisation”, decision was made in December 2016 to amend so called “law on legal status of foreign citizens in Abkhazia” and to enable residents of Gali district, holding Georgian citizenship, to obtain “residence permits”; according to the amendment, “resident permits can be issued to individuals holding foreign citizenship if they were born in Gali district of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Abkhazia.”¹³ However, it should be noted here that resident permits will not enable to obtain so called “Abkhazian citizenship” until holding foreign citizenship.¹⁴

12. As part of the new wave of so called “passportisation” in the Abkhazian region, the issuance of so called “passports” started in May 2016 and it was continuing during the reporting period.¹⁵ By the middle of December 2016, more than 3 000 new so called “Abkhaz passports” were issued.¹⁶ It has been decided to extend expiry date of old so called “Abkhaz passports” until 31st December 2018.¹⁷ It should be emphasized that on 18th October 2016, so called “head of administration of Gali district” of the Sokhumi occupation regime declared that “from 17 800 residents of Gali district, only 340 have Abkhazian citizenship, the rest are Georgian citizens”,¹⁸

13. It should be recalled that on 1st April 2016, so called “law on legal status of foreign citizens in Abkhazia”¹⁹ and “law on entry and exit of Abkhazia”²⁰ became

¹² *In Russia’s ‘Frozen Zone,’ a Creeping Border With Georgia*, Andrew Higgins, The New York Times, 23 October 2016, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/24/world/europe/in-russias-frozen-zone-a-creeping-border-with-georgia.html?_r=1>.

¹³ *Resident Permits will be given foreign citizens in Gali*, “Apsny”, 29 December 2016, available at <<http://apsny.ru/news/?ID=26462>>.

¹⁴ *Legal status of residents of Eastern districts of Abkhazia will be regulated*, “Nuzhnaya Gazeta”, 29 December 2016, available at <<https://abh-n.ru/pravovoe-polozhenie-zhitelej-vostochnyx-rajonov-abkazii-budet-uregulirovano/>>.

¹⁵ *Tania: during 1 month 300 passports were distributed in Sokhumi*, “Apsnypress”, 19 December 2016, available at <<http://www.apsnypress.info/news/taniya-za-mesyats-po-sukhumu-vydano-svyshe-300-pasportov/>>.

¹⁶ *Manargia: more than 3 000 new Abkhaz passports were issued*, “Sputnik-Abkhazia”, 19 December 2016, available at <<http://sputnik-abkhazia.ru/Abkhazia/20161219/1020088707/manargiya-oformleno-bolee-trex-tysyach-novyx-abkazskix-pasportov.html>>.

¹⁷ *Expiry date of Abkhaz passports of old sample was extended until 31 December 2018*, “Apsnypress”, 31 December 2016, available at <<http://www.apsnypress.info/news/data-okonchaniya-sroka-deystviya-pasportov-starogo-obraztsa-perenesena-na-31-dekabrya-2018-goda/>>.

¹⁸ *Nadaraia: project is ready on creation of special economic zone in Gali district*, “Apsnypress”, 18 October 2016, available at <<http://www.apsnypress.info/news/nadaraia-gotov-proekt-po-sozdaniyu-v-galskom-rayone-osoboy-ekonomicheskoy-zony/>>.

¹⁹ So called “law on legal status of foreign citizens in Abkhazia” was designed in order to qualify ethnic Georgians, living in the region of Abkhazia, into a category of “foreign citizens” and to discriminate against them in many ways. Many ethnic Georgians living in Abkhazia, predominantly in Gali district, hold Georgian citizenship that qualifies them into the category of “foreigners” under the so called “law on legal status of foreign citizens in Abkhazia” and therefore puts limitation on their human rights including the freedom of movement, the right to property and labour rights. Under this so called “law” ethnic Georgians holding Georgian citizenship were deprived possibility to obtain residence permits and respective restrictive clauses prepared “legal” ground for persecution of ethnic Georgian families.

²⁰ By the adoption of so called “law on entry and exit of Abkhazia”, the decision has been made to introduce visas for states a) not recognizing so called “independence of Abkhazia” and

operational. A similar document was adopted by the Tskhinvali occupation regime, namely so called “law on legal status of foreigners in the Republic of South Ossetia”. Adoption of so called “laws” in many ways target the ethnic Georgian population living in the occupied territories. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia once again expresses its serious concern on the adoption of new discriminatory regulations for ethnic Georgians living in the occupied regions of Georgia.

II. FREEDOM FROM TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

14. As described in previous quarterly reports of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia on the human rights situation in the occupied regions of Georgia, the Russian FSB officers and representatives of the Sokhumi and Tskhinvali occupation regimes regularly take actions which amount to torture and ill-treatment. For years, there has been a regular flow of information on inadequate detentions conditions in so called “detention centers” in the occupied regions of Georgia. The practice of torture and ill-treatment in the occupied regions of Georgia remained an issue of concern during the reporting period as well.

15. During the reporting period, namely on 10th December 2016, the Public Defender of Georgia issued the Report on Human Rights and Freedom in 2016. According to the report, “inappropriate and degrading treatment is regularly applied toward detainees at Russian military basis, including forced labor, verbal and physical abuse, restriction of food and water etc.”²¹

16. On 27th November 2016, three members of so called “special forces unit” of the Tskhinvali occupation regime inflicted severe physical assault to a 21-year-old resident in Tskhinvali. As a result, numerous traumas were inflicted to the head of the victim which was later hospitalized. During the incident, one of the members of so called “special forces unit” even fired a shot in the direction of the victim.²²

17. In December 2016, in Tskhinvali members of so called “special forces unit” of the Tskhinvali occupation regime physically assaulted two schoolchildren—one boy and one girl of grade 11 of school N 2 in the restaurant “Oasis”. Traumas to heads were inflicted to both of them; as a result the boy lost conscience. Later the victims were transported to a hospital for medical treatment.²³

18. In October 2016, Mr. Khajimba declared that “there is a need to change detention conditions of detainees in the detention centre” and so called “minister of interior” of the Sokhumi occupation regime declared that “problems related to detention conditions of criminals remain unsolved for already 23 years”.²⁴ It has been argued by representatives of the Sokhumi occupation regime that “absence of motivation of employees of the ministry of interior to work in the detention centre due to the low salary there”, “understaffing of the preliminary detention centre with employees, which equals to 60 per cent” and non-provision of “the detention centre with necessary technical equipments” are behind the problems.²⁵

b) not having a “bilateral agreement” of visa free travel. Under this so called “law” any person can exit Abkhazia, however only so called “citizens of Abkhazia” can enter the Abkhazian region without additional formalities. It should be noted that a foreign citizen or a person without citizenship can be expelled from the territory of occupied Abkhazia if that person poses a threat to defense and security or to public order. It should be emphasized that this so called “law”, creates additional obstacles to representatives of international organizations leading to further isolation of the region.

²¹*The Public Defender of Georgia 10 December Report on the Situation of the Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms in 2016*, “The Public Defender of Georgia”, 10 December 2016, p. 20, available at <<http://www.ombudsman.ge/uploads/other/4/4088.pdf>>.

²²*A resident of Tskhinvali was beaten by members of special forces unit*, “Sputnik-Ossetia”, 2 December 2016, available at <http://sputnik-ossetia.ru/South_Ossetia/20161202/3395524.html>; *General Prosecutor’s Office started investigation against members of special forces unit, which have beaten a resident of Tskhinvali*, Sputnik-Ossetia”, 6 December 2016, available at <http://sputnik-ossetia.ru/South_Ossetia/20161206/3413768.html>.

²³*Tbilov: members of special forces unit should be examples of behavior*, “Sputnik-Ossetia”, 29 December 2016, available at <http://sputnik-ossetia.ru/South_Ossetia/20161229/3528028.html>; *Prosecutor’s office is investigating details of brawl between youngsters and special forces unit*, Sputnik-Ossetia”, 27 December 2016, available at <http://sputnik-ossetia.ru/South_Ossetia/20161227/3517504.html>.

²⁴*Raul Khajimba: it is necessary to regulate issue of increasing salaries to employees of the preliminary detention centre*, “Apsnypress”, 20 October 2016, available at <<http://apsnypress.info/news/raul-khadzhimba-neobkhodimo-reshit-voprosy-povysheniya-zarabotnoy-platy-sotrudnikam-sizo/>>.

²⁵*Raul Khajimba: it is necessary to regulate issue of increasing salaries to employees of the preliminary detention centre*, “Apsnypress”, 20 October 2016, available at <<http://apsnypress.info/news/raul-khadzhimba-neobkhodimo-reshit-voprosy-povysheniya-zarabotnoy-platy-sotrudnikam-sizo/>>.

III. ARBITRARY DETENTION

19. The Russian FSB officers regularly carry out arbitrary detention for so called “illegal border crossing” along the occupation lines with Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions. In most cases detention is followed by fines and later release. Detention period can last several days or several months, in some cases several years. According to data supplied by the State Security Service of Georgia in the middle of December 2016, between 2008 and 12th December 2016, in total 2 775 people were detained by the Russian FSB officers for so called “illegal border crossing”: 1 788 people were detained along the occupation line with the Abkhazian region and 987 people were detained along the occupation line with the Tskhinvali region; from 1st January 2016 to 12th December 2016, 190 people were detained along the occupation line with the Abkhazian region and 132 people were detained along the occupation line with the Tskhinvali region.²⁶ It should be noted that according to the information of so called “State Security Committee of South Ossetia”, 549 people were detained for so called “illegal border crossing” along the occupation line with the Tskhinvali region throughout the year 2016.²⁷

20. According to the report of the Public Defender of Georgia issued during the reporting period, “armed forced of the Russian Federation continue to detain minors, pregnant women, patients and older people.”²⁸

21. It is particularly alarming that during the reporting period, Mr. Giorgi Giunashvil remained in illegal detention in so called Tskhinvali prison.²⁹ As described in the Third Quarterly Report (July-September 2016) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia on the Human Rights Situation in the Occupied Regions of Georgia, on 8 June 2016, Mr. Giorgi Giunashvil, citizen of Georgia was detained by the Russian FSB officers for so called “illegal border crossing” along the occupation line with Tskhinvali region. Initially, the detainee was sentenced 2 months of imprisonment for so called “illegal border crossing”. However, later so called “prosecutor’s office” of the Tskhinvali occupation regime initiated “criminal case” against Mr. Giorgi Giunashvil accusing him of “causing serious damage to the health” of an unspecified resident of the Tskhinvali region in the year 2008. The Government of Georgia considers the above accusations against Mr. Giorgi Giunashvil to be groundless and fabricated and therefore calls for his unconditional release.³⁰

22. During the reporting period numerous cases were reported on arbitrary detention in the occupied regions of Georgia. Below are only few examples.

23. On 12th October 2016, a resident of the village of Plavi, Gori district, was detained for so called “illegal border crossing” along the occupation line with Tskhinvali region and “criminal charges” were filed against him for the above reason.³¹ However, according to the family members of the detainee, he had not crossed the occupation line.³²

24. On 22nd October 2016, a resident of the village of Mejvriskhevi, Gori district, was detained by the Russian FSB officers for so called “illegal border crossing” nearby the occupation line with the Tskhinvali region. The resident of the village of Mejvriskhevi did not cross the occupation line; when detained he was nearby the occupation line for cattle grazing.³³

25. On 24th October 2016, a resident of the village Kirbali, Gori district, was detained by the Russian FSB officers for so called “illegal border crossing” nearby the occupation line with the Tskhinvali region. When detained, the resident of the vil-

²⁶ *Representatives of the Russian occupying forces detained 2 775 Georgians between 2008 and 12 December 2016 for so called illegal border crossing of Georgian occupied territories*, “Pirveli Information Agency”, 12 December 2016, available at <<http://pia.ge/post/84592-rusma-okupantebma-2-775-qartveli-daakaves>>.

²⁷ *Authorities of South Ossetia expelled violator of state border from Georgia*, “Sputnik-Ossetia”, 28 December 2016, available at <http://sputnik-ossetia.ru/South_Ossetia/20161228/3522804.html>.

²⁸ *The Public Defender of Georgia 10 December Report on the Situation of the Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms in 2016*, “The Public Defender of Georgia”, 10 December 2016, p. 20, available at <<http://www.ombudsman.ge/uploads/other/4/4088.pdf>>.

²⁹ *IPRM Meeting held in Ergneti*, State Security Service of Georgia, 30 November 2016, available at <<http://ssg.gov.ge/en/news/197/IPRM-Meeting-Held-in-Ergneti>>.

³⁰ *IPRM Meeting held in Ergneti*, State Security Service of Georgia, 30 November 2016, available at <<http://ssg.gov.ge/en/news/197/IPRM-Meeting-Held-in-Ergneti>>.

³¹ *Criminal case was filed in relation to violator of border from Georgia*, “Sputnik-Ossetia”, 12 October 2016, available at <http://sputnik-ossetia.ru/South_Ossetia/20161012/3149539.html>.

³² *A resident of the village of Plavi was detained for so called “illegal border crossing”*, “IPN”, 12 October 2016, available at <<http://www.interpressnews.ge/ge/konfliktqebi/401945-ets-sazghvris-ukanonod-gadavethis-braldebith-sofel-flavis-mckhovrebi-daakaves.html?ar=A>>.

³³ *43-year-old man was detained for so called illegal border crossing*, “GHN”, 22 October 2016, available at <<http://ghn.ge/com/news/view/162625>>.

lage of Kirbali was collecting timber in the forest nearby the occupation line. He did not cross the occupation line. The detainee spent three days in detention in the Tskhinvali region.³⁴

26. On 5th and 6th November 2016, six citizens of Georgia were detained for so called “illegal border crossing” along the occupation line with Tskhinvali region.³⁵

27. On 27th November 2016, a 18-year-old resident of Gori district was detained by the Russian FSB officers in the village of Jariasheni, nearby the occupation line with Tskhinvali region and was abducted to the occupied Tskhinvali region.³⁶

28. On 6th December 2016, several schoolchildren residing in the occupied village of Otobaia, Gali district, were detained by the Russian FSB officers Abkhazia. The schoolchildren were held in detention in the Russian military base for around 5 hours.³⁷

29. On 27th December 2016, a resident of the village of Mejvriskhevi, Gori district, was detained by the Russian FSB officers for so called “illegal border crossing” along the occupation line with Tskhinvali region.³⁸

IV. FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

30. Along the occupation lines with Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions people are regularly subject to restrictions on freedom of movement by the Russian FSB officers: the operating crossing points along the occupation lines allow crossings only to individuals having one of the types of “documents” recognized by the occupying power. Those unable to present the “document” or show up at the crossing point out of working hours, are denied the right to cross, often leading to various types of problems of locals, including children. Restrictions on freedom of movement remained an issue of concern during the reporting period that has been attested by the various sources.

31. It should be recalled that in spring 2016, two crossing points from six crossing points along the occupation line with the Abkhazian region were closed down.³⁹ In November 2016, Mr. Khajimba publicly spoke about the policy of closing down the crossing points along the occupation line with the Abkhazian region.⁴⁰ On 5th December 2016, so called “head of administration of Gali district” of the Sokhumi occupation regime publicly declared that “the Russian Border Guards are closing more and more segments of fords on the River Enguri, the places in the river which were used to cross the border illegally. . . . In this 2016 year everything is ready to close down two more crossing points”.⁴¹ Eventually, by so called “decree N 241” of so called “Government of Abkhazia”, dated 28 December 2016, decision was made to close down two more crossing points—“Nabakevi crossing point” and “Otobaia crossing point” along the occupation line with the Abkhazian region.⁴² It should be noted that according to paragraph 3 of so called “decree N 241”, “the decree will enter into force in 30 days after it is published”.⁴³ When commenting the decision on the clo-

³⁴ *What is the story of a man who spent three days in illegal detention the Tskhinvali detention center?* “Palitra News”, 27 October 2016, available at <<http://www.palitravideo.ge/yvela-video/akhali-ambebi/79610-ras-hyveba-ckhinvalis-izolatoridan-samdghiani-ukanono-patimrobis-shemdeg-gathavisuflebuli-mamakaci.html>>.

³⁵ *Tskhinvali regime released six Georgian citizens as a result of fine payment*, “IPN”, 8 November 2016, available at <<http://www.interpressnews.ge/ge/konfliktqebi/405626-ckhinvalis-rezhimma-jarimis-gadakhdis-shemdeg-saqarthvelos-6-moqalage-gaathavisufla.html?ar=A>>.

³⁶ *Occupants abducted 18-year-old man from the village of Jariasheni*, “Ambebi.ge”, 27 November 2016, available at <<http://www.ambebi.ge/semtxveva/184430-sofel-jariashenidan-okupantebma-18-tslis-mamakaci-gaitaces.html>>.

³⁷ *So called border guards freed schoolchildren detained in occupied Abkhazia*, “Pirweli Information Agency”, 6 December 2016, available at <<http://pia.ge/post/83148-e-w-mesazrvreebma-okupirebul-afxazetsi-dakavebuli-skolis-moswavleebi-gaathavisufles>>.

³⁸ *Authorities of South Ossetia expelled violator of state border from Georgia*, “Sputnik-Ossetia”, 28 December 2016, available at <http://sputnik-ossetia.ru/South_Ossetia/20161228/3522804.html>.

³⁹ Consolidated Report on the Conflict in Georgia, Council of Europe (April 2015–September 2016), 2016, SG/Inf (2016) 37, paragraph 41.

⁴⁰ *Raul Khajimba: we will not let anybody to destroy our state in the heat of revenge*, “Apsnypress”, 10 November 2016, available at <<http://www.apsnypress.info/news/raul-khadzhimba-my-nikomune-pozvolim-v-pylu-revanshizma-razrushat-nashu-gosudarstvennost/>>.

⁴¹ *Temur Nadaraya: data supplied by Dimitri Dbar are nor authentic and mislead the public*, “Apsnypress”, 5 December 2016, available at <<http://www.apsnypress.info/news/temur-nadaraya-tsifry-privedyenye-dmitriem-dbar-nedeystvitelny-i-vvodyat-v-zabluzhdenie-obshchestve/>>.

⁴² *Two more crossing pints on the River Enguri will be closed*, “Apsnypress”, 28 December 2016, available at <<http://www.apsnypress.info/news/zakryvayutsya-eshche-dva-punkta-propuska-na-granitse-po-reke-ingur/>>; *Decree of Government of Republic of Abkhazia*, 28 December 2016, available at <http://www.gazeta-ra.info/index.php?ELEMENT_ID=14673>.

⁴³ *Decree of Government of Republic of Abkhazia*, 28 December 2016, available at <http://www.gazeta-ra.info/index.php?ELEMENT_ID=14673>.

sure of two additional crossing points, the representative of so called “Government of Abkhazia” stated the following: “in accordance with governmental decision adopted earlier, we are gradually decreasing the number of crossing points on the border with Georgia”.⁴⁴

32. According to information disseminated on 26th October 2016, Mr. Tibilov declared that “Tskhinvali needs airplanes in order to eradicate the practice by Ossetians travelling to Georgia for medical treatment”. According to the source, Mr. Tibilov stated that “local residents often request authorities to send them for medical treatment to Georgia, where it is much easier to travel rather than to North Ossetia [the Russian Federation]”. According to Mr. Tibilov, “South Ossetia is discussing with the Russian Federation the issue of creation of its own aviation”.⁴⁵

33. As described in previous quarterly reports of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia on the human rights situation in the occupied regions of Georgia, both in the Abkhazian region and in the Tskhinvali region so called “border zones” are established in the vicinity of the occupation lines by the occupying power. Residents of each occupied region are subject to restrictions on freedom of movement in terms of entering these so called “border zones” and in terms of moving within these so called “border zones”. It should be emphasized that during the reporting period, so called “deputy minister of foreign affairs” of the Sokhumi occupation regime declared that “there is a decision of government, adopted very recently, in fact few days ago, which approved extension of border zone”.⁴⁶ According to the same source, “this is a regime zone and correspondingly, entrance to this zone will be always restricted. Those who dwell there (householders, guests etc.) fall under this regime”.⁴⁷ According to information disseminated on 15th November 2016, local residents of Gali district of the occupied Abkhazian region are subject to restrictions on freedom of movement: the Russian military personnel deployed there, demands “documents” in order to allow local residents to move across internal routes of Gali district.⁴⁸ According to information disseminated on 16th December 2016, in the villages of Saberio, Lekukhona and Cheghali, Gali district, freedom of movement of local residents is restricted: occupants demand “documents” from locals in order to allow them to move from one village to another and shoot photos of local residents, presumably in order to create a database.⁴⁹

34. It should be emphasized that according to information disseminated on 23rd November 2016, the Russian FSB officers restricted freedom of movement of residents of the villages of Akhalubani, Adzvi and Jariasheni, Gori district, namely residents of these villages, on the occasion of St. George’s Day, could not visit and pray in St. George’s Church, located nearby the occupation line with the Tskhinvali region.⁵⁰

V. RIGHT TO PROPERTY

35. During the reporting period, violations of the right to property caused by the occupation of the territories of Georgia, remained the issue of concern.

⁴⁴ *Two more crossing pints on the border on the River Enguri will be closed*, “Apsnypress”, 28 December 2016, available at <<http://www.apsnypress.info/news/zakryvayutsya-eshche-dva-punkta-propuska-na-granitse-po-reke-ingur/>>.

⁴⁵ *Leonid Tibilov—Tskhinvali needs airplanes in order to eradicate the practice by Ossetians travelling to Georgia for medical treatment*, “Ambebi”, 26 October 2016, available at <<http://www.ambebi.ge/conflicts/180939-leonid-thibilovi-khinvals-thvithmfrinavebi-stcirdeba-imisthvisrom-saqarthveloshi-osebis-samkurnalod-chasvla-aghkvetos.html>>.

⁴⁶ *Talks about militarization of Gali district are untenable*, “ekhokavkaza”, 24 November 2016, available at <<http://www.ekhokavkaza.com/a/28137770.html>>.

⁴⁷ *Talks about militarization of Gali district are untenable*, “ekhokavkaza”, 24 November 2016, available at <<http://www.ekhokavkaza.com/a/28137770.html>>.

⁴⁸ *In occupied Abkhazia population is subject to restrictions of movement on so called border*, “Pirveli Information Agency”, 15 November 2016, available at <<http://pia.ge/post/540-okupirebul-afxazetsi-e-w-sazrvarze-mosaxleobas-gadaadgileba-seezruda>>.

⁴⁹ *In the villages of Gali district occupants restrict freedom of movement of locals*, “Pirveli Information Agency”, 16 December 2016, available at <<http://pia.ge/post/83972-okupirebuli-galisoflebsi-okupantebi-adgilobrives-gadaadgilebas-uzrudaven>>.

⁵⁰ *In Gori district, nearby the occupation line, mobilization of so called Russian border guards was noticeable*, “Newposts”, 23 November 2016, available at <<http://www.newposts.ge/?l=G&id=125858-%E1%83%92%E1%83%9D%E1%83%A0%E1%83%98,%20%E1%83%A1%E1%83%90%E1%83%9D%E1%83%99%E1%83%A3%E1%83%9E%E1%83%90%E1%83%AA%E1%83%98%E1%83%9D,%20%E1%83%9B%E1%83%94%E1%83%A1%E1%83%90%E1%83%96%E1%83%A6%E1%83%95%E1%83%A0%E1%83%94,%20%E1%83%92%E1%83%98%E1%83%9D%E1%83%A0%E1%83%92%E1%83%91%E1%83%90>>; *Population is not allowed to pray nearby administrative boundary line with so called South Ossetia*, “Kvira”, 23 November 2016, available at <<http://kvira.ge/295904>>.

36. During the reporting period, a representative of the Tskhinvali occupation regime stated that “particularly on locations, where the border is not yet clearly formalized, residents of adjacent territories often cultivate land and harvest crop and therefore violate the law.” He further stated that “In cases when the border crosses directly through premises and plots of land, a householder should keep a passport in order to enter his plot of land, which remained on the territory of another state. There are a lot of such situations, predominantly in the village of Zardiantkari.”⁵¹

37. According to the article which was published during the reporting period in *The New York Times*, the occupation line along the Tskhinvali region creates problems for local residents in terms of enjoyment of the right to property. According to the article, “the dirt track now running through this tiny Georgian village [of Jariasheni] nonetheless means that Vephivia Tatiashvili can no longer go to his three-story house because it sits on land now patrolled by Russian border guards.” The article argues that “[t]here is no fence or barbed wire, but Mr. Tatiashvili does not dare to cross the track to visit his house for fear of being arrested, as his elderly neighbor was, by Russian border guards. “It is too dangerous for me to go home,” he said, complaining that the boundary has become so mobile that nobody really knows its final destination. Mr. Tatiashvili now lives in his brother’s house, away from the border in the village center. . . . Russia starts right here,” said Mr. Tatiashvili, pointing to the freshly dug track that separates his house from Georgian-held land.” The article further observes that “Elizbar Mestumrshvili, 75, a farmer who lives next to Mr. Tatiashvili’s now-marooned house, can still get to his home, as it lies on the Georgian side of the new dirt track. But he is wary of going to the bottom of his garden, which lies within a 60-yard frontier zone that Russian and South Ossetian security officers claim the right to patrol. Pointing to a row of vines drooping with plump grapes, he said it was unwise to walk any farther because “they might come and set up a border post.”⁵²

38. According to local residents of Gali district, so called “administration of Gali district” of the Sokhumi occupation regime forces them to sell most of their harvested citrus crops in the Russian Federation: however it is economically much more profitable for them to sell their crops of citrus in Zugdidi, the territory controlled by the Government of Georgia.⁵³ I should be noted here that the European Court of Human Rights has interpreted “possessions” under Article 1 (Protection of Property), Protocol No. 1 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) very broadly and has held that it includes movable or immovable property and also the economic interests connected with “possessions”.⁵⁴

VI. RIGHT TO EDUCATION IN THE NATIVE LANGUAGE

39. As described in previous quarterly reports of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia on the human rights situation in the occupied regions of Georgia, in the Gali district there are 31 schools and from these 31 schools only 11 schools, all of which are in so called “lower zone” of Gali district, had the status of Georgian schools until the end of the academic year 2014–2015. However, from the beginning of September of the academic year 2015–2016, drastic changes have been made in the curriculum of these 11 schools, implying teaching of all subjects in the Russian language in grades from I to IV. The academic year 2016–2017 started in line with the above changes implying teaching of all subjects in the Russian language and therefore the Russian language had become the formal instruction language also in grade V. The above policy, if continued for several years, would result in gradual

⁵¹David Sanakoev: *Arrangement of Border depends on financing*, “Sputnik-Ossetia”, 13 October, available at <http://sputnik-ossetia.ru/South_Ossetia/20161013/3158517.html>.

⁵²In *Russia’s ‘Frozen Zone,’ a Creeping Border With Georgia*, Andrew Higgins, *The New York Times*, 23 October 2016, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/24/world/europe/in-russias-frozen-zone-a-creeping-border-with-georgia.html?_r=1>.

⁵³*Abkhazian de-facto authorities force population of Gali district to transport citrus to Russia*, “Business Press News”, 27 October 2016, available at <<https://bpn.ge/finansebi/27714-afkhazethis-de-faqto-khelisufleba-galis-mosakhleobas-citrusis-rusethshi-gatanas-aidzulebs.html?device=xhtml&lang=ka-GE>>.

⁵⁴“Possessions” include “a range of economic interests. The following have been held to fall within the protection of Article 1: movable or immovable property, tangible or intangible interests, such as shares, patents, an arbitration award, the entitlement to a pension, a landlord’s entitlement to rent, the economic interests connected with the running of a business, the right to exercise a profession, a legitimate expectation that a certain state of affairs will apply, a legal claim, and the clientele of a cinema.” Carss-Frisk, M. *The right to property: A guide to the implementation of Article 1 of Protocol No. 1 to the European Convention on Human Rights*, Human rights handbooks, No. 4 (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2001), p. 6, available at <<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168007ff4a>>.

replacement of the Georgian curriculum with the Russian curriculum for all grades in these 11 schools of so called “lower zone” of Gali district.

40. According to the report of the Public Defender of Georgia issued during the reporting period, “problems remain with the access of people living on occupied territories to education.”⁵⁵

41. During the reporting period, the situation with regard to the right to education in the native language in the Gali district remained the same. According to “EU Statement on the Secretary General’s 14th Consolidated Report on the Conflict in Georgia”, made on 16th November 2016 at 1271st Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Meeting, “[t]he EU expresses its concern at reports on a continuing deterioration of the access to education in the native language in the Georgian region of Abkhazia. We strongly believe that the right to education for everyone, including education in the native language should be guaranteed and applied in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia as well. We join the efforts of the Co-Chairs of Geneva International Discussions to promote understanding and respect for the universal right to education of the child.”⁵⁶

42. As described in previous quarterly reports of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia on the human rights situation in the occupied regions of Georgia, there is a tendency of making decisions by parents on termination of attendance by their schoolchildren of the schools with newly introduced Russian curriculum and transferring them to the schools located on the other side of the occupation line; however the right to education in the native language remains problematic also in relation to freedom of movement. For example, in the reporting period, namely on the morning of 6th December 2016, several schoolchildren residing in the occupied village of Otobaia, Gali district were detained by the Russian FSB officers and were prevented from crossing the occupation line along Abkhazia and therefore from attending school in the village of Darcheli, Zugdidi district, the territory controlled by the Government of Georgia. It should be noted that the schoolchildren were held in detention in the Russian military base for around 5 hours.⁵⁷ Moreover, the decision to close down two more crossing points along the occupation line with the Abkhazian region will create further impediments to the schoolchildren going to schools on the territory controlled by the Government of Georgia to get the education in the native language, as they have to pass additional several kilometres every day.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

43. It can be concluded that the situation described in the occupied regions of Georgia constitutes infringements on freedom from torture and ill-treatment and therefore are violations of Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR); Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR); and the OSCE commitments.⁵⁸

44. It can be concluded that the situation described in the occupied regions of Georgia with regard to arbitrary detention and examples provided for the reporting period constitute arbitrary detention and therefore violations of Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR); Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR); and relevant provisions of the OSCE commitments.

45. It can be concluded that the situation described in the occupied regions of Georgia with regard to freedom of movement and examples provided for the reporting period constitute violations of the right to freedom of movement, namely of Article 12 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR); Article 2, Protocol No. 4 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR); and the OSCE freedom of movement commitments.

⁵⁵*The Public Defender of Georgia 10 December Report on the Situation of the Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms in 2016*, “The Public Defender of Georgia”, 10 December 2016, p. 20, available at <<http://www.ombudsman.ge/uploads/other/4/4088.pdf>>.

⁵⁶*EU Statement on the Secretary General’s 14th Consolidated report on the Conflict in Georgia*, 1271st Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Meeting—16 November 2016.

⁵⁷*So called border guards freed schoolchildren detained in occupied Abkhazia*, “Pirweli Information Agency”, 6 December 2016, available at <<http://pia.ge/post/83148-e-w-mesazrvreebma-okupirebul-afxazetsi-dakavebuli-skolis-moswavleebi-gaatavisufles>>.

⁵⁸The Vienna Concluding Document (1989) prohibits torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Paragraph 23.4; The Paris Document (1990) also prohibits torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; the Istanbul Charter for European Security commits to “eradicating torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment throughout the OSCE area.” Paragraph 21.

46. It can be concluded that the situation described in the occupied regions of Georgia with regard to the right to property and examples provided for the reporting period violate the right to property, namely Article 17 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR); Article 1, Protocol No. 1 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR); and the OSCE commitments.

47. It can be concluded that the situation described in the occupied regions of Georgia with regard to education in the native language and examples provided for the reporting period constitute violations of the right to education in one's native language and therefore violations of Article 26 (read in conjunction with Article 2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR); Article 2, Protocol No. 1 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR); Article 28 (read in conjunction with paragraph 1 of Article 2) of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; and relevant provisions of the OSCE commitments.

48. It can be concluded that the situation described in the occupied regions of Georgia, particularly adoption of so called "laws" and the process of "passportisation" violates prohibition of discrimination provisions of Article 14 and Protocol No. 12 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR); Article 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

VIII. APPEAL TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

49. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia appeals to the international community, states as well as international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations:

to call on the Russian Federation to reverse its recognition of independence of the Georgian regions Abkhazia and Tskhinvali and to end the occupation of the Georgian territories;

to call on the Russian Federation to stop violations of human rights on the occupied territories while exercising effective control;

to continue calling on the Russian Federation to ensure free movement of people and removal of barbed and razor wires and other artificial obstacles and banners along the occupation line;

to take additional measures in order to monitor and report on the human rights situation in the occupied regions of Georgia, more specifically, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia appeals to:

(i) the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to take additional measures in order to regularly address and assess the human rights situation in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region of Georgia;

(ii) the UN Human Rights Council's Special Procedure Mandate holders to take additional measures in order to address and report on the human rights situation in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region of Georgia;

(iii) the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe to take additional measures in order to address and report on the human rights situation in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region of Georgia;

(iv) the OSCE and its autonomous institutions, namely the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) to find ways for monitoring the human rights situation in Georgia's occupied regions. Such steps could, inter alia, include undertaking a follow-up mission to the occupied regions of Georgia and preparing a report on the status of the implementation of the recommendations contained in the ODIHR/HCNM 2008 Report on "Human Rights in the War Affected Areas following the Conflict in Georgia".

to continue calling on the Russian Federation to allow a) access of the international human rights monitoring mechanisms to the occupied regions of Georgia; b) access of the relevant missions of international organizations (e.g. EUMM), including humanitarian organizations, to the occupied regions of Georgia through legal routes;

to continue and intensify condemning violations of human rights such as the right to life; freedom of movement; freedom from torture and ill-treatment; the

right to liberty; the right to property and the right to receive education in the native language in the occupied regions of Georgia.

