Minority Politics in Latvia and Estonia

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Introduction

In the Eastern Enlargement of 2004 the European Union expanded from 15 to 25 member states. It marked the first time that countries of the former Soviet Union (Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia) joined the European Union. The EU expansion also meant that the European Union would directly border the Russian Federation. This brought a whole set of new problems to the European Union. At the moment of expansion Russia had not agreed to ratify border treaties with either Latvia or Estonia. There is also the major issue of the large Russian minority in both Latvia and Estonia. This paper will explain the historical and geopolitical significance of the Russian minority in Latvia and Estonia. The paper will focus on Estonia and Latvia. Lithuania, has only a small Russian minority and is therefore not of significance to this paper.

Chapter 1 will explain the historical background of the Russian minority in the Baltic States. The Baltic States became part of the Soviet Union following the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact of 1939 that divided Eastern Europe into a Soviet and a German sphere of influence. During World War II the Baltic States were briefly “liberated” by German troops, but after war the Baltic States again became part of the Soviet Union. After the war the Soviet Union began to heavily industrialize the Baltic States. The labour needed for the industrialization was brought in from the Soviet Union and was mostly Russian-speaking. The immigration of a large Russian-speaking minority changed the social makeup of the Baltic States. It also led to a marginalization of the Baltic languages. The Baltic States became not only demographically Russified but also socially, as the Russian language also dominated the arts and culture of the Baltic States. In the 1980s the Soviet Union planned several large mining and construction projects in Latvia and Estonia. These projects were opposed by the Baltic

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1 Fraser Cameron, *An Introduction to European Foreign Policy*, (London, 2008), 64.
2 Ibid. 64
communities since they were harmful to the environment, but also would have meant a greater influx of Russian workers into the Baltic States.\textsuperscript{5} The continued Russification of the Baltic States led to a call of independence by the Baltic States. This was made possible by the Glasnost and Perestroika ideology of Mikhail Gorbachev.\textsuperscript{6} The independence movements in the Baltic States were especially fuelled by the continued Russification of Latvia and Estonia. In 1991, after the breakup of the Soviet Union, both Latvia and Estonia became independent states. Chapter 1 will explain the Russification of the Baltic States, and the demographic shifts caused by the Russification of the Baltic States. Furthermore the Chapter will outline Latvia’s and Estonia’s struggle to gain independence from the Soviet Union, which was finally achieved when the Soviet Union ceased to exist in 1991.

Chapter 2 will deal with the politics of independent Latvia and Estonia. The focus will especially be on the early 1990s and the de-Russification policy of both states. Because of the Soviet policy of Russification both states had large Russian minorities living within their borders. The large Russian-speaking minority was therefore at the center of national politics in the 1990s. The sizeable Russian minorities in both states meant that Latvia’s and Estonia’s nation building would be extremely difficult. Both countries came up with elaborate citizenship, language, and education laws in order to integrate their large Russian minorities. This chapter will examine the citizenship and language policies after independence. Furthermore the chapter will deal with the nationalization policies of the Baltic States after 1991. The response by the Russian community of Latvia and Estonia to the nationalization process of the Baltic States will also be discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 3 deals with the response of international organizations (such as the EU or OSCE) and the Russian Federation to the minority politics of the Baltic States. Russia in particular criticized the Baltic States for their minority politics. In the light of EU accession


\textsuperscript{6} Michael Garleff, \textit{Die baltischen Länder}, (Regensburg, 2001), 180.
both states invited foreign observers to judge the minority politics. This chapter mainly deals with Latvia’s and Estonia’s liberalization of citizenship laws, in response to international pressure by the European Union, OSCE and the Russian Federation. Furthermore this chapter will outline the challenges that Latvia and Estonia faced prior to European Union accession. Also it will outline the response of the Russian Federation to the minority politics in the Baltic States. The Russian Federation viewed the Baltic Sea Region as their sphere of influence. Therefore EU and NATO expansion into the Baltic States was seen with scorn in Moscow. This chapter of the thesis will examine the response of the international community to the minority politics of the Baltic States. There will be a particular focus on the reactions of the OSCE, the EU, NATO and the Russian Federation.

Chapter 4 will deal with the post-enlargement challenges following Latvia’s and Estonia’s accession into the European Union and NATO. A particular focus will be on the 2007 Statue Crisis in Estonia, which showed that despite a successful integration policy there were still remaining integration issues. Some Russophones in Latvia and Estonia felt that the integration process of the Baltic States was undermining their Russian identity. The chapter will analysis the response of the Russian minority to the Statue removal in Tallinn and also explain the Russian Federation’s response to the Statue Crisis. The chapter will then outline political representation of the Russian-minorities in Latvia and Estonia. What are the most significant Russian-speaking parties in Latvia and Estonia? What are the most important Russian-speaking non-governmental organizations? Furthermore it will explain the general relationship between the Russian Federation and the Baltic States, following the enlargement of the European Union and NATO into the Baltic States. This thesis thus focuses on the integration process of the Russian minorities of Latvia and Estonia. The challenges of creating a nation state that includes large Russian minorities, considered by Latvians and Estonians as their former oppressors, will be the main theme of this thesis.
Chapter 1: Russification of Soviet Latvia and Estonia

The Russian Minority in the Baltic was the result of the Soviet Union’s policy of Russification, which went hand in hand with Sovietisation. After World War II the Soviet Union began to establish heavy industry in the Baltic States, in particular Estonia and Latvia. Soviet deportations of the local elites of Latvia and Estonia to Siberia and Kazakhstan reduced the rural labour pool and made room for Russian workers. From 1945 to 1959, some 400,000 Russians and 100,000 people of other nationalities from the Soviet Union migrated into Latvia. The Latvians’ share of the population dropped from 83 per cent in 1945 to about 60 per cent in 1953, the year of Stalin’s death.\(^7\) 210,000 non-Estonians (most of them Russians) migrated to Estonia between 1945 and 1953. The Estonian share of the population dropped from 94 percent in 1945 to 72 percent in 1953.\(^8\) Along with the demographic Russification of the Baltic Union Republics also came the Russification of literature, arts and language, in both Latvia and Estonia.\(^9\) The Soviet policy of Russification continued to have an effect on the demographic, cultural, and educational landscape of Estonia and Latvia until the fall of Soviet Union and the subsequent independence of the Baltic States in 1991. This chapter will also deal with the consequences of the Russification policy on the political, cultural and educational landscape of the Baltic States. Furthermore it will discuss the attempts at overcoming the Russification policy in the nation building process of the late 1980s and early 1990s. What was the role of the Russian minority in the creation of modern Latvia and Estonia?

1.1 Post World War II Latvia and Estonia the Russian Migration

To place post-Soviet nation building and minority politics in Latvia and Estonia into context, it is important to understand the historical background of the Baltic States in the Soviet

\(^{7}\) Misiunas, and Taagepera, *The Baltic States*, 112.

\(^{8}\) *Ibid.* 112.

\(^{9}\) *Ibid.* 117.
Union. Estonians and Latvians were deeply influenced by the “years of dependence” between
1940 and 1991. The Baltic was illegally integrated into the Soviet Union in 1940, following
the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of August 1939. The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact divided Eastern
Europe into a German sphere of influence and a Soviet sphere of influence. In 1940 the Soviet
Union forced the Baltic States into becoming Union Republics of the Soviet Union. In Latvia
1940 is still remembered as “baigais gads” (year of terror), when Latvia lost more than 40,000
inhabitants to deportations and executions.\(^{10}\) The same procedure was repeated after World
War II. During the war the Baltic States were occupied by Nazi Germany, and many Estonian
and Latvians supported the German war effort. After the defeat of Nazi Germany the Soviet
authorities quelled any kind of resistance by the Balts against being reintegrated into the
USSR by deporting and executing (most of the executions took place between 1944 and 1952)
everyone who was suspected of collaboration with the Nazis.\(^ {11}\) Furthermore the Russians had
a deep distrust for the local population and therefore much of the ruling elite were brought in
from Russia. These cultural elites mainly consisted of ethnic Estonians or Latvians (since they
had command of the local languages) that had migrated to Russia before the brief
independence of the Baltic States in the inter-war years.\(^ {12}\) In the work *The Baltic States:
Years of Dependence 1940-1990* Romuald Misiunas and Rein Taagepera claim that those
“Russian Latvians” and “Russian Estonians” were considered just as foreign to the local
population as the Russians themselves, because most of them had lived in Russia for several
generations and were educated as Soviet citizens. Therefore the rule of those immigrant Balts
only emphasized the feeling of foreign rule of the Baltic States.\(^ {13}\) For the Balts those new
immigrants were an integral part of Russian rule.

The mass deportation of many ethnic Estonians and Latvians also resulted in the mass
immigration of Russian labour, because the Soviet authorities had to bring in labour to replace

\(^ {10}\) Daina, Stukuls Eglitis, *Imagining the Nation* (University Park, 2002), 6.
\(^ {11}\) Misiunas, and Taagepera, *The Baltic States*, 73.
\(^ {12}\) *Ibid*. 78.
\(^ {13}\) Ibid. 78.
deported Latvian and Estonian workers. After the war the Soviet authorities moved quickly to establish farming, mining, and oil production collectives in the newly conquered areas. For that end they established large towns in the Estonian province of Narva. Narva was of particular interest, because of the shale oil industry that was located there. Russian workers were brought in to build up the industry. Entire villages were constructed to house the massive influx of Russian workers; and towns like Sillamäe were founded during this period. The industrialization of the North-East of Estonia meant that Estonians were marginalized demographically in the region.\(^{14}\) The Soviet Union began with land reforms in Estonia, immediately after the “liberation” of Estonia by the Red Army. In 1944 all Nazi collaborators and speculators were disowned. According to Michael Garleff Collectivisation was stepped up in 1947 when 40,000 Estonians were deported, the amount of collective farms rose from 530 in 1947 to 3017 in 1949. The census of 1959 indicated that all agricultural production was collectivized. According to Garleff, the collectivisation led to an even further Russification of Estonia.\(^{15}\) Due to Estonia’s high productivity (by capita the highest in the Soviet Union in 1959) the Soviet government was able to establish a large farming industry. The high productivity meant that workers had to be imported from the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic in order to meet production goals. Estonia’s high living standard also meant that many Russians viewed a move to Estonia as desirable, and as a result the percentage of Russians living in Estonia kept growing.\(^{16}\) Russian migrants were sent to live in the Latvian SSR to secure Soviet rule as the USSR believed that Russian migrants would help establish socialism in Latvia.\(^{17}\) Furthermore Latvia was targeted as a zone of heavy industrial production. To meet industrial production, in the wake of the mass deportations of Latvians, Russian workers had to be brought in.\(^{18}\) Like in Estonia the Soviet

\(^{14}\) Cinis, Drémaité, and Kalm, “Perfect Representation of Soviet Planned Space”, 229.


\(^{17}\) Michael Garleff, *Die baltischen Länder*, 175.

\(^{18}\) Misiunas, and Taagepera, *The Baltic States*, 111.
central planning agency constructed industrial villages for farming but also for coal plants that mostly housed Russians. These villages often concentrated the vital industrial sectors of the two Soviet Republics (natural resources such as amber and gypsum, power plants etc.), which meant that the industrial sectors of the Soviet Republics was completely controlled and maintained by Russians. In Estonia and Latvia the process of Russian migration let to a two-people state.

1.2. Russification of the Baltic States

As the official Soviet Policy was determined by the principle of “national in form and socialist in content”, officially local customs, language, arts, and folklore were sponsored by the Communist Party. Yet the goal of the Soviet Union was to achieve a unified multinational Soviet-culture, which was dominated by Russian culture. The Russification of the day to day life was therefore an important means to fortify Soviet rule. Russification (some authors use the term Sovietisation) was achieved through different means. Propaganda, media, literature, art, and agitation were used to change the world view of the people of the Baltic States. Stalin’s social engineering was also applied to education. Old teachers were fired and replaced by teachers who graduated from Soviet universities. Education was an important means of enforcing Soviet power, and creating a new Soviet man. The schools in the Baltic States were reformed, and now offered new courses on Soviet history, geography, etc., but more importantly in the Russian language. Russian language courses were obligatory during the Stalin years, under Nikita Khrushchev as the new Secretary General of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. A school reform law passed in 1958 changed the language

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20 Ibid. 173.
education in schools. Russian became a voluntary language subject in Baltic Schools.\textsuperscript{22} However, according to Misiunas and Taagepera this education thaw did not change the Soviet policy of Russification. In reality the Soviet Union functioned in the Russian language, which forced non-Russian minorities of the USSR to learn Russian. Russians on the other hand felt no pressure to learn the Baltic languages.\textsuperscript{23} Aneta Pavlenko, explains that titular languages had the right of autonomy but not the right of equality.\textsuperscript{24} It was also the official policy in the Soviet Union that Russian had to be spoken if a Russian-speaking person was involved in a conversation.\textsuperscript{25} This policy in particular encouraged Russians not to integrate into Baltic society, because they could afford to be monolingual.\textsuperscript{26} The education and language policies of the Soviet Union led to a fragmentation of Estonian and Latvian societies, into a large indigenous Baltic population, and a large Russian settlement population (who did not feel the need to integrate).