ATTACHMENT 2

OFFICE OF THE STATE MINISTER OF GEORGIA FOR RECONCILIATION AND CIVIC
EQUALITY

Main Directions of the Reconciliation and Engagement Policy of the SMRCE

The Government of Georgia (GoG) pursues and actively implements the peaceful, pragmatic and constructive policy of reconciliation, engagement and confidence building with the aim to achieve conflict transformation, facilitate people-to-people contacts, assist the population on the ground and contribute to the peaceful settlement of the conflict.

In this regard, the GoG continues to implement the main dimensions of the State Strategy towards the Occupied Territories: Engagement through Cooperation and its respective Action Plan with special emphasis on such components as healthcare, education, confidence building, socio-economic assistance, civil society development and international engagement.

SMRCE actively cooperates with the EU, USA and with other international partners to enhance its peace policy based on the principles of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Also, it actively participates in different formats and plays a leading role in their proceedings.

The GoG continues to seek the ways for sharing the benefits and opportunities stemming from the EU-Georgia Visa Liberalization Dialogue, EU-Georgia political association and economic integration process, with the populations residing in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia. The EU-Georgia high level political consultations are periodically held to discuss the existing local and regional challenges and assess the efforts undertaken towards the peaceful settlement of conflict in Georgia. The same issues are also discussed at the meetings of the Association Council and of the Subcommittee on Justice, Freedom and Security (the latest ones held on December 2 and June 16, 2016). Along with the existing situation the participants overviewed the implementation of the Engagement Strategy and Action Plan.

SMRCE holds intensive consultations with international organizations to ensure their presence in the occupied regions despite all the obstacles these organizations face in terms of accessing these territories and carrying out their activities on the ground.

SMRCE is actively engaged in the implementation of the Communication and Information Strategy of the GoG in the sphere of the European Integration. Informative video commercials concerning the Association Agreement were prepared and transmitted on Public broadcasting TV channel in 4 different languages, including in Abkhazian and Ossetian. Special booklets were printed and distributed in all these languages. In addition, with the assistance of the EU, SMRCE prepared short videos on the issues of visa liberalization, Association Agreement, education opportunities and "Life with barbed wires", which was screened at the Batumi International Conference in July and highlighted the existing situation and challenges of local population.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ENGAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

Healthcare

Free healthcare represents one of the cornerstones of the engagement strategy. Residents of the occupied territories largely benefit from the state-sponsored Referral Program under which they receive full-scale, needs-based medical treatment in any medical institution of Georgia. In April 2015 Hepatitis C elimination program (initiated through the support of US company "Gilead") was launched and the participation was extended to the residents of the occupied regions.

Through the Liaison Mechanism (LM) effectively operating under the Action Plan for Engagement, the GoG regularly delivers to Abkhazia region necessary vaccines, including immunization and veterinary vaccines, diabetes and HIV/AIDS treatment and medicine for tuberculosis, also ambulance and other types of vehicle, medical equipment, etc. Annually the cost of delivered medicine amounts approximately to 250,000 USD.

In 2013–2015 Government of Georgia spent more than 5 million USD on the healthcare of the residents of occupied regions. In 2016 the amount on healthcare

component already equaled to 3.5 million USD. It is important to underline that throughout the years the number of persons coming over for free healthcare treatment has more than doubled.

GoG continues the construction of multi-functional center, including the 200-bed hospital in Rukhi that is the closest point to the occupation line in the direction of Abkhazia region. The functioning of this high profile medical institution will make the receipt of the free of charge medical treatment even more accessible and convenient.

Education

The GoG continues sponsoring the “1+4” program that offers simplified procedures for the representatives of ethnic minorities, inter alia, Abkhazians and Ossetians, to enroll in higher education institutions of Georgia by passing only one exam in their native language, with 1 year in Georgian language training followed by 4 years of undergraduate studies in a program of their own choice. At the same time, the GoG maintains the operation of the International Education Center (IEC) which offers the funding of the MA and Ph.D. education to the residents of the country, including the one in the occupied territories.

For these purposes and with the aim to simplify the existing procedures for the recognition of education received inside the occupied territories, the SMRCE in close cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia elaborated the amendments to the Order of the Minister of Education and Science of December 1, 2009 on the Rules for the Recognition of Higher Education Received in the Occupied Territories that entered into force on January 11, 2017. The introduced amendments to the Order created possibilities for the persons residing inside the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia to obtain the recognition for the high education received inside the occupied territories via status neutral solutions and simplified procedures—online or through the assistance of international organization, without the need to travel to the rest of Georgia, to take Georgian ID or to present witnesses that was necessary before. On its side, the issued act certifying the receipt of education inside occupied territories authorizes the person to continue study in higher education institution in the rest of Georgia or abroad and to participate in international student mobility and education programs.

Trade

Multi-functional trading center was constructed in closest vicinity of occupation line in Rukhi in 2015 and launched in April 2016 that will facilitate trade and business contacts across the divide. The center also includes bank, veterinary clinic, post office, drug store, small refrigerators for storing the goods and collection points for agriculture products.

The GoG continues to actively work on further facilitating and encouraging trade, business ties and confidence building across the ABL and for creating favorable and conducive environment in this regard.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is funding a program entitled The ZRDA Activity in Georgia. The goal of it is to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth in targeted regions. The activity purpose is to improve livelihoods and resilience in targeted communities in Georgia, through improving MSME development and growth, increasing productivity of rural households, facilitating market linkages between producers and buyers, promote local economic development by establishing networks. USAID intends to provide a total of approximately \$15,000,000 funding over a 5-year period.

Liaison Mechanism

The LM continues to serve the important functions of conveying messages between Tbilisi and Sokhumi, effective and regular delivery of the medicine and medical equipment to Abkhazia region and assistance of international organizations in the implementation of bilateral confidence building projects. Apart from this, LM directly participated in the implementation of several confidence building projects. In particular, LM was involved in the arrangement of Abkhaz Corner in the National Parliamentary Library of Georgia with the aim to promote the Abkhaz literature, culture and history, in the publishing of “Mokvi Gospel” in Georgian, Abkhazian and English languages that was distributed in Abkhazia region and conducted joint trainings of Georgian and Abkhazian doctors in Istanbul on the treatment of Hepatitis C.

In 2016, the LM has delivered to Abkhazia region a special vehicle with spray equipment necessary for preserving box-trees and respective pesticides channeled by the GoG. It has also provided Sokhumi Child Center with ultra sound device allocated by the Ministry of Health of Georgia.

CBMs

In close cooperation with the LM and the CoE, SMRCE continuously facilitates the implementation of bilateral Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian-Ossetian confidence building projects that includes the meetings, seminars, trainings, study visits etc. of various groups of people—teachers, doctors, cultural heritage experts, civil society representatives, etc.—on neutral territories. The number of such projects is increasing.

In particular in 2016:

- Georgian-Abkhazian young women participated in training on women empowerment in Yerevan;
- “Series of European lectures” were held in Sokhumi for teachers and lecturers, also with the participation of several Ossetian representatives;
- Georgian-Abkhazian doctors participated in study visit to Berlin on the issues of drug prevention and treatment. As a result CoE mission took place to Sukhumi and Tbilisi for Pompidou Group experts;
- Georgian-Abkhazian psychology and psychiatry specialists working with traumatized children participated in training in Budapest;
- Georgian-Abkhazian archive specialists participated in follow-up meeting concerning the Soviet time materials in Yerevan, Tallinn and Paris as a result of which a joint publication will soon be made;
- Georgian-Abkhazian teachers participated in last workshop in Graz on the methodology of teaching of foreign languages;
- Georgian-Abkhazian human rights defenders and civil society representatives met in Budapest and Venice on follow-up meeting to discuss human rights issues;
- Georgian-Abkhazian interpreters two times participated in training on translation technique in Budapest;
- Georgian-Abkhazian museum experts participated in training on museum management issues in Budapest;
- Field visit was implemented to Gudauta with the participation of CoE experts as a continuation to Georgian-Abkhazian cultural heritage project;
- Training of trainers for Georgian-Abkhazian teachers on Human Rights education to children of 8–13 years based on CoE materials “Compassito” was held in Budapest.

SMRCE supports the operation of COBERM—EU funded financial mechanism—that enables the implementation of bilateral confidence-building projects by non-government and international organizations.

The SMRCE maintains flexible and transparent operation of the Modalities for Conducting Activities in the Occupied Territories of Georgia and continues to issue Non-objection Orders with respect to the submitted projects which concern the activities of international and non-governmental organizations in the occupied territories, including the confidence-building initiatives. In 2016, additionally 58 new projects were granted with non-objection (overall 345 projects); none was ever refused.

Communication between the divided societies

SMRCE engages in any kind of platform and tries to use any given opportunity to help re-establish effective communication among the divided communities. In February and June of 2015 and April of 2016 informal dialogues were held in London between the representatives of Georgian and Abkhazian communities, amongst them politicians, experts and international organizations. Meetings of similar format were also held in September 2015 in Bern, Switzerland and in Berlin, Germany. Recent political developments had been discussed and the existing situation had been analyzed. At the same time, the SMRCE continues to actively take part in Civic Point of View meetings that is a platform for the meeting of representatives of Georgian-Ossetian communities.

In the frames of GoG’s peaceful policy of reconciliation, confidence building and engagement and as a result of agreement directly reached with the de-facto authorities, Georgian and Ossetian prisoners were released at Enguri Bridge on March 10, 2016. In particular, 14 citizens of Georgia held in illegal custody on the territories of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia and 4 Ossetians convicted under Georgian legislation were released from detention. The exchange of prisoners had a positive impact on peace process and confidence building between the divided communities.

Assistance of conflict affected population

GoG actively continues the efforts to alleviate the consequences of the installation of barbed wire fences and other physical barriers by the Russian militaries in villages adjacent to the occupation line. In the frames of the Interagency Commission, the GoG together with international partners restored the provision of irrigation and potable water in communities affected by Russian-built barbed wire fences, completed gasification works, provided local population with financial assistance during winter time, built and renovated several schools and kindergartens, created and rehabilitated ambulatories, restored roads and developed infrastructure, supported local youth in covering their university tuition fees and helped farmers in their agricultural work. The rehabilitation works and delivery of assistance to the local population continues annually.

In 2016, due to the efforts of the GoG and with the assistance of international organizations (UNDP, UNHCR) the surface of the Enguri bridge was renovated. Also, the bus became operational on the bridge, following 8 years of restrictions. Consequently, the residents of the occupied territory are able to benefit from free-of-charge transportation.

On 5 March 2017, representatives of the occupation regime abolished two so-called crossing points along the occupation line in the villages of Nabakebi and Otobaia, the Abkhazia region. The announced closure of two crossing points along the occupation line which are used daily by hundreds of commuters, will be detrimental to the freedom of movement of the population, including school children, on both sides of the occupation line. It will likely increase the risk of incidents, especially detentions.

Such a unilateral decision would go against commitments to work towards enhanced security and improved living conditions for the conflict-affected population. Furthermore, it would be contrary to efforts to normalise the situation by creating an atmosphere that is not conducive to longer-term conflict resolution and overall stability in the region.

GID and IPRM

First Deputy State Minister of SMRCE heads the Second Working Group of Geneva International Discussions (GID) on humanitarian issues. Georgian delegation regularly raises issues of utmost importance, such as return of IDPs and refugees and grave violations of human rights and basic freedoms of the population residing in the occupied territories (e.g. freedom of movement, right to education in native language, right to unimpeded access to healthcare, etc.). Other important issues—such as the provision of water and gas, protection of the cultural heritage sites, fate of the detained—are also being raised.

In the spirit of its constructive approach in 2015 and 2016 the GoG handed important archive materials to Abkhaz participants and an international expert on cultural heritage issues was enabled to visit Bedia and Likhny temples in Abkhazia region and elaborate a subsequent document on their current condition; another expert on healthcare issues conducted training on diabetes in Sokhumi. The potential cooperation on environmental issues, in particular, addressing a shared problem endangering the endemic box tree population in Georgia, including in Abkhazia has been also discussed.

SMRCE actively participates in Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) meetings, which are held along the ABLs with Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia on a regular basis. As a result of agreement reached during the 35th round of GID, IPRM was resumed in Gali after 4 year suspension.

Within the IPRM framework the issues of human rights violations in the occupied territories, including but not limited to illegal detentions, prisoners, deprivation of property, issues related to provision of potable and irrigation water as well as vital security and livelihood issues are being discussed. The hot lines remain operational and thanks to them kidnappings have been diminished substantially.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.
The Ambassador from Latvia.

**STATEMENT OF HON. ANDRIS TEIKMANIS, AMBASSADOR, EMBASSY OF
THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA**

Ambassador TEIKMANIS. Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Leahy, Members of the subcommittee.

Thank you very much for inviting me to speak before this very honorable subcommittee.

Latvia and the United States have a century-long history of truly friendly relations and a very close partnership. Due to this partnership, Latvia has safeguarded its independence and this partnership has facilitated Latvia's integration back into the Euro-Atlantic community.

We have to admit today that the world has become less secure and less stable over the past decade. Causes for instability are various and the geography of the threats is diverse. Continued U.S. global leadership is extremely important to safeguard an international rules-based order. A strong transatlantic link is the best answer to today's security risks.

Since 2003, Latvian troops have stood shoulder to shoulder with the United States in the fight against terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan. We both have made sacrifices and Latvia remains committed to fighting terrorism within the global coalition against ISIL.

We can do more. We are ready to do more. In 2017, Latvia considers additional contribution to the fight against terrorism in the form of financial assistance.

Threats around us, and threats in the region, become more complex and harder to identify, quantify, and pinpoint. Russia's actions, vis-à-vis its neighbors, show a disturbing and worrisome trend that we have to reckon with.

What happened in the Ukraine, Russia's steady and systematic military buildup, as well as the intensive military maneuvers in the proximity of NATO borders—like the one symbolically named Zapad 2017—have caused a significant deterioration in the European strategic security environment, and are challenging the European and international security order. This has a direct impact on the national security of Latvia, Europe, and NATO.

To respond, we need a strong NATO as a source of stability and reliability. We need a prosperous and resilient European Union. We need an effective Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE) capable of solving, not freezing, conflicts.

Thanks to historical decisions of the NATO Warsaw Summit on the deployment of four multinational battle groups to the Atlantic eastern flank—including a Canadian-led Enhanced Forward Presence Battle Group in Latvia—we are more secure and reassured. This is a very practical expression of solidarity from our allies and a strong deterrent signal to Russia.

Security in our region is greatly strengthened thanks to Congress' support for the U.S. European Reassurance Initiative, the Atlantic Resolve mission, and the Foreign Military Financing Program, for which we are grateful.

By taking into account that the challenges to our region are of a long term nature, we are looking forward to the continuation of the European Reassurance Initiative at the funding level of \$3.4

billion or higher. Likewise, we hope that the Foreign Military Financing funding will be maintained or enhanced.

The continued U.S. commitment to NATO is essential to preserving the irreversibility of these decisions. Latvia highly appreciates the very clear and resolute statement by the U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis at the NATO Defense Ministerial meeting in Brussels last month, thus reconfirming the United States' strong support to the Alliance. The meeting of the Presidents of three Baltic States and the Vice President of the United States in Munich in mid-February reassured us even further in this respect.

Latvia is also stepping up and pulling more weight. Latvia is among the best examples when it comes to raising a nation's own defense capabilities. In case of military aggression, our own forces will be the first responders. We are well aware of that challenge, therefore Latvia has spent the past 2 years boosting its military capacity and improving interagency coordination. Currently, we are spending 1.7 percent and next year, only a few months to go, we will spend 2 percent of GDP for our defense.

Since joining NATO in 2004, Latvia has been not only a recipient, but also a provider, of security. In proportion to our population of 2 million, we count as among the top contributors in missions to Afghanistan, Iraq, the Balkans, Mali, the Central African Republic, and Somalia.

Europe and the United States should join their efforts to help Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova counter threats of a hybrid nature that are a mix of various elements including information warfare. Latvia has been active in providing its support to the Eastern partners to counter propaganda and to strengthen independent media.

I would like to mention two examples of very practical approaches and supports towards the Eastern Partnership countries.

First, the Baltic Centre for Media Excellence recently completed a study on skills and training needs of independent media in the Eastern Partnership countries.

Second, Latvia is interested in the success of the Creative Content Support Fund that is being established with support from the European Endowment for Democracy and the British Government. This fund will strengthen the capacity of independent media to offer Russian language audiences a strong alternative to the Kremlin controlled media. We encourage the United States to consider supporting this important initiative.

During pivotal times in history, the Alliance has always proven to be effective, credible, and united. Solidarity is the keyword here. I believe the spirit of solidarity will bring us to wise future decisions.

Thank you very much.
[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. ANDRIS TEIKMANIS

(See also “Annual Report About the Activities of the Security Police in 2015” and “Tools of Destabilization: Russian Soft Power and Non-Military Influence in the Baltic States” in the additional information at the end of the hearing.)

LATVIA-UNITED STATES

Latvia and the United States have a century long history of truly friendly relations. The United States is our closest strategic partner. The Latvian-American strategic partnership has helped Latvia to safeguard its independence and build democratic society, has facilitated Latvia’s integration into the Euro Atlantic community. Latvia highly values the extensive political dialogue and multifaceted co-operation developed over the years.

GLOBAL SECURITY CHALLENGES

We have to admit today that the world has become less secure and less stable over the past decade. Causes for instability are various and the geography of the threats is diverse. The continued U.S. global leadership is extremely important to safeguard an international rules based order. The strong transatlantic link is the answer to today’s security risks—terrorism, radicalism, cyberwarfare, information confrontations. Latvia is ready to continue joining the U.S. in this important endeavor to make the world more secure and stable.

Since 2003, Latvian troops have stood shoulder to shoulder with the United States in the fight against terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan. We both have made sacrifices. Latvia remains committed to fighting terrorism within the Global Coalition against ISIL and providing financial support and military expertise to those who fight ISIL in Iraq and Syria. Since 2014 NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in Riga (*NATO StratCom*) provides in-depth analyses and recommendations on countering Russian and ISIL propaganda.

We could do more. We are ready to do more. In 2017 Latvia is considering additional contribution to the fight against terrorism in the form of financial assistance.

SECURITY SITUATION IN THE REGION

Threats around us have become more complex and harder to identify, quantify and pinpoint. Russia’s actions *vis-à-vis* its neighbors show a disturbing and worrisome trend that we have to reckon with.

As it is evident from the new Russian National Security Strategy, Russia has defined NATO as its adversary and threat to its national interest. The Strategy also reflects the sentiment and desire for a world order with spheres of influence. This vision is outdated and unrealistic; the sovereign nations Russia wishes to subject to such division have their own vision and an active say in their development and choice with whom to ally themselves. This sovereign right may not be challenged.

What happened in Ukraine, and Russia’s steady and systematic military build-up as well as the intensive military maneuvers in the proximity of NATO’s borders—like the ones symbolically named “Zapad 2017” (which means “West 2017” in Russian)—have caused a significant deterioration in European strategic security environment and are challenging the European and international security order. This has direct impact on the national security of Latvia, Europe and NATO. We take it seriously. I do predict that we can expect continued pressure both in terms of military pressure and hybridized warfare employing both military assets and non-military means aimed at eroding and deconstructing the unity of Europe, the Transatlantic link and consequently—NATO. These actions include a range of instruments, including propaganda, economic pressure and financing of political campaigns to cyber-attacks and aggressive intelligence gathering.

To respond, we need a strong NATO as a source of stability and reliability. We need a prosperous and resilient European Union. We need an effective *Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe* (OSCE) capable of solving, not freezing conflicts. We need more co-operation at the regional level. To uphold our European values and principles, we have to back them with strong institutions and partnerships with its neighbors that are nurtured on a daily basis.

Being aware that internal and external security is interlinked, Latvia is doing its utmost to build on our own resilience, strengthen our border security and invest in our self-defense. However, our strength is in our solidarity! We are grateful to NATO and individual Allies, in particular, the U.S., for a significant military reinforcement experienced already. An enhanced military presence combined with assurance measures such as air policing and military exercises has provided us with visible reassurance.

NATO AND U.S. PRESENCE

Following swiftly on the heels of Russian aggression in Ukraine, NATO reacted by taking decisions to reassure Allies that were proper to deter Russia. And since then, it has proceeded with strengthening strategic partnerships to build security together with non-NATO countries like Sweden and Finland in our region.

Thanks to historical decisions of the NATO Warsaw Summit on the deployment of four multinational battle groups to the Alliance's Eastern flank, including a Canadian-led Enhanced Forward Presence battle group in Latvia, we are more secure and reassured. This is a very practical expression of solidarity from our allies and a strong deterrent signal to Russia. Security in our region is greatly strengthened thanks to the Congress support for the U.S. European Reassurance Initiative/European Deterrence Initiative, the *Atlantic Resolve* mission and the Foreign Military Financing for which we are grateful. Taking into account that challenges to our region are of a long term nature, we are looking forward to the continuation of the European Deterrence Initiative at the funding level of \$3.4 billion or higher. Likewise we hope that the Foreign Military Financing funding will be maintained or enhanced. These policies have strengthened our regional security and made a positive impact on addressing our immediate shortfalls in national capabilities.

The continued U.S. commitment to NATO is essential to preserving the irreversibility of these decisions. Latvia highly appreciates the very clear and resolute statement by the U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis at the NATO Defense Ministerial meeting in Brussels last month, thus reconfirming the U.S. strong support to the Alliance. The meeting of the Presidents of three Baltic States and the Vice President of the United States in Munich in mid-February reassured us even further in this respect.

Having said this, I would like to add that Latvia shares the notion that NATO must be capable of confronting the 21st century threats. We agree there is a need to modernize NATO, to streamline the Alliance's military command structures, to place greater focus on counter-terrorism and cyber security, on information warfare. NATO has to have appropriate investment in military capabilities that can be achieved by equally sharing the burden of our collective security.

LATVIA'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO DEFENSE

Latvia is also stepping up and pulling more weight. Latvia is among the best examples when it comes to raising a nation's own defense capabilities. In case of military aggression, our own forces will be the first responders. We are well aware of that challenge, therefore Latvia has spent last 2 years boosting its military capacity and improving the interagency coordination. For the current fiscal year, our defense spending has increased by 22 percent, reaching 1.7 percent of GDP. Our commitment to NATO target of 2 percent will be reached next year—in 2018.

Since joining NATO in 2004, Latvia has not only been a recipient, but also a provider of security. In proportion to our population of 2 million, count us amongst the top contributors to international peacekeeping missions in Afghanistan and Iraq. We have also contributed to the missions in the Balkans, Mediterranean, Mali, the Central African Republic, and off the coast of Somalia.

SUPPORTING OUR EASTERN NEIGHBORS

Transatlantic resolve is also needed to continue strengthening resilience of the EU's Eastern neighbors who constantly encounter threats to their territorial integrity and statehood as a result of Russia's aggressive actions. Europe and the United States should stand firmly on calling Russia to comply with international rules and its commitments, in particular—fully with the Minsk Agreement. Transatlantic unity is of utmost importance in this respect. The latest escalation in the Eastern Ukraine underlines this. We need to keep up pressure on Russia to de-escalate the situation and facilitate peaceful resolution of the conflict in Ukraine. We should continue supporting Ukraine both practically and politically, because the success of Ukraine to firmly stand on its own feet will be the best response to the concept of spheres of influence.

Europe and the U.S. should join their efforts to also help Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova counter threats of hybrid nature that are a mix of various elements including information warfare. Latvia has been active in providing its support to the Eastern partners to counter propaganda and to strengthen independent media through various frameworks—NATO (*NATO StratCom*), the European Union (*East StratCom Task Force*), regionally and nationally (*Baltic Centre for Media Excellence*).

I would like to mention two examples of very practical approach and support towards the Eastern Partnership countries. Firstly, *the Baltic Centre for Media Excellence* recently completed a study on skills and training needs of independent media in the Eastern Partnership countries. We encourage all donors to use the findings of the study to improve the coordination and targeting of their media support programs.

Secondly, Latvia is interested in the success of the *Creative Content Support Fund* that is now being established with support from the *European Endowment for Democracy* and the British Government. The Fund will strengthen the capacity of the independent media to offer Russian-language audiences a strong alternative to the Kremlin-controlled media. We encourage the United States to consider supporting this important initiative.

IN CONCLUSION

We are living in very turbulent times. The international rules based order has been challenged. The European security architecture has been shaken up as a result of the more aggressive, assertive and adventurous foreign policy pursued by Russia. The other fundamental change in Europe's security has come with the appearance of incidents of terrorism on European soil. The transatlantic community needs to address these threats jointly. To be successful and effective in this endeavor we need a strong NATO, the transatlantic link and solid unity among the Allies. We should also support our neighbors for them to strengthen their resilience—both in the East and the South.

During the pivotal times in history, the Alliance has always proven to be effective, credible and united. Solidarity is the key word here. I believe this spirit of solidarity will bring us to wise future decisions.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.
The Ambassador from Lithuania.

STATEMENT OF HON. ROLANDAS KRIŠČIŪNAS, AMBASSADOR, EM-BASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA

Ambassador KRIŠČIŪNAS. Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Leahy, and Members of the subcommittee.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present our assessment of the threats Russia's policies pose to our democracy, to explain what Lithuania is doing to counter those threats, and to explore the possibilities for cooperation between Lithuania and the United States.

First of all, let me name the threats we face. Russia has never stopped using its political, economic, propaganda, and other open and undercover tools to make democratic countries more vulnerable to present day challenges. The attack on Georgia, the illegal annexation of Crimea, and the war in eastern Ukraine are being perceived by Lithuania as having considerable implications to its own national security.

Russia is increasing its military capabilities on the Lithuanian border. Kaliningrad is the most militarized zone in Europe. Large scale military exercises of an offensive nature on our borders with Belarus are taking place regularly.

Russia is extremely active in the information field, using pro-Russian media, propaganda, disinformation, fake news, trolls, and leaks in order to confuse public opinion and to influence decision-making.

Russia's international media channels spread its views on disinformation on sensitive topics such as migration, terrorism, ethnic relations, and the deployment of NATO troops in Central and Eastern Europe.

In my written testimony, you will find various examples of Russia's preparations against Lithuania.

Another security threat is the Ostrovets Nuclear Power Plant, which is under construction in Belarus. Because of revisions in nuclear safety, it has the potential to become a second Chernobyl.

How do we fight back against these threats? In 2018, Lithuania will be spending over 2 percent of GDP on defense and we plan to go beyond this benchmark in the future. We are modernizing our military by spending 31 percent of the budget for new weapon systems.

The LNG terminal independence was one of the best investments into our security. As its name suggests, it ensures the independence of energy supplies and deprives Russia of one of its manipulation tools. It has opened the Baltic market for potential LNG deliveries from the United States.

Dear Senators, using this opportunity, allow me to thank you for your personal support and for the United States' support to our security. We greatly appreciate the strengthening of the United States' military presence in Europe and the implementation of the European Deterrence Initiative.

We do believe that the best deterrence, therefore, the only way to achieve regional stability is to place U.S. and NATO troops in the Baltic States on a permanent basis. In our view, it is necessary to have forces and military plans adequate for deterrence.

When it comes to practical areas of defense cooperation, Lithuania and the United States have been engaged in close dialogue. On our part, we are ready to move forward with more precise bilateral projects, and timelines, with identified financial resources on both sides.

The projects can include the establishment of Baltic regional air defense capability, prepositioning of military equipment, procurement of ammunition, and intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition, and reconnaissance (ISTAR) capabilities among others.

While bringing your attention to defense issues, close cooperation to counter hybrid threats are necessary. To counter threats posed by disinformation, Lithuania launched a National Information Influence Identification and Analysis Ecosystem Project to monitor and analyze the information environment, and preclude possible unfriendly actions. The possibility to access some of the services and tools of the United States would make this system more efficient.

Currently, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty is broadcasting via Lithuania almost 10 hours a day in Russian and Belorussian languages. We see the need to increase the radio coverage and to improve the signal quality for the listeners of RFE/RL in Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, and we should aim at raising transmission power and extending the programming into 24 hours.

We should also work together in creating an attractive and positive narrative about Western societies for radio and television programs seen in the region. There is also a great need to tell the true facts of history to the societies influenced by Russian propaganda.

Finally, we are aiming to strengthen border security. With the U.S. Army support, Lithuania will be launching a new RAID systems project. Lithuania also plans to build a Situation Awareness Center that would integrate border, air, and maritime situation

pictures. United States experience and assistance in this area would be greatly appreciated.

Once again, thank you for this opportunity to tell you our part of the story today. We much value our strategic partnership with the United States. We will continue to be your reliable ally willing and hoping to work with the U.S. Congress and the U.S. administration very closely.

Thank you, and I am pleased to be on the mark first.

[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. ROLANDAS KRIŠČIŪNAS

Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Leahy, and members of the subcommittee; thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present our assessment of the threats Russia's policies and intentions pose to our democracy, to explain what Lithuania is doing to counter these threats and to explore the possibilities for cooperation between Lithuania and United States.

I. THREAT ASSESSMENT

1. Russia's Aggressive Posture

Russia continues to maintain its aggressive posture towards NATO and the EU. Russia has deliberately chosen confrontation with the Euro-Atlantic community aiming at weakening Europe, discrediting NATO and cutting the transatlantic link. These are the most alarming trends of the past years:

- Russia updated basic strategic documents, indicating NATO, and particularly the U.S., as threats. It is written in official documents, it is publically said by Russian politicians, and it is constantly broadcasted on TV for the public.
- Russia withdrew from international agreements aimed at building trust and stability and thus assuring existence of the international security system. Russia is violating basic international law norms, and is keen to change current international order.
- At the time NATO was aiming to build a strategic partnership with Russia, cutting defense structures and focusing on expeditionary forces, Russia was increasing its investments into defense, modernizing its armaments and military structures, reviewing its strategy, doctrine and tactics.
- Russia is extremely active in the information field, using pro-Russian media (e.g. Russia Today, Sputnik), propaganda, disinformation, fake news, trolls, leaks etc. in order to confuse public opinion and influence the decisionmaking.
- Russia also employs lobbying, PR agencies to disseminate the conspiracy theories, to discredit other states in the international arena and harasses those who criticize the Kremlin.
- Russia is active in promoting its narratives: “the West is corrupt and morally bankrupt”, “fascist regime in Kiev”, “Ukraine is an artificial state”, “widespread Russophobia”. There is a constant manipulation of the historical facts, e.g. common history of the post-Soviet countries, and the victory over fascism in the World War II (liberators vs occupiers).
- Russia tends to support European extremist and anti-EU groups, strives to foment divisions and instability in the target countries, and to create divisions inside the EU and NATO. Other forms of action: cyber activity (attacks against critical infrastructure, hacked and leaked emails, and cyber espionage), initiation of population resettlement (in order to change the ethnic composition of a frozen conflict region), creation of the proxy groups (pseudo-NGOs, youth organizations, research institutes, think tanks, motorcycle clubs).
- The compatriot policy (providing financial, healthcare or other kind of benefits to Russian-speakers abroad, issuing Russian passports, and justifying aggression against neighboring countries with protection of Russian speakers' rights) is being used as an additional tool for Russia's disruptive strategies abroad.
- Rising militant nationalism and chauvinism inside Russian society is a result of government efforts to mobilize the population and increase its acceptance for sacrifices in the name of “higher” national objectives. Nationalism in Russia is tolerated and fostered but nationalism in other countries presented to Russian public almost as extreme as Nazism. An intense state propaganda campaign has stoked Russians' perception that Putin righted a historical wrong in orches-

trating Russia's seizure of Crimea and reasserted Russia's great-power interests against hostile West.

—For more examples of Russian hybrid activities see Annex 1.

The Kremlin increasingly sees Europe whole, free, and at peace not as an opportunity for prosperous coexistence, but as a threat to its geopolitical agenda and regime survival. Moscow views the Western values—pluralism and openness—as weaknesses to be exploited. Its tactics are asymmetrical, subversive, and not easily confronted. U.S. is presented as an abuser of a global dominant position and Russia knows a solution—diminishing U.S. role in the world to achieve multipolar international order. Western governments have ignored this threat for too long, but finally, awareness is growing that the transatlantic community must do more to defend its values and institutions.

2. Threat Perception in Lithuania

The illegal annexation of Crimea and the war in Eastern Ukraine are being perceived by Lithuania as having substantial implications to its own national security for the following reasons:

- Russia has never stopped treating the Baltic States as part of its exclusive sphere of influence and used its political, economic, energy resources, propaganda, cyber, information and other coercive, open and undercover tools to make the democratic countries more vulnerable to the present-day challenges.
- In Ukraine, Russia demonstrated that it would not shy away from invading sovereign country.
- Russian military snap readiness exercises that take place regularly complicate tactical warning and increase military tensions along the Russian borders.
- Russia is increasing its military capabilities on Lithuania's borders. It is broadening its range of military options in the region and limiting NATO's possibilities to reinforce and resupply.
- Large-scale military exercises of the offensive nature on our borders with Belarus taking place regularly.
- “Russia first” military tactics to engage in a military conflict and destroy its adversary military installations is particularly dangerous. Russian determination to use nuclear component as an escalation in order to “deescalate” regional conflict is extremely dangerous.

There are additional reasons that explain our concern:

- Attack on Georgia in 2008, illegal annexation of Crimea and covert use of military and paramilitary forces by Russia in Ukraine redrew the political map of Europe and shook up the rules-based international peace order.
- It is difficult to trust Russia to uphold its word and its international commitments, as it violated—among other—Budapest Memorandum, Helsinki Accords and the UN Charter.

2.1 *Kaliningrad Factor*

Kaliningrad is the most militarized zone in Europe with extensive A2/AD capabilities. These capabilities allow gaining control of the Baltic Sea and air space. Short-range nuclear-capable ballistic missiles Iskander are expected to be deployed to Kaliningrad this year. Last year, two frigates armed with nuclear capable cruise missiles “Kalibr” (range up to 2500 km) have been additionally deployed to Kaliningrad, as well as coastal defense missile system “Bastion”, capable of blocking the entrance to the Baltic Sea.

Around 25,000 troops are permanently deployed in the Kaliningrad region. It is assessed that up to 70 percent of the region's population is related to the military in one way or another.

It became a new practice to command civilian ships to change their course in Lithuanian exclusive economic zone during exercises of Russia's Baltic Sea Fleet.

2.2 *Belarus Factor*

President Lukashenko has been balancing between the West and Russia for decades in order to receive possible benefits from the both sides. However, in military terms, Belarus is fully integrated with Russia and has limited means to disallow using its territory for military operations. Quick military operation to unite Kaliningrad region with Belarus (through the so-called Suwalki gap) was being exercised by Russian troops. In case of conflict, it is very unlikely that Belarus remains neutral.

Situation in Belarus is worrisome. Weak economic situation allows Russia to dictate conditions for cooperation. Two countries have a joint air defense system, there

are Russian facilities and capabilities in the territory of Belarus. Astravets nuclear plant, which is under construction, is one more risk as the project does not have economic grounds and technological reliability. Its nuclear safety credentials cannot be trusted. It is Russian political project created in order to prevent the integration of Baltic countries into the European Energy system.

II. CLOSING SECURITY GAPS

ENSURING DEFENSE AND DETERRENCE

Due to geographic location of the Baltic States, the most credible way to deter Russia is by making it physically difficult to achieve its objective to capture and hold the Baltic States by strengthening their defense and resilience.

Bearing in mind the time and geographical factors, credible deterrence in the Baltics could primarily be ensured through having adequate capabilities and the will to act. The Baltic States do have the will, but due to the size of their economies, they are not in a position to eliminate all the gaps in their defence capabilities by themselves.

1. National Efforts

The awareness of being a frontline state and the lessons learned from the war in Georgia, and especially in Ukraine, led to immediate steps that were necessary to take in order to strengthen Lithuania's security:

- Increase of professional soldiers in the armed forces, reintroduction of conscription, higher number of citizens familiar with armaments and military tactics.
- Increase of defense budget, which is set to hit the 2 percent of GDP mark next year and subsequently grow, as required, based on threat analysis and the need to further modernize our armed forces.
- Modernization by substantial defense procurements (28 percent of the current budget goes to procurement of new weapons systems).
- LNG terminal was built to ensure independence of energy supplies and to cut short one of the Russia's manipulation tools.
- National legislation related to state of war, crisis management and information security has been amended in order to remove some legal obstacles for smooth and fast national response actions.
- New law on cyber security was adopted. It overhauls national cyber governance system, defines general cyber security requirements as well as identifies additional cyber security measures, including close private-public cooperation. In 2015 National Cyber Security Center was established. It focuses on protection of critical information infrastructure, public sector, increasing resilience and response capability.
- In response to Russia's information war, strategic communication capabilities have been improved within the government and in the armed forces. Public awareness of information warfare and propaganda was raised. Lithuania is part of information sharing and coordination platforms among the Baltic States, Poland and Finland, contributes to the EU and NATO StratCom capabilities.
- Monitoring of TV and radio programs for initiating legal actions to suspend licenses for those disseminating disinformation and hatred was introduced.

2. Strengthening Conventional Capabilities

Conventional threats being the main cause for concern, current efforts to improve Lithuania's defense capabilities are focused primarily on modernization of armed forces, increasing the ability to inflict damage on adversary. There are some crucial areas where Allied support and specifically that of United States is very much needed:

- The U.S. military presence in Europe (notably in Germany, Netherlands, and Poland) is being strengthened and ERI (European Reassurance Initiative)/EDI (European Deterrence Initiative) are being implemented, which we greatly appreciate.
- The NATO's enhanced Forward Presence with 4 (U.S., Germany, Canada and UK) battle groups being deployed in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia is an important contribution. It is our strong belief, however, that restoring the U.S. military presence in Europe back to a pre-2009 level would be highly instrumental and play well into substantiating our joint credible deterrence and defense posture.

- In our view, it is necessary to have forces and adopt military plans adequate for deterrence, especially considering Russia’s A2/AD (anti-access and area denial) and growing naval capabilities in the Baltic Sea.
- The best deterrence, therefore, and the only way to achieve regional stability, is to place U.S. and NATO troops in the Baltic States on a permanent basis.

When it comes to practical areas of defense cooperation we would need U.S. assistance in:

- The establishment of Baltic regional air-defense capability that is the most important element for ensuring regional security. This would allow the Baltic States armed forces to respond to a military aggression at the very first stage of a conflict and to sustain before the reinforcement arrives.
- The prepositioning of military equipment that allows for rapid reinforcement. In terms of cost value, it is much better to invest in defense installations in the Eastern part of Europe. Lower-cost U.S. investments with a high rate of our contribution are mutually beneficial.
- Procurement of ammunition to increase our antitank capabilities, namely Javelin, AMRAM for the NASAM system, and 155 mm artillery shells.
- ISTAR capabilities to gather crucially important intelligence.
- Need to upgrade our communication systems.
- As time being a very important factor, it would be welcome to apply for the Baltic region a program similar to “Train and Equip” thus strengthening the Eastern border of NATO, increasing abilities of forces in place to defend, and contributing to deterrence. It could be worth considering the revival of the Warsaw initiative that in previous years helped to acquire necessary capabilities while procuring products of U.S. manufacturers.

In all these mentioned areas, Lithuania and United States have been engaged in discussions and dialogue, but we on our part are ready to move forward with more precise bilateral projects and targeted timelines with identified financial resources on both sides.

3. Countering Hybrid Threats

Recent study “Hybrid Warfare in the Baltics. Threats and Potential Responses” by RAND Corporation (http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1577.html) concludes that while improving the conventional deterrent in the Baltic region is important, the U.S. and NATO should also address the potential for all forms of Russian aggression across the conflict spectrum. An increased U.S.-Baltic engagement in the area of hybrid threats—in parallel with more substantial NATO/U.S. military presence in the region—would be very welcome.

Currently, an intra-governmental discussion is ongoing in Lithuania on the coordination between various institutions of countering hybrid threats. The Government aims at upgrading an integrated system of crisis management and countering hybrid threats. Here, we are seeking to gain from the U.S. experience and are ready to share ours.

Lithuania supports regional cooperation among NATO Allies exposed to similar types of hybrid threats, which would include closer interagency cooperation among border guard, police, and municipal authorities. This would lead to joint development of comprehensive cooperation mechanisms and procedures for reacting to and countering hybrid threats. Closer regional cooperation between Baltic and Nordic States, Poland and the U.S. would be very instrumental and desirable.

The EU and NATO would gain from closer dialogue with the third states directly affected by the hybrid threats, particularly Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova. Additionally, we should invest in supporting these countries in building up their capabilities. Continued U.S. engagement in this direction would be welcome.

3.1 Disinformation

In order to counter disinformation attacks, Lithuania launched a national information influence identification and analysis ecosystem project to monitor and analyze physical and electronic information environment, and preclude possible unfriendly and destructive actions. The recent example was the reaction to the fake news about the alleged rape of a teenage girl in Lithuania by the German soldiers. The reaction time was very short, it was managed smoothly and did not have a negative effect on the perception of the local population towards the NATO Allies and the Enhanced Forward Presence in Lithuania.

It would make a great benefit if similar systems were launched in other two Baltic States and Poland, also possibly in a wider region. It would allow us to understand the pattern of Russian influence activities, monitor them and preclude some

unintended actions. To make this system more effective, the access to some of the U.S. services would be appreciated to facilitate the analysis of electronic environment and technologies like cybercrime, and social communication analysis tools (about \$300,000 per year for licenses).

The legal cooperation on information warfare is another important area, as it is often the case when the U.S.-owned cyber space is used initiating information attacks against other states.

More American popular culture in Lithuania could help to neutralize Russia's so-called "active measures". Cultural, student, journalist exchange projects, educational, history programs should be encouraged and funded. In January 2017, the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) shipped to Lithuania an AM radio transmitter for broadcasting of the RFE/RL programs to Russia and Belarus. The Nautel NX-200 type solid-state transmitter currently is under installation in Viešintos (North-East of Lithuania).

The AM band is available in all car radios. The AM radio can be very important in case Russian or Belarusian authorities block the websites of RFE/RL. Currently, RFE/RL is broadcasting via Lithuania almost 10 hours a day in Russian and Belarusian languages. The transmission power is 75,000 W. The annual broadcasting cost is \$220,186.

In order to increase the radio coverage, to improve the signal quality and to provide the most convenient schedule for the listeners of RFE/RL in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, we should aim at raising the transmission power from 75,000 W to 120,000 W and RFE/RL 24 hour broadcasting. The annual broadcasting cost would be \$890,000 (increase by \$670,000).

3.2 Cyber Threats

In the face of rapidly growing cyber threats, it is critically important for Lithuania to make a leap forward in critical information infrastructure protection. To give a spark in this direction, we suggest the idea of establishing a Cyber Laboratory within our National Cyber Security Center and propose a joint project that could be ambitiously pursued with the U.S. support. It would greatly contribute to our security by: (1) enhancing cyber defense capabilities of our armed forces; (2) strengthening resilience of state-level critical information infrastructure; (3) laying a better background to the development of national cyber defense competencies; (4) enabling better preparedness to counter conventional and hybrid scenarios against Lithuania.

3.3 Border Security

Security of the borders starts with the situation awareness and the ability to monitor. This year, with the U.S. Army support, Lithuania will be launching a new so-called RAID systems project that would significantly increase national abilities in beefing up our border security. We hope this to be enhanced to the Baltic regional operation with the overall aim to have an integral security situation picture of NATO's Eastern border. U.S. assistance in this area would be of tremendous importance.

Lithuania plans to build a situation awareness center that would integrate border, air and maritime security situation picture. We see many reasons for turning it into a regional U.S.—Baltic center. U.S. experience and assistance in this area would be of great help.

3.4 Energy Security

Lithuania has been very active in fighting Russian dominance in the energy sphere. We constructed the first LNG terminal in the Baltic Sea region, which broke Russian monopoly of gas supply and reduced political influence. It has opened Baltic gas market for potential LNG deliveries from USA.

Lithuania bridged the Baltic Sea by laying underwater electricity cable linking Lithuania and Sweden and got connected with Poland as well. Our next goal is to connect with continental European electricity networks. Baltic States aim to synchronize their electricity networks with the EU, breaking away from Russia. It is a matter of urgency and top priority, because of geopolitical aspects, security and economic/market issues.

The Ostrovets Nuclear Power Plant constructed in Belarus is a nuclear and environmental safety issue not only for Lithuania, but for the whole region (for more information about the Ostrovets NPP see Annex 2).

Lithuania (the EU) deals with the issue engaging unilateral and multilateral instruments including but not limited to the Espoo, Aarhus and the Nuclear Safety Conventions aiming to promote nuclear and environmental safety in the Ostrovets NPP. Seriousness of nuclear safety issues should warrant it to become an item on bilateral U.S.-Belarus agenda. We also ask for U.S. support regarding this issue in the framework of the Convention on Nuclear Safety.

ANNEX 1

EXAMPLES OF RUSSIAN HYBRID ACTIVITIES

1. Aggressive Russian Intelligence Operations

Russian intelligence services (RIS) support Russian foreign policy objectives by conducting active and aggressive influence operations or espionage against Lithuania.

- In 2015 the FSB officer Nikolay FILIPCHENKO, one of the organizers and coordinators of the FSB long-term operation against Lithuania, was detained in Lithuania. His recruitment targets were VIP Protection Department, officers of other institutions, Lithuanian politicians, and state servants. With the help of the recruited law enforcement officers (VIP Protection Department), the FSB had intentions to penetrate other Lithuanian state institutions, among them—the President Palace. FILIPCHENKO was looking for a VIP protection officer who could arrange possibility for FSB to plant bug into Presidential Office and residence.
- During the parliamentary elections in Lithuania in October 2016, when RIS extensively focused on the collection of the information about domestic political situation and the recruitment of Lithuanian citizens who could provide such information.

2. Increasing Russian Cyber Intelligence Attacks

RIS is more often using increasingly sophisticated cyber attacks for intelligence collection and against high value political and economic targets.

- In autumn 2016 GRU related Internet hacker group SOFACY (APT28) conducted attack against several members of Lithuanian parliament. With the help of social engineering the GRU tried to penetrate Parliament computers, gain their control and overtake the information stored there. The cyber attack against members of the Lithuanian Parliament was a part of SOFACY attack series against NATO and Ukraine targets. We assess that in the near term Russian intelligence services will continue to organize cyber attacks against NATO countries.

3. Wide Scope of Russian Technical Intelligence Capabilities

Russia has a wide scope of technical capabilities to intercept, decrypt and process electronic communications. It uses stationary technical intelligence centers in Kaliningrad oblast, mainland Russia and Belarus, as well as mobile land, air and sea units.

- In June 2013 a couple of phone conversations between Lithuanian MFA diplomats in Vilnius and diplomats posted to Hungary and Azerbaijan were released to YouTube. Diplomats informally discussed Lithuanian relations with Armenia and Azerbaijan. It was Russian active measures operation aimed to discredit Lithuanian EU Presidency and instigate internal tensions in Lithuania. Conversations were intercepted by Russian electronic intelligence unit.

4. Investment in IT Projects As Intelligence and Subversion Threat

Russia has traditionally used supply of energy resources, investment in strategically important sectors of economy and trade relations as a tool to influence domestic and foreign policy of Lithuania as well as other countries. Lithuanian energy and economic dependency on Russia is decreasing, however, Russia is inventing novel ways to use its economic resources to increase its influence capabilities.

- The company based in Lithuania and owned by Russian citizens, who have ties to Russian Federal Security Service, is planning to launch data center project Amber Core that would be a biggest data center in the Baltic region. Data center project poses a threat to Lithuania's national security. It is probable that after the construction of the data center the FSB would acquire the possibility to overtake the data of Lithuanian and foreign state institutions stored there and by such means to collect intelligence information. If state institutions, banks, telecommunication enterprises become the clients of the data center, Russia would acquire the possibility to undermine Lithuanian state management and functioning of the economy in order to implement its political, economic and military interests.

5. Russian Propaganda and Disinformation Activities

Russia pursues to influence Lithuanian and Western audiences by setting up and promoting international media channels that spread its views and disinformation on the sensitive topics—such as migration crisis, terrorism, ethnic relations, deployment of NATO troops in Central and Eastern Europe etc.

- The most active propaganda project of Russia's international media outlet "Rossvia Segodnia" in Lithuania is website Baltnews.lt. It realizes Russia's informational and ideological policy, disseminates articles which cover main narratives of Russian propaganda. Baltnews.lt gets funding from "Rossvia Segodnia" in a complex and non-transparent financial scheme through intermediary companies in foreign states.
- A new "Rossvia Segodnia" propaganda project "Sputniknews.lt" was launched in Lithuania in December 2016. "Sputniknews.lt" is oriented in Lithuanian-speaking audience, but for the moment failed to gain any popularity.
- The most recent example of information attack was attempt by Russian media outlets and pro-Russian activists in February 2017 to the spread the fake news that German soldiers stationed in Lithuania were culpable for the rape of the teenage girl. This particular piece of disinformation failed to attract attention of mainstream media, but the like information attacks against NATO military personnel deployed in the region are highly likely to be repeated in the future.

6. Russian Political and Social Influence Activities

Moscow's attempts to regain the influence in the post-Soviet region materialize in Russia's efforts to weaken Lithuania's social integrity and to escalate intra-ethnic tensions. Russia employs so call compatriot policy to achieve that. Kremlin's aim is to discredit and hinder any efforts made by the authorities' to carry out a successful integration of national minorities.

- The main goal of Russia's compatriot policy in the Baltics is to incite ethnic tensions. The Fund to Support and Protect the Rights of Compatriots Living Abroad, which was established by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Federal agency "Rossotrudnichestvo", finances two Lithuanian-based organizations, which try to fuel ethnic tensions within Lithuania. Centre for the Protection and Research of Fundamental Rights uses various international human-rights events to blame Lithuania for violating the rights of ethnic communities. Independent Human Rights Centre, takes part in pro-Russian propaganda campaigns against the US and NATO. Both organizations receive nearly 100 thousand euro from the fund every year. Vladimir POZDOROVKIN, current coordinator of the Baltics in the fund, had been the chief of SVR under a diplomatic cover at the Russian Embassy in Vilnius from 1994 till 1996.
- Russian Embassy in Lithuania directly controls, coordinates and finances activities variety of pro-Russian organizations, clubs and groups ranging from political protests to cultural events. Despite the fact that pro-Kremlin political parties or NGOs currently fail to gain wider support, their representatives are constantly used as information sources for Russian propaganda, because mostly their political actions and ideas coincide with Russia's viewpoint. One of the most popular ideas suggested by these political organizations is the idea of Lithuania's neutrality and withdrawal from NATO.

7. Belarus As a Base of Russian Influence and Agression

Close military and intelligence cooperation between Russia and Belarus and significant Russian influence in Belarusian society poses a significant threat to Lithuanian national security.

- In 2014 Belarusian intelligence operation against Lithuanian military communications system was terminated. Belarusian military intelligence (GRU) undercover officer Sergey KURULENKO carried out the operation. He tried to collect information about fiber optic cable network of national Lithuanian air navigation system. The cable was also used by the military, among other for NATO communications. Due to close military cooperation between Belarus and Russia, it is highly likely that the Belarusian GRU shared the collected information with the Russian military intelligence GRU.
- Approximately 100 pro-Russian groups are active in Belarus. Many of them are paramilitary patriotic groups, some of them related to Belarusian Cossacks movement. These groups are most active in Belarus regions bordering Lithuania and Poland. Cossacks played significant role in the Russian hybrid warfare against Ukraine, including the Crimea takeover operation. Belarusian Cos-

sacks and other pro-Russian paramilitary groups operate in the same fashion as in Ukraine, using representatives of Russian Orthodox Church as liaison officers for the Russian intelligence services. Pro-Russian groups in Belarus can be used by Russia to pressure Belarusian president Alexander Lukashenko as well as various operations (provocations) against the NATO member countries, e.g. Lithuania and Poland. Such provocations are highly likely during the “Zapad 2017” military exercise.

ANNEX 2

MAIN FACTS ABOUT THE OSTROVETS NUCLEAR POWER PLANT (NPP) PROJECT IN BELARUS

- Belarus is implementing the NPP project¹ in violation to the international nuclear and environmental safety requirements and without respect to the principles of openness, transparency and good neighbourliness. That was recognized internationally:
 - The Meeting of Parties (MOP) of the Espoo Convention² and the MOP of the Aarhus Convention³ acknowledged that Belarus was developing the NPP project in violation to the mentioned Conventions (decision VI/2 of the Espoo Convention MOP—ECE/MP.EIA/20.Add.1, decision V/9c of the Aarhus Convention ECE/MP.PP/2014/2/Add.1).
- The Ostrovets construction site was selected prior to the start of the transboundary environmental impact assessment (EIA), without seismic, geological and hydrological research and without consultations with the immediate neighbours, i.e. Lithuania. This constitutes serious violations of the Espoo, Aarhus and the Nuclear Safety Conventions.
- Belarus sidesteps from its international obligations: the accomplishment of the International Atomic Energy Agency’s (the IAEA) specialised mission for site and design evaluation (Site and External Events Design (SEED) mission) and the risk and safety assessments (the stress tests) in line with the declaration signed with the European Commission on 23 June 2011. Despite Lithuanian requests and the recommendations of the Espoo Convention to look into the site selection process and scientific researches of the sites, the IAEA SEED mission invited by Belarus was incomplete and was not tasked to assess site related issues.
- In 2016, at least six incidents occurred at the Ostrovets NPP. Two of the incidents included the reactor vessel—one of the most important safety components of a NPP. In all the cases Belarus tried to conceal the information about the incidents and after it appeared in the independent media, Belarus either denied it or attempted to downgrade the consequences. The recurrent incidents at the Ostrovets NPP reveal serious problems with the work and safety culture and raise reasonable doubts regarding the competence and independence of the Belarus nuclear safety regulator “Gosatomnadzor” that is currently the department within the Ministry of Emergency situations of Belarus. It also indicates the lack of transparency and openness in the implementation of the project.

OSTROVETS NPP: A MULTIDIMENSIONAL THREAT

Environmental threat. The implementation phase of the Ostrovets NPP project was commenced before the start of the transboundary environmental impact assessment (EIA), without the obligatory seismic, geological and hydrological research. Lithuania holds that the transboundary EIA is still pending, as Lithuanian questions regarding the potential impact on its environment and population have not been answered, public hearings for the Lithuanian public have not been arranged, consultations with Lithuania in line with Art. 5 of the Espoo Convention have not been organised.

¹The Ostrovets NPP in Belarus is situated in the North-Western part of Belarus, Grodno oblast, near Ostrovets (coordinates 54°45'19.6"N 26°05'28.9"E). The distance from the construction site to the Lithuanian capital Vilnius –40 km, to the Lithuanian (and external EU) border –20 km. The NPP will have two units with VVER–1200 reactors (output capacity up to 2x1200 MW, operating lifetime—60 years). The first unit of the NPP is scheduled for launch in 2019, the second—in 2020. The contractor general—Rosatom’s subsidiary company—Atomstroyexport (Russia). Project financed by Russia.

²Espoo Convention—UNECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context.

³Aarhus Convention—UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters.

Radiological threat. Belarus selected the Ostrovets site that is ~20 km from the Lithuanian border and ~40 km from the Lithuanian capital Vilnius without obligatory assessment of population density in the territory of Lithuania and without assessment of feasibility to implement emergency preparedness and response arrangements in case of a nuclear accident, although it is required by the IAEA. In case of an accident at the Ostrovets NPP, 1/3 of Lithuanian population (within the radius of 100 km from the Ostrovets NPP) could be affected. Need for evacuation of the Lithuanian capital Vilnius, where all the Governmental institutions are based, cannot be excluded.

Unfair competition. Belarus is constructing its NPP with a prospect of electricity export to the European market; however, Belarus has no necessary infrastructure neither for the operation of the NPP, nor for the electricity export, but expects to make use of the Lithuanian infrastructure, including the newly build power interconnections with Poland and Sweden. Belarus does not invest into nuclear and environmental safety in order to reach the level set by the international safety standards, thus creating the potential for distortions in the European electricity market. Furthermore, attempts to evade from needed investments into adequate safety of this project distorts the competition in the nuclear industry globally. It is of utmost importance to ensure that electricity trade with third countries follows the rules of fair competition (level playing field) and that electricity produced in violation of the international nuclear and environmental safety standards would not be accepted in the European electricity market.

MILITARY THREAT. For the physical protection of the Ostrovets NPP Belarus created a new military unit No. 7434 under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Viktor Zhadobin. It will consist of ~300 military personnel that is trained not only in Belarus, but also in Russia.⁴ In February 2017, the military unit was located in the place of permanent deployment. Moreover, in 2016, Belarus started the construction of the military base for the Air Force and Air Defence units for the security needs of Belarus NPP.⁵

Population within the range of 100 km from the Belarus NPP & Kaliningrad NPP



International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on emergency preparedness and response: territories within the radius of 100 km can require evacuation within a day and relocation within a week to a month.

⁴“The military unit for the protection of BELAES will be located at the site of a permanent deployment in early January” http://www.atom.belta.by/ru/belaes_ru/view/voennaja-chast-po-oxrane-belaes-razmestitsja-na-meste-postojanno-dislokatsii-v-nachale-janvarja-8954/.

⁵“First stage of military base to guard Belarusian nuclear power plant ready in 2016” http://atom.belta.by/en/belaes_en/view/belaes_en/view/first-stage-of-military-base-to-guard-belarusian-nuclear-power-plant-ready-in-2016-8091/t_id/1.

*Belarusian authorities agree that there is a possibility for the radiological impact to the environment and people:*⁶

- 1000 km—possible short-term restriction for consumption of locally produced food;
- 300 km—possible long-term restriction for consumption of certain types of food;
- 100 km—possible need for iodine therapy.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, thank you. That is the model for the rest of us right there. You nailed it. Lithuania is doing well.

Senator LEAHY. Get out the checkbook.

STATEMENT OF HON. EERIK MARMEI, AMBASSADOR, EMBASSY OF ESTONIA

Ambassador MARMEI. Thank you. My name is Eerik Marmei. I am the Ambassador of Estonia.

Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Leahy, Members of the subcommittee.

Thank you for the invitation to testify before the United States Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs. It is an honor to be here.

First, let me emphasize how important the United States' steadfast support for the freedom and independence of Estonia has been. Our membership in Euro-Atlantic institutions is the cornerstone of our prosperity and security, and we are mindful of the role the United States has played in supporting and assisting us.

As Russia's immediate neighbor, Estonia would like nothing more than to have good relations with a democratic Russia, including prosperous trade and active everyday relations at all levels of society. But shared commitment to the core values of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law are indispensable pillars for good, neighborly relations.

We should not be guided by wishful thinking, but by real facts. Examples of Russian malign activities in Europe, to name but a few, include the Russia-Georgia war, the annexation of Crimea, the war in eastern Ukraine, provocative activities by the Russian military, and interference in Western democratic processes including elections. We have learned that inadequate responses to such behavior can only feed future transgressions.

I would like to stress that Russia's ambitions and activities are not only of concern to NATO's eastern flank or the countries represented at this hearing, but are influencing all our allies in the West. Therefore, it is essential not to regionalize the Russian threat to Eastern European countries, but to clearly recognize that the threat of Russia's subversive methods has expanded far beyond the eastern flank of Europe, including to the United States. We, as neighbors to Russia, are just a bit more used to witnessing such behavior.

Upcoming elections in the Netherlands, France, and Germany are a perfect theater for the Russian disinformation warriors.

The goal of Russia's influence and activities in Europe is to create tension and sow confusion between European Union member states and within individual states. By doing so, the Kremlin hopes to influence the decisionmaking process and steer the narrative and outcomes towards its own interests.

⁶Based on A.N. Rykov, Director of *Belinipenergoprom*, presentation, 16-06-2010.

The illegal annexation of Crimea in March 2014 succeeded largely because of a successful information war that allowed Russia to avoid a direct military confrontation. It can be expected that Russia will use this tactic—extensive manipulation of information—to support its military goals in order to achieve strategic advantage in the future as well. This forces the adversary to doubt and verify the facts, thus delaying its response.

The unity of the West, joint action, and the decision to stay the course towards Russia has been the strongest message in response to Russian actions so far. To be credible, we need to stand by our values and be consistent in our policies. We need to take into account that Russia sees itself being in a confrontational era with the West for a long time.

We, the West, need to address the subversive actions in a systematic and coordinated way within the European Union and NATO, but also in cooperation between these two organizations. This should be done in very practical terms. We need to share more intelligence on Russia's subversive methods and to decode the Russian hybrid method playbook.

We need to raise the awareness of decision makers and the public at large in order to limit the ability to abuse the open nature of our societies. We can do it by exposing or countering Russia's malign tactics such as covert support to political parties and politicians, seemingly innocent NGO's or economic leverage gained through murky business connections. Also, transparency, regulation, and anti-corruption measures can, and should be, strengthened.

The Kremlin makes extensive use of Russian and foreign language media outlets, as well as countless fake social media accounts. Merely constant reaction to propaganda is not enough and can sometimes even be counter-effective.

The quality of strategic communication capabilities, and the formation of our own messages, needs to be improved. The effect of disinformation can be diminished by enhancing critical reading skills within intended audiences. The best medicine against disinformation is an open and free, high quality, and pluralistic media environment offering a variety of voices and opinions.

I firmly believe this subcommittee plays an important role in effecting positive change in the areas I have described above.

Funding for initiatives that fall under the State Department, USAID, the Broadcasting Board of Governors, the National Endowment for Democracy, to mention but a few, can all contribute to building capability and resilience in Europe in order to counter changes Russia is trying to achieve.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide you with my thoughts and I look forward to answering your questions.

Thank you.

[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. EERIK MARMEI

Chairman Graham, Ranking Member Leahy, members of the subcommittee,

Thank you for the invitation to testify before the United States Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs. It is an honor to be here. We are here to discuss an important topic: Russia and Europe.

First, let me emphasize how important the United States' steadfast support for the freedom and independence of Estonia has been. Your non-recognition policy helped carry us through the darkest days of Soviet occupation and we thank you for your unwavering support to join the family of nations since we regained our independence. Our membership in Euroatlantic institutions is the cornerstone of our prosperity and security and we are mindful of the role the U.S. has played in assisting us.

As Russia's immediate neighbor, Estonia would like nothing more than to have good relations with a democratic Russia, including prosperous trade and active everyday relations at all levels of society. But shared commitment to the core values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law are indispensable pillars of good-neighborly relations. Those values have underpinned the post-war international order and we should not abandon them. It is now up to Russia to honor those fundamental principles.

We shouldn't be guided by wishful thinking but by real facts. Russia has demonstrated time and time again that it cannot be trusted. There is a disturbing pattern of aggressive behavior that dates back at least to 2008. We have learned that inadequate responses to such behavior can only feed future transgressions.

Examples of Russia's malign activities in Europe, to name but a few, include the Russia-Georgia war, the annexation of Crimea, the war in Eastern Ukraine, provocative activities by the Russian military, and interference in Western democratic processes, including elections.

I would like to stress that Russia's ambitions and activities are not only of concern to NATO's eastern flank or the countries represented at this hearing, but are influencing all our allies in the West. We, as neighbors to Russia, are just a bit more used to witnessing such behavior. Upcoming elections in the Netherlands, France, and Germany are a perfect theatre for the Russian disinformation warriors. Therefore, it is essential not to regionalize the Russian threat to Eastern European countries, but to clearly recognize that the threat of Russia's subversive methods has expanded far beyond the "Eastern flank" of Europe, including to the United States.

The goal of Russia's influence and activities in the European Union is to create tensions and sow confusion both between member states and within individual states. By doing so, the Kremlin hopes to influence the decisionmaking process and steer the narrative and outcomes towards its own interests.¹ Russia sees the problems ailing the European Union—including Brexit, the migrant crisis and the debt crisis—as signs of the weakening of the Western-led world order and it seeks to reconfigure power relationships in international politics.

The Kremlin makes extensive use of Russian- and foreign-language media outlets, as well as countless fake social media accounts. The fabricated information often falls on fertile soil in certain circles in the EU, who further disseminate the Kremlin's talking points.

The illegal annexation of Crimea in March 2014 succeeded largely because of a successful information war that allowed Russia to avoid a direct military confrontation. It can be expected that Russia will use this tactic—extensive manipulation of information to support its military goals in order to achieve strategic advantage—in the future as well. This forces the adversary to doubt and verify the facts, thus delaying its response.²

To carry out its foreign policy goals, the Kremlin is increasingly reliant on right- and left-wing populist parties arrayed against or frustrated by the European Union and NATO. Open or covert sponsoring of the numerous populist anti-establishment far-right and far-left political movements across Europe lends the Russian message credibility and allows it to distance itself officially. We have also seen how the Russian diaspora can be instrumentalized and how the Russian Orthodox Church and state monopolies can be mobilized to achieve their foreign policy goals. President Putin has even managed to use history as a tool of warfare.