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, immigration of more Russian speakers, coupled with emigration of Latvians and Estonians to the Russian SFSR and the west, led to a further demographic decline of Estonians and Latvians in their respective Republics.\textsuperscript{27} Statistics provided by Misiunas and Taagepera show

\begin{quote}
"the threat of demographic denationalization of the two republics, reaching alarming proportions in 1970: about 11,000 immigrants entered Estonia in that year, compared to a natural increase of about 2,500 Estonians and 4,000 non-Estonians. In Latvia immigration peaked in 1973-4, with a net inflow of 15,000, compared to a natural increase of about 2,000 Latvians and 4,000 non-Latvians."\textsuperscript{28}
\end{quote}

In 1963 there were 100 arrivals (of Russians or Russianized members of the Soviet nations) for every 72 departures in Baltic cities. By 1980 immigration had increased to 100 arrivals for

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Misiunas, Taagepera, \textit{The Baltic States}, 195.
\item \textit{Ibid.} 195.
\item Aneta, Pavlenko, \textit{Multilingualism in Post-Soviet countries}, (Bristol, 2008), 8.
\item Pavlenko, \textit{Multilingualism in Post-Soviet countries}, 8.
\item Misiunas, Taagepera. \textit{The Baltic States}, 215.
\item \textit{Ibid.} 215.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
90 departures.\textsuperscript{29} Those new arrivals were mostly young Russians seeking social advancement by moving to the relatively wealthy Baltic Republics. The Balts considered Russians to be “guests who chose largely to ignore the republic’s language and culture and expected their hosts to adjust themselves.”\textsuperscript{30} Many Russians also believed that their stay would be temporary and that they would return to Russia eventually. The working language of the Soviet Union was Russian: banking, statistics, the militia (Soviet police), the railway, air transport, naval operations and the military etc. all operated in the Russian language.\textsuperscript{31} This policy furthered the functional supremacy of Russians in the Baltic, creating a Russian-speaking environment, in which the nationality and languages of the titular nations (Latvians and Estonians) were completely subverted.

For the Baltic States the immigration of Russians led to a stagnation of Estonian and Latvian culture in the 1970s. In 1964 Leonid Brezhnev became the head of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. In response to the Prague Spring in 1968 political self control of the Union Republics was further limited.\textsuperscript{32} In Latvia Augustus Voss was nominated as party head of the Communist Party of Latvia. Voss was nominated because he was considered to be an ethnic Latvian, even though he did not speak Latvian, and he was also a stringent supporter of the Russification policy.\textsuperscript{33} Furthermore the Soviet Union began a period of economic stagnation in the 1970s, which led to a shortage of consumer goods. This was especially true in the matter of arts, culture and literature. Furthermore the migration policy of the Soviet Union let to ever fewer people publishing in Estonian or Latvian. By 1980 the share of Estonian in the print media of Estonia was 62 per cent, down from 73 per cent in 1970. Furthermore two thirds of television and radio broadcasts were in the Russian language, and the amount of resources (ink, paper, etc.) towards publications in Estonian, and Latvian were

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnote{29} Ibid. 215.
\footnote{30} Ibid. 215.
\footnote{32} Michael Garleff, \textit{Die baltischen Länder}, 179.
\footnote{33} Ibid. 178.
\end{footnotesize}
also limited. Since Estonian and Finnish are closely related languages, Estonians responded to the limited amount of Estonian spoken on radio and television programs, by tuning into Finnish radio and television. This led to a Finlandisation of Estonian society, and contributed to the fact that Finnish television would not show any anti-Soviet material on their programs. Soviet authorities turned a blind eye towards this until 1980, when the Soviet authority realized that Finnish culture proved to be an antidote to the new wave of Russification started that year. The immigration of even more Russians into the Baltic States in late 1970s resulted from an attempt by the authorities in Moscow to a further Russification process in the Baltic States. In December 1978 a document was leaked from the Central Committee of the Estonian Communist Party announcing reforms of the school system and the introduction of more Russian courses into the school curriculum. Russian was no longer to be a voluntary subject, as it was before, but to be mandatory. Russian was also introduced as the language of instruction at the kindergarten and pre-school level. The Soviet authorities also attacked the Latvian language and criticized that both Estonian and Latvian used the Latin and not the Cyrillic alphabet. This new wave of Russification was met with demonstrations by students in Tallinn in 1978. After the demonstration was brutally repressed by the authorities a letter was signed by 40 intellectuals condemning the new Russification policy.

This latest Russification campaign also manifested itself in cultural events. During the song festivals held in the three Baltic Republics in the summer of 1985 (40th year anniversary of Soviet victory in WWII) Russian Red Army soldiers dominated the chorus programs. The Soviet Union put strong emphasis on the fact that it was Russian soldiers that had liberated Latvia and the other Baltic States. This latest Russification campaign, which lasted until

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34 Detlef Henning, “Formen kultureller Autonomie in den baltischen Staaten”, 60.
36 Ibid. 149.
37 Misiunas, Taagepera, The Baltic States, 296.
38 Andres Tarand, “The Soviet Period”, 149.
39 Ibid. 149.
40 Misiunas, Taagepera, The Baltic States, 297.
1986, was met with stiff resistance of the intellectual community in both Latvia and Estonia. By 1981 the dissident movement in the Baltic States became organized and outspoken. A letter was published in 1981 demanding that the Baltic region should be declared a Nuclear-Free Zone. The Soviets responded to the letter by arresting the Estonian chemist Jüri Kukk; according to Misiunas and Taagepera, his arrest and subsequent death in prison actually boosted the protest against nuclear facilities in the Baltics. The same year a movement called the “silent half-hour” was established. Inspired by the Polish Solidarity movement this movement organized a work stoppage that was held once a month. Following the death of Leonid Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov rose to the position as Party Secretary of the CP of the Soviet Union in 1983. Andropov was considered a hard liner and after his rise came a severe crackdown on the dissident movements in Latvia and Estonia. Human rights activists like Lidija Doronina-Lasmane and Janis Barkans were arrested in 1983. Doronina was sentenced to five years imprisonment and an additional three years in exile. Barkans was sentenced to four years in a hard labour camp. Another dissident who was arrested was the writer Gunars Astra, who was sentenced to seven years in a strict-regime labour camp. Astra was accused of dissemination of a samizdat novel called Piecas dienas (Five Days). Piecas dienas is a critical fictional novel describing a tourist’s impressions of Communist Latvia. Estonian dissidents Lagle Parek, Heikki Ahonen and Arvo Pesti were also arrested, tried and sentenced in 1983. The last prominent dissident figure Enn Tarto was arrested and sentenced to 10 years in a hard labour-camp in 1984, his signature on the letter written on nuclear disarmament was labelled “anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda.” Despite those arrests another open letter, signed by 8 intellectuals from the Baltic States, was published in 1984 calling for world disarmament and abolition of censorship. In May 1985 there were riots at the Freedom Monument in

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41 Ibid. 299.  
42 Ibid. 299.  
43 Ibid. 301.  
44 Ibid. 301.  
45 Ibid. 300-301.
Riga (which commemorates the Latvian War of Independence 1918-1920). Students were carrying posters reading “Down with the Party – Down with the Russians.” In Estonia’s city Tartu, several hundred Estonian and Russian youths confronted each other during the preparations for the Soviet Constitution Day in the fall of 1985.

1.3. National Revolutions in the Baltic

According to David J. Galbreath, it was the Soviet nationality policy that led to the eventual downfall of the Soviet Union. The Soviet system assumed that the national elites would not be willing to attack the centre for greater control on regional politics. In the Baltic case however this is exactly what happened. The titular communists of Latvia and Estonia were also national communists. The predominance of the Russian language and the continued Russification of the Baltic States meant that the local elites became ever more alienated from the centre. At the same time the Soviet system was based on administrative units. This meant that every Republic of the Soviet Union was run by the Republic Communist Party. In the case of the Baltic States this meant that on the one hand the Soviet Union attempted to Russify the titular nations, but on the other hand policy was written by local elites who were becoming increasingly alienated from the centre by the continued policy of Russification.

This sort of policy can only be kept up by severe restrictions and repression as it was the case under Stalin, and to a lesser extent under Khrushchev and Brezhnev. Mikhail Gorbachev’s rise to power as General Secretary of the CP of the Soviet in 1985, and his policies of Glasnost (openness) and Perestroika (restructuring), allowed the Baltic States to make a push for more liberalization. The rise of Gorbachev meant the official end of the Russification

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46 Ibid. 301.
47 Ibid. 301.
49 Ibid. 88.
50 Ibid. 88.
51 Ibid. 88.
52 Garleff, Die baltischen Länder, 180.
policy in the Baltic States. For intellectuals Glasnost meant that they were encouraged to criticize the regime of the Soviet Union but from a Marxist-Leninist position, to improve the USSR. In the Baltic this first materialized in an attack on historical falsifications of Soviet history. In particular the historical truth surrounding the events of the Second World War and the occupation of the Baltic countries was attacked by historians from Latvia and Estonia. Latvians and Estonians pointed out that the liberation of the Baltic after World War II by Soviet troops also meant a re-occupation of the Baltic States by the Soviet Union. A major topic was also the secret clause of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact which included the Baltic States in the Soviet sphere of influence.

In 1987 several Baltic political prisoners were released, among them the Estonians Parek, Ahonen, and Pesti, and the Latvians, Doronina-Lasmane, and Barkans. The release of dissidents only seemed to fuel the national desires of the Baltic people. Political speeches given at the time also reflect that despite the 40 years of rule (and 40 years of Russian settlement in the Baltic) Russian-Baltic relations had to be achieved and not maintained. This meant that despite the fact that Russians had lived in the Baltic for almost 40 years there was not a mutual understanding between Russians and Latvians or Estonians. Gorbachev’s Glasnost policy allowed for more tolerance by the authorities for open expression in society. Gorbachev believed that more freedom of speech and criticism of the authorities would strengthen the Soviet Union rather than destroy it. In 1987 the people of the Soviet Union were testing the waters of Glasnost when protesting for more protection of the environment. In 1987 the central planners of Moscow came up with a plan to mine Europe’s largest phosphorite lode in the Virumaa region of Estonia. The mining would have destroyed one of Estonia’s richest agricultural areas, and destroyed 40 per cent of the region’s water supply.

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53 Ibid. 180.
54 Misiunas, Taagepera, The Baltic States, 302.
55 Ibid. 302.
56 Stukuls Eglitis, Imagining the Nation, 22.
57 Misiunas, Taagepera, The Baltic States, 304.
Estonians also considered the project a demographic danger. In the mid-1980s Estonia was notoriously short on labour, and the initial stages of the project alone would have required between 30,000 and 40,000 workers. That included only miners and their families; additional service personal would have to be brought in from Russia and elsewhere. The already large Russian population would have grown even further and Estonians began to fear that they would become a minority in their own country. Protests against the phosphorite mine flared up all over the country. Initially the Soviet Estonian authorities tried to crush the uprising, but this would have undermined the policy of Glasnost. Instead the government was willing to make concessions and finally the project was halted. The conflict between the protesters and the Soviet government came to be known as the Phosphorite War in the west.

A similar protest emerged in Latvia. In 1987 the Soviet authorities planned to build a large metro system in Latvia’s capital Riga. The citizens of Riga were outraged by the project; they felt that the construction of the metro would be dangerous and unnecessary since bus lines already covered the transportation needs. The construction of the metro also would have lowered the area’s underwater tables, potentially causing damage to the 800 year old city since many of the houses were standing on fragile foundations. Along the ecological threat however Latvians were also worried about the demographic threat the project would bring. Similar to the phosphorite project in Estonia, the Riga metro project would have required a massive influx of workers. The Latvian SSR was simply not able to provide the workforce, so workers would have to be brought in mainly from Russia. The migration of workers would have even further reduced the share of Latvians in the Republic, which at that point was at 52 per cent. Demonstrations against the metro broke out in Riga, with protesters carrying signs like “The

58 Ibid. 306.
61 Stukuls Eglitis, Imagining the Nation. 40.
62 Ibid. 42.
metro is one more step toward the destruction of the Latvian nation.” The protests were successful and the metro project was halted. The success for the national movements in Estonia and Latvia against the Soviet authorities paved the way for more nationalistic demonstrations. Tove H. Malloy states that “the environmental and the justice/human rights discourses became a ‘protect-our nation’ discourse.” The protests demonstrated that Estonians and Latvians were concerned with their own national status within their respective states.