The best way to build resilience against Russia's malign influence is to make sure our own house is, and remains, in order. Cohesiveness of our societies, trust in gov-

¹ Estonian Information Board, 2017. International Security and Estonia. http://teabeamet.ee/pdf/EIB_public_report_Feb_2017.pdf.

² Ibid.

ernment and sticking to our fundamental values make us less susceptible to such attempts.

The unity of the West, joint action and the decision to stay the course towards Russia, has been the strongest message in response to Russian actions so far. To be credible we need to stand by our values and be consistent in our policies. We need to take into account that Russia sees itself being in a confrontational era with the West for a long time. Only a strong, united and efficient Europe can contribute to the fight against terrorism and also counter Russian malign influence. U.S. backing and cooperation, both with individual countries and through Euro-Atlantic institutions is vital to this effort.

We, the West, need to address the subversive actions in a systematic and coordinated way within the EU and NATO, but also in cooperation between these two organizations. This should be in very practical terms: we need to share more intelligence on Russia's subversive methods—to decode “the Russian hybrid method play-book”. We need to raise the awareness of decision makers and the public at large in order to limit the ability to abuse the open nature of our societies. We can do it by exposing or countering Russia's malign tactics such as covert support to political parties and politicians, seemingly innocent NGOs or economic leverage gained through murky business connections. Also, transparency regulation and anti-corruption measures can and should be strengthened.

Merely constant reactions to propaganda is not enough and can sometimes even be countereffective. The quality of strategic communication capabilities and the formation of our own messages needs to be improved. The effect of disinformation can be diminished by enhancing critical reading skills within intended audiences. The best medicine against disinformation is an open and free, high-quality and pluralistic media environment offering a variety of voices and opinions.

I firmly believe the subcommittee plays an important role in effecting positive change in areas I've described above. Funding for initiatives that fall under the State Department, USAID, the Broadcasting Board of Governors, the National Endowment for Democracy, to mention but a few, wisely chosen and strategically deployed, can all contribute to building capability and resilience in Europe in order to counter changes Russia is trying to achieve.

In conclusion, I'm sure all the countries represented here would like to have good-neighborly and predictable relations with a democratic Russia that respects the core values of democracy and international law. Unfortunately for the time being, Russia remains a common concern for the West as it is an unpredictable and aggressive actor in Europe and beyond. Transatlantic unity and a clear, unwavering posture in our policy towards Russia will remain crucial in near future.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide you with my thoughts and I look forward to answering your questions.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you all for coming and informing the subcommittee of what you face, a Parade of Horribles when it comes to Russia.

RUSSIAN HYBRID WARFARE

Lithuania. There was a recent deployment of German soldiers to Lithuania to help train Lithuanian military. I have been informed that as soon as the soldiers from Germany arrived, there was an allegation that one of the German soldiers had raped a Lithuanian woman. Are you familiar with that?

Ambassador KRIŠČIŪNAS. Yes, it did not take long, Senator, because right after German troops had arrived, because of the decisions taken in Warsaw for deployment, German troops are leading the battalion in Lithuania.

It was almost like the second day or the next day of their arrival, after their arrival, there was news spread that a teenage girl was raped, allegedly, by German troops and it was absolutely nonsense. It was fake news. It was cooked and it was denied right away.

But, of course, as you know with fake news, not all people are aware listening to the denouncement of this that it is not true.

Senator GRAHAM. Did it come from a Russian outlet, the news?

Ambassador KRIŠČIŪNAS. Yes, that is what we suspect. It is always difficult to get a grip of where it comes from first. But yes, that is what we suspect because the very idea is very clear: that NATO troops in Lithuania are bad.

Senator GRAHAM. Have you experienced an uptick of Russian involvement since President Obama drew the red line in Syria against Assad and nothing happened, or has it been the same the whole time? Did that affect Russia's involvement at all or is it all about the same?

Ambassador TEIKMANIS. Well, I would not say that there have not been some significant changes. While we have been experiencing Russian hybrid warfare already for 35 years, well, maybe we have become a bit more resilient to it. But certainly, it has never stopped.

Certain narratives are not changing and certain methods are still being used. And in that sense, very much has been disclosed by journalists as to what are the methods, how trolling is being done, and where the fake facts are emerging.

I would not say that the intensity has changed in the course of the last years, but it has not diminished.

Senator GRAHAM. Is it, then, constant Russian interference in your countries? Has it been constant? Is it on the rise?

Ambassador MARMEI. Yes, Chairman, it has been constant as my Latvian colleague said. We have experienced this for the past 25 years.

I think what really opened our eyes was the 2007 cyber attacks against Estonia; that was politically motivated. And even today, the cyber domain remains one of the most important areas, and we really need to put more emphasis on this issue as well; bilaterally but also in NATO.

U.S. RESPONSE

Senator GRAHAM. What do you think the consequences would be if our country forgave and forgot the interference in our election by Russia? What kind of effect do you think that would have on Russia?

The Foreign Minister from the Ukraine.

Minister KLIMKIN. Actually, Russia has developed a very systemic way on how to use all kinds of unconventional warfare.

Senator GRAHAM. My question is what would the effect be if the United States did not act regarding the interference in our election? Would it embolden Russia?

Minister KLIMKIN. Well, there should be a clear way of how to react to the Russian interference. Otherwise, the Russians are always good in exploiting weaknesses.

Senator GRAHAM. The Ambassador from Poland, do you agree with that?

Ambassador WILCZEK. I mean, it is difficult for me to make comments on what Americans should do, or should not do, or what would happen if Americans did not do something.

But I think that investigations in such cases are essential in all countries and it cannot be covered up. It just should be investigated in every case.

Ambassador BAKRADZE. To continue what my colleague from Poland just said, as I have mentioned in my remarks, as we think that international response on the invasion and occupation of Georgia was insufficient; that that might have led to the further operation of the Russian Federation towards the Ukraine, et cetera. I think that international response is generally necessary in the violation of international laws.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you all. You will have a chance to tell the subcommittee specifically what we could do to help you regarding Russia on the power side.

Senator Leahy.

Senator LEAHY. Thank you. This has been very instructive. Mr. Klimkin, am I pronouncing that correctly? Thank you.

RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE

In 2014, since Russia's annexation of Crimea, the United States has supported the Ukrainian Government against pro-Russian separatists.

During our past election campaign, Mr. Trump said we might withdraw U.S. support, possibly as a deal with Vladimir Putin, and said that he would also look into recognizing and approving of Russia's annexation of Crimea.

Have you or any other senior Ukrainian officials met with President Trump or Secretary Tillerson to discuss their policy toward the Ukraine?

Minister KLIMKIN. I have just met with Secretary Tillerson a couple of hours ago, and it was a very strong message of support for Ukraine, and that any kind of tradeoffs is not possible. And our President had a phone conversation with President Trump, and it was the same, a very clear message.

Senator LEAHY. Did he say anything about Crimea?

Minister KLIMKIN. No compromise about Crimea, and Crimea is the issue about rules and international law.

Senator LEAHY. How important is our aid to Ukraine?

Minister KLIMKIN. The U.S. support and U.S. assistance, more security-related assistance, and reform-related assistance was and is fundamental for the Ukraine in the sense of our ability to counter Russian aggression and in the sense of us creating a democratic and European Ukraine.

Senator LEAHY. Thank you.

Ambassador Wilczek, your country, Poland, is uniquely positioned geographically between the conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

I assume Russia's deployment of nuclear capable missiles to Kaliningrad creates significant challenges for you, am I correct?

Ambassador WILCZEK. As I have just said, the deployment of these missiles to Kaliningrad is very essential for our security. It is a kind of, I think, it was a kind of breakthrough moment because it strengthens this feeling of insecurity and uncertainty.

And it is not only about Poland. It is about the flexibility of NATO in this region, and it is also about the Baltic countries and other countries.

So this area of the Kaliningrad region is an especially sensitive area. And as I said, it is the most militarized area in the whole of Europe, I think.

Senator LEAHY. Do you get support from NATO? Do you feel that NATO's support is strong?

Ambassador WILCZEK. Yes, we feel enormous support both from NATO and bilaterally from the United States. So I think that the whole project of deployment and deterrence is implemented right now. That we are still being supported fully by the United States is essential for our security and is very important.

RUSSIA AND THE BALTICS

Senator LEAHY. Do you, in the Baltic states, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia feel any greater or less concern about a Russian invasion since the elections here in the United States?

Ambassador TEIKMANIS. I think we are concerned since 2014 or even before that, since 2008, since Georgia or Ukraine.

We are all concerned because we see the international rules-based order is being challenged. And that is a concern for all of Europe. It is a concern for all of NATO. And here we are considering that the most important principle is the indivisibility of NATO territory.

And it does not matter which part of NATO can be challenged. It is a challenge for the whole of NATO in this sense: the assurances from NATO, the presence of NATO battalions, international battalions on Baltic soil, and reassurance given by the United States in particular, that gives a strong sense of a strong response to anybody who wants to challenge NATO as the strongest military organization. That is the only response we can expect from NATO and that is a response that is understandable by everybody.

That gives us, as small nations, a good sense of assurance about our security, safety, and stability for the future.

Senator LEAHY. Does anybody disagree with that?

Ambassador MARMEI. If I just may add, Senator, I think what we have seen in the past 2½ years, with the two NATO summits, Wales in 2014 and Warsaw last year, have made very important decisions. It is important to implement those decisions, and we do not see any change in direction in that sense.

This is my answer to the question: Is there a change of direction after the elections in the United States? No, we do not see that happening. Thank you.

Senator LEAHY. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator GRAHAM. Senator Moran.

Senator MORAN. Chairman, thank you very much.

Mr. Minister and Ambassadors, thank you for joining us.

U.S. ASSISTANCE

As we make decisions about spending money, taxpayer dollars of American taxpayers, what would you highlight for me as the priorities that we should have in the financial aid that we provide your countries? Is there a consensus?

I mean, I am happy to have one or a few of you respond to that if there is consensus in what is the highest priority. Ambassador.

Ambassador TEIKMANIS. Well, if I may.

Probably the programs that have been already mentioned today, this is the European Reassurance Initiative or the Deterrence Initiative that has already started and financing is assured partly. We hope very much that this program will be financed fully and maybe even higher.

As well, foreign military financing received by the Baltic States is a very crucial point of improving our resilience, our capabilities.

And third, I would mention are the programs devoted to counter hybrid warfare. And these programs can be in different shapes, whether it is the strengthening of free media, independent media, or countering the propaganda, or countering hybrid attacks. All of these programs are doing very relevant work to increase resilience.

Senator MORAN. Does anyone wish to add or detract or subtract? Minister.

Minister KLIMKIN. In the case of Ukraine, it is probably a bit different one, but in our case it is definitely about upgrading the Ukraine defense and security sector to the NATO standards.

It is about permanent control. It is about training. And it is a two-way road because we understand now the sense of hybrid warfare and unconventional warfare.

So it is about exchange, but it is also about weapon supplies, especially defensive weapon supplies.

Senator MORAN. Let me ask if any of you have other thoughts, if you would get that to the subcommittee, I want to ask a couple more questions. So if you can provide that answer in writing, I would appreciate it.

SANCTIONS AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

Senator MORAN. There are some EU members that are chafing at the continued imposition of sanctions against Russia.

In your estimation, what do we need to do to keep EU unified in its support for those sanctions? And how significant is it that the United States continue its sanctions in that effort? Ambassador.

Ambassador MARMEI. Senator, as long as we keep to the principle of the Minsk Agreements, there will be unity on both sides of the Atlantic in the European Union and the United States.

So this is a very clear message that we should send to Russia that Minsk is the basic fundamental agreement that has to be fulfilled by all parties. And as long as this is not done, the sanctions should continue.

Ambassador KRIŠČIŪNAS. If I may, Senator, I would add that as long as the United States is strong on sanctions and we understand that that is the strongest tool we have in our toolbox. So that will unite Europe also.

Senator MORAN. U.S. leadership, if I can paraphrase, U.S. leadership matters in this regard.

Ambassador KRIŠČIŪNAS. Yes.

ENERGY

Senator MORAN. Let me ask a question about energy. There is a Rand Corporation study that indicates Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, and Poland are among the EU members most vulnerable to a problem with energy if Russia would take certain actions. And

yet, there is a 2014 European Commission study that says that there are cooperative measures among the EU that could significantly reduce the impact of any short-term cutoff of supplies of energy.

Are those measures in place, the things that are thought that could reduce the implications of an energy cutoff? Has the EU taken the steps necessary to mitigate the damage?

Ambassador KRIŠČIŪNAS. I would say that building a LNG terminal in Klaipeda, Lithuania and building an LNG terminal in Poland has changed the situation quite substantially, especially for Lithuania and the Baltic States.

We do believe we are strengthening our inter-linkages between Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. So we are able to get gas from anywhere including LNG from the United States, which I do expect to see in the future. So it is no longer possible for Russia to blackmail us on the gas.

On electricity, we still have one big project to come synchronization with the Western European grid, which is important. It is quite an intricate project. It will take time to develop, but that will be the last straw in our independence. So that will make the Baltic States purely independent and self-sufficient in this regard.

And I do believe that for the other countries it could be different.

Senator MORAN. Georgia and Poland.

Ambassador BAKRADZE. Thank you very much. And let me combine it with your first question with regards to Georgia as a provider of an alternative diversified route for energy supplies for Europe, which is not dependent on Russia.

We now have two pipelines. The third one is under construction, the Trans-Anatolian Pipeline. The importance of strengthening Georgia and stability in Georgia as one of the alternative routes and pathways to supplying the alternative energy sources for Europe is critical. And therefore one of the main attentions from the United States, we expect, is in the energy sector.

Senator MORAN. Thank you.

Ambassador WILCZEK. As far as energy cooperation is concerned, I believe and we believe in Poland that it should be based on mutual benefit. So it should be beneficial for those countries that cooperate, like the United States and the countries of Central Europe.

So this LNG terminal in Poland mentioned by my Lithuanian colleague is a very important part of this project of diversification.

There is also a project, which is in progress, of the Baltic Pipeline with Denmark and Norway. And, of course, there is the very important issue of Nord Stream 2 forced by Russia. This is a project which divides the European Union partners because, of course, it has been suspended for some time.

But this is actually interesting that, as far as energy is concerned, the European Union should be also the energy union. This is an idea very much advertised by Poland that the European Union, if it is not an energy union, there is no union.

So we really think about diversification and cooperation with the United States especially, as far as LNG is concerned, as very important for Central Europe.

Senator GRAHAM. Senator Coons.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In fact, I want to specifically thank you, Chairman Graham as well as Ranking Member Leahy for convening this hearing, and for assembling these important ambassadors and a foreign minister from vital European allies of ours. This has focused us in a bipartisan way on how we can confront Russian aggression together.

I am encouraged by your call that we create a counter-Russia account specifically to strengthen our allied and partner democracies.

This week is the 150th Anniversary of the creation of the Appropriations Committee in the United States Senate, something that showed, I think, the wisdom of the founders in recognizing that having a strong hand for the Senate in the shaping of our investments, including those overseas, was something that has enduring relevance.

I joined my colleague on this subcommittee, Senator Marco Rubio of Florida, last week in a bipartisan speech on the floor of Congress about the importance of countering Russian aggression. We reviewed many of the issues that were raised by the witnesses today based on trips that each of us have taken to your various countries. We heard from you directly about hybrid warfare; about the illegal and inappropriate invasion and annexation of Crimea and the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine; about the importance of our standing in solidarity with our allies in Poland and the Baltic States; and the real challenges that Georgia has faced, since it was the first of you to be illegally invaded, and to have some of its territory occupied in an ongoing, disruptive way.

I just want to mention two bills here in the Senate that have already garnered bipartisan support for those who have any concern about the absences of bipartisanship here.

The Counteracting Russian Hostilities Act has 10 Republican and 10 Democrat cosponsoring it. It would make Russia pay the price for its illegal annexation of Crimea, for the ongoing violence in eastern Ukraine, for their support of Assad's murderous regime in Syria, and their meddling in our own American elections last November.

The other bill, led by Senator Graham, the Russian Review Act, would make certain that congress has to weigh in before sanctions against Russia could be waived. I am proud to be a cosponsor, as are many on this subcommittee, of these bills.

We continue to believe that the transatlantic alliance is absolutely essential. It is a force for stability in the world, to maintain the world order that we worked together to build over the last seven decades.

So let me ask a few questions, if I might.

U.S. LEADERSHIP

There has been a rumored proposal by the administration to cut by as much as 37 percent our State Department and USAID, which are essential for the funding of many of the programs that we have been talking about.

What would the absence of American leadership in this area mean for your countries? Would you feel safer in the face of an aggressive Russia if we were to cut back on programs that we have just discussed like Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty; and other pro-

grams that support your resilience both in terms of your governance, democracy institutions, and in terms of our sustainment of some of the development initiatives?

Would any of you care to speak to that question?

Please, Mr. Ambassador.

Ambassador WILCZEK. Senator Coons, I think this is just a rhetorical question.

Senator COONS. Yes.

Ambassador WILCZEK. We will not feel safer when the budget for such projects will be essentially cut. So we hope that it is just kind of deliberation tweaking, not really a decision because this sounds very dangerous.

But we hope that it still can be changed, and people who think this way will change their minds because American leadership in this region is essential and you know this very well. That there is great support for American leadership in this part of Europe, perhaps more than in other parts of Europe.

So we really rely, as countries of the region, on firm American leadership and support.

BROADCASTING PROGRAMS

Senator COONS. On a visit I took last August, in addition to several visits by my colleagues, I heard about the importance of strengthening our investment in countering Russia Today, Sputnik, and other propaganda outlets.

You referenced, Mr. Ambassador, the broadcasting from Latvia both for Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, and Radio Liberty.

Tell me how Russian propaganda operations are affecting your country and how we might strengthen and expand our investment in counter Russian propaganda operations that would be more effective?

Ambassador TEIKMANIS. Well, to give a short answer, probably we are less concerned in Latvia about Russia Today, because the programs of Russia Today are being broadcast in English.

Russia has all the opportunities to broadcast in Russian. There are major television channels and that is what Russia is doing. And Latvia, as a democratic country, is not putting any barriers to free speech, to free broadcasting. While at the same time we are aware about the content of these programs, what is essential is to give an alternative to different sources, to reliable sources. To give an alternative of broadcasting in Russian, to be understandable, but to be objective, reliable, and different from those major television channels broadcasting from Russia.

OVERSEAS PRIVATE INVESTMENT CORPORATION

Senator COONS. One last question, Mr. Chairman, to the Ambassador from Georgia.

I understand that the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) has helped make possible significant programs in Georgia over the last 20 years in modernizing industries and in agriculture.

Can you comment at all on the value of OPIC in helping make possible mutually beneficial programs in Georgia?

Ambassador BAKRADZE. There are several programs that OPIC has implemented in Georgia which is really productive, not only for

developing Georgia, modernizing its economic potential, but is also beneficial for both sides.

And therefore in that regard, I can provide in a more detailed way by submitting in a written way more detailed information.

Senator COONS. Terrific. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your patience.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you.

Senator BOOZMAN.

Senator BOOZMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

GEORGIA

Ambassador Bakradze, in your testimony you talked about Russia creating borders on the edge of territory that is occupied in Georgia.

Can you talk a bit about the recent closing of two of these controlled crossing points and the impact that it has had for Georgia's territorial integrity?

Ambassador BAKRADZE. Thank you very much, Senator, for that question. Very recently, just 2 days ago, Russian controlled forces in the Abkhazia and occupied region have closed two checkpoints. That is affecting free movement of people. That is affecting free movement of school children over the occupation line.

And we are really appreciative of a very strong statement that the State Department has made with regards to these developments.

Also one more very recent development was the initiation 2 weeks ago by the de facto Tskhinvali region authorities to hold a referendum about renaming this region into the one associated with one of Russia's autonomous republics. And we also appreciate the very strong statement that was made by the U.S. Department of State in this regard.

These kinds of developments continue, but we believe in a peaceful resolution of this problem. We believe in the Geneva discussion where U.S. authorities are actively contributing.

Thank you.

Senator BOOZMAN. Thank you. So you were pleased with the American response, then, in that regard?

Ambassador BAKRADZE. There was a very strong statement just yesterday made by the State Department about the closure of these two checkpoints with explaining what kind of humanitarian difficulties it will create for those people residing adjacent to the occupation line.

U.S. PROGRAMS

Senator BOOZMAN. Let me ask all of you or just whoever wants to jump in.

Which U.S. administered programs in your country seem to have the most impact? And are there ways that we can improve them? So, what is working? What programs do you like the most and how can we make them better?

Yes, sir.

Ambassador BAKRADZE. Thank you very much. We are really appreciative.

We are celebrating 25 years of our diplomatic relations this year, and we believe that the U.S. assistance during these 25 years were essential for the survival, for the transformation that Georgia has been through, for creating democratic institutions, solidifying civil society, and making new opportunities for our people.

These are the assistance that comes through USAID that comes through FMA for supporting Georgia's resilience when it comes to the defense and security cooperation, and supporting Georgian democracy and the rule of law when it comes to the support of the United States.

We believe there is space for more cooperation on trade, economic, and investment direction as we believe that security is also coming through economic means.

Senator BOOZMAN. Yes, sir.

Ambassador KRIŠČIŪNAS. I would say that any support that you could give to Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty in developing their content and strengthening their capacity to reach longer distances would matter a lot. So that is the most important.

I, myself, I am still old enough to remember the Soviet times when my father was listening. I was a child at that time. My father was listening on the radio to Radio Free Europe and I know what kind of impact it was. It was eagerly sought every evening. There were always plenty of people in Lithuania sitting by the radio and listening to it. It was a word of freedom.

So the more words of freedom you could express through the region, the more secure the region will be because that will be destroying the monopoly on news.

Senator BOOZMAN. So you like the contact, but strong broadcast.

Ambassador KRIŠČIŪNAS. Yes.

Senator BOOZMAN. Very good. Yes, sir.

Ambassador MARMEI. Thank you, Senator.

I would emphasize that in the Estonian case, the most efficient funding has come through for military funds and also ERI, or the European Reassurance Initiative; so most of the American taxpayers' money has gone to these capabilities, but also to infrastructure build up.

We have received about \$75 million from the ERI funding in the recent 2 years. And we have spent that money on infrastructure, but also on the capability development on the antitank weapons.

Also IMF money, which is very important and hopefully it will be increased in the coming years, goes to the very important capability development.

Thank you.

Senator BOOZMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator GRAHAM. Very quickly.

Ambassador WILCZEK. Yes, if I can add just to what my Estonian colleague said.

The European Reassurance Initiative is most important for us and we would like to thank you for just this great increase in this program from \$1 billion to \$3 billion. It is very, very essential.

But also what my colleague mentioned as well, in all kinds of exchange of people, all kinds of programs, we do need Radio Free Europe and such projects, but not to such an extent as it was under

communism. Now people can move and can visit each other's countries.

So I think that support for programs like Fulbright and all kinds of exchange programs is also very, very important; just people going both ways and learning about each other. And I think that for strengthening American support, support of the American citizens and taxpayers, it is very important that American taxpayers also see our countries and see them thanks to exchange programs, which I think are now underestimated; their role is underestimated.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you.

Senator Durbin.

Senator DURBIN. Thank you very much.

Ambassador TEIKMANIS. Just to add my support to what has been said of ERI and for the military financing. That is really a kind of value added above our own national contribution, national investment, and procurement programs that really gives a very focused strengthening of all the capabilities. Thank you.

Senator DURBIN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for being here.

Each of you is welcome to come back to or to visit Chicago, which I am honored to represent, where you will find many people from your homeland, and you will find many great restaurants. Estonia? Not too sure. [Laughter.]

But for the rest, I guarantee it. It will be well worth the journey and we would be honored to have you visit.

So 3 weeks ago, we had our first break and I decided to visit Warsaw, Vilnius, and Kiev for the very reason that we are meeting today. Because I knew there was anxiety and concern about the future of NATO and the future relationship between the United States and your countries.

And it was a good visit. There were many things I came home with from having met with President Poroshenko, having met with President Grybauskait?, and with the leaders in Poland, as well as so many other countries.

But I remember one comment particularly from 4 days in travel. The man's name was Zbigniew Pisarski, he works for the Casimir Pulaski Foundation. We had dinner in Warsaw and he asked me a question which goes to the point of the opening made by the chairman.

He said, "We are wondering if the United States does not take the Russian invasion into your election seriously, will you take the Russian invasion into Poland seriously?"

I thought about that question. I have thought about it ever since. And I want to salute the chairman here, who has been one of the few who has been willing to step up and speak out about how this outrage of the cyber attack by the Russians into the American election should not go unnoticed and certainly should be responded to.

It is a starting point to our credibility when it comes to our relationship with Russia. And I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for what you said earlier.

I could go through a litany, I will not, of my concerns on the security side, and most of them have been touched on here whether it is Kaliningrad or whether it is the Zapad which the Russians are

planning to put 100,000 Russian soldiers into Belarus in September on the borders of Lithuania, and Poland, and the Ukraine.

And there is a serious concern about what they might do next after we have seen what they have done in the Ukraine and what they could do with these troops on the border there for this so-called military exercise.

We are concerned about the hybrid war. I had not heard that term before, but I heard it throughout my visit. The hybrid war, and not just the military side of it, but the cyber side of it and the propaganda side of it.

U.S. AND NATO FORCES

I guess my question, in addition to my suggestion. Number one, Mr. Chairman, that when we commit NATO forces and our allies—Germany in Lithuania, I believe it is UK in Latvia, am I correct on that, and Canada into Estonia—I would hope the United States would always have a complement of our uniforms and forces as part of it.

It is not a negative thing in terms of their capability, but it is a demonstration, a symbol, that the United States is committed to this NATO alliance in every one of these deployments.

The other thing I would hope is that in the Ukraine, your president, I said to him, “What do you need?” And he said, “In the Budapest Agreement, we gave up 1,000 nuclear missiles. Can you give us 1,000 antitank missiles?” And I understood what he was saying. They need that for the protection of the Ukraine and to stop any incursion of Russians into the rest of your country.

But the point I want to get to is this, Mr. Chairman, and that is we have to learn what they have already experienced. We have to learn what the Russians have done to you, which led to decisions in Lithuania to suspend RT for a number of months which led, at some point, to a cyber attack on Estonia, which crippled your economy. You have been through these experiences. Now we are being threatened with the same thing.

We can teach you many things about the military. You can teach us about these other aspects of the hybrid war and prepare us so that the next election is not another victim of Russian aggression.

I know you have talked about this, and I will not dwell on it any further because I know Senator Van Hollen would like to ask questions too.

But I thank you all for coming. We value your friendship. We value this alliance. It is strong, bipartisan strong in Congress.

Thank you.

Senator GRAHAM. Very quickly.

Ambassador MARMEI. If I can just respond to Senator Durbin. What he raised is a very important issue is the American troop presence in the Baltic States.

You correctly mentioned that there will be an enforced forward presence of NATO. As we speak, the British, actually are moving into Estonia with 1,200 men. There will be full operational capability of these forces by June this year.

But what I want to emphasize here, and you pointed out, is that the American presence in the Baltic States should remain. We have

company-sized units in each country right now, and we would like to see them being embedded to that battalion.

Ambassador KRISČIŪNAS. Chairman, if I may. Supporting 100 percent what was told by my colleague from Estonia.

But I just wanted to thank Senator Durbin for his visits to those important capitals he mentioned. Those are also very important. So it is a part of showing our partnership to the world that we are strong together. And so it is very important.

And I am very encouraged and thankful to all the Senators who are visiting our countries to send this very strong partnership message. And there are plenty of Lithuanian restaurants in Chicago.

Senator GRAHAM. On that note, Senator Blunt.

Senator BLUNT. Well, thank you, Chairman.

And I have been in five or six of your countries. I was in Estonia a year ago in September, when we had a Reserve A-10 Unit there from Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri, and they were back again for an even more extended period of time this year.

But following up on what Senator Durbin said, and it was really the question I wanted to pursue anyway.

We clearly understand Russian improper involvement in our elections. It is a wide belief that they are currently involved in both the upcoming German and the upcoming French elections. But you all have experience with this as well.

RUSSIAN HYBRID WARFARE

And I wondered if you want to share, maybe one at a time, some sense of what you saw through RT or through manipulation of your infrastructure in ways where you feel like the Russians were improperly involved. Or everybody, maybe in a couple of cases, understands improper involvement in your election situation, if you could share some of that with us that would be helpful.

And I am wondering if we could just start maybe, Ambassador Marmeï, with you?

Ambassador MARMEI. Thank you, Senator.

I think one of the very clear operations of influence that I mentioned earlier also was the cyber attack in 2007. We see those cyber hackings on a daily basis. It is continuous.

I think it is also important to point out that the Kremlin-backed Russian language television and media channels are trying to influence the Russian speaking population in Estonia and in other countries. It is not specifically an Estonian issue. It is everywhere else. We have to really deal with this.

We have, 2 years ago, opened an Estonian broadcasting company Russian language channel to counter that propaganda.

I think what we see is also a lot of intimidation when it comes to the security of our borders and airspace; the violation of air and maritime borders. We had to deal with this as well.

We have to deal with the support of, or the influence of, the NGO's in our countries as well and also academia.

Senator BLUNT. That would be Russian influence.

Ambassador MARMEI. Yes, sir.

Senator BLUNT. I am going to run out of time here.

I will say that the visit that I made there a year ago, I think 1 of the 2 days that I was there with our A-10 pilots, the Russians

were practicing invading Estonia 20 miles away from the Estonian border, and it was very publicly clear that that was the purpose of that exercise.

Mr. Kriščiūnas, anything in Lithuania you would want to talk about?

Ambassador KRIŠČIŪNAS. Well, I would say, Senator that of course it is difficult to influence the election in Lithuania probably for Russian propaganda, even though I would say they are clearly probably trying in there.

But because in Lithuania, there is almost like 80 percent support of EU membership and NATO, so it is very difficult. It is not popular to go against those topics which Russia would like to destroy.

So what we see is the efforts by some media outlets to put doubt on NATO relevance or to be cooked with fake news which would show to the Lithuanian public that, "The Americans are not with you. They are looking the other way," and things like that.

So the fake news of a similar nature would be the ones which are being cooked in Lithuania, trying to cast a doubt, of course, in general of the people believing in the government, believing in the NATO and trying to push, for example, NATO. Let us be neutral. "Why should Lithuania be a NATO member? Let us be neutral."

So it seems like it is a very vague message. It is not like against NATO but, "Why are we not neutral? We are not a militaristic Nation," and so on. So that is the kind of news which is being probably most exploited in Lithuania.

Senator BLUNT. Ambassador Teikmanis.

Ambassador TEIKMANIS. Well, I can join the assessment of my colleagues in three directions we are facing when we see hybrid warfare.

One is Russian television channels that are broadcasting in Russian. And the major narrative is probably linked eternally to the Baltic States, but also to the European Union.

And its narrative tells us that, "The European Union is economically collapsing, and that was a great strategic mistake by the Baltic States to have joined to the European Union. And the only way to get back to prosperity and welfare is to come back to Russia and through the Russian economy, get to high welfare."

Another way is financing of NGO's. While the people in the NGO's are not so numerous—and each of them are working at several NGO's—they are financed by different kinds of Russian Foundations, and have very nice names linked to the "protection of human rights," or "European research," or whatever. And they are pretending to be fighting for the rights of Russian speakers while allegedly developing another narrative that Russian speakers in, for instance, Latvia are abused and facing massive abuse of their human rights.

And probably the third I would mention is rather strong work in social media spreading out different fake news and trolling.

Or as we saw quite recently—well, that is another indication probably whether the news is important—for warfare just when preparation for Atlantic Resolve started and U.S. troops started to move to Poland from Germany. Well, the news headline appeared on different websites that over 3,000 NATO tanks were rolling to-

wards the Russian border. Well, that was spread out in news lines and social media.

Senator BLUNT. Well, thank you.

I think the point, Chairman, here is well taken that there is a lot we can learn by sharing what we learned from what happened here, but also looking at what our friends have consistently dealt with for two decades now. And thank you for letting me use a little extra time.

Senator GRAHAM. Absolutely. As a matter of fact, I think that is one of the central questions of this whole hearing.

If the ones who did not comment could put into writing examples of interference in your election system, that is very important.

Senator GRAHAM. Senator Van Hollen.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Minister, and Ambassadors for your testimony today.

Mr. Chairman, it is great to be on this subcommittee. And I want to join our colleagues on a bipartisan basis to thank you for your leadership in general and for putting together this hearing because Russian interference in our elections is not a democratic party issue. It is not a republican issue. It is an American issue. In fact, it is an issue obviously important to democratic countries around the world, as all of you are testifying to today.

You have had this experience over many, many years with both the military challenges and threats, but also the intimidation through various means of propaganda. The propaganda invasion is a little bit new to the United States in terms of our elections. We are seeing it, as Senator Blunt said, in the upcoming elections in France and Germany.

And Mr. Chairman, I would agree with your opening statement, which is that if we do not respond, then we will allow those actions to be encouraged. If they can do this kind of interference with impunity, they will do it again and again and again.

So I support the legislation that would, first of all, require congressional consent before we roll back any sanctions. And I also support the legislation that would go further. I think we need to now impose sanctions on a bipartisan basis to send the signal you are talking about because if we do not do it, we are simply going to be encouraging this kind of interference in elections going forward.

And I appreciate the testimony from all of you as to the lessons learned, and look forward to getting some of the written observations from others.

CYBER WARFARE

I would say that, obviously, we need to strengthen our cyber capabilities across the board. I mean, this is the new dimension of security, of warfare and I am pleased that my State of Maryland is the home of the U.S. Cyber Command.

And Ambassador Marme, I know Estonia takes the lead in NATO with respect to cyber security. We also have a good relationship between the Maryland National Guard and your efforts on behalf of NATO, and look forward to strengthening those ties.

With respect to cyber security, what I would ask is very quickly for each of you to try and grade what you think are our current

capabilities, and whether you think this is an area where we need to put more resources, and how vulnerable are we today? We know the Russians are very involved every day in trying to penetrate our systems.

And I would, starting with you Ambassador Marmeï, because of Estonia's lead within NATO, if you could give us some assessment of where you think we are.

Ambassador MARMEI. Thank you, Senator. We have good news and bad news, I think, or bad news and good news.

First of all, I would too, also thank you for the really good cooperation that Estonia and Maryland have enjoyed in the past 25 years especially the cooperation between Estonia, and the Armed Forces, and your National Guard. Your 175th Air Wing has been to Estonia. You have 21 planes there, 18 of those have been to Estonia. So this is excellent. And also the cooperation with your cyber defense unit there is developing very fast.

Now it is clear, as you pointed out, that cyber is the new domain of warfare. What is good is that NATO really recognized that last year during the Warsaw Summit, and clearly pointed out that cyber warfare is the fourth domain of warfare. But a lot remains to be done in this area.

We have to be, all our countries individually have to put more resources into that, but we should also collectively deal with these issues also on a bilateral basis between the relevant countries. But also with NATO which, as you know, Estonia hosts the NATO Cyber Center of Excellence. I would encourage you when you talk about the further funding of the countering of hybrid warfare to find more resources to put to that Center as well, and to have more people in NATO Headquarters also to deal with this issue.

It will not fade away. It will, this issue will be with us for the good part of this century, I think. So we have to really put more emphasis in this.

Thank you.

Senator GRAHAM. And everyone else can, in writing, respond as we are running out of time.

There is a vote being called any minute now and there are a couple of Members of the subcommittee on the way. So I want to make sure everybody can ask questions.

Very briefly, what have I learned? There has been a systematic effort to undermine democracies in your countries by Russia for years.

Does everybody agree with that statement?

Let the record reflect an affirmative answer.

Prior efforts to deter Russia have failed. They are getting more aggressive not less.

Affirmative answer.

Without American leadership, nothing will work.

Affirmative answer.

All right. Who do we have? We have two Members on the way. Senator Van Hollen, do you want to continue until they come?

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Well, Chairman, I think—and this is a discussion for Members of Congress—I do believe that as you have indicated that we need to come together across party lines to respond. And we need to learn from your own experiences the kind

of measures that we need to be on the, one, lookout for. But we also need to be very focused on what we are doing.

Let me ask you this. If the United States does not take any affirmative action beyond what President Obama already did with respect to the Russian interference in our elections, do you believe that would embolden Russia to take these actions on an even larger scale in your countries and other democracies around the world?

Senator GRAHAM. And for the record, you can answer that because we have Senator Daines, if that is okay. That is a very good question, but I want to make sure that everybody can ask questions.

Senator Daines.

Ambassador MARMEI. I think this is real important to show unity and resolve. To do it individually on a bilateral basis between our countries, but also through NATO and in our case in the European Union, which is a very important organization for us.

So a lot remains to be done, but we have to show resolve and unity otherwise what you describe will become true.

Senator GRAHAM. Senator Daines. I have been told the vote is on, so we have about 7 or 8 minutes, probably.

Senator DAINES. All right. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome. Thank you for being here, and in representing your respective countries, and your interest in the United States.

The United States values our strong relationships and our alliances, and strengthening these ties can help improve the security, and certainly the stability, across Eastern Europe.

Many of you also represent NATO allies. This alliance has proven to be an effective and steadfast bulwark against aggression and terrorism in Eastern Europe and around the world. It is critical that NATO remains strong and continues to receive robust support from the United States, particularly in light of ongoing Russian aggression that undermines regional stability and threatens our national security.

Russian interference is not limited to the security fear either. Disinformation campaigns seeking to discredit alliances such as NATO, cyber attacks, or substantially raising energy costs as a means to influence other countries have occurred far too frequently.

RUSSIAN THREATS

Ambassador Wilczek, what threats from the Kremlin do you view as the most imminent, whether it is to Poland, NATO, or the region as a whole?

Ambassador WILCZEK. Threats from Kremlin, which threats?

Senator DAINES. Yes. Which threats do you view from Kremlin as most imminent, most urgent, whether it is to Poland, to NATO, or the region as a whole?

Ambassador WILCZEK. I think it is to the whole Western world or the transatlantic alliance, I would say, both Europe and the United States.

Now, the cyber war is going on every day all the time and it is a threat for everyone because it does not depend on how far you are from the Kremlin. You can be 500 miles, you can be 5,000 miles, and you can be a dictatorship or a democracy. There are var-

ious ways of using this hybrid war and the cyber war. So I think that everyone is vulnerable.

And what is essential to our countries to be in our message to NATO and the United States and our countries to be unambiguous. What is the most dangerous thing, I think, especially as far as the war against the Ukraine is concerned is that many messages from the various countries are not unanimous. It is not univocal. It is not clear cut that this is the war.

I think this should be stated openly that there is Crimea, there is Donbas. There is a war against the Ukraine. And I think that there is also a war, a cyber war, against so many other countries.

Senator DAINES. So in light of that, what in your view would be the very best and most effective response to Putin's hybrid efforts to advance his goals whether it is energy, informational, or cyber?

Ambassador WILCZEK. Well, it is energy, and information, and cyber.

I think that first of all the cooperation on energy should be strengthened. And the position, for example, of the European Union, again, should be unambiguous because it is dividing the Union when various countries have various opinions about energy cooperation.

So I think the cooperation of this region with the United States should be strengthened as far as energy is concerned.

And I think that today, I have just returned from a conference on cyber security organized by the Visegrad countries—Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary—and I think that we are still not aware how important this new kind of war is conducted today.

So I think cyber should be the most important, the most essential way of cooperation.

ENERGY

Senator DAINES. You brought up the issue of energy as well as cyber. I want to switch gears here.

Ambassador Marmeï, as you know, or may not know, my home State of Montana is one of the leading energy producing states in the United States. In fact, we have more recoverable coal than any State in the United States.

Montanans understand the importance of and access to reliable and an affordable source of energy, and undoubtedly, so do Estonians.

The question is how dependent is your country on Russia for its energy needs and what concerns does that raise?

Ambassador MARMEI. Thank you, Senator, for this question.

I think Estonia enjoys a rather different situation in the region in the sense that we are not reliant on Russian energy. The only energy that we use or import from Russia is gas, but it only forms about 7 percent of the total energy consumption. Estonians are reliant on oil shale, which we generate to produce electricity. So in that sense, we are not really dependent on Russia.

But there is a bigger issue here, which is that as long the region, the Baltic region is still considered as an energy island inside the European Union, then it is not a matter of how dependent Estonia is. But the question really is how safe the whole region can be from the Russian energy influence and tools?

Senator DAINES. So would the region be more secure if that dependence was on the United States versus Russia?

Ambassador MARMEI. Well, the United States plays a very important role here, especially when it comes to LNG and the export to Europe, which is, I understand, the issue of licensing. And this is clearly what Lithuania is looking forward to getting more American LNG to Europe, to Lithuania.

Also it is important to mention that Estonia actually exports 30 percent of our gas from Lithuania today. So it is only 8 percent from Russia. And this shows how important the connections between these countries are when it comes to pipelines and then power grids.

Senator DAINES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you all.

We have just a few minutes left on the vote. Senator Rubio is in another committee hearing and he cannot make it by 4:15, which is the time we have to all leave. So I will make sure he can ask you questions in writing. I know he has been very, very good on this issue.

To all of you, thank you for coming. This has been eye opening, at least to me and I am sure to every member of the subcommittee. My goal is to inform the American people of the risks that you have being in the backyard of Russia as a democracy. That they are coming after us, France, and Germany until somebody stops them. And we are going to try to give you more tools in your toolbox to fight back because the safer you are, the safer we will be.

To all of you, thank you very much. You have been very brave to come here today and to our friends in the Ukraine, keep your chin up. I think the Ambassador from Poland got it right. We need to get the Ukraine right before anything else will happen.

Every effort to stop Russia in the past, whether it be Georgia, the Ukraine, you name it, is clearly not working. My goal is to come up with something that will work. I want a better relationship with Russia, but that never will be achieved until Russia changes its practice of trying to grind democracy into the ground.

I can understand why Putin is afraid of democracy. I cannot understand why America and others will not defend it.

I just met with President Trump. I think you are going to have a good ally in President Trump in terms of having a rotational troop presence in a permanent fashion. That the Ukraine will be helped more and not less, and that we will push back against all Russian aggression.

I look forward to working with him and my Democratic and Republican colleagues to give you some hope in the region that America is back. This subcommittee hearing is just the beginning of what I think will be a long journey.

Our next hearing will be March 29, and we will look at civil society's perspective on Russia and Russia's regional influence.

To all of you, thank you very much. Your country is in our thoughts and prayers, and I want you to see in America a more reliable ally in the future. Thank you.

The record will be open until Friday.

ADDITIONAL COMMITTEE QUESTIONS

[The following questions were not asked at the hearing, but were submitted to the witnesses for response subsequent to the hearing:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO HON. PAVLO KLIMKIN

Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM

Question. Please describe in detail Russian interference in elections in your respective countries, including specific actions taken to undermine the credibility of the polls or to influence the outcome.

Answer. Ukrainian security services have clear evidence of Russia's constant attempts to interfere in elections in Ukraine by using a variety of cyber tools, as well as other methods. This submission will focus on events that took place in 2014. Subsequent and more recent attacks are the subject of ongoing investigations. Once these investigations are concluded, we will be happy to provide that additional information as it becomes available and when its release into public domain would not compromise the national security interests of Ukraine.

On May 22, 2014, ahead of the Presidential elections in Ukraine scheduled for May 25, 2014, the "Elections" Unified Information Analysis System (designed to announce preliminary results on the process of voting and counting of votes) was blocked. The computer system of the Central Election Commission (CEC) was rendered inoperable and most of the data files were deleted or made inaccessible. Malware was detected in the CEC's LAN, part which could not be neutralized by the licensed Russian-made "Kaspersky" antivirus software installed in the system. Ukrainian specialists managed to promptly address the threat and to minimize negative consequences of the external interference.

On May 23, 2014, hacker group "CyberBerkut" (which, according to available data, is controlled by the Russian secret service FSB (Federal Security Service) and is responsible for cyber attacks on information infrastructure of Ukrainian state institutions) released files and official correspondence from the Ukrainian CEC computers, including network and cyber security technical documentation, as well as passwords to all network devices, on its site cyber-berkut.org.

Ukrainian security experts revealed that over 20 CEC's LAN computers, including the server, were infected with the malware, later detected as "Sofacy" virus (created by ART28 hacker group). This group reportedly acts in the interests of the Russian Federation's secret services and was involved in targeted cyber attacks on electronic information resources in Ukraine, European countries and the USA. The virus is intended to steal restricted information and make destructive impact on electronic information resources, including software. It is characterized by high immunity toward detection and neutralization by antivirus software.

As the hacking activities against the "Elections" system were carried out on the eve of the extraordinary Presidential elections in Ukraine, they are evidence of an attempt by the Russian secret services to discredit the Ukrainian authorities as unable to organize elections at the regional and national levels and, in its turn, to disrupt the election as the whole.

As another evidence of Russia's attempt to influence the electoral process, there was publication (starting from 8 pm on May 25, 2014) by the Russian media (TV and online outlets) of a fake report on an alleged victory of Dmytro Yarosh, leader of the "Right Sector" (party labeled by Russia as an instigator of the Revolution of Dignity and portrayed as an "anti-Russian ultranationalist and fascist group").

The CEC server was externally infected by malicious software designed to display fake statistical voting results at a set time (Dmytro Yarosh—37.13 percent, Poroshenko—29.63 percent, Tymoshenko—11.42 percent etc.).

The mentioned malware was neutralized in a timely fashion by the Ukrainian specialists. Nevertheless, as the Russian special services were not aware that it was detected, the Russian media started to share (at a specific time) the fake news of Dmytro Yarosh's victory at the Presidential elections in Ukraine.

Moreover, aside from interfering in Ukraine's elections, Russia has used its special forces to conduct, at the barrel of a gun, its own elections in the territory of Ukraine. As the U.S. is well aware, in 2014, in the course of a Special Forces operation on the Ukrainian Crimean peninsula, Russia staged an illegal referendum. The results of this referendum have been used by the Kremlin to illegally occupy Crimea. Furthermore, the results of that referendum and the attempted illegal an-

nexation have never been recognized by Ukraine, the United States or the rest of the international community. There have also been attempts to hold similar sham referendums in the specific areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, currently controlled by Russia and Russia-backed terrorists. Such attempts, as well as Russia's ongoing interference in Ukraine's electoral system, are part of Russia's hybrid warfare against Ukraine.

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY SENATOR CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

Question. Has the Minsk II process failed? Is there an alternative to Minsk II?

Answer. Ukraine remains committed to the unconditional implementation of the Minsk Agreements in their entirety and takes consistent action to this end.

Nevertheless, the Minsk peace process falters, but not because of Minsk documents' defect in content and form, while some elements really seem to be rather uneasy compromises. It falters because Moscow does not want to do anything at all, for Kremlin needs neither Donbas, nor its population.

Russia still considers Ukraine as a part of its core geopolitical interests, which, if realized, would mean the end to Ukraine's European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

As a result, almost 2 years and a half have passed since signing of the first Minsk document, but peace still has not come to Donbas. Despite Ukraine's and its allies' joint efforts to resolve the conflict peacefully, Russia continuously denies all its obligations claiming its non-involvement in what Russia calls "Ukrainian internal conflict". Under such circumstances, it seems almost impossible to ensure proper implementation of the Minsk documents as Ukraine and its partners, on one hand, and Russia—on another, have such polar perceptions of the nature of the conflict.

Recently, Russia has made a number of very controversial steps, which have nothing to do with its commitments under the Minsk agreements, but clearly testify Kremlin's willingness to raise stakes and test the reaction of the West. In particular, Kremlin made a formal decision to recognize "documents" issued by illegal entities of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, which means Moscow's recognition of its de facto occupation of the certain areas of Donbas.

Moscow also backed 'grabbing' of local state and private economic entities operating in the Ukrainian legal environment by the members of illegal armed formations (IAFs) and mastered their "formal decision" to recognize Russian rouble as "the only currency".

Moreover, Russia is destroying the industrial potential of Donbas by looting local plants and factories, dismantling the most profitable and valuable industrial assets and moving them to the Russian territory. It was Russia which issued formal permissions to 243 Russian enterprises to "conduct foreign trade operations" with "business entities" from the certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine through the Government-uncontrolled section of Ukraine-Russia border.

By taking the above measures, Russia derails the Minsk peace process, simultaneously shifting the responsibility for the possible collapse of the Minsk Agreements on Ukraine. Kremlin's clear goal is to get rid of the international sanctions or at least to ease the sanctions' pressure.

In order to unblock the Minsk as the single peace option we should jointly create such tough conditions under which Russia will think at least twice before taking any unfriendly actions towards Ukraine in breach of Kremlin's commitments under the Minsk Agreements. In this regard, we ask the United States to consider the following options:

- To strengthen sanctions;
- To strengthen the U.S. involvement in the multinational support of Ukraine in its negotiations with Russia, aimed at implementation of the Minsk agreements, de-occupation of Donbas and Crimea;
- To provide Ukraine with defensive military aid and to enhance the exchange of intelligence information;
- To assist Ukraine in training its military personnel;
- To support OSCE/SMM activities in Ukraine and enhancement of its technical capacities;
- To provide expertise and financial support of the bold reform agenda;
- To invest in Ukraine's economy; and
- To provide continuous political and diplomatic support regarding Ukraine's future membership in NATO.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO HON. PIOTR WILCZEK

Ambassador, Embassy of the Republic of Poland

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY SENATOR CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

Question. Poland has played a leading role in sanctions against Russia, following Russia's intervention in Ukraine. How would you amend or bolster sanctions on Russia, moving forward?

Answer. Poland remains a strong proponent of the sanctions policy toward Russia. There are no grounds for softening or lifting the sanctions. The reasons behind their deployment are still valid: Russia occupies Crimea and is actively fueling the conflict in Eastern Ukraine.

Moscow shows no sign of good will. What's worse, its rolling out a set of measures that could lead to a creeping annexation of Eastern Ukraine, i.e.:

- The recognition of ID cards issued by separatists in Donetsk and Lugansk;
- The introduction of the Russian ruble as the official currency in areas controlled by separatists; and
- Calling the contact line between the two sides a “state border”.

The sanctions, and more importantly, the countersanctions introduced by Russia had a severe impact on the Polish economy. According to the econometric analysis, our GDP shrank by 0.3 percent. Yet, we are ready to pay this price in order to protect the basic values underpinning international law, such as the peaceful coexistence of the nations and the inviolability of sovereign states.

We hope that the United States will continue to support Poland and the EU in the goal of improving the situation in the region. To this end, the international community must speak with a strong and coherent voice.

We saw an added value in the process of coordinating the sanctions regime between the UE, the United States, Canada, Japan and other important players. We believe that this process, which was suspended last year, should be restored.

Should the situation in Ukraine deteriorate due to Moscow's actions, we should be ready to implement even stronger restrictive measures. Different ideas and proposal with this regard have already been discussed among the EU Member States and its partners upon placing current sanctions (e.g. enlarging the list of sanctioned persons and entities, imposing stricter conditions with regard to present economic sanctions or widening their scope to new sectors).

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM

Question. Please describe in detail Russian interference in elections in your respective countries, including specific actions taken to undermine the credibility of the polls or to influence the outcome.

Answer. We haven't noticed direct Russian interferences in the electoral process in Poland. However, 2015 saw the creation of a pro-Russian party in our country (“Zmiana”, i.e. “The Change”). Openly pro-Russian, its members support Moscow's aggressive policy towards Poland and other members of the international community.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO HON. DAVID BAKRADZE

Ambassador, Embassy of Georgia

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM

Question. Please describe in detail Russian interference in elections in your respective countries, including specific actions taken to undermine the credibility of the polls or to influence the outcome.

Answer. Russia has always demonstrated interest toward Georgia's election processes and has, through various means, attempted to affect them. However, Russia could not have produced such an effect on the domestic election outcome via cyber-attacks owing to the fact that Georgia simply does not employ the electronic system and ballots for vote counting.

In view of this, Russia utilized propaganda as a tool to influence the elections by creating an overall atmosphere, where anti-Western sentiments are reinforced and pro-Russian positions/attitudes are shaped and supported.

In fact, the Russian propaganda enlists Russian as well as some Georgian language media outlets, Russian non-governmental organizations, and their Georgian

partners along with the domestic pro-Russian political parties and movements to actively promote the Russian narrative and anti-Western attitudes in the Georgian population.

In Georgia, Russian propaganda makes use of television as one of its key instruments. According to the latest survey, 90 percent of Georgia's population stated that television was their main source of information. It is noteworthy, however, that the number of pro-Russian Internet publications is increasing in line with the growing figure of Internet users in the country.

The instruments of aggressive Russian propaganda represented in Georgia include the Kremlin-run Russian television channels that operate freely thanks to the pluralistic media environment in the country. The Russian information agency "Sputnik" must be set apart in that context, as it runs not only an online portal, but also a 24-hour radio broadcast.

Russian propaganda is actively engaged in social media and online publications. The printed media that has quite a substantial circulation in Georgia, is rife with Russian propaganda, anti-Western, and, specifically, anti-American narrative and mantras.

In recent years, Russia has actively utilized non-governmental organizations as a means of exerting influence via the so-called "soft power" tools. Recent Russian strategic documents set out a specific budget for funds that have been created for the purpose of mobilizing public opinion in favor of, and reinforcing support for Russia's political agenda—altogether carrying an ulterior motive of discrediting the West.

Generally, the Georgian population is not easily receptive of public proclamation of pro-Russian ideas. Therefore, the pro-Russian political parties rarely declare their pro-Russian sentiments publicly; however, there have been some exceptions. For instance, during the run up to the 2016 parliamentary elections, a pro-Russian party "Tsentristebi" (The Centrists) ran a television campaign ad (including via the state sponsored "Public Broadcaster") in which the party issued a promise to its electorate that, in case of victory, they would legitimize the Russian military bases existent in Georgia's occupied territories, and ensure the payment of Russian pensions in the country. Following this development, the leadership of the "Public Broadcaster" reached a decision to suspend the airing of this campaign ad on the grounds that it contained messaging that was directed against the state sovereignty, and was violating the supreme law of the land—the constitution of the Georgian state. In light of such resistance, the political parties loyal to Russia directed their efforts toward propagating anti-Western narratives instead of concentrating on the dissemination of pro-Russian ideas.

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY SENATOR CHRISTOPHER A. COONS

Question. Since 1995, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) has committed over \$500 million across 48 projects in Georgia to stimulate private sector investment, rebuild war-torn buildings, modernize industries, and position Georgia for a more stable and prosperous future. How have OPIC investments in the agriculture sector, among others, helped to build a more resilient Georgia that is less vulnerable to Russia?

Answer. There is much to be said for OPIC's share in helping to build a more resilient Georgia that is less vulnerable to Russia. OPIC, together with the USAID and other donor agencies, provide western capital investments to Georgia, which foster economic and political stability in the country. Such agencies have introduced the western model of doing business and corporate governance into the country and this has helped improve the exportability of Georgian goods and increased the diversity of the country's export markets. The OPIC's mandate is to promote private investments and while doing so OPIC is greatly contributing to the expansion of US-Georgian business ties. The OPIC investment policy is based on measuring the developmental score of projects and this is one of the key criteria that the Corporation considers when approving loans. Thus, all projects financed by OPIC are geared towards aiding Georgia's further development as well as ensuring return on U.S. investments by requiring at least 25 percent involvement from American companies.

OPIC has been investing in Georgia since 1993. The Corporation has played an important role in the development of different sectors of the Georgia's economy, including: the financial sector, tourism, healthcare, agriculture, manufacturing, education, mining, renewable energy, real estate and hotel industries. OPIC also contributes to the development of small and medium size businesses and is very effective in providing affordable loans directly to the qualified businesses.

Issues like local jobs, sustainable employment, worker rights, host country benefits, transfer of knowledge, transfer of know-how and environmentally friendly solu-

tions are all very important elements of OPIC projects in Georgia. Thereby, practically every OPIC project in the country can be considered as a part of the Impact Investment Strategy.

The 2008 war with Russia displaced thousands of people from their homes and delayed the economic growth of the country. Today, 20 percent of Georgia's territory is under Russian occupation. Traditionally, the Kartly region, the one most affected by the Russian invasion was known for fruit and vegetable production. The population of this region supported their families through agriculture. The OPIC financed projects in the agriculture sector create employment opportunities for low income families that are most susceptible to Russian propaganda. More than half of the country's population is employed/self-employed in the agricultural sector (although, it constitutes only 9 percent of Georgia's GDP), therefore, agricultural projects are essential, as they help generate income for IDPs as well as much of Georgia's general population.

The OPIC projects in the agriculture sector also contribute to food security in the country. Thanks to the year-round production of vegetables and new technologies in the agricultural sector that OPIC provides, Georgian consumers became less dependent on imported food products, especially from Russia.

Some of the hallmark investments carried out by OPIC in Georgia's agriculture sector include as follows:

1. *Teliani Valley Winery*: OPIC helped the company increase its production capacity and produce greater quantities of quality Georgian wines. This was one of the earliest private investments into the Georgian wine industry, which has traditionally been Georgia's number one export commodity. Teliani Valley annually exports around 5–7 million bottles of wines to European, American and Chinese markets. The ability to comply with the highest quality standards, which in themselves require heavy capital expenditure into the production facilities and equipment, made it possible for the company to diversify its export markets, thereby making it virtually independent of the Russian market.
2. *Sante Walsh Products*: This is a dairy product plant that produces around 100 sorts of various products with 50 million liters of milk and milk powder utilization capacity. The company collects around 10 million liters of natural milk from 2,000 local farmers. This was the first local, Georgian, producer of dairy products that introduced quality standards. Prior to this, the market was dominated by Russian dairy products.
3. *Cold Storage & Refrigerator in Poti*: This OPIC project allows for the storage of fruits and vegetables produced in western Georgia according to EU standards. This storage acts as a collection center for local farmers, who are keen to export to European markets since supply is relatively low, and, therefore, there is a waiting period that ensures that the required capacity of goods is reached prior to export. The modern shock freezing technology provides farmers and traders with the ability to store their produce in the cold storage and export it to the EU market within a week, thereby, substituting the Russian export market.
4. *Wendy's Georgia*: The roll-out of Wendy's restaurants in the country boosted the local production of raw meat and meat products. Moreover, some of the vegetables used by the restaurants will soon be of Georgian production.

It is noteworthy that in other sectors OPIC has supported two educational projects in Georgia, which ensure that the younger population has broader access to western standard curricula and quality of education. Additionally, OPIC is financing the first hospital project in Tbilisi that will be in compliance with JCI standards and provide citizens with high quality healthcare.

Successes in the OPIC funded projects creates certain confidence for U.S. and other companies to closer evaluate the investment climate of Georgia and ultimately make sound and profitable investments. Increased engagement from U.S. companies not only contributes to the economic development of the country but serves as a strong reinforcement to the security of Georgia and the region as a whole.

OPIC's involvement in, and effect on Georgia, including the country's agricultural sector, is hard to overestimate. Along with the funds allocated by other U.S. donors, the OPIC's engagement in Georgia exemplifies the effective spending of U.S. taxpayers dollars, especially considering the positive outcomes of the allotted investment in Georgia. The country stands ready to further continue its cooperation with OPIC to help ensure positioning Georgia for a more stable and prosperous future.

QUESTION SUBMITTED TO HON. ANDRIS TEIKMANIS

Ambassador, Embassy of the Republic of Latvia

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM

Question. Please describe in detail Russian interference in elections in your respective countries, including specific actions taken to undermine the credibility of the polls or to influence the outcome.

Answer. Considering the situation in Latvia, namely, its proximity to the Russian Federation, it has and is continuing to use various measures in order to distort elections in Latvia. However, methods and influence channels used by Russia are slightly different from those in the Western Europe or U.S. since Latvia is home for a significant Russian-speaking minority which, in Russia's opinion, is an asset to be used for meddling in Latvia's internal affairs.

First, Russian diplomatic missions are working closely with compatriots from various organizations. Very often leaders and members of compatriot associations happen to be involved in political parties. Therefore, Russian diplomatic missions keep in touch with them, offer help and assistance in compatriot issues while using these resources to groom loyal present or future politicians. The relationship is mutually beneficial because that way Russian compatriot politicians can add unintentional extra resources to their campaigns. The more resources they add to their associations the more favorable is their position within the Russian compatriot environment. As a result, Russian compatriots often are leaning to vote Kremlin-backed personalities and are helping to create negative mass PR on other political parties.

Second, Russia is growing its influence within information environment by spreading propaganda and misinformation. There have been cases in Latvia where misleading information has been disseminated before election in order to create a negative image about certain political parties or candidates whom are not in Russia's interest. As mentioned before, for such purposes compatriots have also been used. Lately Russian propaganda is more concentrated on creation of a myth that Latvia is a "failed state". It may result in voter's inactivity which is beneficial for Russia. Other aspect of this is the presence of Russian media in Latvia. Latvian Russian-speakers get a vast amount of their information from Russian television which overwhelmingly gives a platform to pro-Kremlin politicians and activists from Latvia. This situation distorts perception of reality since on the Russian state controlled TV they disseminate far more radical views than at home. Another thing, it is almost impossible to qualify it as spending on electoral campaign, as there is no information available for Latvian state institutions on conditions upon which the broadcasting time is granted.

Last, there have been cases where various political parties have been offered an assistance by or tried to establish relationship with professional Russian political campaigners and communication experts. There are indications, that certain pro-Kremlin political parties have received free-of-charge services of such specialists from Russia thus potentially giving them advantage in comparison with other political competitors.

Overall, Russia's presence in Latvia's electoral process is evident. Since Russia has had limited success distorting elections in Latvia through channels mentioned above, it may build up a new strategy. Most likely, in upcoming Latvian municipal and parliamentary elections it will try to strengthen its messages about Latvia as a "failed state" in order to decrease the overall participation rate which in turn would be beneficial for pro-Kremlin political parties with strong pool of loyal voters. Also possible establishment and running of multiple pro-Russian parties affiliated so called "Latvian" parties may be considered as a tool for fragmenting "Latvian vote" (decreasing proportion of voters per other larger Western-orientated parties) in their favor and in this way increasing possibility for increase of Russian influence in Latvian politics.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO HON. ROLANDAS KRIŠČIŪNAS

Ambassador, Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM

Question. Please describe in detail Russian interference in elections in your respective countries, including specific actions taken to undermine the credibility of the polls or to influence the outcome.

Answer. One of the main parts of Russia's compatriot policy is to support political parties with the Russian compatriot presence. Russia controls and directs activities of compatriot organizations through the Coordination Council of Russian Compatriots which works under auspices of the Russian Embassy in Lithuania. In Lithuania Russian compatriots take part in the elections in the list of Electoral Actions of Poles in Lithuania-Unions of Christian Families and party "Russian Alliance". From 2008 these political parties participate in elections together and have support from the Russian Embassy in Lithuania. Leaders of aforementioned political parties seek to stop the integration of ethnic minorities into Lithuanian society and this activity is beneficial for Russia. In 2016 6 MPs were elected from this coalition.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO HON. EERIK MARMEI

Ambassador, Embassy of Estonia

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM

Question. Please describe in detail Russian interference in elections in your respective countries, including specific actions taken to undermine the credibility of the polls or to influence the outcome.

Answer. There have been attempts to interfere in Estonia's electoral process. Our Internal Security Service has successfully prevented attempts to finance political parties from Russia and explained to Estonian political parties the security risks connected with the acceptance of illegal foreign funding.

However, during the 2009 European Parliament elections in Estonia, Russia's "non-interference" "do not intervene" in other states' internal affairs via their compatriots policy was on full display. The activity of the Head of Department of Foreign Relations for the Moscow City Government Georgi Muradov is also specifically worth mentioning.

On February 28, 2009, when Russia's Compatriots organizations had a meeting in Tallinn, Muradov's two-day visit to Estonia began. At the beginning of the visit Muradov claimed in his interview to the Estonian media that he came to to rest and visit his friend. In reality the visit began in the Embassy of Russian Federation in Tallinn holding conversations with selected compatriots who had been called out to attend. The purpose was to agree on how to form a joint list of Russian candidates for the elections, with Aleksey Semyonov, an active member of the Coordination Council and the Head of the non-profit association Legal Information Centre for Human Rights, being the number one candidate. Highlighting him was understandable, as he is a person presenting a view on human rights favourable for Russia and his activity is being financed from Moscow. According to the annual report of the Legal Information Centre for Human Rights, financial support from the Embassy of Russian Federation formed nearly half of the total support to their projects in 2008.

At the meeting the candidates of the planned joint list were offered a motivation package of over 10 million EEK, if they would fulfil established conditions. How such a large sum would have arrived in Estonia in practice remains unknown, as they did not manage to form the joint candidates list and thus the purpose of motivation vanished.

Source: 2009 Estonian Internal Security Service Annual Review page 12: (https://kapo.ee/sites/default/files/public/content_page/Annual%20Review%202009.pdf).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[The following materials were submitted by Hon. Andris Teikmanis, Ambassador, Embassy of the Republic of Latvia for the record:]

ANNUAL REPORT ABOUT THE ACTIVITIES OF THE
SECURITY POLICE IN 2015



SECURITY POLICE

ANNUAL REPORT 2015

Dear Reader,

We have prepared this public report on the work of Latvian Security Police (DP) in 2015. The aim of the report is to inform you about what our service has achieved in the last year, as well as to provide DP's assessment of what are in our view the most significant processes affecting our national security interests.

The bygone year was one of the most complex in the history of our service. In the first half of 2015, Latvia held the Presidency of the Council of the EU and this was an intensive and busy time for DP. In conjunction with other institutions, DP carried out counter intelligence activities and measures to strengthen protection of state secrets, as well as coordinating and implementing top level security measures during the Presidency on a national scale.