The liberation policy of Glasnost allowed for verbal concern over the status of language in the Baltic States to be voiced. In 1986 the Latvian pop group Livi published a song called Dzimta valoda which means mother tongue, or literary language of birth. The song’s lyrics reflected that the Latvian language was in danger of being replaced by Russian. The refrain went “The language of my birth is my mother”, the song was criticized by the Communist Party of Latvia, but not outlawed as it would have been the case before Glasnost.

In Latvia rock music and art were the driving force behind a revival of nationalism. A punk subculture also appeared in Riga which adopted the slogan “Where German tanks failed, Riga’s punks will prevail.” This slogan was in obvious reference to World War II and that the Latvians will succeed in the endeavour of freeing Latvia from the Soviet Union. 1987 was also the official revival of national symbols. During the summer of 1987 a large peaceful protest declaring the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact as unlawful was condemned by the Estonian Communist Party. The Heritage Society of Estonia (a cultural foundation that advocated preserving Estonian language and culture) that had organized the demonstration was put under severe pressure by the authorities. When the Heritage Society refused to condemn the protest, the club’s September meeting was outlawed.

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63 Ibid. 42.
64 Malloy, “Minority Environmentalism and Eco-nationalism in the Baltics”, 386.
65 Stukuls Eglitis, Imagining the Nation, 27.
66 Ibid. 27.
67 Subrenat, Estonia, 229.
reverse effect and instead of hurting the Society the club grew and by October its membership had doubled. By October it had become a national movement. During a rally on October 21st 1987 the banned blue, black, and white flag of Estonia was displayed. The militia that was attending the demonstration was ordered by the Estonian Soviet to use tear gas to disperse the protesters. The order however was ignored. By 1988 more national symbols appeared. National demonstration began to appear in all three Baltic Republics. Music and folklore played an especially significant role in the national revival of the Baltic nations. In both Latvia and Estonia plays and operas were performed that reincarnated long forgotten national heroes. In Latvia a rock opera about the Bearslayer (a national fairytale hero) sold out for 43 consecutive performances and attracted over 180,000 visitors. The message of the opera was that significant national resistance had to be vocal but not violent (since Bearslayer defeats his opponents but does not kill them).68 This is why Michael Garleff calls the national revolutions of the Baltic the Singing Revolutions, because they were dominated by folklore, music, arts, and literature. 69 Language as well was important, many Latvians and Estonians felt their respective languages were threatened by the policies of the Soviet Union. As mentioned above music in particular became an important medium for revolutionary messages.

The national movement in Estonia made it necessary for the Communist elite in Estonia to challenge the status quo, they were afraid that a national revolution would destroy the communist party. In September 1987 various groups within the Communist Party of Estonia presented a “proposal for full economic autonomy in the Estonian SSR.”70 This proposal called for a restructuring of the Soviet Union, and more economic independence for the Soviet member states. This proposal became known as the IME-project (Isemajandav Eesti or economically autonomous Estonia). IME coincidentally is also the Estonian term for

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69 Garleff, Die baltischen Länder, 180.

“miracle.” The plan however did not call for an independent Estonia and did not question the power of the Soviet Union. According to Galbreath there were many both in the Russophone and in the titular (Latvians and Estonians) communities who wished to see the Soviet Union continue. This is certainly true but by the mid-1980s many also realized that the Soviet Union in its current form had no future. Resistance towards the independence movement also came from workers and managers who were dependent on employment in the all-Union industrial sectors. In the same time there were many Russians who believed that independence could bring them social benefits. Also many Russians participated in ecological groups that demonstrated against massive projects such as the Riga Metro or the phosphorite mines in Estonia. Taagepera also argues that about a third of all Russians of Estonia actually identified themselves with the titular community. It is important to keep in mind that the division between those who wanted to keep the Soviet Union alive and those that wanted to see it end was not black (Russian) and white (Estonian or Latvian). The same is true for the large projects like the phosphorite mines and the Riga metro system. The Communist Parties of both Latvia and Estonia had significant influence in those projects. After the death of Stalin most of the Russians in the Baltic Communist Parties were replaced. Misiunas and Taagepera explain that

“since the war, the three Baltic parties had remained small by Soviet standards and suffered from a lack of indigenous participation. Necessarily, all three parties as well as the administrative apparatus in the three republics had to be disproportionately staffed by imported cadres, although the existence in Russia of small bodies of pre-war Estonian and Latvian Communist expatriates who could be transferred back to their former homelands mitigated this situation somewhat in [Latvia and Estonia].”

By the 1980s however, most of the decision makers in the Communist Parties of the Baltic States were Latvian and Estonian. In Estonia most of the ministers (80 per cent) were

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71 Ibid. 229.
72 Galbreath, Nation Building and Minority Politics, 100.
73 Ibid. 99.
74 Rein Taagepera, Estonia: Return to Independence, (Boulder, 1993), 141.
75 Ibid. 132.
Estonian\textsuperscript{76}, and in 1983 Arnold Rüütel (four years before the phosphorite project) was the first Estonian Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Estonian SSR and therefore head of state of Estonia.\textsuperscript{77} Likewise in Latvia the Latvian born Janis Vagris took over the Chairmen of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Latvian SSR in 1986 (one year before the Riga metro project).\textsuperscript{78} This shows that Estonians and Latvians were part of the decision making process in both titular states. Furthermore it has to be kept in mind that although Moscow made all final decisions, much of the structural planning of projects like the phosphorite mines or the metro system in Riga was made at the local level.

1.4. Independence and Conclusion

By 1988 the dissatisfaction of the Estonian people with the Soviet regime had grown significantly. In February of 1988 demonstrations in Tartu were broken up violently by local Soviet police.\textsuperscript{79} This violent crackdown only furthered the cause of the nationalist revolutionaries. Like in Estonia, Latvia also introduced a program that called for more liberalization of the Latvian SSR. Latvia, however, was more outspoken about independence earlier on. For Latvian intellectuals Perestroika and Glasnost were only a short stop on the road to national liberation. Latvians were dissatisfied by Soviet rule. Intellectuals lamented the lack of freedom to write and create. Consumers lacked goods of good quality, and farmers complained about the poor conditions of agriculture. There was also the growing fear of demographic marginalization of Latvians.\textsuperscript{80} By the fall of 1988 National Front Movements (NF) which demonstrated for national liberation, were created in the Baltic Republics. Those popular fronts were the \textit{Estimaa Rahvarinne} (Estonia; or Estonian National Independence Party ENIP), the \textit{Latvijas Tautas Fronte} (Latvia; LTF), and the \textit{Lietuvos Persitvarkymo

\textsuperscript{76} Misiunas, Taagepera, \textit{The Baltic States}, 208.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid. 279.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid. 276.
\textsuperscript{80} Stukuls Eglitis, \textit{Imagining the Nation}, 50.
Sajudis (Lithuania; LPS).\textsuperscript{81} It became obvious that political change was happening, and soon the popular movements called for the liberation of the Baltic countries. On August 23\textsuperscript{rd} 1989 one million people in the capitals Tallinn, Riga, and Vilnius protested against the 50 year anniversary of the Hitler-Stalin Pact. They denounced the pact as politically illegal, and one day later the Soviet flag was brought down in Tallinn and replaced by the blue, black and white tricolour flag of Estonia.\textsuperscript{82}

In December 1989 the newly created Congress of Estonia declared the Hitler-Stalin Pact as void and opened the way to national liberation. On October 2\textsuperscript{nd} 1990 the Baltic Congress (a unified congress of the governments of the three Baltic States) declared that like the “German Question” the “Baltic Question” needed a solution.\textsuperscript{83} After the March 1990 Lithuanian congress elections in which the National Front gained a majority, the government of Lithuania declared its independence from the Soviet Union on March 11 1990. The Lithuania congress declared its independence on the basis that the Hitler-Stalin Pact was null and void and thus declared that the Constitution of 1938 was the only legitimate constitution of Estonia. Moscow reacted with severe economic sanctions. It was Lithuania’s independence that set in motion a chain of events that resulted in the independence of Latvia and Estonia and the breakup of the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{84} In February 1990 multi-party elections took place to the Estonian Congress for the first time, and the parties that supported independence won an overwhelming victory. Unlike in Lithuania, the Estonian government did not vow for independence but called for a restoration towards independence.\textsuperscript{85} In May of the same year the Latvian Supreme Soviet followed both Lithuania and Estonia in declaring that the incorporation of Latvia into the Soviet Union was illegal, and that it was necessary to take

\textsuperscript{81} Garleff, \textit{Die baltischen Länder}, 181.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid. 182.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid. 183.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid. 184.
\textsuperscript{85} Mart Laar, “The Restoration of Independence in Estonia”, 236.
steps to declare Latvia an independent state. Moscow hoped to regain control over its Baltic territories and on March 3rd Mikhail Gorbachev tried to talk the leadership of Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia into signing federal agreements with the Soviet Union. This was refused and referendums were called in Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia to vote for the independence of the Baltic States. On the 3rd of March 73.7 per cent of Latvians voted for independence. In Estonia 77.8 per cent of Estonians voted for independence. Boris Yeltsin, the leader of the RSFSR, supported the Baltic States in their endeavour to gain independence. He hoped that the independence of the Baltic States would speed up the breakup of the Soviet Union. Furthermore Yeltsin was important in opposing any military operations against the Baltic States. Yeltsin knew that he could only maintain his power over the RSFSR if the Soviet Union would collapse. By August 1991 the Soviet Union was gone, and the international community accepted the independence of the Baltic States.

The Soviet policy of Russification still left a mark on the newly created independent states. Large percentages of their population were Russians (or Russian speaking) minorities. Along with the task of creating a functioning state apparatus, the newly independent Republics also had to find a solution regarding their large national minorities. In 1991 a large percentage of the population of both Latvia and Estonia was Russian speaking. This was the result of the massive influx of Russian workers in the post-World War II years. The Singing Revolutions of Latvia and Estonia showed that the Soviet Union’s attempts at cultural assimilation had backfired. Instead of integrating the Baltic States, they alienated their citizens by marginalizing the population and language of Estonia and Latvia. With the independence of the Baltic States the Russian minority was now at risk of going through the same alienation process. Soviet policy of sending Russians to work at vital industrial sectors.

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86 Stukuls Eglitis, *Imagining the Nation*, 54-55.
89 Garleff, *Die baltischen Länder*, 186.
however meant that Russians living in the newly independent states had control over the important industrial sectors of Latvia and Estonia. Estonia and Latvia therefore faced a difficult task of de-Sovietisation and de-Russification, without alienating a large percentage of their population.
Chapter 2: Latvia and Estonia: De-Russification and De-Sovietisation in the 1990s

The independence of Latvia and Estonia and the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 marked the beginning of tumultuous times. For the Baltic States the declaration of independence in 1991 was just the beginning of a long road towards political normalcy. 50 years of Soviet rule has left a mark on Latvia and Estonia. Marko Lehti states that for Latvians and Estonians the time of Soviet occupation and all its expressions were seen as abnormal and illegitimate, and transformation meant a return to a state of “normality” and legal states of affairs.\(^{91}\) Political normality in the eyes of Estonians and Latvians was defined by the independence of their respective states in the inter-war years (1918-1939).\(^{92}\) Furthermore many Latvians and Estonians feel offended by the fact that the Russian Federation had never apologised for the fifty years of occupation.\(^{93}\) The realities of the Soviet Union’s legacy in the Baltic would prove to be both difficult and complex. First of all there was the demographic issue, both Latvia’s and Estonia’s demographic make ups had changed dramatically. Both independent republics had to deal with a large Russian minority within their territory. Nominal independence for both Latvia and Estonia therefore came with enormous challenges. De-Russification (or de-Sovietisation) had to be achieved without challenging their newly independent neighbour (the Russian Federation) and without marginalizing a large percentage of the local population. At the same time there was political pressure from titular Latvians and Estonians who demanded a rash process of re-nationalisation in the Baltic States. This chapter will examine the de-Russification and de-Sovietisation policy of both republics with regard to citizenship, language and education. This chapter will also outline the reaction of the Russian minority towards independence and the changes that followed immediately after independence. Estonia began negotiations with the European Union about accession in 1997,


\(^{92}\) Ibid. 94.