For the duration of the Presidency, DP also had responsibility for coordinating counter-terrorism cooperation between European security services, as well as heading the Council of the EU working group on counter terrorism issues. During Latvia's Presidency heightened attention was paid to counter terrorism issues, because only a few days after the start of the Presidency Islamist terrorists carried out attacks in Paris. At the end of the year terrorist carried out more attacks in the French capital, which were the biggest terrorist acts in Europe in recent years. Several other terrorist attacks also took place in Europe last year, while many more were prevented during their planning stage due to the work of security services. The large number of terrorism incidents emphasizes the growing threat of terrorism to Europe's security.

Compared with other European countries, the terrorism threat level in Latvia is still low, however there is no doubt that religious radicalisation processes have also affected some individuals in Latvia. Although compared with other EU member states few persons from Latvia have joined *Daesh* in Syria, the number has increased precisely in the bygone year. Since returnees from conflict regions are currently one of the main sources of terrorism threats in Europe, such persons pose significant risks to our national security.

Along with the growing threat of terrorism, the previous year did not see a reduction in the risks associated with the willingness of the Russian Federation (hereinafter Russia) to use military instruments to achieve its geopolitical goals. Following its aggression against Ukraine's territorial integrity, which continues to cause tension in relations between Western countries and Russia and to negatively influence the security situation in Europe, last year Russia also commenced military operations in Syria. Due to increasing international ambitions, Russia's intelligence and security services continued their espionage activities against Latvia.

At the same time, Russia has not ceased using so-called *soft power* instruments, waging aggressive information manipulation activities and systematically exploiting so-called *compatriot organisations* which it funds to achieve its geopolitical goals. Taking advantage of free speech and other attributes of democracy, people's political activists financed by Russia continue their efforts to systematically undermine the ties between Latvia's inhabitant and their country and to support Russia's geopolitical goals both in Latvia and on the international scale. Given the experience of the conflict in Ukraine, such activities demand closer scrutiny and cannot be ignored as just marginal phenomena.

Another serious challenge to Europe's security was caused by the refugee crisis, which was used as a cover by *Daesh* to conduct its criminal acts in Europe and by Russia for its propaganda campaign. Radical right wing activists in Latvia tried to exploit the negative public attitude toward settling refugees in Latvia. Although support for right wing radical ideologies is low in Latvia, giving refuge to asylum seekers could radicalise persons with xenophobic or racist orientations.

The unstable security situation in Europe, which is largely driven by Russia's aggressive foreign policy and the increasing terrorist threat, will continue to pose challenges for our national security interests this year. Our country's security does not only depend on Latvia's membership in NATO and the EU and our allies – it mostly depends on ourselves. The most effective guarantee of security is the ability of state institutions to professionally perform their national security functions and the readiness of every person in Latvia to contribute to strengthening our common security. Therefore, in conclusion, on behalf of the service I would like to thank everyone in Latvia who has given significant assistance to our work.

Best regards,
Normunds Mežviets,
Director General of DP

1. Counter intelligence

Counter intelligence is one of DP's priority areas, involving systematic measures to identify activities by foreign intelligence and security services against Latvia and illegally obtaining or revealing confidential information. DP cooperates in counter intelligence with Latvia's other intelligence and security services – the Military Intelligence and Security Service (MIDD) and the Constitution Protection Bureau (SAB) - as well as foreign partner services. DP informs top state officials about trends uncovered through counter intelligence activities, to ensure that decision-makers are informed about potential risks and are able to quickly and effectively avert them.

During the reporting period, DP organised 64 lectures on counter intelligence and national security risks to raise awareness about the threats posed by foreign intelligence and security services amongst state and municipal officials engaged in international cooperation or with access to information of interest to foreign intelligence and security services.

1.1. Espionage by foreign intelligence and security services

During the reporting period the main counter intelligence risks faced by Latvia continued to come from Russia's intelligence and security services – the Federal Security Service (FSB), the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) and the Main Intelligence Directorate (GU).¹ In the last year, representatives of intelligence and security services from other states outside the EU and NATO also operated in our country, however the intensity of their activities and risks for Latvia's security were comparatively low compared with Russia's intelligence and security services.



FSB logotype



GU logotype



SVR logotype

¹ As of 2015 the official name of this body is the Russian Federation Armed Forces General Staff Main Department (Главное управление Генерального штаба Вооруженных Сил Российской Федерации), however Russia's official media continues to use its previous name "Main Intelligence Directorate" and the abbreviation "GRU". The change of name can be viewed within the context of the restoration of formal nomenclature from Imperial Russia i.e. "Main Directorate" was the historic name of the military intelligence unit in the Imperial Russian armed forces.

DP considers that in the bygone year the intensity of Russian intelligence activities targeted against Latvia remained at their previous level. The most significant intelligence activities directed against Latvia were conducted by the FSB, which may be connected with the FSB's increased role as an intelligence and security service. Alongside intelligence gathering activities, in the reporting year Russia's intelligence and security services continued to build positions of influence in Latvia and to organise information operations against our country. These activities are aimed at changing public opinion and influencing Latvia's domestic political processes as well as discrediting our country and its officials and institutions.

Information available to DP indicates that in the first half of 2015 Russia's intelligence and security services were most interested in Latvia's Presidency of the Council of the EU, however throughout the reporting period Russia's intelligence and security services continued to take an interest in social-political and economic processes as well as the work of Latvia's intelligence and security services and law enforcement institutions. Russian intelligence and security services also continued working on cross-border cooperation projects which could be used to mask intelligence activities against Latvia.

At present, residents of Latvia visiting Russia are some of the main sources of information used by Russian intelligence and security services. According to information available to DP, during the reporting period FSB officers (also using other Russian state bodies as cover or for support) regularly questioned residents of Latvia (on the border and in the border area and less frequently within Russia) about the socio-political situation in our country, the economic environment and the personnel and tactics used by state intelligence and security and law enforcement institutions.

In most cases, the questioning of Latvian residents entering Russia is limited to general information gathering activities, but such interviews can also be used to select potential candidates for recruitment. DP considers that the greatest risk of recruitment is for representatives of political parties and to middle level state and municipal officials who have access to information of interest to Russian intelligence and security services or important decision-making roles. Russian intelligence and security services also traditionally have a heightened interest in officials from state intelligence and security and law enforcement institutions and persons associated with such institutions who are informed about the personnel, activities (including against Russian intelligence and security service activities), material/technical capabilities and other aspects of these state intelligence and security and law enforcement institutions.

DP considers that counter intelligence risks are associated not just with state or municipal officials. Latvian business people

with interests in Russia are also at risk of recruitment. Taking into account the role of the intelligence and security services in Russia, Russian intelligence and security services can influence the ability of foreign companies to earn profits in Russia, thereby subjecting Latvian entrepreneurs to risks of manipulation.

Persons involved in smuggling excise goods from Russia to Latvia are also exposed to increased counter intelligence risks. From the Russian side such activities are virtually impossible without the consent and control of the FSB, making it easy to influence smugglers and organised crime members.

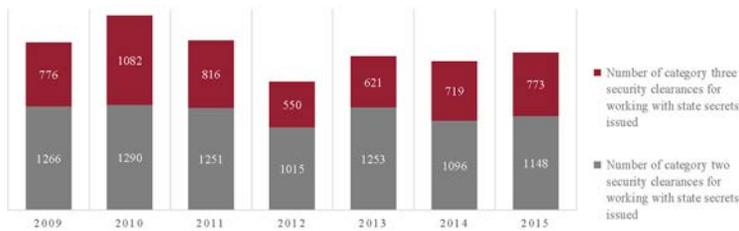
Interest by Russian intelligence and security services in cooperating with supporters of compatriot policy conducted by Russia in Latvia as well as with former members of the Soviet KGB was also observed during the reporting period. Russian intelligence and security services want to use these people to obtain information, strengthen Russia's influence and to conduct propaganda operations against Latvia, the EU and NATO. Young people going to study at universities in Russia are also recruitment risks. Although these persons do not have access to confidential information, in the future they might work for state or municipal institutions and thus be able to provide useful information to Russian intelligence and security services or influence decisions on the basis of orders from Russian intelligence and security services.

During the reporting period, Russian intelligence and security services used Russian research institutions and Russian journalists under their control against Latvia as well as officials from other Russian state institutions directly or as cover. This allows Russian intelligence and intelligence and security services to obtain information from a broader range of persons i.e. those who do not wish to collaborate with intelligence and security services, making it more difficult for Latvia's intelligence and security bodies to promptly identify hostile intelligence activities.

Propaganda operations aimed against Latvia involving Russian intelligence and security services also continued last year. The most prominent example was the report by Russian TV channel NTV on the so-called "unmasked NATO spy", Latvian citizen Andrejs Dudarevs.

During the reporting period, DP in conjunction with the other state intelligence and security bodies (MIDD and SAB) began work on amendments to the Criminal Law, including Article 85 covering criminal liability for spying. This decision was based on the fact that the three intelligence and security bodies consider that the current legal framework significantly impedes state security institutions from using criminal law instruments against persons who collaborate with foreign intelligence and security services. In its current version, Article 85 is difficult to implement in practice, and it is outdated and does not align with the intelligence methods currently being used against Latvia. The result is that although collaboration with a foreign intelligence and security service is classified as an especially serious crime against the state, after identifying possible collaboration between a resident of Latvia and foreign intelligence and security services Latvia's intelligence and security institutions traditionally employ other legal solutions to avert the risks caused by such persons. The amendments to Article 85 will increase the ability of state intelligence and security institutions to counter hostile activities by foreign intelligence and security services using methods stipulated in criminal law, thus raising the efficiency of counter intelligence measures and having an additional preventative effect.

NUMBER OF SECURITY CLEARANCES ISSUED BY DP



1.2. Protection of state secrets

One of the most important components of the counter intelligence system is the protection of state secrets, which encompasses a range of measures. The purpose of the state secrets protection system is to prevent illegal access to information protected by law or its unsanctioned disclosure which could significantly harm national security interests. DP closely cooperates with the other state intelligence and security bodies (MIDD and SAB) in protecting secrets.

DP issues category two (up to confidentiality level SECRET) and category three (up to confidentiality level CONFIDENTIAL) security clearances for working with state secrets. In the reporting period DP issued 1921 security clearances, of which 1148 were category two and 773 were category three security clearances.

Last year, there were 28 cases in which DP ruled not to issue security clearances to persons for working with state secrets. These rulings were adopted because:

- In five cases it was found that the person had been found guilty of a deliberately committing a criminal offence or revealing state secrets due to negligence;
- In one case it was concluded that the person was registered with a medical institution in connection with addiction to alcohol, narcotic, psychotropic or toxic substances or mental illness;
- In 22 cases while investigating the person facts were uncovered which cast doubt on their trustworthiness and ability to keep state secrets confidential (for example, the

person's activities involved deliberately providing false information, addiction to alcohol, narcotic or psychotropic substances, breaching rules on working with objects of state secrecy or disclosing classified information, or committing acts of a criminal character).

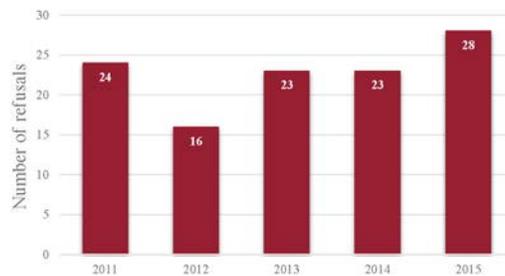
The persons refused permission to work with state secrets included officials of both high, middle and low ranks from institutions in various sectors. A large number of persons denied access to state secrets were employees of law enforcement institutions. There were also cases where DP issued permits for working with state secrets only for limited periods after investigations revealed facts requiring additional checking.

During the reporting period, DP also provided support during the vetting procedure for 48 persons applying for category one (up to confidentiality level TOP SECRET) security clearances for working with state secrets. Decisions on issuing category one clearances are made by SAB. DP also provided SAB with 12 positive and two negative assessments on issuing industrial security certificates to commercial entities.

In order to ensure the effectiveness of the system for protecting state secrets, DP conducted 47 state secret protection checks on various institutions and provided 51 consultations on the operation of the system for protecting state secrets.

In the first half of 2015, DP also performed checks on persons involved in organising Latvia's Presidency in the Council of the EU or who attended these events. In connection with the Presidency events, DP performed checks on 2276 persons in the first half of 2015.

DP REFUSALS TO ISSUE SECURITY CLEARANCES



Conclusions and outlook

- During the reporting period, foreign intelligence and security services continued organising espionage activities against Latvia. The most active espionage activities against our country were conducted by Russia's intelligence and security services, especially the FSB. It is anticipated that hostile activities by foreign intelligence and security services will not diminish and will continue posing threats to our security.
- During the reporting period, intelligence and security services from Russia and other states outside the EU or NATO showed most interest in socio-political and economic processes in our country. In order to obtain data intelligence and security services employ various tactics to obtain information sources and influence decisions in their favour. This tendency will most likely continue in future.
- During the reporting period, Russian intelligence and security services were more active than before in interviewing Latvian residents travelling to Russia. To evade counter intelligence measures, Russian intelligence and security services mainly conducted their recruitment attempts within Russian territory, where by using blackmail or manipulating the possibilities for Latvian residents to conduct their business in Russia there is a greater chance of getting a person to cooperate. It is anticipated that in future Russian intelligence and security services will keep concentrating recruitment attempts outside Latvia's territory.
- As in previous years, last year one of the highest levels of risk of recruitment by Russian intelligence and security services was associated with state and municipal officials with access to state secrets as well as representatives of state intelligence and security and law enforcement institutions. Russian intelligence and security services also continued to seek cooperation with persons favourably disposed toward Russia's proclaimed ideology. This tendency will most likely continue in future.
- To increase the effectiveness of counter intelligence measures, during the reporting period Latvia's state intelligence and security bodies drafted amendments to the Criminal Law, which propose the expansion of the capacity of state intelligence and security bodies to combat hostile activities by foreign intelligence and security services using methods sanctioned by criminal law. Access to such instruments could significantly influence the effectiveness of future counter intelligence measures.
- During the reporting period DP continued strengthening measures for protecting state secrets through stricter evaluation of the suitability of persons and enterprises for working with objects of state secrecy. Considering the intensity of hostile espionage against Latvia, DP believes it is critically important to national security to continue strengthening the system for protecting state secrets, including preventing access to state secrets by persons whose ability to protect such information is demonstrably in doubt.

2. Protection of the constitutional order

The protection of the constitutional order is one of the main tasks of the national security system. To achieve this, DP conducts counter intelligence and operational activities to collect pre-emptive information about potential risks to the constitutional order and prevent them. An important element of protecting the constitutional order is informing top state officials and state and municipal institutions about processes and activities posing risks to our constitutional order. Increasing awareness of these risks by both decision makers and the public is a significant blow to attempts to split society in Latvia, question the country's territorial integrity or cast doubts on the legitimacy of Latvia's statehood and independence.

During the reporting period, the most significant risks to the constitutional order continued to come from activities which, while they are cloaked in legitimate objectives, are in reality aimed at influencing Latvia's domestic and foreign policies in line with Russia's geopolitical interests. Discussions about receiving refugees in 2015 were accompanied by increased activities by radical right wing ideologists, however at present they present a low level of risk to the constitutional order. The number of supporters of left wing ideologists and the level of their activities is extremely low in Latvia, therefore their activities are not discussed in this report.

2.1. Goals and priorities of Russia's compatriot policy

Last year Russia continued to actively use compatriot policy to further its foreign policy interests. The conflict in Ukraine, military operations in Syria (which caused further tensions in relations with the West) and the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II were the events in which Russia most actively used Russians living in foreign countries to legitimize its aggressive foreign policy and to promote interpretations of history favoured by Russia's political elite.

During the reporting period, the main emphases of Russia's compatriot policy remained unchanged: protection of compatriots' rights against discrimination in foreign countries as perceived by officials in Russia (especially in countries where Russia has longstanding geopolitical interests), consolidation of compatriots under Russia's wing, reinforcement of historic memory as desired by Russia, as well as popularisation of Russian language and culture. While many countries care about their compatriots abroad, Russia regularly exploits its compatriot policy as an instrument to force changes in other countries' domestic and foreign policies which suit Russia. Article 2 of the Republic of Latvia Constitution stipulates that Latvia's sovereignty belongs to the Latvian people, therefore Russia's attempts under the cover of compatriot policy to influence political processes to further its own interests rather than those of the Latvian people is a clear threat to our country's constitutional order.

Along with traditional emphases, last year Russia's compatriot policy in reference to youth remained its significance. During the reporting period there were ongoing attempts to attract compatriots living abroad to study at universities in Russia, where they would develop loyalty to Russia and be able to represent and promote Russia's interests abroad in future. Russia's federal agency *Россотрудничество* (RS) continued actively implementing the programs *Новое Поколение* (New Generation) and *Здравствуй, Россия!* (Hello, Russia!), which is aimed at creating positive impressions of Russia by organising trips to Russia for foreign youth. While it is natural for young people to visit and gain education in Russia, there are concerns over attempts to use these programs and study courses to develop loyalty to Russia and use them as agents of Russia's interests abroad in future. During the reporting period young people from Latvia were amongst those making such trips to Russia.

In the last year Russia's political elite continued to stress the importance of compatriot policy, however the further expansion of these policies was restricted by Russia's economic problems caused by Western sanctions and world crude oil prices. As a result the main funders of Russia's compatriot policy – *Фонд поддержки и защиты прав соотечественников проживающих за рубежом* (Fund for the Support and Protection of Russians Living Abroad), *Русский мир* (Russian World, hereinafter RM) and *Фонд поддержки публичной дипломатии имени А.М.Горчакова* (the A.Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund) – were forced in 2015 to refuse or reduce funding for several compatriot support projects in foreign countries, including Latvia. Moreover, funding for approved projects was not infrequently transferred later, and due to the



decline in the value of the rouble compatriot activists received less money in real terms. During the reporting period it was also observed that Russia's state institutions tended to demand more detailed reports from funding recipients regarding money spent, thus securing greater control over measures conducted as part of compatriot policy.

Last year saw a continued reduction of the Russian Foreign Ministry's authority over compatriot policy, leading to an even greater role for RS. However, during the reporting period there were also significant personnel changes at this agency. This shows that Russia is seeking new ways to increase the effectiveness of these foreign policy instruments in the context of economic difficulties and increasing awareness abroad regarding Russia's real aims.

2.2. Expressions of Russia's ethnic Russians policies in Latvia

During the reporting period Russian compatriot policy activists² continued working with varying degrees of intensity in Latvia, their goals and activities were closely linked to Russia's foreign policy guidelines and the values espoused by Russia's political elite. Considering that Russian compatriot policy activists in Latvia continued to receive financial support from Russian funds, the close correlation between their activities and Russia's geopolitical interests was probably not a coincidence, but rather a targeted and coordinated series of measures to strengthen Russia's influence.

In order to reduce the possibility of hiding the true sources of funding used by organisations supporting Russian compatriot policy, during the reporting period DP prepared proposals for amending regulations in this sphere. DP considers that the public has the right to be informed about organisations and foundations claiming to be part of Latvia's civil society and their goals. Otherwise the situation arises wherein organisations registered in Latvia receive money from funds in Russia and attempt to influence Latvia's domestic political processes, but they only have to account for how the funds are spent to their financiers in Russia.

Compared with previous years, the number of compatriot policy activists and organisations remained about the same in Latvia in 2015. During the reporting period, the same persons continued to dominate the ranks of compatriot organisations in Latvia as before. The most important Russian compatriot activists can be divided into two categories:

- *systemic (or professional compatriots)* – active members of Russian compatriot organisations who enjoy constant support from institutions in Russia;

² In this report the terms "activists" and "supporters" in relation to Russian compatriot policies are used as synonyms to refer to the same category of persons.

- *non-systemic* activists – persons who disseminate messages supporting Russia's geopolitical interests but who are not members of compatriot organisations and whose links with officials and institutions in Russia are formed independently of the "official" compatriot organisations in Latvia.

Although both *systemic* and *non-systemic* compatriot activists share similar ideological views and support increasing Russia's influence in Latvia, this is not a unified or homogenous environment. During the reporting period, Russia's decreasing ability to finance compatriot support projects led to increasing competitiveness and envy between compatriot activists. This was reinforced by the ambitions of some of the most prominent activists and/or personal antagonisms. Bickering and intrigue also soured relations both within the *systemic* and *non-systemic* groups and between them, with the latter accusing the former of ineffectively using funds given by Russia. The friction could be seen in the arguments over selecting the youth delegate for the World Russian Compatriots Congress in Moscow. The chosen candidate was lobbied by Viktors Guščins, chairman of the *Latvian Council of Non-Governmental Organisations (LSOP)*, and Natalja Čehova, head of the organisation *Rodnik*, but this was strenuously opposed by *PEROM* representative Margarita Dragiļe, who considered herself the best person for the job and went to the event with the mediation of the RM fund.



N.Čehova

During the reporting period, both *systemic* and *non-systemic* compatriot policy activists continued their usual activities, mainly spreading information and organising protests in line with Russia's foreign policy interests. However, last year activists devoted more effort to information campaigns directly supporting Russia and paid less attention to traditional protest meetings. DP believes that this is due to declining attendance at recent public events organised by compatriot activists, making them less cost effective.

During the reporting period, the objectives of compatriot policy activists included creating an impression of supposed "discrimination against minorities in Latvia", giving legitimacy to Russia's aggressive foreign policy, popularising historical interpretations favourable to Russia and promoting the moral superiority of the *Russian world* over the West as per the propaganda espoused by Russia's political elite.

As in previous reporting periods, Russia's Embassy in Latvia continued providing significant support to compatriot policy activists. Since RS does not have a representative office in Latvia, the embassy advised Russian compatriot policy activists on drafting applications for funding from Russian funds, as well as taking a more active role in the activities of compatriot policy activists by giving instructions on further action. Moreover, the embassy retained the decisive role on the composition of delegations for compatriot policy events held abroad, accompanied by "recommendations" on raising specific questions.

2.2.1. Systemic compatriot policy activists

Despite the fact that *systemic* compatriot activists are united in several political organisations, in practice during the reporting period they focussed more on individual action rather than joint efforts. This was due to the aforementioned competition for funding from Russian institutions, personal tensions as well as ineffective coordination.

During the reporting period, the LSOP, which was established to coordinate the activities of various compatriot organisations, continued to function as a forum for discussion and information sharing rather than as a coordinating structure. The LSOP's ineffectiveness during the reporting period was also demonstrated by its fruitless attempts to attract young people, despite the lack of interest amongst youth in compatriot politics. Another sign of its ineffectiveness was the fact that during the reporting period officials from the Russian Embassy became more regular attendees at its meetings, possibly trying to boost enthusiasm and motivation within the LSOP's ranks.

With the decline in the influence of the LSOP, compatriot organisations outside Riga began seeking consolidation at the regional level. *Ventspils krievu biedrība* (Ventspils Russian Association) and *Liepājas Krievu kopiena* (Liepāja Russian Community) in Kurzeme, the Jelgava organisations *Vēce* and *Istok*, the Aizkraukle organisation LAD and the Jēkabpils organisation *Rodņik* in Zemgale, and *Rēzeknes krievu biedrība* (Rēzekne Russian Association) in Latgale became active last year. There were also consolidation efforts on the LSOP model in Jūrmala, where the main initiator was Andrejs Podmazovs.



V. Gušins

However, weak organisational coordination did not diminish the intensity of some individual compatriot activists during the reporting period. Activists tried to exploit Latvia's EU Presidency as well various international forums, which compatriot activists attended thanks to funding from institutions in Russia, in order to bolster their claims about "discrimination against minorities" and "human rights abuses" in Latvia.

Russia's preferred discourse about the "lack of justice and democracy" in Latvia was supplemented during the reporting period with claims about the supposed "persecution of compatriot policy supporters" in Latvia and the other Baltic countries. Some activists consider that this is proven by DP's public reports, criminal cases opened by DP against compatriot activists and other "facts". Activity devoted to popularising this assertion during the reporting period included the unveiling of a new organisation called the *League of Latvia's Prisoners of Conscience*, which brings together a number of activists who believe that DP is "persecuting" them for their pro-Russia views. Another means to this end was the publication of the informational material "Persecution of dissenters in the Baltic countries," and the thesis about the persecution of activists was also accented at international events. During the reporting period, the most active propagator of this myth was the "chairman" of the unregistered organisation *Nepilsoņu kongress* (Congress of Non-Citizens, NK) Aleksandrs Gagoņenko. His activities are motivated by a desire to cast himself as the most active "defender of Russian rights", thus strengthening his position in the battle for funding from Russia. At the same time A. Gagoņenko only paid occasional attention to NK during the reporting period, which remained virtually inactive last year.



A. Gagoņenko (in black) with colleagues

In addition to rights issues, during the reporting period activists also took action to legitimise and support Russia's foreign policy. In the majority of cases this involved informational support for Russian aggression in Ukraine and involvement in Syria and to discredit opponents of Russia's foreign policy. One of the main targets for informational campaigns by compatriot activists was the presence of armed forces from allied NATO countries in Latvia. The demonstration of solidarity by the alliance with the Baltic countries was positioned as "aggression against Russia", rather than as a strengthening of NATO's defensive capabilities

in response to the conflict in Ukraine. A.Gapopenko exploited the traditionally provocative rhetoric surrounding this issue by describing the presence of troops from the US and other NATO states as preparations for the "armed suppression of Russians in Latvia".

In addition to public expressions of support, activists also held various events in support of Russia's foreign policy. During the reporting period, European Parliament Member Tatjana Ždanoka made several visits to illegally annexed Crimea, while her party the Union of Russians in Latvia (LKS) held a vigil in Riga for the victims of the 2014 Odessa tragedy. In both cases, Russia's desired messages about both historical and current events were dominant. The views expressed at the event "For a Europe from Dublin to Vladivostok" staged during the Eastern Partnership Summit also correlated closely with the views of Russian officials regarding the Eastern Partnership.

In addition to T.Ždanoka, another active supporter of Russia's foreign policy was A.Gapopenko, who planned to act as an election observer in the internationally unrecognised Republic of Transnistria. However he was barred from entering Moldova, which A.Gapopenko viewed as a case of "yet more repression", since he had allegedly been going to Moldova on a business trip. This contradicted a later statement by Vladimir Hoerik, the chief organiser of the foreign "observers" group, that one of the observers for the parliamentary elections in the Republic of Transnistria A.Gapopenko had been barred from entering Moldova. Other compatriot activists from Latvia also participated in observing imitations of electoral processes which were not recognised internationally but received Russian support in the previous years.

During the reporting period, *systemic* activists played an important role in spreading and popularising Russia's desired interpretations of history. In order to maintain the myth long espoused by Russian propaganda regarding the rebirth of fascism in Latvia, last year saw the traditional protests against the 16 March procession commemorating the Waffen SS Legion. However, the protest by Josifs Korens, unofficial leader of Latvia's anti-fascist activists, attracted less attention in 2015 than in previous years.



T.Ždanoka



J.Korens

This demonstrates that concerns about the rebirth of fascism in our country are artificially propagated by Russian officials and mass media outlets rather than having any real basis in Latvian society.

Unlike the protests against the March 16 events, which arouse less and less interest even amongst compatriot activists, one of the rare events which consolidated both *systemic* and *non-systemic* activists was the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II in May 9. For the first time in Riga, part of this event was the "March of the Immortal Regiment," a phenomenon borrowed from Russia where it has become one of the main weapons used by the political elite to reinforce the desired collective historical memory. The main credit for organising this march goes to A.Gapopenko's colleagues Bropislavs Zeļčermans, Margarita Dragiļe and Elizabete Krivcova, and to a lesser extent the so-called anti-fascists. For her contribution M.Dragiļe received an award at the 2015 World Russian Compatriots Congress. It is important to note that Russia exploits the May 9 celebrations not only to honour World War II veterans but also to stress Russia's heroism and unique place in history in an attempt to cultivate loyalty towards Russia by compatriots abroad. For this reason, Russia actively supports May 9 events externally both politically and economically.



E.Krivcova

During the reporting period, compatriot activists continued to popularise morality and traditional values, singling out Russia as the champion of these virtues in contrast to the "morally corrupt" West. Last year saw the debut A.Gapopenko's film *Juvenālija justīcija*, in which the authors distort various events to prove that "traditional families are being destroyed in the West as same-sex relationships are promoted, whereas in Russia traditional family values based on Orthodoxy prevail." During the reporting period, A.Gapopenko also participated in a conference on traditional values in Moldova, where concerns were raised about the destruction of traditional Christian values and "the growth of homosexualist propaganda". This subject was raised earlier in Latvia by another compatriot activist, Vladimirs Lindermans, who unsuccessfully sought to initiate a referendum on prohibiting the popularising of same-sex relationships amongst children.

It is noteworthy that some compatriot activists whose names are not mentioned here did not hesitate from preaching about moral values and the "decadent lifestyle" of the West even though they were guilty of the same vices. During pre-trial

investigations, DP found child pornography in the possession of one compatriot activist, while another activist had child pornography as well as materials featuring bestiality, necrophilia and violent sexual acts. Possession of such materials is a criminal offence and the cases have been handed over to the State Police.

2.2.2. Non-systemic compatriot policy activists

During the reporting period, various *non-systemic* compatriot activists continued their activities, mainly concentrating on informational measures in line with Russia's propaganda narrative about "discrimination against minorities" in Latvia and supporting Russia's aggressive foreign policy. Although in a few cases *non-systemic* activists joined events organised by *systemic* activists and also supported other *non-systemic* activists, they mostly continued acting independently of other compatriot activists. In comparison with *systemic* activists, *non-systemic* activists traditionally choose provocative rhetoric and forms of protest to draw attention to themselves in both Latvia and Russia.

As in previous years, in 2015 one of the most active *non-systemic* compatriot activists was V.Lindermans, who mainly concentrated on informational activities to publicly support



V.Lindermans

Russia's narratives about Ukraine, the presence of allied forces in Latvia, the status of minorities in Latvia and other subjects used in Russian propaganda. During the reporting period he also had a high profile role in supporting members of the unregistered Russian political organisation *Другая Россия* (Another Russia) who were arrested for illegally entering the National Armed Forces base at Ādaži³. This led to criminal charges being filed against the two citizens of Russia and Lindermans, and at the end of the reporting period the case had been sent to the prosecutor to commence criminal interrogation. DP considers that the aim of this activity was to protest the presence of foreign soldiers in Latvia and to raise the prestige in Russia of *Другая Россия*.

³ On 12 June 2015, two citizens of Russia entered the National Armed Forces base at Ādaži to protest what they view as NATO's aggression toward Russia. Criminal proceedings were begun in connection with this incident, which in the course of investigations was reclassified under Article 231.2 of the Criminal Law (hooliganism committed by a group of persons). On 28 September 2015 DP recommended that criminal interrogation be commenced against the Russian citizens for hooliganism committed by a group of persons, and against V.Lindermans for supporting them.

Another person to gain attention for provocative activities during the reporting period was compatriot activist Ilarions Girss, one of the leaders of compatriot organisation *Russkaja Zarja* (RZ), who publicly renounced his Latvian citizenship and burned his passport. This was a typical tactic by RZ, designed to be provocative enough to earn condemnation from society yet within the bounds of the Criminal Law. The inevitable counter-reaction is used to generate further controversy to popularise the myth of an "ethnocratic regime". Another RZ leader, Jevgēņijs Osipovs, who during the reporting period concentrated on informational actions in support of Russia on the RZ websites and in less popular Russian information outlets, using provocative rhetoric similar in style to that of A.Gapogeko. The said activities were probably motivated by a desire to gain support from Russia, including funding. It is noteworthy that as in previous years, in 2015 RZ did not hesitate to berate *systemic* activists during the forum on Baltic compatriots in Vyborg, Russia, accusing them of incompetence and ineffectively using money from Russia. However, neither provocative rhetoric nor actions have helped RZ gain any significant visibility or support in Latvia.



I.Girss

During the reporting period, the organisation *GVD Baltia*, which was established to collect funds for the residents of the regions of Eastern Ukraine under separatist control, practically suspended its operations. This was largely due to a decline in the number of donors and a loss of interest by the organisation's activists. During the reporting period, the only *GVD Baltia* member continuing his public activities was Stasīslavs Bukains, who like other *non-systemic* activists prefers provocative actions and rhetoric. Unlike RZ representatives or V.Lindermans, who carefully consider the consequences of their actions, S.Bukains acted impulsively during the reporting period, resulting in his arrest for damaging the exhibition "People of Maidan". Probably due to Bukains' unpredictable behaviour, both *systemic* and *non-systemic* activists avoided cooperating with him during the reporting period. Bukains also failed to gain much from his "journalistic" activities, since the only outlet to give him a somewhat regular platform was the Russian message supporting *inhoclub.lv*.

In 2015 the activities of *GVD Baltia* were suspended, and there was less interest by residents of Latvia in direct involvement in the war in Ukraine. Although during the reporting period some persons did join illegal military groups fighting against the government of Ukraine, there were fewer such individuals than in 2014. However, last year DP did commence criminal proceedings in two cases for illegally participating in the war in Ukraine.

2.3. Radical right-wing activists

During the reporting period, the situation regarding radical right-wing organisations and activists was significantly influenced by the refugee crisis. As in other EU countries, the decision by Latvia's government to admit asylum seekers caused discontent within some sections of society, and radical right-wing groups tried to exploit these feelings for their own interests. Although protests against refugees in Latvia were legitimate and peaceful, aggressive internet comments affirmed the potential for this issue to radicalise some xenophobic and racist individuals from various ethnic groups.

Last year, opposing the admission of asylum seekers became the main focus of radical right-wing groups. Protests against refugees were joined by both veteran radical right-wing activists (for example members of the banned association *Gustava Celmiņa centrs*), as well as supporters of such ideas who have refrained from public activities in recent years. The protests also saw involvement by individuals and organisations which DP had not previously observed in the ranks of radical right-wingers. Such activities were also attended by Eurosceptics and populists who sought to use the refugee issue to popularise their negative stance toward the EU.

The refugee question is also exploited in Russian propaganda, which depicts asylum seekers as threats to European security and values. This allows Russia to position itself as a true friend of Europe and gain support amongst European radical right-wingers and conservatives. This is shown by the *World National Conservative Movement*, a cooperation network for radical right-wingers and conservatives which was unveiled on the internet at the end of last year by the Russian ultra-right-wing organisation *Русское империалистическое движение* (Russian Imperialist Movement), and which several anti-refugee activists in Latvia have joined. DP believes such initiatives are aimed at gaining control over radical right-wing and conservative groups to put pressure on European decision makers in line with Russia's foreign policy interests.



"World National-Conservative Movement" logo

Despite various protests against admitting refugees, during the reporting period there was no sign of increased public interest in joining radical right-wing organisations. The protests against refugees occurred without incidents, although there were some internet comments about refugees which were outside the bounds of free speech. Although this indicates the potential for some xenophobic individuals to become radicalised in the future, during the reporting period the risk to the constitutional order posed by radical right-wing activists was relatively low.

Conclusions and outlook

- During the reporting period, Russia continued using the Soviet-era tactic of employing various organisations abroad to further its geopolitical interests. It is anticipated that Russia will continue using this tactic in future, therefore Russia's compatriot policy will continue to be the biggest threat to our constitutional order.
- Due to the worsening economic situation, Russian institutions were forced to reduce funding for compatriot support projects while assessing the expenditure of allocated funds in more detail. It is anticipated that as economic difficulties continue Russia will focus its support for compatriot activities on those activists who show the best results.
- As funding from Russia shrank and Russia focussed more on informational war, last year compatriot activists in Latvia paid greater attention to providing Russia with informational support and less to organising various events. This trend will likely continue this year as it requires fewer resources and organisational effort.
- During the reporting period, the same activists as before dominated the ranks of compatriot activists. Despite Russia's attempts to involve young people more in compatriot politics, interest among young people in Latvia in compatriot politics has not been observed. However, Russia will probably continue to pay heightened attention to working with young compatriots living abroad.
- Last year, the main activities of compatriot activists were popularising the myth of "human rights problems" in Latvia as dictated by propagandists in Russia, legitimising Russia's aggressive foreign policy and promoting interpretations of history favoured by Russia. It is anticipated that compatriot activists will continue these activities, although if required they can reorient to new areas if this aligns with changes in Russia's priorities.
- During the reporting period, the main focus of right-wing activists was protesting against admitting asylum seekers. It is anticipated that protesting against resettlement of refugees will again be the main focus of the radical right-wing this year.
- Although the risks posed by radical right-wing persons remain low, the continued admission of asylum seekers could serve to radicalise xenophobic individuals.

3. Information space security

As Russia's information campaign against Latvia continues, which is aimed at changing public opinion in Latvia in line with Russia's foreign policy interests, the importance of protecting the information space to ensure national security is increasing. In accordance with the principals of democracy, DP's role in protecting the information space is strictly limited. Its role is to promptly identify and inform decision makers, institutions responsible for the sector and the public about information activities which are funded and directed from abroad with the intent of manipulating the opinions of Latvia's inhabitants in line with the foreign country's interests.

3.1. The role of informational influence activities in furthering Russia's foreign policy goals

During the 2015 World Russian People's Congress in Moscow, Russia's President Vladimir Putin announced that henceforth Russia will more actively support Russian-language press and broadcasting platforms abroad which "help in the fight against stereotypes about Russia and information campaigns aimed against it". This aligns with the framework for strengthening and spreading the Russian language abroad approved during the reporting period which aims to strengthen the position of the Russian language abroad and to "activate *soft power* instruments for use in the international arena". This framework gives information platforms a key role in promoting the Russian language abroad. For example, the said document stresses that "it is necessary to promote an increase in the number of broadcasting channels [this means other communication channels in addition to television] in foreign countries, including internet resources".

Russia's National Security Strategy approved at the end of 2015 also states that "the international situation is increasingly influenced by growing confrontation in the global information space", therefore Russia must actively defend its interests in this area. Thus the framework legitimises further use of informational influence activities in foreign countries, which is presented as defence rather than aggression by Russia.

During the reporting period, although Latvia was not a priority target for Russia's informational influence activities, sufficient attention was paid to our country to remind consumers of Russia's mass media outlets in Latvia, Russia and Western countries about Russia's traditional narratives regarding Latvia:

- Our country "discriminates minorities";
- Latvia is seeing "the rebirth of fascism";
- We are "a failed state";
- We are "puppets used by the USA/West against Russia".

These Russian narratives have been used for a number of years and are periodically adjusted to chime with current events. For example, during the reporting period Russian media outlets

presented the presence of allied forces in Latvia or exercises held in Latvia as NATO aggression in which Latvia is used as a springboard to act against Russia. DP believes that the aim of these messages is to split society in Latvia, weaken the sense of belonging by Latvia's residents toward our country and diminish people's faith in the ability of the state to guarantee prosperity and security, simultaneously promoting loyalty to Russia and support for its foreign policy interests in Latvia. The spreading of such messages within Latvia's informational space is against our national security interests.

3.2. Information platforms furthering Russia's interests in Latvia

During the reporting period, a number of information platforms continued working in Latvia which are funded and directed from Russia or are aimed at furthering Russia's geopolitical interests by spreading relevant messages. Compared with TV channels loyal to Russia's political elite which are retranslated in Latvia, the audiences of these platforms are relatively small and they do not have a significant impact on public opinion in Latvia, however some of them can be viewed as long-term projects whose ultimate impact on Latvia's information space has yet to be seen.

3.2.1. Sputnik Latvian version

Last year's most prominent example in Latvia of the goal set out in Russian strategic documents – spreading specific information abroad – was the attempt to establish a representation in Latvia by Russia's state information agency *Россия сегодня*⁴ (hereinafter the agency). Despite the blocking of registration for its representation office (this is being appealed in court), during the reporting period the agency continued to develop the Latvian version of the information platform *Sputnik*, which began operations in February 2016.

Concerns about the agency's real aims are raised by the objectives stipulated in its statutes, including "Provision of operational information to the state organs of the Russian Federation about the socio-economic and political situation in the Russian Federation and abroad". In democratic states this task is usually given to intelligence and security services rather than mass media outlets, whose job is to inform the public rather

⁴ On the basis of Council of the European Union Decision No 2014/145/KADP of 17 March 2014 on restrictive measures pertaining to activities undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine, a list of persons subject to EU sanctions was drafted. This list included the agency's general director Dmitry Kisilev, who played an important part in disseminating propaganda during the conflict in Ukraine.

than gathering information for the authorities. This indicates that *Sputnik* is probably not an outlet for objectively reflecting various opinions, rather it is an instrument for furthering Russia's foreign policy goals.

The person chosen to be the curator of *Sputnik's* Latvian version is Tatjana Kirillova, a person previously unknown in Latvia's mass media community, who did the work to have the representation registered and took part in selecting the platform's staff. The recruitment of personnel for this propaganda outlet was conducted by the agency's representative, citizen of Russia Liana Minasjana, who is also the editor of *Sputnik's* Latvian version according to information available to DP.

T.Kirillova assists L.Minasjana in running *Sputnik's* Latvian version by coordinating this propaganda outlets operations in Latvia, and there is also a small team of "staff" and "freelance" authors, translators and consultants. Several *Sputnik* authors publish under pseudonyms and try to hide their links to the platform. This may be due to desire to extract information without revealing the true beneficiary, or to preserve their reputations in Latvia's journalist community. DP has information that a number of Latvian journalists declined offers to cooperate with *Sputnik's* Latvian version.

Compared with other Russian information platforms operating in Latvia, the audience of the Latvian version of *Sputnik* includes both persons regularly using Russian-language resources as well as that section of society preferring Latvian information sources. For this reason for the first few months of its operation the *Sputnik* Latvian version produced significantly different content for its Latvian and Russian language editions, selecting messages likely to have the most resonance with each of the audiences. For example, the Latvian version emphasizes Russia's narrative that "Latvia is a failed state", while the Russian-language edition cultivates the myth about "discrimination against minorities". Carefully selecting messages to meet the audience's expectations is characteristic of Russia propaganda.

3.2.2. *Baltnews.lv*, *imhoclub.lv* and *Avtoradio*

While *Sputnik's* links with Russia's state institutions are well known, during the reporting period other outlets supporting Russia's informational activities abroad continued working in Latvia. DP considers that attempts to hide such links are grounds for questioning the true objectives of these activities.

During the reporting period development continued on the website *baltnews.lv*. Although this portal broadcast similar messages to the Latvian version of *Sputnik*, *baltnews.lv* did not inform its users of its links with funding from Russia and its informational activities abroad. This creates the impression that messages desired by Russia are broadcast by the so-called "independent" media as well. This gives these outlets a higher degree of believability while also creating the illusion that Russia's messages have widespread support. It is also noteworthy that during the report period contributors to both the Latvian version

of *Sputnik* and *baltnews.lv* began using pseudonyms, despite the fact that many of them, including portal head Andrejs Jakovlevs, are well known to Russian-language readers in Latvia.



Last year the website headed by Juris Aleksejevs *imhoclub.lv* continued operating, which functions as a platform for discussion and exchanging views for supporters of compatriot policy and persons sympathising with Russia. Due to its popularity in these circles, during the reporting period *imhoclub* began expanding and it now has a version for Belarus. Information available to DP shows that this portal is also closely linked to funding from Russia and its informational activities abroad. It is noteworthy that Aleksejevs was one of the representatives from Latvia at the June 2015 All Russian Press Congress in Moscow, which traditionally invites representatives from media outlets friendly to Russia to thank them and motivate them to continue broadcasting information desired by Russia.

During the reporting period, messages favourable to Russia were also spread within Latvia's information space by the radio station *Avtoradio*, connected with former European Parliament member Aleksandrs Mirskis, which began retranslating *Radio Sputnik's* broadcasts. Due to the fact that *Avtoradio* has broadcasting rights in Latgale, the distribution of Russian propaganda products in this region could alienate its residents from Latvia's information space and facilitate Russia's information objectives.

3.2.3. Other information platforms

In 2015 other platforms were launched or continued working in Latvia which were not directly connected with Russia's informational activities abroad but nevertheless supported its aims.

During the reporting period, the website *zarya.lv* established by RZ began operating. Its contents are mainly produced by this association's activists (I.Girss and J.Osipovs) and also draw on publications from both Latvia and Russia which are dominated by Russia's desired messages about Latvia and the world. Despite the provocative rhetoric of this association's members, the website did not attract a large audience and therefore missed out on funding for development. As a result, exactly a year after its launch the founders of *zarya.lv* announced it was suspending operations, although this does not mean it may not renew operations in the future.

Last year, Sergejs Malahovskis continued to unsuccessfully seek funding for his portal *baltijalv.lv*. It is possible that the failure to attract funding by Malahovskis, the head of the unsuccessful "Anti-Fascist Front of Latvia," is linked to his poor reputation amongst other compatriot activists, of which Russian officials are probably aware. Without external funding *baltijalv.lv* will most likely remain marginal.

2015 saw the previously predicted reorientation of the media club *Format A3. The Culture Line* established in 2014 was used to organise discussion events involving invited guests from the cultural sphere, purportedly in line with the organisation's mission to promote Russian culture. However, during these events both the event organisers and audience members called

on the invited guests to also comment on geopolitical issues. This causes concern that the stated aim of popularising Russian culture is merely a cover for spreading messages desirable to Russia, which was characteristic of *Format A3* and which we wrote about in previous reports.

Conclusions and outlook

- During the reporting period, the most significant risk to the security of Latvia's information space came from Russia's information campaigns, which exploit biased and false information to diminish the feeling of belonging to their country by residents of Latvia while promoting loyalty to Russia and support for its interests in Latvia. Considering that strategic Russian documents state the aim of developing informational influence resources, it can be predicted that Russia will continue its propaganda campaigns against Latvia.
- Although Latvia was not a priority target for Russia's informational influence activities during the reporting period, Russia continued to fund its already established information platforms to broadcast its desired message and to create new ones. It is anticipated that Russia will continue to support the work of various information platforms in our country.
- During the reporting period, information platforms supported by Russia continued working both openly and clandestinely in Latvia. Attempts to hide the connection with Russia's information campaigns are grounds for questioning the true objectives of these activities.
- The most significant element of Russia's information campaigns during the reporting period was the creation of a version of *Sputnik* for Latvia, which was completed this year. It is anticipated that this platform will become the main channel for distributing messages favoured by Russia in the Latvian language.
- Compared with retranslated Russia TV channels, information platforms supported by Russia based in Latvia have small audiences, but they are most likely established as long-term projects and Russia expects results in the long-term from them. Therefore these platforms must be assessed from the long-term perspective.

4. Counter-terrorism

As the threat of terrorism in Europe intensifies, DP is devoting increasing resources to counter-terrorism. In the counter-terrorism sphere, DP conducts counter-intelligence and operational measures as well as cooperating with foreign partner services to promptly identify and prevent potential terrorist threats. As the body coordinating counter-terrorism measures at the national level, DP harmonises cooperation between all involved bodies for planning and implementing preventative and reactive measures, organises counter-terrorism training at various levels, and informs top state officials and other counter-terrorism bodies about current terrorism trends. As the terrorism threat in Europe intensified in 2015, for the first time DP published recommendations for action consistent with terrorism threat levels on its website.

4.1. Terrorism threat trends in Europe

The terrorist attacks which occurred during the reporting period confirm that terrorism is a transnational threat, therefore the threat of terrorism in Latvia must be analysed in close connection with the threat situation in Europe as a whole.

In 2015, European intelligence and security services and law enforcement bodies prevented 18 terrorist acts during their planning stage in a number of countries. There were also arrests of several dozen persons involved in supporting terrorist activities, planning to travel to conflict zones or returning from these areas. However, despite many counter-terrorism operations, Islamist terrorists were able to carry out 12 attacks, of which two were large-scale attacks with many victims.

Of the terrorist attacks carried out during the reporting period, the 13 November events in Paris are of particular note, as they affirmed the ability of *Daesh* to organise large-scale attacks in Europe, using so-called returnees from Syria. These incidents also showed that terrorists in Europe are prioritising soft targets where large numbers of people gather, as there are no heightened security measures at such sites and there is potential for harming large numbers of victims. These attacks also revealed that the terrorists are capable of using combined attack tactics i.e. simultaneously using a variety of weapons (firearms and improvised explosives) and methods (suicide attacks, shootings and hostage taking).

Last year there were also relatively smaller-scale attacks in Denmark, France, Germany and the UK. Islamist terrorists also carried out attacks against Europeans in other regions, for example at tourist resorts frequented by Europeans and probably organising the bomb blast on a Russian passenger aircraft flying from Sharm el-Sheikh to Saint Petersburg.

The worsening of the security situation during the reporting period was largely due to the Syrian conflict. Since the start of

the war, Islamist terrorist groups (mainly *Daesh*) have attracted several thousand Islamists from Europe, and there is ongoing radicalisation of Muslims in Europe. Many of the European Islamists involved in the conflict have returned home, and some of them have been involved in terrorist attacks in Europe (for example the November 2015 Paris attacks), reinforcing existing concerns about the threat posed by returnees. At the same time, as Western military pressure against *Daesh* increases, this group has intensified its propaganda attacks against the West, particularly on the internet. As a result, there is a real risk that attacks in Europe may be carried out both by persons returning from Syria with combat experience, training in organising terrorist attacks and instructions to carry out attacks in Europe, as well as persons who have not been to Syria but who are inspired by Islamist ideology and may decide to perform acts of terror on their own initiative. In addition, during the reporting period the security situation was also worsened by the refugee crisis in Europe, as radicalised persons used the cover of legitimate refugees to discretely enter the continent.

4.2. The terrorism threat situation in Latvia

During the reporting period there were no terrorist acts in Latvia and the terrorism threat level in our country remained low. At the same time, the radicalisation trends seen in other EU countries also appeared more frequently in Latvia. Although as in previous periods the vast majority of Latvia's Muslim community respect the laws and values of our country, DP has recently noted increasing numbers of radicalised members of the Muslim community.

At the end of 2015, DP initiated criminal proceedings for participation in the conflict in Syria under Article 77¹ of the Criminal Law. This was the first case in Latvia's history that criminal charges were filed over the possible involvement by a resident of Latvia with an Islamist terrorist group in a conflict zone. Currently DP has three ongoing criminal cases against residents of Latvia suspected of illegal involvement in the Syrian conflict. Moreover, DP has information proving that several other Latvian Muslims are in terrorist-controlled areas of Syria/Iraq. There is also evidence that some residents of Latvia who travelled to Syria have been killed.

While travel to terrorist-controlled areas does not automatically mean a person is involved in terrorist activities, the fact that persons heading to conflict zones are already radicalised indicates that involvement in terrorism is one of their travel objectives. It must be noted that potential risks to national security are posed not only by participation in combat, but also by involvement in activities supporting terrorism, for example recruitment, spreading propaganda, collecting funds etc.

DP has information indicating that in 2015 persons fitting a variety of profiles travelled to terrorist-controlled regions of Syria/Iraq. They included both women and men, people of various ethnicities, as well as both individuals who are prominent in the community and have studied Islam as well as persons who were previously obscure with superficial religious knowledge. Persons have travelled to Syria/Iraq together with their families or ideological brethren. The vast majority are converts i.e. persons who have changed their religion to Islam during their own lifetime. This reaffirms that converts are amongst the main groups at risk of radicalisation. Although the number of converts in Latvia is relatively small, it has grown in recent years, including during the reporting period.

There are currently no grounds for considering that there are active recruitment networks in Latvia organising Latvian residents to travel to Iraq/Syria. However, it cannot be discounted that some individuals from Latvia's Muslim community who have gone to Syria/Iraq may have encouraged other community members to become radicalised and travel to these regions.

A terrorist propaganda video featuring the former head of the Latvian Islamic Culture Centre (LIKC) Oļegs Petrovs appeared on the internet for the first time in early 2016. In this video he refuted all of his previous statements condemning terrorism and called on other Latvian Muslims to go to *Daesh*-controlled areas in Syria/Iraq. O. Petrovs only returned to Latvia in 2014 after lengthy studies of Islam and the Arabic language in Saudi Arabia. After returning to Latvia he became the head of LIKC, but he only held the post until summer 2015 when he travelled to terrorist-controlled regions. His appearance in the video confirmed risks that individuals can become radicalised if they spend lengthy periods in countries where conservative or radical Islamist views are widespread or which have a significant presence of Islamist terrorists.

The actions of the former LIKC head emphatically do not reflect on Latvia's Muslim community as a whole. The vast majority of Latvia's Muslims do not support Islamist terrorists or their ideology. However, the leadership of Latvia's Muslim community could do more to guarantee national security by using its authority to more actively prevent radicalisation. Information at DP's disposal suggests that several other members of the community plan on travelling to terrorist-controlled areas in Syria/Iraq or have expressed support for the terrorists' ideology. Moreover, several other residents of Latvia continue to study Islam and Arabic in countries where conservative or radical Islamist views are widespread, which may radicalise these persons.

Latvia's Criminal Law in its current redaction prohibits illegal participation in armed conflicts abroad which are aimed against the territorial integrity or political independence of state or otherwise contravene international obligations binding on Latvia, funding such conflicts, or recruiting, training and sending persons to such armed conflicts. However current regulations do not provide effective preventative measures against persons planning to join such conflicts. Therefore, at present DP has limited scope to prevent actions possibly leading to terrorist attacks even after obtaining information that a person is planning to go to a conflict zone. Considering the increasing numbers of residents of Latvia travelling over the last few years to terrorist-controlled regions of Syria/Iraq, DP considers it essential to have reasonable preventative legal tools allowing for effective and prompt action against plans to become involved in illegal activities.



Screenshots from Daesh propaganda video with O. Petrovs

4.3. Monitoring of entry of foreigners

In conjunction with obtaining information about radically inclined residents of Latvia, during the reporting period DP and other state institutions continued to monitor the entry of foreigners³ into Latvia. In 2015, DP performed additional checks of 1874 invitations for visas/residence permits (3174 persons), 1570 visa applications (recommending in 23 cases that visas should not be issued, in 3 cases to reduce the number of visiting days and 554 residence permit applications (recommending that residence permits be declined in 58 cases). It must be noted that none of the rejected cases were connected with terrorism risks.

During the reporting period, one of the reasons why persons from countries in which terrorists are significantly present wished to enter Latvia was to study at Latvian universities. In 2015, around 200 citizens from such countries were studying in Latvia. Although this figure is similar to the previous year, a trend was noticed during this reporting period that marketing campaigns are being directed for profit-making purposes to recruit new students from countries in which terrorists are significantly present. In addition universities check of potential foreign students applying for studies at Latvian higher educational establishments are made in a very superficial manner, thus increasing the risk that radicalised persons may enter Latvia and therefore the Schengen Area generally under the cover of being students.

During the reporting period, DP continued assessing applications for asylum. In 2015 there were 310 asylum seekers in Latvia, a slight drop compared with 2014. However, whereas the previous year the bulk of asylum seekers were from Georgia, Russia and Ukraine, during the reporting period the largest group of asylum seekers were from Iraq (86 persons). The asylum seekers also included citizens of Syria, Pakistan and Afghanistan, which also have significant terrorist groups present.

Although the number of asylum seekers in Latvia is relatively small and the flow of refugees over the eastern border of the EU is tiny in comparison with the south, there is a risk that some radicalised persons may try to enter Latvia under the cover of being asylum seekers. This is confirmed by the fact that during the reporting period one person was expelled from Latvia because of suspicions that he may be involved with foreign terrorist groups.

³ Foreigners who are citizens of countries in which terrorist groups are significantly present.

4.4. Preventative counter-terrorism measures

During the reporting period, DP continued to improve the preventative counter-terrorism system. In 2015 DP consulted with institutions involved in counter-terrorism measures to assist the respective bodies in being ready to implement the National Counter-Terrorism Plan in the event of elevated, high or severe terrorism threat levels. DP also organised table top exercises for institutions involved in counter-terrorism measures, in which the scenarios of recent terrorist acts were played out to assess the readiness of the said bodies in the event of high or very high terrorism threat levels.

In 2015 inspections were performed on 61 critical infrastructure objects and recommendations were drafted for improving physical security at these objects. In addition DP organised training for over 656 security staff at critical infrastructure and soft targets.

Moreover, during the reporting period DP established a national contact point for reporting suspicious activities with explosives precursors in accordance with EU regulations on their sale and use. Last year DP also began cooperating and exchanging information with the Association of Latvian Chemical and Pharmaceutical Industry and the State Plant Protection Service on informing commercial entities regarding issues pertaining to the distribution of explosives precursors.

4.5. Passenger Data Register

In 2015, DP in conjunction with the Information Centre of the Ministry of Interior continued work on establishing a Passenger Data Register (hereinafter PDR) system in Latvia. During the reporting period the said institutions began work on creating a new state information system and drafting related regulations. The PDR system will process and analyse airline passenger data to detect and prevent serious and very serious crimes including terrorism-related crimes and threats to state security. It is planned that the register will begin operating at the end of 2016.

Conclusions and outlook

- Terrorist acts carried out or prevented in Europe during the reporting period and early 2016 affirm that terrorism remains one of the main threats on our continent. As the Syrian conflict and Islamist propaganda activities continue, it is likely that the terrorism threat level in Europe will not diminish in the near future.
- The terrorism threat level in Latvia remains low and there are few radicalised persons compared with other EU countries. However, terrorism threat trends in Europe and around the world are increasingly affecting the situation in Latvia and the safety of our citizens abroad.
- During the reporting period, several residents of Latvia travelled to terrorist-controlled areas in Syria/Iraq. This creates long-term terrorism risks since the experience of other EU states shows that persons returning from conflict zones may become involved in terrorist activities at home.
- It is possible that other members of Latvia's Muslim community will follow the example of those who have already gone to Syria. In order to more effectively avert the risks posed by residents of Latvia joining Islamist terrorist groups in conflict zones, preventative legal mechanisms must be introduced to allow security services to act effectively against such travellers. Consistent and firm condemnation by leaders of Latvia's Muslim community of becoming involved in violent activities can also significantly help prevent radicalisation.
- It is anticipated that in 2016 more resources will have to be directed towards assessing asylum seekers since asylum seekers residing in other EU countries are beginning to visit Latvia. To ensure more comprehensive evaluation, DP will cooperate closely with other state institutions, foreign partner services and international bodies.
- Implementation of a Passenger Data Registration system was a new area of activity in 2016, which expands DP's ability to promptly identify terrorism - related travellers to conflict zones.

5. Economic security

In order to protect the country's economic sovereignty, DP performs counter intelligence and operational measures to identify processes causing threats to national economic interests. DP informs top state officials and responsible institutions about the detected risks.

During the reporting period, economic relations between the West and Russia continued to be strained following Russia's annexation of Crimea. Bilateral economic sanctions were extended in 2015, and Russia continued its propaganda campaign about the "devastating effect" of the sanctions on Latvia's economy. Considering that Latvia experienced economic growth last year, the real objective of this message was probably to cause public dissatisfaction and put pressure on Latvian decision makers to lift the sanctions. However, during the reporting period there was little public discussion of the sanctions issue.

DP considers that the most significant risks to national economic interests in 2015 continued to be posed by attempts by foreign interest to gain control of strategic Latvian enterprises in order to exploit their dominant market position to influence political processes in Latvia. At the same time, as Latvian high technology firms and research centres become more competitive the risk of economic espionage increases as foreign interests seek information about technologies created or used in Latvia.

5.1. Energy security

Despite political friction, Russia remains an important partner for both Latvia and the EU as a whole for supplying energy. For a long time Russia has been Latvia's sole source of natural gas, so one of the most important events relating to economic security in the reporting period was the further passage through Parliament of amendments to the Energy Law stipulating that the gas market must be liberalised by 3 April 2017. The adoption of the amendments was opposed by some managers of a "Latvijas gāze", who wanted to delay the deadline for liberalisation to 2019.

Opponents of the Energy Law actively lobbied both the institution regulating the gas market and political parties. While there was a reduction in the use of the mass media to promote the opponents' agenda, a new phenomenon is the recruitment of experts from state institutions by the market player shortly before significant decisions affecting the sector are made. Nevertheless, despite active lobbying for the deferral of the market liberalisation deadline, the amendments were adopted by Parliament on their final reading in 2016. This is a significant advance in ensuring energy security since it will reduce dependency on a single supplier. At the same time, in order for gas market liberalisation to have a real impact on energy independence, it is vital that this process is not just a formality and new players really enter the market.

Joint EU energy policy initiatives are another significant boost to Latvia's energy security. During the reporting period, the European Commission issued a directive that by 2020 the European Energy Union must ensure the functioning of a common EU internal energy market. The establishment of such a union is a positive development for Latvia as it provides a platform for further unifying and integrating European energy market. However, in practice the common EU energy initiatives encountered obstacles during the reporting period. For example, the adoption of the EU Energy Security Strategy Report was suspended shortly before a crucial vote in the European Parliament. This report includes a requirement to end the energy isolation of the Baltic countries as soon as possible and to open the common energy market to ensure consumers get the lowest prices. EU common energy policy initiatives can significantly restrict the capacity of Russia's political elite to exploit energy prices and supplies as levers to secure favourable decisions from member states.

5.2. The transport sector

Together with control of the natural gas market, Russia also retains significant influence over Latvia's transit sector. However, despite strained political relations and public pronouncements on rerouting shipments to ports in Russia, there were no significant fluctuations in cargo volumes transhipped through Latvian ports during the reporting period. Moreover, last year Russian entrepreneurs continued investing in Latvia's transit sector, indicating that they plan to continue using Latvian ports in future. At the same time, our economic security may be negatively affected by the fact that some of the owners of companies partnering Latvian ports have ties to Russia's political elite. This creates the risk that if Russia's political elite decides to reroute cargoes to other ports, enterprises loyal to them will probably follow such instructions even if this brings financial losses.



Illustrative photo

Changes in the management of public holding company "Latvijas dzelzceļš" and Russia's railway enterprise "Российские железные дороги" created uncertainty in the second half of 2015 in Latvia's transit sector concerning future volumes of cargo from

Russia and concerns about a decline in volumes in 2016. These concerns were realised regarding cargo volumes in Latvian ports in the first few months of 2016. Russian officials have spoken previously about plans to reorient shipments to Russian ports, but the main brake on such plans to date has been inadequate railway infrastructure in Russia. Therefore diversifying the countries of origin of cargoes remains an important aspect in reducing economic security risks, but little progress was made in this regard during the reporting period.

5.3. Residence permits in exchange for investment

During the reporting period there was reduced interest by foreigners in the program of residence permits in exchange for investment in Latvia pursuant to paragraphs 28, 29, 30 and 31 of Article 23.1 of the Immigration Law⁶. This was largely due to the worsening economic situation in Russia and the devaluation of the rouble. Interest was also affected by the increase in the required amount of real estate investment from 150 000 euros to 250 000 euros, however at the end of the reporting period fewer foreigners also wished to obtain residence permits in exchange for investments in business or financial investments.

⁶ Paragraph 28 of Article 23.1 of the Immigration Law stipulates that residence permits may be issued for a term not exceeding five years on the basis of a person investing at least 35 000 EUR in a company's equity. Article 29 stipulates they may be issued if a person purchases real estate in Latvia valued at not less than 250 000 EUR, while Article 30 stipulates that they may be issued if a person has obligations with a Republic of Latvia credit institution to an amount not less than 280 000 EUR for a term not less than five years. Article 31 which entered into force on 1 January 2015 stipulates that residence permits may be issued for a term not exceeding five years on the basis of investments in interest free government bonds if the person purchases specific government bonds for a nominal value of 250 000 EUR and pays 25 000 EUR to the state budget.

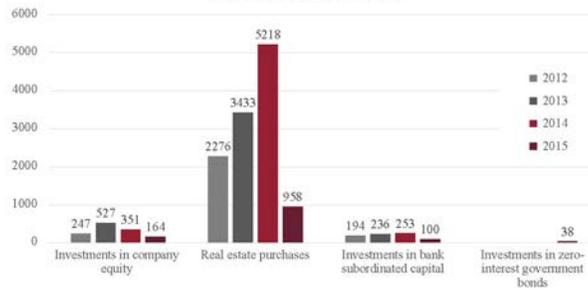
In total 1,260 residence permits were issued in 2015 under this program. The bulk of interest by foreigners was still for residence permits in exchange for investments in real estate. During the reporting period 958 residence permits were issued in exchange for investments in real estate, compared with 164 for investments in business, 100 for financial investments and 38 for investments in government bonds.

During the reporting period, the largest group of persons requesting residency permits were citizens of Russia (61% of all residency permit requests). The second largest group of persons requesting residency permits were citizens of Ukraine (13%), followed by the People's Republic of China (10%), Kazakhstan (5%), Uzbekistan (4%), Azerbaijan (3%) and Egypt (1%).

In 2015, after checking applications received DP recommended not issuing residence permits to 38 foreigners, four times the number for 2014. This increase is connected with the strengthening of DP's capacity in the residence permit sphere, as well as a drop in the total number of residence permit applications, allowing DP to assess the risks posed by every applicant in much greater detail.

During the reporting period in around 60% of cases DP decided not to issue residence permits to foreigners due to established economic risks, for example there were suspicions of money laundering, the person was facing criminal charges in their home country for economic crimes etc. In 30% of cases national security risks were identified i.e. there were suspicions that the applicants might misuse their residence permit to conduct espionage activities against Latvia's interests, or the person is connected with Russia's compatriot policy or is involved in international organised crime activities.

RESIDENCY PERMIT REQUESTS BY INVESTMENT TYPE



In 2015 DP began to re-assess those foreigners who had received residence permits five years before and who needed re-registration. In the course of these checks DP ruled that residence permits should be annulled for 25 persons.