\(^{93}\) Galbreath, *Nation Building and Minority Politics*, 192.
Latvia followed in 1998. As such this chapter will focus (with a few exceptions) on internal policies created between 1991 and 1998.

2.1. The New Order: Citizenship in the newly independent States

An important step in post-Soviet Latvia and Estonia was the creation of a state that advocated the power to legislate and the right to suffrage. Eglitis states that elections were of particular importance since “democratic elections themselves signalled a step towards democracy and away from the single-party authoritarianism of the Soviet period.”94 Due to the complex demographic situation in both Latvia and Estonia the question of whom the electorate would be proved to be very difficult. What were the conditions of citizenship in each respective Republic? In Estonia the political landscape of the independence years (1989-1991) was shaped by two major independence groups, the Popular Front and the Restorationists. The Restorationists wanted to restore the pre-World War II Republic, whereas the Popular Front wanted a gradual independence from the Soviet Union which would eventually result in the creation of a new Estonian state. This debate began in 1989 and was won by the Restorationists when Estonia declared independence in 1991.95 The Restorationists model envisioned a return to the pre-World War II constitution and laws, and in 1992 it was the model of the Restorationists that prevailed. This meant that the 1938 Citizenship law was restored and only descendants and survivors of the pre-World War Estonian Republic became automatic citizens. Residents who had arrived in Estonia after the occupation of Estonia by the Soviet Union (June 1940) had to apply for citizenship.96 Pami Aalto calls this the beginning of the re-Estonisation of Estonia’s society.97 The 1992 citizenship law excluded 454,000 adults (32 per cent of the population), almost all of them Russian speakers. They

94 Stukuls Eglitis, *Imagining the Nation*, 65.
became aliens in their own state, which in the opinion of Budriyte was criticized by Russia, local Russian speakers, scholars and international organizations.\textsuperscript{98} Criticism was opposed by Estonian who believed that it was “unimaginable for [Estonians and Latvians] to ‘derive rights’ from the Soviet past, which was a time of deportations and Russification.”\textsuperscript{99}

In Latvia the political landscape was dominated by the Popular Front (which was willing to incorporate certain Soviet elements into the new Latvian Republic), and the Latvian Citizens’ Committee Movement. Like Estonia’s Restorationists, the Citizens’ Committee demanded an immediate break with the Soviet past. Unlike Estonia, however, it was the Supreme Council of Latvia (the Parliament and successor of the Supreme Council of the LSSR), which was controlled by the Popular Front (the moderates), that restored Latvia to the status of the pre-World War II Republic. Unlike the Citizens’ Committee the Popular Front did not follow a policy of deporting the Russian-speaking population. The moderates had to support the re-creation on the grounds of the 1940 constitution; otherwise they would have risked losing their political dominance. In October of 1991, the Supreme Council restored Latvian citizenship only to those who were either citizens of Latvia before 1940 or directly related to citizens of the pre-World War II Republic. This left approximately 700,000 persons (28 per cent of Latvia’s population) without Latvian citizenship, most of them Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians.\textsuperscript{100} Galbreath believes that in Latvia the more moderate groups had to choose a more exclusivist citizenship policy because they had to show the Latvian voters their credentials as protectors of the Latvian nation.\textsuperscript{101} In both Latvia and Estonia, basing the constitution on a state that was wrongfully annexed in 1939 by the Soviet Union was an attempt to undo the wrongs of the past. At the same time, however, basing a constitution on a state that disappeared more than 50 years ago would also cause obvious

\textsuperscript{98} Budriyte, \textit{Taming Nationalism}, 66.
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid. 71.
\textsuperscript{100} Ibid. 102.
problems. The Baltic States officially announced that a large percentage of their population had no right to be there. Furthermore the Baltic States vilified the Russian population, making them solely responsible for the wrongs of the Soviet Union, even though many Latvians and Estonians had also willingly participated in the Soviet regime. The following paragraphs will explain the citizenship laws in both Estonia and Latvia from 1991 to 1995 in detail and separately since the two countries chose to follow different paths towards naturalization of their minorities.

In Estonia the rationale behind the 1992 Citizenship law was explained by Estonia’s President Lennart Meri (member of the conservative Isamaaliit or Fatherland Union Party, and Estonia’s President from 1992 to 2001) in an interview given to Izvestiya in 1999:

“We [the policymakers] were faced with a problem: How could the rights and interests of citizens of prewar Estonia and their descendants, who had no say in becoming Soviet citizens, be maintained? ... After independence was restored, we chose the option of the continuity of Estonian citizenship. There was no other way for us.”

Meri therefore believed in setting back the clocks to zero hour - in the case of the Baltic States this means to 1940. The policy makers of Estonia believed that the only way of restoring the pre-war Republic was to restore its constitution and the citizenship law. Even more radical groups like the Restorationists went a step further and argued that due to the reduction of the Estonian population by the Soviet state apparatus (through deportations and Russification) the new Citizenship Law was necessary to protect the Estonian nation. During the debates on the Citizenship Law in the Estonian Parliament one of the more radical members of Parliament, Johannes Kass, argued: “In an indirect way, you [the Russians living in Estonia], as citizens of the Soviet Union, are guilty for what that state did to the Republic of Estonia in 1939.” These nationalist tendencies were fuelled by a Soviet Union wide referendum in

102 Budriyte, Taming Nationalism, 69.
103 As quoted in Budriyte, Taming Nationalism. 69.
104 Ibid. 70.
March 1991. In the referendum 330,000 Russian-speakers were asked if they would like to remain in the USSR; about 77 per cent, (in the regions Tallinn, Narva, and Kohtla-Jarva which are dominated by Russian speakers even 92 to 96 per cent consented to this question.)

Estonians believed that they could not grant citizenship to people who were rejecting the idea of Estonian statehood. Estonians also feared for the survival of their language, as such they believed that Russians living in Estonia could only become citizens of the newly independent state if they were proficient in the Estonian language. The new Citizenship Law therefore included the terms of how the non-citizens of Estonia were to be naturalized into the new Estonian Republic. As Budriyte explains this naturalization process included:

“residence in the territory of Estonia for at least the last two year; a one year waiting period; proficiency in the Estonian language; and an oath of loyalty to the state: ‘In applying for Estonian citizenship, I swear to be loyal to the constitutional state system of Estonia.’ Proficiency in the Estonian language was equivalent to approximately 1,500 words in Estonian, and the test included questions about Estonian culture and history.”

Most countries in Europe use naturalization laws that fall along the same line than Estonia’s naturalization laws. Most European countries however do not have the demographic background of Estonia. According to the 1989 census, only 15 per cent of all Russian speakers living in Estonia could speak Estonian. The language clause in the citizenship test was set up as a way of promoting the Estonian language among Russian speakers.

In 1993 the Estonian government passed a Law on Aliens. It stated that those who held a Soviet passport had to apply for residency within one year. Galbreath states that this law in particular caused anxieties with the Russian population since it made it possible for the Estonian bureaucrats to reject application for residency. Furthermore the law stated that those

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107 Budriyte, Taming Nationalism, 71.
108 Ibid. 71.
109 Ibid. 71.
that failed to apply for residency were considered illegal immigrants and were subject to deportation to their home country.\footnote{Galbreath, \textit{Nation Building and Minority Politics}, 161.} Furthermore, to be issued a permit the applicant had to prove a lawful source of income.\footnote{David J. Smith, \textit{Estonia independence and European integration}, (New York: Routledge, 2002), 86.} The author of the Law on Aliens Andres Kollist stated that the intention of the law was to regulate aliens who live in Estonia, and document and classify them.\footnote{Budriyte, \textit{Taming Nationalism}, 72.} This law in particular caused concern for the Russian population in Estonia. First of all the law did not make a difference between people that had just arrived in Estonia or people who had lived in Estonia since World War II. Furthermore residence permits were limited to five years, which meant that holders of such a permit were never quite sure if their next application would be accepted. The law also demanded that Soviet passport holders had to apply for non-citizen status in order to be given a residence permit.\footnote{Galbreath, \textit{Nation Building and Minority Politics}, 161.} In 1993 a government poll stated that 27 percent of Estonians believed that the danger of their ethnic extinction was growing.\footnote{Budriyte, \textit{Taming Nationalism}, 73.} This was mostly due to the fact that Estonians did not believe that the government was taking extreme enough measures to protect the demographic dominance of Estonians. In response to this poll the Estonian government issued changes in the Estonian Citizenship Law (this law came into effect in 1995), which made the application for citizenship more difficult for immigrants that had arrived in Estonia after independence. Permanent residency, which is necessary to apply for citizenship, was changed from two to five years for those immigrants from Russia and elsewhere that had entered Estonia after 1992.\footnote{Ibid. 73.} The state did not make a difference between those that had migrated to Estonia during the time of the Soviet Union and those that had arrived after the independence of Estonia. In other words the Republic of Estonia considered everyone who had come to Estonia after 1940 as an illegal immigrant.
After independence a Citizenship Restoration Resolution was passed in Latvia. Unlike in Estonia, there was no immediate Citizenship Law in Latvia. The Citizenship Restoration Resolution was only a framework document and not considered to be a law. A Citizenship Law was not adopted in Latvia until July 1994. The reason for this delay was the refusal of the Russian Federation to withdraw its troops from Latvian territory. Estonia, however decided to form a parliament even while Russian troops were still in the country (Russian troops left Estonia in 1994). Also, after 1991 there was significant political debate within the Latvian community on how to proceed with Citizenship Laws. Latvia did not elect a national parliament until 1994; instead the country was run by the Supreme Council of Latvia which was elected before Latvia became independent from the Soviet Union. The Supreme Council however was not accepted by political organizations and parties within Latvia as the legitimate administration and lawmaker of the Republic of Latvia. Henceforth legislations like the citizenship questions were put on a backburner until a national parliament was elected in 1994. Also not unlike Estonia there was a significant political debate within the political community of Latvia on the details of the Citizenship Laws. Many political groups and politicians wanted no integration of the Russian minority in Latvia. Especially more radical nationalist groups were in favour of deporting the Russian population to the Russian Federation. Even more liberal politicians like Latvia’s Prime Minister Valdis Birkavs (PM from 1993 to 1994) believed that the solution to the Russian problem could be found not only through naturalization but also by “encouraging voluntary repatriation and emigration to third countries.” This however was deemed impossible because many Russians living in Latvia were born in Latvia and considered Latvia to be their home. The political debate was finally won by the moderates when Latvia’s President Guntis Ulmanis (President from 1993 to

117 Stukuls Eglitis, Imagining the Nation, 74.
118 Ibid. 74.
119 Budriyte, Taming Nationalism, 110.
120 Ibid. 110.
promised that the “Latvian state would not engage in the forceful repatriation of Russian speakers, and that repatriation would be ‘peaceful and voluntary.’”

In Latvia the naturalization process contained several parts: first proof of fluency in the Latvian language (through a language test). Second, applicants had to pass a test on Latvian history and culture. Also non-citizens applying for Latvian citizenship had to prove a legal source of income and had to swear a loyalty oath to the Republic of Latvia. As in the case of Estonia the naturalization laws would be considered fair in any other state. It has to be kept in mind however that most Russians living in Latvia had been living in Latvia their entire lives. Finally different segments of the population were given a time window in which to register for citizenship. Due to the large size of Latvia’s non-citizen population, the state apparatus claimed that it simply could not process all applications at once and therefore put a quota on the yearly citizen applications. This became known as the “naturalization window.” It became obvious however that the “windows policy” was a restrictive quota system which according to Budriyte was introduced to preserve ethnic proportions, and to encourage repatriation of the Russian community. The “window policy” would have put a maximum quota on the amount of yearly citizenship applications for Russian speakers. This system was however heavily criticized by President Ulmanis as exclusionary towards the Russian minority, since it preferred the naturalizations of non-Russian minorities such as Poles or Lithuanians. The Citizenship Law was thereafter passed with a more liberal “window policy” that saw no restrictions on ethnic minorities. The “window policy” however remained a difficult obstacle for integration. The first group who were allowed to apply for citizenship were persons between 16 and 20 years of age and who were born in Latvia. Second came the

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121 Ibid. 110.
122 Budriyte, Taming Nationalism, 105.
123 Galbreath, Nation Building and Minority Politics, 175.
124 Budriyte, Taming Nationalism, 112.
125 Ibid. 112.
spouses of Latvian, Lithuanian, and Estonian citizens.\textsuperscript{126} This process began in 1995 and was to be completed in 2003.\textsuperscript{127} Because of the slow integration process, Latvia issued a Law in 1995 “On the Status of Former Soviet Citizens Who Are Not Citizens of Latvia or Any Other State [non-citizens].”\textsuperscript{128} The law dealt with the results of the slow integration process by issuing non-citizen passports.\textsuperscript{129} These passports allowed non-citizens of Estonia and Latvia to travel abroad without the fear of being disallowed re-entrance to Latvia (or Estonia). Furthermore the non-citizenship passports guaranteed non-expulsion from the Republic of Latvia.\textsuperscript{130} Unlike in other post-Soviet states the non-citizen issue is specific to Latvia and Estonia. In most other countries of the former Soviet Union people would be either citizens of the newly created states or the Russian Federation (or possess dual citizenship). This was not the case in the Baltic States, because the Baltic States declared that all Latvian or Estonian nationals who had come to the Baltic between 1940 and 1991 did not have the right to Latvian or Estonian citizenship. Russians with Soviet citizenship and Latvian or Estonian nationality therefore became non-citizens. The Russian Federation did have very few direct links to the Russian-speaking communities of Latvia and Estonia after the troop withdrawal of 1994. There were also no major campaigns to repatriate the Russian minority of the Baltic States to Russia.\textsuperscript{131}

2.2. De-Russification in the Baltic States: Language Laws and Education Policies in the Baltic

De-Russification of the Baltic States was also pursued in the field of language and education. It is important to note that both language laws and education policies were meant to encourage the de-Russification of the newly independent republics. Furthermore the language

\textsuperscript{126} Simkuva, “Minderheitenpolitik in Lettland“, 78.
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid. 79.
\textsuperscript{128} Budriyte, Taming Nationalism, 106.
\textsuperscript{129} Simkuva, “Minderheitenpolitik in Lettland“, 79.
\textsuperscript{130} Budriyte, Taming Nationalism, 106.
\textsuperscript{131} Galbreath, Nation Building and Minority Politics, 293.
laws and education policies supplemented each other but also were used to integrate the large non-citizen populations of both Latvia and Estonia. This subchapter will deal with both the Language Laws and the Education Policies of Latvia and Estonia. Along with Citizenship Laws, language was an important part of nation building in the post-Soviet atmosphere in the Baltic States. In Estonia the constitution established Estonian as the only official language of Estonia and every other language as a “foreign language.” Technically this put the Russian language (spoken as a native language by 35 per cent of the population) on the same legal platform as any other foreign language. The reality was different however, and the language law established in 1989 when Estonia was still part of the USSR, ensured that Russian remained a required language for public officials, since many public officials were simply not able to communicate in Estonian. Estonia simply did not have the workforce to replace all Russian-speaking officials with Estonian-speaking officials. Therefore Russian continued to be the working language in many public sectors until the mid-1990s. Similar to Estonia, Latvia also changed the Language Law in 1989 when it was still part of the USSR. In Latvia bilingualism became official state policy. The difference between and Estonia and Latvia, however was that Latvia followed a transition policy in which Russian would slowly disappear as an official language. Neither Estonia nor Latvia made significant changes to those language policies until 1997, when it became apparent that the Citizenship Laws amended in both countries were not a strong enough device on their own to integrate the large Russian minorities. While the early 1990s were centered of the enforcement on the Citizenship Laws, the second half of the 1990s was marked by stricter language requirements in Estonia. The 1989 language law called on all public officials to be fluent in Estonian within three years, yet the language law was not enforced until 1997 when the government fired four

134 Galbreath, Nation Building and Minority Politics, 166.
135 Ibid. 180.
Russian-speaking district attorneys and two Russian-speaking judges, because they could not speak Estonian.136 This marked the beginning of stricter language policies in Estonia, and a purge of former Soviet officials from public offices. The idea was that a stronger enforcement of Language Laws would encourage Russians to either assimilate faster into Estonian society or to leave the country. Many Latvians also felt that the integration process for non-Latvian speakers was not happening fast enough. A 1998 poll conducted among the non-Latvian speakers showed that 70 per cent of all non-Latvian speakers wanted to improve their Latvian language skills. Many Russian speakers however stated that they could simply not afford language education.137 Latvian and Estonian law makers therefore realized that a successful future integration policy could only be achieved through a successful school system.

In order to strengthen the languages of the newly independent Republics of Estonia and Latvia, both states had to reform their respective education systems. The reform of the education system is a natural process following the independence of nation states. Gellner argues that “a man’s education is by far his most precious investment, and in effect confers his identity on him.”138 Therefore one of the first priorities of the newly independent Republics was the reform of the school systems that they had inherited from the Soviet Union. As mentioned in Chapter 1 the education of the Soviet Union was based on Soviet history, geography and politics. Especially in terms of history and politics the Soviet education was deemed as highly propagandistic by the lawmakers of the Baltic States. Non-Russian school children in Latvia and Estonia where expected to be educated in the Russian language as well as in their own language, whereas Russian children living in Latvia or Estonia (or in any other Soviet Republic) were not expected to learn the local tongue.

Latvia produced the first post-Soviet education law in 1991. The curriculum was cleansed of Marxist dogma and the Soviet perception of history and social science, and was

136 Ibid. 167.
137 Ibid. 182.
replaced with a curriculum more common to democratic states.\textsuperscript{139} Of course the state also encouraged its own political outlook and history. Citizenship training and lessons in democracy were emphasized, which is evident in the number of school books published in 1991 on those topics.\textsuperscript{140} While the curriculum was changed, the actual school structure was not. The Soviet Union encouraged the separation of ethnicities in their school system. In the time of the Soviet Union, Russian children who lived outside the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic would attend Russian schools whereas Latvian and Estonian children would attend schools that functioned in Latvian or Estonian. After independence Latvia did not change the system and kept Russian children separated from Latvian children.\textsuperscript{141} This was mainly due to the fact that Latvia and Estonia simply did not have enough teachers to switch the entire school system into only Latvian and Estonian. There was not a “purge” of Russian teachers in Latvia and Estonia, simply because neither state had the resources to replace ethnic Russian teachers. This also meant that for the first years after Latvian independence many Russians continued to be educated completely in the Russian language. Changes to language education in the Latvian school system did not come until the late 1990s. A controversial Education Law adopted in 1998 had the goal to switch all secondary schools in the country to exclusively teach in Latvian.\textsuperscript{142} A similar law was already passed in the Estonian parliament in 1993; with the goal that all pupils would be taught in the state language by 2000 (the date was later moved to 2005). The Estonian Minister of Culture and Education Paul-Eerik Rummo however stated that the language of instruction should be left with the local authorities.\textsuperscript{143} This would mean that localities which are dominated by ethnic Russians (like Narva, for example) could retain Russian as the language of instruction.\textsuperscript{144} This

\textsuperscript{140} \textit{Ibid.} 115.
\textsuperscript{141} \textit{Ibid.} 119.
\textsuperscript{142} \textit{Ibid.} 126.
\textsuperscript{143} Galbreath, \textit{Nation Building and Minority Politics},171.
\textsuperscript{144} \textit{Ibid.} 172.
meant that like Latvia, Estonia began to develop a segregated school system. The reason for the slow school reform in the Baltic States can be attributed to the fact that neither Latvia nor Estonia had the resources (financially and manpower) to switch the language of instruction to Latvian or Estonian. Estonia therefore began to look into other ways of immersing Russian speakers into the Estonian language. Estonia for example has been given help by the Canadian government to establish Language Immersion schools in Estonia. Language Immersion means that children from a young age are educated completely in a language that is not the same as their mother tongue. In Canada the Immersion Program is used to familiarize English speaking Canadians with the French language and vice versa. This program in Estonia however would be voluntary. Furthermore the Estonian government also began to switch all High School and Secondary education (including Russian dominated regions) to the Estonian language. Both Latvia and Estonia believed that reform of the education system would be the final step of integrating their large Russian minorities into society. Yet the education reforms in both countries were not without their critics. As we will see in the later part of this chapter the educational policies would be heavily criticized by the Russian community.

2.3. From Majority to Minority: The Russian Community Adaptation to Integration Policies

Annelies Lottmann states that for Russians living in the Baltic it was difficult to judge whether they should tie themselves legally to the newly independent states or to Russia, since they did not know if the dissolution of the USSR was permanent or if Estonia and Latvia would retain their independence. There was also speculation among the Russophone community that the Baltic States could not sustain themselves independently and would

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145 Ibid. 172.
146 Ibid. 171.
implode. These doubts were proven wrong. Most Russians did not want to turn their back on the Russian Federation, because they felt that switching their allegiance to the Baltic States might make it more difficult to visit friends and relatives in the Russian Federation. Many Russians living in Estonia and Latvia therefore ignored the registration deadlines for citizenship application, in order to avoid possible political reprisal by Russia.\textsuperscript{148} It soon became apparent, however that the newly independent Baltic States would retain their independence and that the Soviet Union was gone for good. The Russian communities in Estonia and Latvia therefore found themselves in a situation where they had to deal with rapidly nationalizing states. Furthermore, the nationalization policies of Estonia and Latvia are based on the rationality of political de-Russification.\textsuperscript{149} Many Russians realized that the newly created Citizenship Laws would lead to the marginalization of their communities.\textsuperscript{150} Russophones also believed that the Citizenship Laws were “ethnic politics of exclusion” which would deprive Russian communities of political rights in the newly created states.\textsuperscript{151} For Russophones living in Estonia or Latvia the naturalization laws must have had a discouraging effect. They were openly declared second class citizens, and strangers to their home countries. Many Russians took part in the independence movements of the Baltic States, and they were now declared as unwanted. About one third of the population of Estonia became political disenfranchised when the new Citizenship Law was based on the 1940 Estonia Citizenship Law. They were not included in the 1992 election of the first parliament and could not vote on the 1992 constitution.\textsuperscript{152} This ensured that the 101 members of the first elected Riigikogu (Parliament) were all Estonians and that Russians had no political influence on the political landscape of Estonia. Latvia chose a similar path and only granted citizenship

\textsuperscript{148} Ibid. 511.
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid. 110.
\textsuperscript{151} Michael Ardovino, “Imagined Communities in an Integrating Baltic Region”, Demokratizatsiya 16.2 (2008), 9.
\textsuperscript{152} Jeff Chinn, and Robert Kaiser (editors) Russians as the New Minority (Boulder, 1996), 100.
to historic citizens and their descendents. Like in Estonia this left a large percentage of Latvia’s population politically disenfranchised. Furthermore Citizenship, Language, and Educational policies of the new nation states became increasingly aimed at de-Russification of Latvia and Estonia. This section will deal with the response of the Russian community to the de-Russification policies of Latvia and Estonia.

In 1992 the Helsinki Watch (Human Rights Watch) interviewed several Russian speakers on their outlook after Estonia had passed the Citizenship Law of 1991. Russophones living in Estonia were especially concerned about the fact that they had lost their citizenship and because of that had no right to vote. Also many were concerned about the fact that in order to become a citizen, they had to learn a new language. Many Russians expressed opinions, in a series of interviews conducted by the Helsinki Watch, that they felt cheated by the new state. Especially Russophones who supported the independence of Estonia and the democratization of society felt that they were left behind in the democratization process of the new state. Finally the enactment of the 1993 Law on Aliens was heavily criticized by the Russian community; the events that surrounded the amendment of the Law on Aliens would be later known as “Aliens’ Crisis.” Non-Estonian politicians felt that they had to act on behalf of the Russian-speaking community. They demanded better representation and access to policy-making in Tallinn. The councils of Narva and Sellamäe chose to use the 1991 referendum as political pressure against new “Law on Aliens.” The Russian community did not really have an interest in leaving Latvia or Estonia. Most Russians living in the Baltic identified themselves as ethnic Russians but viewed Estonia or Latvia as their home. The secession threat of Narva and Sellamäe was therefore used as a political threat by the local governments of Narva and Sellamäe but was never seriously considered within the Russian

153 Ibid. 112.
155 Galbreath, Nation Building and Minority Politics, 162.
156 Ibid. 162-3.
157 Galbreath, Nation Building and Minority Politics, 192.
community. Internal pressure by the Russian community but also liberal forces within the Estonian government forced the Estonian government to make amendments, and the final version of the Law on Aliens was changed to guarantee work permits and residency to those that had settled in Estonia before July 1st 1990. Budryyte also believes that the Law on Aliens helped to start a discourse between the Russian community and the Estonian community. The President’s Roundtable on Minorities was formed in 1990 (it still exists today and is known as the Round Table of Nationalities), which included representatives of both the Russian and Estonian communities as well as from the Estonian government. The roundtable is fundamentally important as a discussion body, which can make suggestions to law makers. It was especially important in the early 1990s at a time when only few Russian speakers in Estonia had a political voice. The roundtable holds discussions with members of the Estonian parliament on issues such as minority laws.