DP considers that the 2015 results show that the reinforcement of the services capabilities and changes to laws

have achieved their intended effect i.e. checks of applicants have become more effective and opportunities to use this program for fictitious purposes have been reduced. Thus a balance has been achieved between the need to attract foreign investors for Latvia's economic growth and protecting national security.

Conclusions and outlook

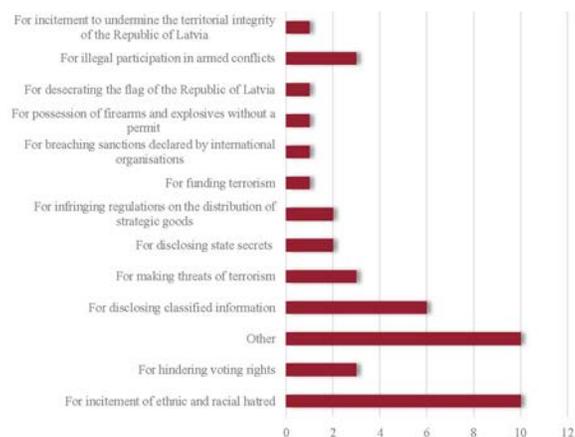
- During the reporting period, the amendments to the Energy Law stipulating liberalisation of the natural gas market from 3 April 2017 will reduce dependence on a single supplier, thereby strengthening Latvia's energy security. However this will only happen if market liberalisation is substantial and not merely a formality.
- The total volume of cargo transhipped through Latvian ports did not change significantly last year, with cargoes originating in Russia retaining a significant position in the total volume. Considering that Russian officials have repeatedly declared their intention to reorient cargoes to ports in Russia, insufficient progress by Latvian port in diversifying their cargoes can have a negative effect on economic security in the long term.
- During the reporting period there was reduced interest by foreigners in obtaining residency permits in exchange for investing in Latvia's economy. This was due to the economic situation in Russia as well as an increase in the required amount of investment in real estate.
- Last year there was a significant increase in the number of foreigners denied the right to obtain residency in exchange for investments due to security concerns. This was due to an earlier government decision to increase DP's capacity in this sphere, resulting in more effective checks by DP.
- DP considers that the current rules for issuing residency permits ensure a balance between the need to attract foreign investment and protecting national security. Considering that over the next few years significant numbers of foreigners will need to re-register the residency permits they received five years previously, changes in the current rules are not desirable as this would negatively affect DP's ability to perform detailed and effective checks of persons. This would also increase the risk that persons threatening the security of Latvia or its allies could enter and reside in Latvia and other EU countries under the cover of this program.

6. Pre-trial investigation

DP is the only one of the three Latvian security services which also conducts pre-trial investigations alongside its counter intelligence and operational work. DP investigates criminal acts which threaten national security (for example crimes against the state, its constitutional order, territorial integrity, criminal acts within state intelligence and security bodies, espionage, illegal participation in an armed conflict, terrorism, revealing state secrets etc.) or which the general prosecutor assigns to DP.

During the reporting period DP initiated proceedings in 36 criminal cases, and another eight criminal cases were assigned to it from other institutions in accordance with institutional jurisdiction. The criminal proceedings were initiated based on information obtained by DP, submissions by natural persons or legal entities and information provided by other law enforcement institutions, as well as through separating such cases from other cases in the files of DP and General Prosecutor's Office.

NUMBER OF CRIMINAL CASES INITIATED
IN 2015



In 2015 DP initiated the first ever criminal proceedings pursuant to Article 77¹ of the Criminal Law, which stipulates criminal liability for illegal participation in an armed conflict abroad. Considering that residents of Latvia continue to be illegally involved in an armed conflict abroad, the legislature's decision to criminalise such activities significantly improves DP's ability to use criminal justice instruments against the threat

to Latvia's security and possibly that of other European states posed by returnees from conflict regions.

During the reporting period, DP forwarded 23 criminal cases to prosecutors to commence criminal interrogation, of which two were returned for additional investigation. In total, last year DP recommended criminal interrogation of 48 persons, of whom 13 were officials of state institutions from various sectors.

Criminal interrogation was initiated for publicly calling for the liquidation of Latvia's state sovereignty with the purpose of incorporating Latvia in another state, deliberate disclosure of state secrets, deliberate hindering of a person's right to freely vote in Parliamentary elections, incitement of ethnic hatred (on internet news sites and in social media), illegal transportation of strategic goods across the borders of the Republic of Latvia and other criminal acts.

In 2015 DP terminated criminal proceedings in 18 cases. In 15 cases the decision was made because investigations did not

uncover evidence of criminality, while in three cases the statute of limitations had expired. A further 11 criminal cases were forwarded to the State Police.

During the reporting period, DP investigators received five requests for legal assistance from foreign law enforcement bodies, and DP also participated in an international investigation group.

At the start of 2016, DP had 86 criminal cases on its files, including 27 criminal cases initiated in 2015.

7. Protection of dignitaries

DP is responsible for providing security for Latvia's prime minister and speaker of Parliament, as well as for officials from foreign governments and international organisations visiting Latvia.⁷ Furthermore, in the first half of 2015 DP was the institution responsible for security at high level events during Latvia's Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

During the reporting period, DP provided security for Latvia's prime minister and the speaker of Parliament during public events and foreign visits by the aforementioned officials. Last year DP provided security for the speaker during 16 foreign visits and 23 visits within Latvia, and for 15 foreign and



⁷ Security for the Republic of Latvia State President and protected officials of foreign military and international defence organisations is provided by the National Armed Forces unit the Military Police.

21 national visits for the prime minister. DP also provided security for both officials at 19 public events.

Last year DP also planned and implemented security for 51 foreign officials visiting Latvia. In connection with Latvia's Presidency of the Council of the EU, in conjunction with other institutions DP was responsible for planning, coordinating and implementing security at 25 events, in the course of which security was provided for 654 officials. During the Presidency DP also provided close protection for 125 officials visiting Latvia.

In terms of planning and providing security, the biggest challenge in DP's history was the Eastern Partnership Summit held in Riga during the Presidency. In total 66 officials requiring security took part in this event, and their security was ensured by DP, Military Police and State Police. Moreover, compared with the 2006 NATO Summit in which a similar number of protected officials took part, much fewer restrictive measures were put in place during the Eastern Partnership Summit so as not to inconvenience residents and visitors to the city as much.

Despite the large number of events during the Presidency and the intensity of the work involved, the fact that no security incidents were recorded during the Presidency testifies to the effective cooperation between DP and other institutions involved in providing security. DP would also like to thank all the residents and guests of Riga for the success of this event for showing understanding of the job of DP and other bodies to protect visiting foreign officials.

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TOOLS OF DESTABILIZATION
RUSSIAN SOFT POWER AND NON-MILITARY INFLUENCE IN THE
BALTIC STATES



Tools of Destabilization

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

Mike Winnerstig [ed.]

Mike Winnerstig [ed.]

Tools of Destabilization

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

Bild/Cover: Mikhail Metzel/TT

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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 landet 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

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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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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

FOI-R-3990-SE

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

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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 or 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.

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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.

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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 Pelinš, 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/bdcomp/nsosndoc.nsf/e2f289bea62097f9c325787a0034e255/a2fd6cef39f6706944257ba600461abb1OpenDocument>.

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 tiotårsperspektiv* [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/bdcomp/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/076389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D.

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 Peltnens, op. cit. (2009): 19, 27.

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

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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

²³Grigorev, Maksim & Ordzhonikidze, Sergei (2013), ‘Soft power: protivodeistvovat manipulatsiam’, Rossiiskoe federalnoe izdanie “VVP”, No 4 (82) 2013. http://www.oprf.ru/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 meniauchshisia 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 slozhilos 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): *Strategiya natsionalnoi bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federatsii do 2020 goda*, http://president.kremlin.ru/ref_notes/424.

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

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

³⁶ *Gosudarstvennaia programma RF "Vneshnepoliticheskaia deiatel'nost'"*, <http://www.mid.ru/bdcmp/activity.nsf/070C680302CAF0CC744257B4000450BF3>.

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

⁴¹ Pravitelstvennaia komissiiia, <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/newslines/1ED8A7DD4E137C7844257ACC0031D3FC, p. 3.

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

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

⁴⁵ Rossotrudnichestvo (2012): Plan Federalnogo agenstva po delam Soderuzhestva Nezavisimyykh 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/newslines/1ED8A7DD4E137C7844257ACC0031D3FC.

⁴⁷ Russkii mir (2013) *Katalog russkikh tsentrov*, <http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/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 *Rosstrudnichestvo* 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

Rosstrudnichestvo'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 Pervozvannyi 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. *Rosstrudnichestvo* 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 deiatel'nosti Ministerstva inostrannykh del Rossiiskoi Federatsii na period do 2018, <http://www.mid.ru/bdcmp/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 *Rosstrudnichestvo* 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/bnp_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.

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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

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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 Rossiyskoy Federatsii*, March 27, http://www.mid.ru/bnp_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.

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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/0/70c680302caf0cc744257b4000450bE3/\\$FILE/foreign_policy_activity.pdf](http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/activity.nsf/0/70c680302caf0cc744257b4000450bE3/$FILE/foreign_policy_activity.pdf) [originally in Russian].

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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

⁷¹ Estonian 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>

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

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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

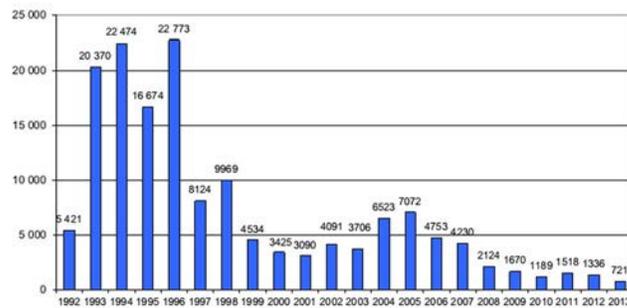
⁷³ Kruusvall Juri, Vetik Raivo, Berry W. John (2009): *The Strategies of Inter-Ethnic Adaptation of Estonian Russians*, Studies of Transition States and Societies, Vol 1.

⁷⁴ Juhan Kivirahk, Nerjūs Maliukevičius, Dmytro Kondratenko, Olexandr Yermeev, Radu Vrabie, Nana Devdariani, Mariam Tsatsanashvili, Nato Bachiashvili, Tengiz Pkhaladze, Gatis Pelnēns, Andis Kudors, Mārtiņš Papiņskis, Ainārs Dimants, Ainārs Lethis (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>>

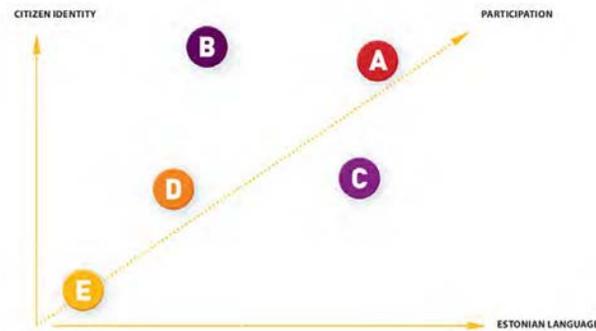
⁷⁶ See *Estonian Integration Monitoring 2011*, http://www.praxis.ee/fileadmin/tamo/Projektid/Valitsemine_ja_kodanike%C3%BChiskond/Artiklid/Integratsiooni_monitoring_2011_ENG_lyhiversioon.pdf.

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

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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/Valitsmine_ja_kodanike%C3%BChiskond/Artiklid/Integratsiooni_monitoring_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, Geri (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*.

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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 *Rossostrudnichestvo*, 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 *Rossostrudnichestvo*, 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, *Rossostrudnichestvo* 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.ruskiimir.ru/ruskiimir/en/publications/articles/article0354.html>>.

⁸² See <http://ruskiimir.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 Natsizma*, 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/.

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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 *Baltitskiy 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/bdcomp/brp_4.nsf/e78a48070f128a7b4325699005bcb3/c387a51ee5b1188c32572de0044c1ea!OpenDocument>.

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

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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.eestielu.ca/et/arvamus/kommentaari/105-estonian-life/opinion/opinion/laas-leivat/504-party-politics-hinders-estonian-language-acquisition-by-russian-students>

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

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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 at⁹⁹ <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.

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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 [«Русский Век»: портал «Baltija» прорвал информационную блокаду Русской общины в Эстонии], 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 Sootchestvennikov za Rubezhem], November 2008, http://ricolor.org/rus/rus_mir/sootchestvenniki/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 poseitil 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>.

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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 *Tsentr* 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/eesiti/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/paevaundised/eesiti/loe-kapo-aruanne-savisaare-rahakusimise-kohta.d?id=37038965>

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showed a propaganda film about Edgar Savisaar.¹¹⁶ People are able to watch *Tsentri* 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 Mikko 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_FULCKA.

¹¹⁷ Mikko 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 Ühikool.

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.

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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 Estonia.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 (določvje 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/teleaditooriumi-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/>.

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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.

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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, [Obuchenie 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

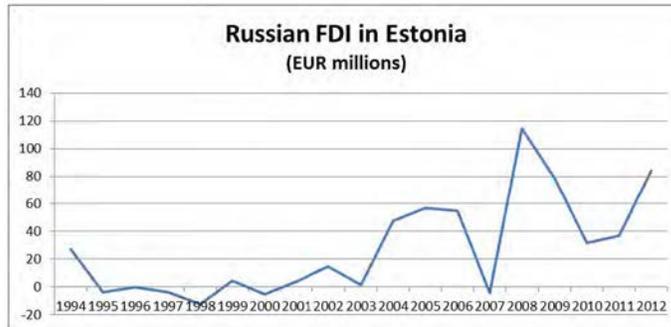
Since Estonia regained its independence, its economic relations with its largest neighbour have gone through four distinct phases.¹⁴⁸ The initial phase, between 1991 and 1994, saw a decoupling of the economies and witnessed a sharp decline in Russia's share of the Estonian economy. This divorce was followed 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-us-kirik-hingerahu-teenindusmaja.d?id=66874847>

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

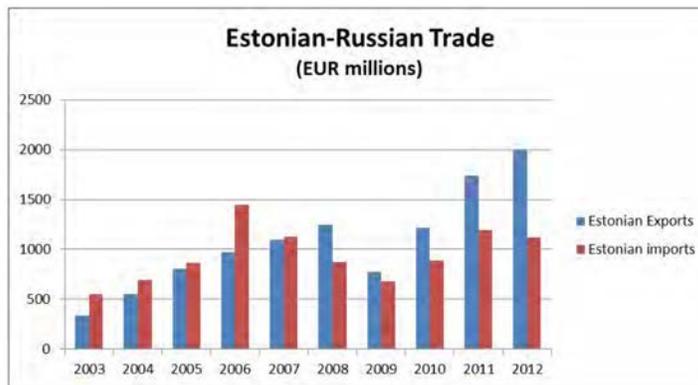
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Diagram 2: Russian FDI in Estonia



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.

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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.

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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=fd9b9f478-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c95c702d4c-fd9b9f478-307768685.

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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.

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(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 Võrguteenus, 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 Itera 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.

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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

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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.*

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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>.

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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, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 30 October 2008, available at <http://www.mid.ru/bdmp/ns-dgpcn.nsf/bab3e4309e31451cc325710e004812c0/432569ee00522d3cc32574f2002d1ca0!OpenDocument>, last accessed on 1 November 2013.

¹⁷⁵ Lavrov S. (2011): *About Compatriots*, available at <http://www.pomnirossiu.ru/about/obrasnenie-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, 2005/2009: 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.

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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 *Rossotrudnichestvo*, 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.

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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 Porina 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>.

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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" » "Provizorisks rezultāts"*, 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-ninkevics-mudina-lavrovu-iezpaties-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>.

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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/aeiroga>.

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/aeiroga>.

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

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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-169999>.

Centre requested evidence from Vike-Freiberga, 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>.

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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.saskanascents.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.

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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://lbma.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.

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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, *JR*, <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, *JR*, <https://www.ir.lv/2013/6/27/usakova-e-pastu-publikosanas-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_zumalists_jakobsons_patiaban_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-iekšlietu-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>.

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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%20%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.*

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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/bdcomp/ns-dpgh.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 Pelens 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 Pelens 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 Pelens G., [ed.] (2010): op cit.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., p.173.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

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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: *Rossiya-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 Pelens 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%20skaitis>.

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.

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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 Pelens 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 Pelens 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.

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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/faunatne/petijumi/Cela_uz_pilsonisku_sabiedribu_06112008%5B1%5D%5B1%5D.pdf.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Dribins L., (ed.), *Pretestība sabiedrības integrācijai: cēloņi un sekas*. Riga: 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.*

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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, *Delovaya Rossia*, <http://www.deloros.ru/main.php?mid=249&doc=24202>.

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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.

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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 Zelīns A. (2012): *op. cit.* p.129.

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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/#.UtuSLtSxXIU>.

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.*

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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

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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

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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)

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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 Pelens, 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?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.

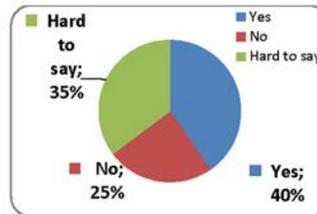
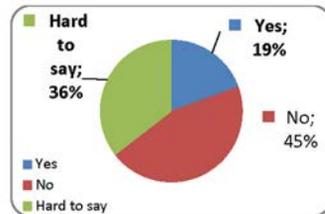
and its political organizations are perceived positively by the Russian-speakers in these countries. As is noted above, the Centre Party in Estonia even has a cooperation agreement with the pro-Kremlin ruling party in Russia, United Russia.³⁶⁵ In Lithuania, the political mobilization of Russian-speakers 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 behaviour ³⁶⁷

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_ustaski_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 Intervyū direktora Departamenta po rabote s sootchestvennikami MID Rossii A.V. Chepurina. "Vnesheekonomicheskiye 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/>.

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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>.

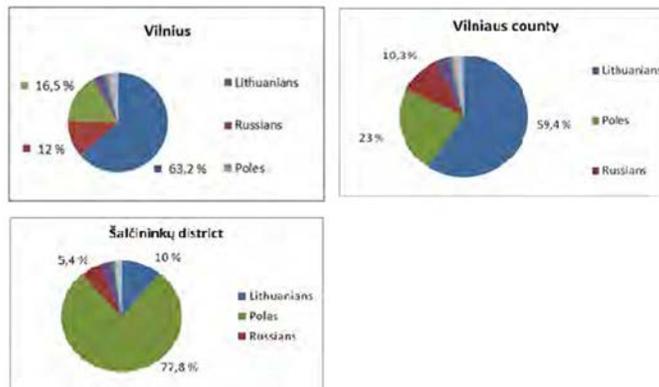
³⁷⁷ <http://ruvek.ru/?module=issues&action=view&ids=4&id=198>.

³⁷⁸ See <http://www.lrytas.lt/-/13020769341301348003-v-toma%C5%A1evskis-tai-j%C5%ABs-turite-%C5%A1itame-kra%C5%A1te-integuotis-papildyta-13-val-34-min.htm#.UpslGsQW01Y>.

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Diagram 5: Ethnic strongholds³⁷⁹

Polish electoral strongholds (composition by ethnicity)



Russian electoral strongholds (composition by ethnicity)

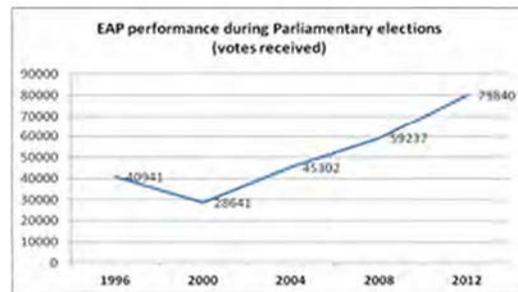


Since the 2012 parliamentary elections, when the EAP performed historically well, the party has been a member of the coalition government and has its say on questions of national strategic importance. In 2013 Voldemar Tomashevski was sceptical about Lithuania's official goal of adopting the euro by 2015,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

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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.lithuaniantribune.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/m-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.lithuaniantribune.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/>.

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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

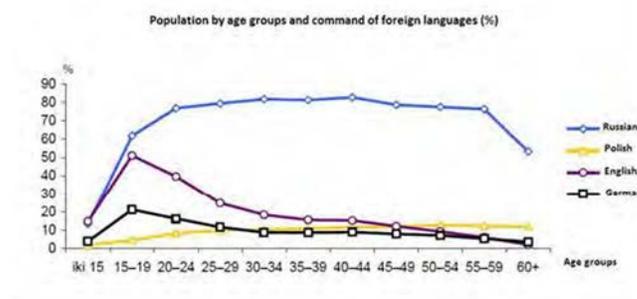
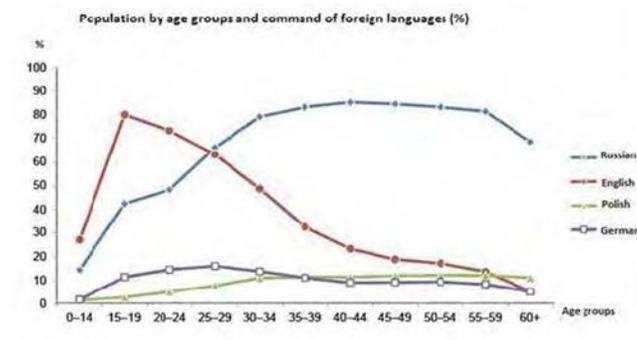


Diagram 8: Lithuanian Census 2011.³⁹³



Russia's Compatriots Policy therefore does not limit itself to ethnic Russians. Ethnic Ukrainians, Belarusians, Poles and other minorities in Lithuania are

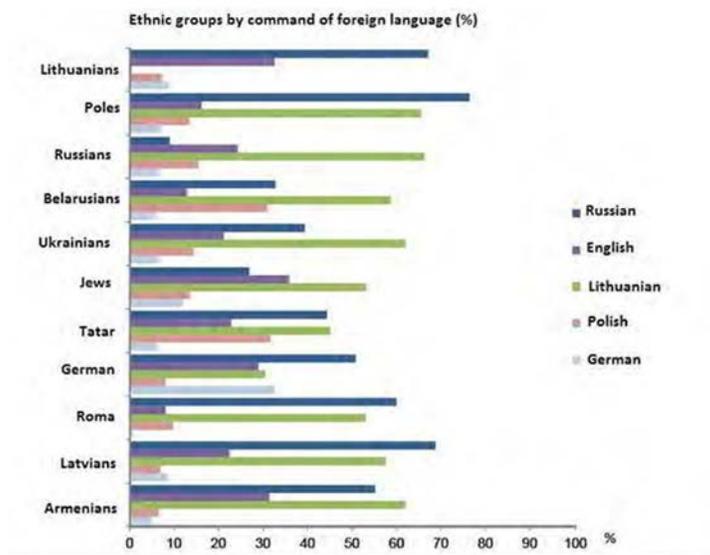
³⁹¹ See „Russky yazyk v novykh nezavisimykh gosudarstvakh”, www.fundeht.org/html/t/library.xml?s=-1&lang=ru&nic=library.

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



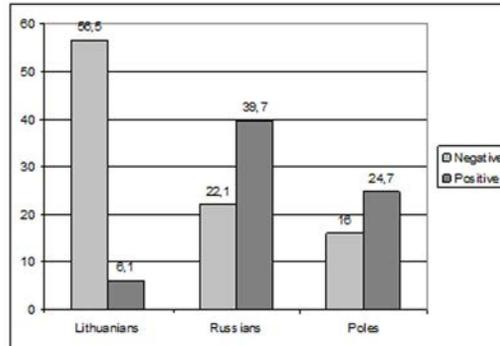
More generally, the Russian Compatriots Policy targets the common post-Soviet legacy, including nostalgia and symbols of the past that transcend political boundaries. A 2007 survey by the Civil Society Institute showed that a positive or negative attitude to the Soviet Union, modern Russia and Belarus 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., Malūkevičius N., Degutis, M. (2007): op. cit. p 24.

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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., Malūkevičius N., Degutis, M. (2007): op. cit.

³⁹⁷ See *Programma raboty s sootchestvennikami, prozhivayushchimi za rubezhom, na 2012 - 2014 gody* <http://ks.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 zasedaniya Doma Moskvy”, *Lenta.ru*, (2008-06-06) <http://reality.lenta.ru/news/2008/06/06/haus>.

³⁹⁹ See <http://www.mkdc.lt/>.

⁴⁰⁰ See “V pomoshch rossyskomu sootchestvenniku za rubezhom: 2012 – 2013 (*Spravochnyye izdaniye*)”, <http://www.materik.ru/upload/iblock/210/210725212794020711ca1d1e6c497dc9.pdf>.

⁴⁰¹ See <http://www.russkiimir.ru/russkiimir/ru/catalogue/>.

⁴⁰² See <http://www.rusorg.lt/>.

⁴⁰³ See <http://rusmir.lt/>.

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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 – paralyziuoti 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 rusišku 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.

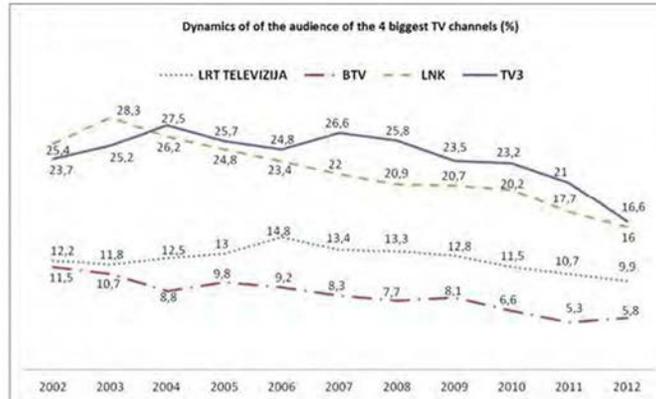
⁴¹⁰ See “SSD warns of Russia’s new information attacks against Lithuania”, *Lithuanian Tribune* (2013-10-31), <http://www.lithuaniantribune.com/55569/ssd-warns-of-russias-new-information-attacks-against-lithuania-20135569/>.

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).

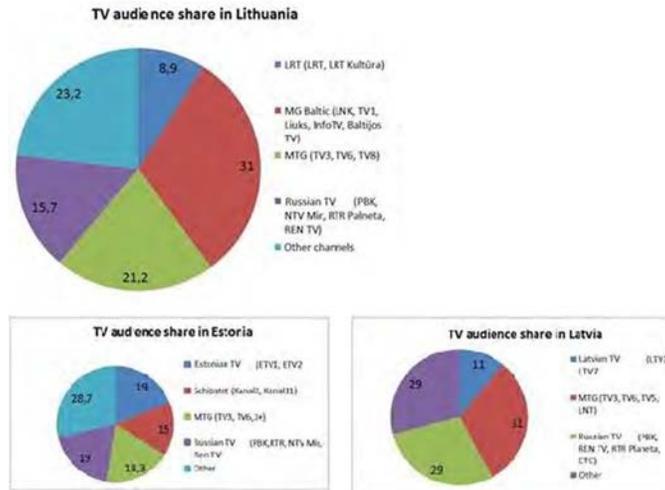
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Diagram 11: Dynamics of the audience for the biggest television channels⁴¹³



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.lv/>.

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.

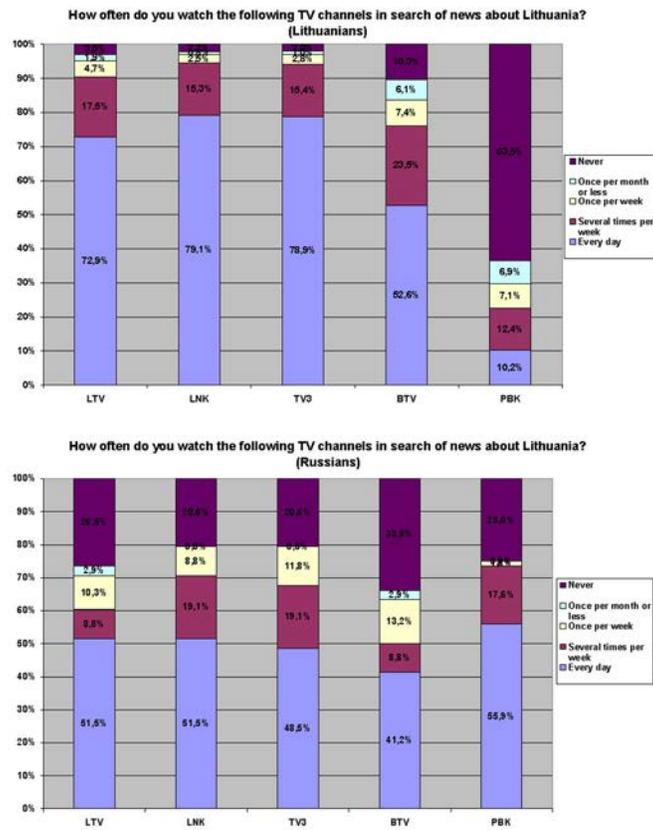
It is not just a matter of Russian television channels taking a share of the audience in the Lithuanian information environment. Russian media production makes up a considerable portion of the television programmes on the major Lithuanian television channels, such as LNK and TV3. When their revenues 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.universitetozurnalistas.kf.vu.lt/2013/06/k-petrauskis-viesaja-erdve-rusijos-itakai-dovanojame-patys/>.

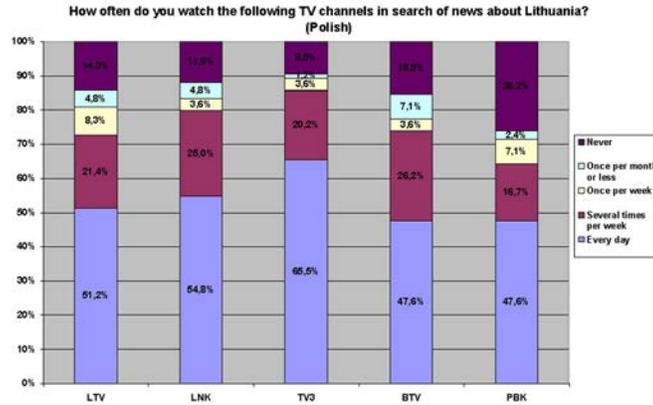
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through the Russian media. A survey conducted in 2007 showed interesting trends in news-watching by nationality (see Figure 5.10).

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.

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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 mezdu 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_obvestva.

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.

		Yesterday and Today)	
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 ; Baltysky tsentr istoricheskikh i sotsialno-politicheskikh issledovaniy (Riga, Latviya) ⁴³⁰
2007	Book	„Pribaltysky fashizm” (<i>Baltic fascism</i>)	Mikhail Krysin, “Veche”

⁴²⁴ See Rossyskoye posolstvo v Estonii: kritiki antifashistskogo filma zanimayut predvzyatuyu pozitsiyu, www.regnum.ru/news/755581.html.

⁴²⁵ See Ingvor Byarenklau, Kremlevskiy dengi pronikayut v estonskuyu politiku, veneportaal.ee/politika/02/07020701.htm.

⁴²⁶ See <http://militera.lib.ru/docs/da/latviya/index.html>.

⁴²⁷ See <http://militera.lib.ru/docs/da/estii/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)

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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 spetsshzhb“. See http://www.lubyanka.org/veteranskie_organizacii/obwestvo_izucheniya_istorii_otchestvennyh_s_pesluzhb/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>.

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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 Malmlöf, 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.emnin.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.lithuaniantribune.com/55782/interview-with-the-ceo-of-hoegh-lng-201355782/>.

⁴⁴² See "Opinion: Why is the ruling coalition so afraid to win the arbitrage against Gazprom?", *Lithuanian Tribune* (2013-09-06), <http://www.lithuaniantribune.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.lithuaniantribune.com/53648/opinion-zapad-2013-observations-and-perspectives-201353648/>.

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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 *Rossotrudnichestvo*, 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-idUKBRE9AP0C320131126>.

⁴⁴⁹ See Putin, Vladimir. *Rossiia i menyayushchysya mir. Moskovskiy novosti*, (2012-02-27), <http://mn.ru/politics/20120227/312306749.html>.

⁴⁵⁰ Kosachev, Konstantin (2012): „Rossii nuzhny novyye podkhody k “myagkoy sile”. *Rosssyskaya 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

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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

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The Russian aggression against Ukraine has generated considerable concerns 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 in many ways the 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. This report analyses the Russian use of these means of influence in the Baltic states during the last five 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 actors, backed 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 political entities, and c) interference in the domestic political affairs of the Baltic states. All this is reinforced by systematic Russian attempts to portray the Baltic states as "fascist". As a whole, Russian strategy seems to be actively using soft power and non-military influence as tools of destabilization against 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.



SUBCOMMITTEE RECESS

Senator GRAHAM. The hearing is adjourned.
[Whereupon, at 4:12 p.m., Tuesday, March 7, the subcommittee was recessed, to reconvene subject to the call of the Chair.]