Radical Restorationists in Estonia hoped that tight language and citizenship laws would encourage Russian-speakers to emigrate to Russia or other countries. Yet there were still remaining challenges, many Russian-speakers of the lower strata of society found it difficult to integrate themselves into Estonian society. Especially Russophones who were employed by the large industries of North-Eastern Estonia, who had been sponsored by Moscow before the fall of the Soviet Union, now faced unemployment and social exclusion. Russian-speakers, who had lost their jobs in that region, were unable to find work because they could not speak Estonian. Since becoming independent, Estonia has been recognized for its economic success, yet in regions like Narva the unemployment

158 Budriyte, Taming Nationalism, 72.
160 Helsinki Watch “Integrating Estonia’s Non-Citizen Minority”, 33.
161 Budriyte, Taming Nationalism, 72.
162 Ibid. 77.
percentage was estimated at around 30 per cent in 1998. Especially the liberalization of the Estonian economy made large Soviet-style industries and farming obsolete. Most Russians however were employed in those large industrial sectors. Especially younger non-citizens expressed their interests in learning the Estonian language in order to stay in Estonia. Between 1992 and 2000 the share of Estonian citizenship holders among native Russophones in Estonia rose from 2 per cent to 40.4 per cent. This can be interpreted as a success of Estonia’s integration policy. Yet this also meant that almost 60 percent of all Russian-speakers lacked Estonian citizenship. Furthermore it is hard to prove if this was a success of nationalised policies or if Russians integrated because of economic reasons. However the integration of Russians into Estonian society meant that Russians gained a political voice in Estonian politics. In 1995 and 1999 parties with a Russophone agenda managed to gain seats in parliamentary elections. Interestingly enough Russian-speakers did not tend to vote for parties that claimed to represent the Russian minorities in Estonia, and instead they voted along social lines. Wealthy Russians tended to vote for more conservative Estonian parties, whereas working-class Russians voted for more socialist parties. This was due to the fact that with a growing Russian electorate, Estonian politicians began to promise more minority rights and to solve the question of statelessness. Furthermore Russian parties like the Russian Party of Estonia or the United Russian People’s Party failed to create electoral blocs, and no party managed to rally all Russian speakers behind a political goal. This was due to the fact that there was a large split between Russians of a high social standing (higher educated and urbanized Russians) and lower-educated Russians from the industrial north-east. Russians who were more highly educated usually had lived longer in Estonia than those with a lower level of education, and were therefore more integrated into Estonian society. These Russians

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164 Ibid. 230.
165 Budriyte, Taming Nationalism, 74.
166 Ibid. 76.
167 Ibid. 77.
also tend to view themselves as more Estonian than Russian and therefore they are more likely to vote for non-Russian parties.\textsuperscript{168}

The language requirement of the Citizenship Law remained the number one obstacle for many Russophones to pass the citizenship tests. Language Laws did however encourage the integration of the Russian minority in Estonia. Especially younger Russophones were willing to learn Estonian.\textsuperscript{169} This was due to the fact that Estonia was doing well economically and many Russians believed that learning Estonian would mean a better standing in society. Furthermore Estonian was required to gain access to secondary schooling and universities. Also many parents began to send their children to Estonian schools with the hope that an Estonian language education would give their children a better future.\textsuperscript{170} Language education was therefore viewed as a way to ensure security and high social standing in Estonian society. Therefore Russians living in Estonia reacted similar to Estonians in the former Soviet Union who sent their children to Russian speaking schools in order to secure their future social and economic standing. Yet there was also resistance to the education reforms in Estonia. Many Russians lamented the lack of educated Estonian language teachers. They rightfully pointed out that Estonia simply lacked the financial resources to reform the Estonian school system into a school system were Estonian is the only language of instruction.\textsuperscript{171} Despite this complaint by the Russians Toivo Raun states that the Estonian school reforms were successful. The percentage of Russians, who were able to communicate in Estonian, was raised from 15 per cent in 1989 to 40 per cent in 2000.\textsuperscript{172}

In Latvia the 1991 Citizenship Resolution and the resulting 1994 Citizenship Law was heavily criticised by the Russian community. The Russian elite that had supported the independence of Latvia from the Soviet Union now felt betrayed by the exclusionist politics

\textsuperscript{168} Ibid. 74.  
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid. 72.  
\textsuperscript{172} Ibid. 532.
of the new Republic of Latvia. Vladimir Stashenko, an avid supporter of the Popular Front and the Director of the Department on National Questions in Latvia, resigned from his post after the amendment of the Citizenship Law.

“I had to ask myself who I was first and foremost – the representative of a national minority or the representative of a state. I realized that I was first and foremost the representative of a national minority. Latvia became a nation state protecting the interests of Latvians, an [I felt that] I could not defend the interests of Russian speakers anymore. That is why I had to leave my position [as the Director of the Department on National Questions].” (Vladimir Stashenko in a TV Interview in 1991)\(^{173}\)

Stashenko’s resentment towards the nationalization was shared by many Russians. Russians despised the idea of pending naturalization and their status as non-citizens.\(^{174}\) Especially the slow process of the Citizenship Law amendment between the 1992 and 1994 and the political debate surrounding the content of the Citizenship Law and the form of integration of the Russian population caused great uncertainty for the Russian community. For two years Russians living in Latvia had uncertainty about their citizenship status. “Reportedly, many [non-Citizens] were afraid to leave Latvia to travel abroad, fearing that they might not be allowed to return.”\(^{175}\) Furthermore the integration process of the non-citizens of Latvia was delayed until 1995.\(^{176}\) Due to the “window policy” the integration process was very slow. Only 2,500 non-citizens were integrated a year, this meant that by 1997 the amount of non-citizens in Latvia was still above 700,000 (in 1991 72 percent were citizens: in 1997 number stood at 72.33 per cent an increase of 0.33 percent).\(^{177}\) In comparison 30 percent of all Russophones in Estonia had obtained citizenship by 1996.\(^{178}\) In Latvia, unlike in Estonia, the Russophone community was not able to participate in the political discourse of the country. In general this meant that Latvia was much slower in integrating its Russian minority than

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\(^{173}\) Budriyte, *Taming Nationalism*, 113.
\(^{177}\) Helena Simkuva, “Minderheitenpolitik in Lettland”, 79.
\(^{178}\) Budriyte, *Taming Nationalism*, 74.
Estonia. The “window policy” was highly restrictive and made Russians feel like unwanted immigrants, which in turn caused social pressure between Latvian and Russian groups. The Latvian state also completely switched its paperwork into the Latvian language. This meant that many Russian-speakers were not able to apply for a residence permit. Latvia’s policy of keeping the separate school systems also meant that a large percentage of Russian-speaking school children were still attending Russian speaking schools. Also, like in Estonia, not enough Latvian language teachers where available. This meant that the Latvian government had to reform the education system. In 1995 the Latvian government, aided by the United Nations Development Program, established the National Program for Latvian Language Training (NPTLLT). The goal of the program was to lessen the segregation of the Latvian education system by preparing instructors to teach Latvian at minority schools. The program was also aimed at educating adults in Latvian. Finally funding from NPTLLT also went towards curriculum reform of the national school system. Latvia hoped that this would increase the knowledge of Latvian with Russian-speakers.

2.4. Remaining Challenges

For both Estonia and Latvia, the accession to the European Union was the logical consequence of the post-Soviet independence process. Both countries however still had major obstacles in their path to EU membership. Both countries had undone the shackles of the Soviet Union and had followed a policy of nationalization. This process was not without difficulties and without its critics, since both Latvia and Estonia faced the unique challenge of being home to large Russian minorities. Both Estonians and Latvians felt challenged by the fact that they had to integrate a part of the population which in their eyes was the former political oppressor. Yet neither nation gave in to the calls of political radicals that wanted to

deport Russians. Both states created citizenship, language, and educational policies that made it difficult but possible for the Russian minority to integrate into Baltic society. At the same time however many Russians living in Estonia and Latvia felt excluded from the new states. Many Russians felt that they were blamed unrightfully for the wrongs of the Soviet Union. Furthermore many Russians had been in the Baltic States for several generations and saw the Baltic countries as their home and had no desire to return to the Russian Federation, which for most Russian-speakers was a foreign country. Russian-speakers therefore felt that they were being alienated in their own country. By the late 1990s calls came from the Russian community to reform citizenship laws in the Baltic States.

Foreign actors like the European Union, and the Russian Federation, increasingly used their influence to exert pressure on Latvia and Estonia to make amendments to their minority politics. Both Latvia and Estonia were candidates for European Union membership by 1995. In the accession process the European Union paid major attention to the minority politics of both countries. Especially the slow naturalization process of Latvia’s non-citizens through the “window system” was criticized by the 1997 Agenda 2000: Commission Opinion on Latvia’s Application for Membership of the European Union, for that reason Latvia was not invited to accession talks with the EU.181 Estonia on the other hand was able to begin accession talks with the European Union in 1997. This was due to the fact that Estonia was willing to integrate its non-citizens much faster than Latvia. Also Estonia was more willing to adapt Citizenship Laws (children born to non-citizens after 1998 were given automatic citizenship) immediately in order to make accession talks possible.182 Both states also became increasingly criticized by the Russian Federation, especially after the Baltic States began accession in 1997 (Estonia) and 1998 (Latvia) talks with the European Union.

181 Budriyte, Taming Nationalism, 116.
182 Ibid. 79.
Chapter 3: Latvia’s and Estonia’s Foreign Politics: Minority Politics in the light of EU accession

A return to Europe was a pre-dominant theme in the post-Soviet foreign politics in both Latvia and Estonia. A turn to the west also meant to turn away from the Russian Federation. The Russian Federation viewed the expansion of NATO and the EU into states that had formerly belonged to the Soviet Union as an encroachment on Russia’s sphere of influence. The expansion of the European Union was seen by many Russians as exclusive since Russians need a visa to travel to EU Member States. Therefore Latvia and Estonia always had to keep their large neighbour to the east in mind when they conducted foreign and security policy. In 1994 the Russian military withdrew from the Baltic States. In 1995 Estonia and Latvia became official candidates of the European Union. As mentioned earlier Estonia began negotiations for EU membership in 1997 one year before Latvia. Both Latvia and Estonia also became candidates for NATO membership in 1997. There were however remaining challenges. International organizations like the OSCE and the EU criticized the minority politics of both states. The Russian Federation voiced its unhappiness with EU and NATO enlargement, and used the status of the Russian minority in Latvia and Estonia to criticize both states. Furthermore both Latvia and Estonia had outstanding border disputes with the Russian Federation. This chapter will deal with the international politics of Latvia and Estonia. It will largely focus on the period between becoming EU candidates in 1995 and becoming full Member States of the European Union in 2004. In 2004 both Latvia and Estonia also joined NATO. NATO membership will also be discussed; however, the main focus will be on EU membership, since the EU has been more interested in the minority politics of its Member States. Another focus will be on the Russian Federation which viewed the expansion of NATO and the EU into the Baltic States with suspicion.

183 Garleff, Die baltischen Länder, 200-201.
3.1. International Response to Minority Politics in Estonia

The foreign politics of Estonia and Latvia following their independence were very much dominated by the minority issues within both countries. The Russian Federation especially criticized Latvia and Estonia for the alleged mistreatment of the Russian community. Russia used media and international governmental organizations such as the OSCE to protest against what it sees as a policy of discrimination and social apartheid against ethnic Russians in the Baltic States. Especially Estonia became attacked by political commentators in Russia; some even considered Estonia “Russia’s number one enemy.” In 1997 the Kremlin issued a statement condemning the Baltic and demanded to normalize the situation of non-citizens: “there can’t be military security when hundreds of thousands of people who make up an ethnic minority in some countries of the region feel insecure and uncomfortable.” Moscow therefore threatened Estonia and Latvia for what was legally a matter of a foreign state, especially since most Russians living in Estonia and Latvia were not Russian citizens.

Vladimir Parshikov of the Russian Ministry’s International and Human Rights Department, and also a member of a fact-finding mission on minority politics in Estonia, issued the following statement: “the key problem is that tens of thousands of people simply cannot get citizenship of the country in which they live.” Researcher Pami Aalto states in his work Revisiting the Security/Identity Puzzle in Russo-Estonian Relations, that Russia’s policies towards the nationalizing Baltic states have been influenced by Russia’s historic imperial or great-power identity, and that in the post-Soviet era, “this legacy has been carried into Russia’s policy, introduced in 1993, of claiming to protect the Russians’ ‘ethnic compatriots’, the Russophone minorities in the ‘near abroad’.” The showing of strength by the Russian Federation was met with discontent by the Baltic States. However, Russia’s biggest problem

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185 Lottmann, “No Direction Home”, 514.
186 Ibid. 514.
187 Budriyte, Taming Nationalism, 78.
was that most Russians living in Estonia and Latvia were not Russian citizens. Moscow could therefore only play on the often vague note of “protecting” its compatriots in the Baltic States.\textsuperscript{189} Their “protective” attitude was therefore seen by the international community especially the west (meaning the United States, the European Union and NATO) as an encroachment on the national politics of foreign states. Both Latvia and Estonia therefore responded by inviting the international community to judge over their minority politics.

For Estonia the critique from Russia became an incentive to open up political discourse with the international institutions like the EU but also the United States and NATO. Estonia responded to the critique of its minority politics by the Russian Federation by inviting international observers from international organizations such as the OSCE to investigate the human rights situation in Estonia. Budryite claims that Estonia intentionally proposed tough citizenship laws with the knowledge that Russia and the international community would respond, and try to liberalize those laws. He also believes that Estonia had to do so to protect the ethnic composition of the country.\textsuperscript{190} It is however hard to believe that Estonia chose to implement harsh citizenship and language laws with the knowledge that the international community would try to change those laws. Democratic governments are responsible towards the local electorate first and to the international community second. Nonetheless the European Union did respond in 1998 by suggesting to Estonia to liberalize its citizenship laws. Furthermore international organizations like the Council of Europe opened monitoring missions in Estonia. In 1997 the Council of Europe’s Parliamentary Assembly (CEPA) also asked Estonia to offer free Estonian language courses to those who applied for citizenship and to improve the teaching of the Estonian language to Russian speakers.\textsuperscript{191} Furthermore in 1997 the OSCE, supported by the EU and the United States, suggested granting automatic citizenship to all children that had been born in independent Estonia to non-citizen parents.

\textsuperscript{189} Galbreath, \textit{Nation Building and Minority Politics}, 221.
\textsuperscript{190} Budriyte, \textit{Taming Nationalism}, 78.
\textsuperscript{191} \textit{Ibid.} 79.
Most international organizations therefore responded by calls from the Russian Federation, which urged the Baltic States to liberalize the naturalization laws. Estonia adopted the recommendation by the OSCE on 16 December 1997, a few days ahead of the EU summit in Luxembourg that identified states for the first round of enlargement.¹⁹² This amendment, by the Estonian government, was met with internal criticism by right-wing parties and right-wing organizations.¹⁹³ Liberal Estonian parliamentarians however realized that the way Estonia would handle the rights of its minorities would become the key in future accession talks with the European Union.

Indeed after 1997 Estonia recognized that their integration policy facilitated separation rather than integration. In his article Ethnic Limits of Civil Society Aleksei Semjonov states that the “crucial impulse for re-consideration of ethnic policies by Estonian elite was the European Union’s ‘Agenda 2000’ report on Estonia’s membership application of 1997.”¹⁹⁴ The “Agenda 2000” process was an initiative by the European Union which actively monitored the situation in accession countries such as Estonia, with an emphasis on building democratic institutions, promoting human rights, the rule of laws, and in the case of the Baltic countries the integration of the Russophone minorities into their societies.¹⁹⁵ The report emphasized the need for Estonia to adopt measures and procedures that would make it easier for the Russophone population of Estonia to become integrated into Estonian society.¹⁹⁶ For the first time the Estonian government acknowledged that integration in Estonia was a problem, and in 1998 a group of experts was brought together to prepare a document entitled “The Integration of Non-Estonians into Estonian Society: The Principles of Estonia’s National Integration Policy.”¹⁹⁷ However after the liberation of the Citizenship Law the Estonian government made language laws stricter. This was a typical compensation; local

¹⁹² Ibid. 80.
¹⁹³ Ibid. 81.
¹⁹⁷ Ibid. 153.
politicians in Estonia tried to keep face by responding to the liberalization of citizenship laws, by stiffening language laws. In December 1998 the Estonian parliament amended changes to the language law, the Parliament Election Act, and the Local Government Election Act. These laws required members of parliament, and local officials to be fluent in the Estonian language. Not surprisingly these new laws were met by criticism by the European Union and other international bodies. Max van der Stoel, High Commissioner on National Minorities (from 1992 to 2000) of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), criticized the new language laws in an interview with the Estonian newspaper Eesti Päevaleht saying “that it should be ‘up to the voters’ to decide whether to elect someone who did not speak the official language.” Furthermore Stoel also believed that this new policy would affect Estonia’s relations with the EU but especially with the Russian Federation, and he therefore hoped that there would be changes to the new language requirements.

The new Language Law was supposed to be a response to the liberalization of the Citizenship Laws. Estonians believed that the strict language laws were necessary to preserve Estonian language and culture. Budriyte states that the proponents of the “Law knew that it was naive to hope that these language requirements would increase the willingness of aliens to study the language.” Instead they believed that this would be the right response after Estonia was forced to liberalize of the Citizenship Law due to international pressure. The language law however would cause even more internal and international pressure. After the amendment of the Language Law four Russian members of the permanent Roundtable on Ethnic Minorities resigned in protest and the United People’s Party (a Russian-Estonian

198 Budriyte, Taming Nationalism, 82.
201 Budriyte, Taming Nationalism, 82.
Party) called upon the EU “to force the Estonian authorities to cancel the amendments.”

International pressure on Estonia to change the language laws was growing. In 2001 the OSCE made it a condition, in order for the OSCE mission in Estonia to be closed, that Estonia had to change its language laws. Budriyte states that for Estonians the OSCE mission was “perceived as an unpleasant symbol of ethnic tensions.”

While Estonians felt that the OSCE mission was unrightfully in their country, many Estonians also failed to understand in the words of Semjonov “that severe – and too often unreasonable – language requirement, may, in fact, infringe on minority rights and even create discriminatory practice.” Estonians believed that international organizations like the OSCE unjustifiably branded Estonia as a place of ethnic tensions. Especially in the light of Yugoslavia or Chechnya, being home to an OSCE mission meant that a country was deemed as politically unstable. What has to be kept in mind is that the Russian Federation is a member of the OSCE. Therefore closure of the OSCE mission in Estonia could not be achieved without consent of the Russian Federation.

Especially the integration policy remained a challenge towards EU accession. In 2001 Estonia made changes to language laws. Parliamentary candidates for local and national elections were no longer required to take language proficiency tests, while Estonian was however made the official working language of the Estonian parliament. Russian-speakers could now run for parliament without taking any language tests.

The changes of the language requirement were an important reason for the OSCE to abandon its mission in Estonia in 2001. Estonia did however seem to leave the shadows of de-Sovietisation and de-Russification, and move towards a more civic approach in the integration process of its large Russian minority. In 2000, Estonia made several minor adjustments to the Citizenship

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202 Ibid. 83.
203 Ibid. 83.
204 Semjonov “Ethnic Limits of Civil Society”,155.
205 Uldis Ozolins, “The Impact of European Accession upon Language Policy in the Baltic States”, Language Policy Volume 2, Number 3 (Oktober 2003), 224.
Law. The naturalization process was simplified for people with disabilities and for students who had passed Estonian language exams at school. In December 2003 language courses were made free of charge for citizenship applicants.\(^{207}\) By 2004 (the year that Estonia joined the EU) 81 per cent of the country’s population had Estonian citizenship (compared to 68 per cent in 1992). Semjonov describes Estonia as “an ethnic democracy” which he believes is characterized by several factors:

> “the institutionalised hegemony of the core ethnic group and a delimiting of the scope of political and other rights for minorities; the fact that certain but not all civil and political rights are enjoyed universally ...”\(^{208}\)

In other words Estonia encourages the separation between ethnic Estonians and ethnic Russians albeit in a common state. This was not changed by the fact that Estonia had integrated a large percentage of its Russian minority. Despite Estonia’s integration success there was still a group of citizens that were marginalized even after the country had joined the European Union. Many Estonians still believe that their nation state will be threatened if citizenship laws or language laws will be relaxed. Language education especially remained a source of conflict between the Estonian and the Russian-speaking population in Estonia even after EU accession.

3.2. International Response to Minority Politics in Latvia

As mentioned in Chapter 2.3. the integration process of the Russian minority into Latvian society was much slower compared to Estonia. This was criticized by Russia and also by the international community. In 1997 van der Stoel recommended to grant citizenship automatically to all children born in Latvia.\(^{209}\) In response Latvia amended changes to the citizenship law that allowed stateless children born after 1991 to gain automatic

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\(^{207}\) Budriyte, *Taming Nationalism*, 86.  
\(^{208}\) Semjonov “Ethnic Limits of Civil Society”, 156.  
The Agenda 2000: Commission Opinion on Latvia’s Application for Membership of the European Union recognized that Latvia was in a difficult demographic situation. The report however demanded changes to citizenship laws, especially the “window” system. In 1998 Russia threatened to impose economic sanctions on Latvia, in response to a demonstration by 1,000 elderly Russians that was broken up violently by the Latvian police. The pensioners were demonstrating against an increase of their utility rates and hoped for a raise in their pensions. Russian newspaper like the Moskovskiye Rossiyskiye Vesti accused Latvia of a “blatant violation of elementary human rights” and the Russian government demanded “that all discriminatory measures against Russian-speakers be removed.” Furthermore Russia threatened to withdraw from border negotiations if Latvia did not change its policies towards the Russian minority. The EU initially made the border ratification between the two countries a necessary step for Latvia to join the European Union (the border treaty was eventually signed in 2007 after EU accession). Galbreath states that:

“Russian activism in the OSCE and the Council of Europe as well as the United Nations General Assembly over allegations about everything from human rights abuses to ethnic cleansing meant that Latvian politicians were on the defensive.”

Latvian politicians were therefore forced to make policies of integration. In order to guarantee membership in NATO and the EU, Latvia was willing to make amendments to their language and citizenship laws. International organizations especially criticized Latvia for the “window policy”. This also meant that Russian pressure on Latvia was mostly successful. It was through the Russian Federation’s international pressure that international organizations demanded a liberalization of naturalization policies.

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210 Ibid. 106.
211 Ibid. 117.
212 Ibid. 117.
213 Ibid. 117.
214 Ibid. 117.
215 Ibid. 117.
218 Ibid. 399.
In July 1998 van der Stoel reiterated that the integration of the minority and the change to the citizenship laws were necessary. But he also believed that Latvia was on the right track, he added:

“that the basic elements of his proposals--the removal of the ‘naturalization windows,’ granting citizenship to children born to non-Latvians after independence in August 1991, and simplifying citizenship examinations on Latvia's constitution and history--have been worked into the recently passed amendments.”219

At the same time Latvia still needed to make more changes to further the integration process.220 Responding to the international pressure from Russia but also from European organizations (OSCE, EU) Latvia held a referendum on changes to the Citizenship Law on October 1998 and 53 per cent of the electorate voted to liberalize the laws along the suggestions of European organizations.221 Many voters however voted for the liberalization of the Citizenship Law with the knowledge that the Latvian government would introduce stricter language laws.222 Like Estonia, Latvia’s response to a liberalization of the Citizenship Law was to stiffen the language requirements. The 1989 and 1992 language laws tolerated the use of the Russian language in the public sphere. Employers in public domains had to be bilingual in Russian and Latvian, “to such an extent as it is necessary to perform their professional responsibilities.”223 This law in the eyes of many Latvians de-motivated Russians to learn Latvian.224 To promote the Latvian language parliament drafted a law in 1995 in which Latvian was to become the only official language of the state but also at the work place. The draft had to pass three readings in order to become law. In 1997 the OSCE criticized Latvia after the law had passed the second reading because it violated OSCE norms, which forbade

220 Ibid.
221 Budriyte, Taming Nationalism, 120.
222 Ibid. 120.
224 Budriyte, Taming Nationalism, 120.
the regulation of languages in private businesses. In 1999 Max van der Stoel travelled to Riga in an attempt to stall the language law reform.

The new language law was also met by stiff resistance from the Russian community in Latvia, because many non-Latvians feared that they would lose their jobs. Demonstrations were held in Riga on 10 to 13 July 1999. Even native Latvians demonstrated against the new language law. Ulf Hanson states that protesters particularly criticised:

“the fact that Latvian authorities, by adoption of the amendments, underlined the exclusive use of the Latvian language and neglected other languages. References were made to the fact that the Livonian language was recognised as a minority language and a ‘historic language’ whereas Russian and other languages were not. Protesters further criticised the ‘Latvianization’ of individual names, something perceived as ‘interference in the private sphere’. One of the aims of the protests was to collect evidence of the problems and negative consequences inflicted by the new regulations.”

Many politicians in Latvia believed that strengthening the language law would ensure the survival of the Latvian language. The OSCE and the European Union on the other hand believed that not strict language laws but language education was the key to preserve the Latvian language. On 9th December 1999, one day before the European Council announced the lists of countries that would be granted EU membership in 2004, Latvia’s President Vaira Vike-Freiberga (from 1999-2007) vetoed the law and sent it back to parliament for revision. The language law was passed with changes in 2000, Latvian was now only mandatory in national security and public safety industries. The EU viewed the revision of the language law as mandatory in order for Latvia to start accession talks. This was probably the main reason why Vike-Freiberga decided to return the law to parliament. Therefore Vike-

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225 Ibid. 121.
227 Galbreath, Nation Building and Minority Politics, 184.
229 Budriyte, Taming Nationalism, 122.
230 Galbreath, Nation Building and Minority Politics, 183.
Freiberga’s veto was essential for the future of Latvia. It also set up more programs that would encourage integration of the Russian minority.

In 2001 the Latvian government adopted the “National Programme for the Integration of Society.” This program was similar to Estonia’s “Integration in Estonian Society 2000-2007” program. Unlike Estonia’s program the Latvian program focused on the Soviet past and the importance of preserving the Latvian language. Also the program intended to increase the number of classes taught in Latvian at Russian high schools. This was supported by the OSCE and the European Union, which believed that language education was an important step towards integration of Latvia’s minority. Unlike Estonia the Latvian integration process was much more criticized by the international community. International pressure especially by Russia coupled with the prospect of EU membership changed the citizenship laws and the integration policies, and furthered language education. The introduction of free language courses and the reduction of the naturalization fee allowed more Russians to become integrated into Latvian society. Yet the naturalization of Russians also meant that Russians gained a political voice in Latvia. Unlike Estonia, Russians tended to vote for conservative pro-Russian parties such as the For Human Rights in United Latvia Party or the Harmony for Latvia Party. This was perhaps due to the fact that Latvian parties failed to include Russian politicians and voters into their platforms. Also many Russians demanded that Russian should become an official state language of Latvia. The division in Latvia between the Russian and Latvia population was much more outlined than in Estonia. This is probably due to the fact that Latvia’s integration policy was more conservative than Estonia’s integration policy. In 2004 Latvia joined the European Union alongside Estonia. Minority rights however remained a main topic in Latvian society even after accession into the European Union.

According to researcher Janina Sleivyte in her book *Russia’s European Agenda and the Baltic States*, for the Estonian government accession to the European Union, along with NATO membership was a key component to its international security policy, especially in the light of threats from the Russian Federation.\(^{235}\) EU accession and a “return to Europe” was a key component of the foreign policy of both Latvia and Estonia following independence from the Soviet Union. Both states realized that accession to the European Union meant to accept EU norms. This meant that the EU would have influence on every area of domestic policies including the minorities’ issue.\(^{236}\) As we have seen in chapter 3.1. the EU used its influence to adapt Latvia’s and Estonia’s minority politics. However the European Union would have not demanded liberalization of the Baltic States minority politics without pressure from Russia. Many Balts believed that the EU was responsible for the liberalization of integration laws. At the same time the minorities in both Latvia and Estonia felt that the European Union had not done enough to liberalize the minority politics of the Baltic States.\(^{237}\) In fact accession to the European Union means that the state gives up part of its sovereignty. Both Latvia and Estonia, which had gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, were willing to sacrifice a part of their independence through accession to the European Union, since it was seen as a necessity for security and economic reasons. Furthermore Latvia and Estonia hoped that accession to the European Union would ensure economic independence from Russia. Yet at the same time accession to the European Union was not without its critics.

### 3.3. From one Union to another: Estonia and Latvia join the EU

Researcher Marko Lehti in his article *Estonia and Latvia: A “new” Europe challenges the “old”?* states that “the enlargement of the European Union (EU) and NATO to the Baltic

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\(^{236}\) Galbreath, *Nation Building and Minority Politics*, 283.

\(^{237}\) *Ibid*. 263.
States has marked the end of a long period of transition following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{238} Latvian president Vike-Freiberga even claimed that

“for Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, the year 2002 [the year Latvia was accepted as a member of the EU; the Baltic countries became full Member States in 2004] may prove to be as significant as the year 1991, when our three countries regained their independence.”\textsuperscript{239}

Statements by government officials of both Latvia and Estonia underline the importance of the international community in the context of state security. Especially the memories of World War II and of Soviet annexation with little resistance by the Baltic States and foreign aid have been a reason for both countries to seek EU and NATO memberships.\textsuperscript{240} Both Latvia and Estonia still had a difficult relationship with the Russian Federation. As mentioned in the earlier part of the chapter, Russia viewed accession of the Baltic countries into the EU as an encroachment into their political sphere of influence. Yet Karsten Brüggemann believes that after EU accession of the Baltic States, Russia’s foreign policy had to come to terms with the fact that the Baltic States could not be treated like the other parts of the so called “near abroad.”\textsuperscript{241} Unlike most countries of the near abroad Latvia and Estonia were never controlled by Russian politics. Neither state had pro-Russian presidents like it was the case in most other post-Soviet states. Therefore the process of EU and NATO accession of the Baltic States was viewed with suspicion by the Russian Federation.

Latvia and Estonia officially joined the European Union on the 1 May 2004. This was the first time that the EU had expanded into countries that were formally part of the Soviet Union. On the eve of Baltic accession into the EU, an observation by the Russian newspaper Rossiyskaya Gazeta demonstrates the general feeling of EU eastern enlargement “Hurrah,

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{238} Lehti, “Estonia and Latvia: A "new" Europe challenges the “old”?, 87.
\textsuperscript{240} Lehti, “Estonia and Latvia: A "new" Europe challenges the “old”?,
\textsuperscript{241} Karsten Brüggemann, “Estonia and its Escape from the East: The Relevance of the Past in Russian-Estonian Relations”, in Tsypylma Darieva and Wolfgang Kaschuba (editors), Representations on the Margins of Europe. (Frankfurt, 2007), 138.
\end{footnotes}
Russia will finally have a border with Europe! But what sort of hurrah is it when it wasn't us who came to Europe, but Europe that came to us.”242 The ironic sentiment expressed in that headline describes the feeling of the Russian Federation towards EU enlargement and the prospect of a common border. Europe’s expansion into the Baltic was viewed as an encroachment into the political sphere of the Russian Federation. Furthermore the headline also points at something else. Many Russians felt excluded by the European Union. Russians need a visa to travel to the EU and the expansion of the European Union to the Baltic States meant further travel restrictions for Russian citizens. The daily Nezavisimaya Gazeta urged “Moscow to put pressure on the EU to prevent what it calls "discrimination" against the Russian-speaking minority in Latvia.”243 These sentiments as expressed in newspapers demonstrate that there was still work to do between the Russian Federation and the new Member States Latvia and Estonia. Also that Russians in general were unsure on how to feel about the European Union.

Due to the historic past of the Baltic States, with the annexation of Latvia and Estonia in the Soviet Union, and the Russification policy of the Soviet Union in the Baltic States, it was clear that relationships between the Russian Federation and the Baltic States would not be easy. The de-Russification policy of the Baltic States was met with criticism by the Russian Federation. There were other obstacles between the Russian Federation and the Baltic States. When Latvia and Estonia joined the European Union they had no border agreements with the Russian Federation. The borders between Russia and Estonia were set in November 1944, when Stalin transferred three Estonian regions east of Narva and the Pechori region to the Russian Federative Soviet Republic.244

243 Ibid.
244 Bult, "Everyday tension surrounded by Ghosts from the Past: Baltic-Russian Relations since 1991", 134.
Neither the EU nor NATO were keen to import the border dispute between Russia and Estonia. Both Russia and Estonia agreed on a draft treaty in March 1999, but the actual treaty was not signed before EU accession of Estonia. For Latvia the situation was similarly difficult, especially because the Latvian constitution states that Latvian territories include the Abrene region. Pytalovo as it is known in Russian was transferred to Russia under Stalin in 1944 and was made part of the Pskov oblast in 1944. When Latvia joined the EU in 2004 there was still no border treaty, since Russia refused to negotiate unless Latvia would change its constitution. Russia also has continuously used the missing border treaties with Latvia and Estonia as a means of putting pressure on the minority politics of the Baltic States. Another issue is the presence of the Russian Army in the Baltic. Even though the Russian Army left the Baltic States in 1994, there was still a presence of troops in the Kaliningrad enclave. Brüggemann states that every time a Russian military aircraft crosses into the air

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246 Ibid. 134.
247 Ibid. 134.
248 Ibid. 135.
space of either Latvia or Estonia there are questions about the security policies of the Baltic States.\textsuperscript{249}

\textsuperscript{249} Brüggemann, “Estonia and its Escape from the East: The Relevance of the Past in Russian-Estonian Relations”, 141.
Chapter 4: Latvia and Estonia after EU Enlargement

Accession to the European Union was only the beginning of a larger integration process for Latvia and Estonia into the European Union. Following the EU enlargement and membership at NATO, Latvia and Estonia were able to use the benefits of membership within international organizations. Both Latvia and Estonia have several foreign policy objectives in common. Both were also interested in the advantages of the European common market. They hoped that membership with the EU and NATO would minimize the influence of the Russian Federation on Baltic politics.\textsuperscript{250} Both Latvia and Estonia have made progress towards integration, yet at the eve of the 2004 EU enlargement there were still many Russians living in Estonia and Latvia without citizenship, the status of the non-citizens in the Baltic States remains a challenge even today. David Galbreath believes that Estonia and Latvia did not perceive integration into the EU as the solution to all their problems, but “rather a strategy for improving their ability to deal with [integration] challenges.”\textsuperscript{251} In 2007 protests erupted in Tallinn, when the Estonian government decided to remove a Soviet World War II memorial.\textsuperscript{252} The protests turned violent, and became synonymous for Estonia’s post-enlargement integration and identity challenges. Some Russophones in Latvia and Estonia believed that the integration process by the Baltic States was destroying the Russian identity of the Russophone community. Some Balts viewed the integration of the Russophone community as a danger to the new nation states. The protests against the Statue removal were therefore also an identity conflict, between Russophones and Estonian nationalists. This chapter will deal with the post-enlargement challenges of Latvia and Estonia. Furthermore the statue conflict would also demonstrate the rather shaky relationship between the Russian Federation and the Baltic States. The Baltic States view the Russian Federation as a political


\textsuperscript{251} \textit{Ibid.} 89.

and economic threat. Whereas Russia views the minority politics of the Baltic States as unjust ethnic segregation, along with the events surrounding the 2007 statue crisis this chapter will outline the relationship between the Russian Federation and the Baltic States in the post-EU expansion framework.

4.1. The Statue Crisis in Estonia

The 2007 Statue Crisis has become a symbol for Estonia’s divided society and the difficult relationship between Russia and the Baltic States. The Bronze Soldier Statue was situated in Tonismägi (the main square of Tallinn), and was at the centre of a violent protest in 2007. The statue was erected in 1947 following the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany. For the Russian-speakers the statue was symbol of Soviet liberalization of Estonia, for Estonians the statue was a symbol of Soviet occupation. Some of Estonia’s Russophones refuse to view the Soviet Red Army as an occupation force, and they point to the fact that the Soviet Union lost

Figure 2: The Bronze Soldier

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26 million people fighting Nazi Germany. For Estonians, however the Soviet “liberation” of their homeland was viewed as the start of another occupation. A government homepage of Estonia portrays the arrival of the Red Army in 1944 not as liberation but as a change of foreign regimes:

“The recapture of Tallinn by Soviet forces was far from being a “liberation” for the Estonian people. It merely marked a change in foreign regimes and the beginning of a nightmarishly repressive occupation that would last for nearly 50 more years.”

The presence of a soldier in a Soviet uniform on the main square of Tallinn therefore became a symbol of injustice for many Estonians. In 2002 the Estonian government removed a monument in Parnu that honoured SS soldiers, who fought the Soviet Union in World War II. After it was removed it reappeared in Lihula, were In September 2004 the Estonian government removed it a second time.

The removal of the Lihula monument sparked the controversy surrounding the Bronze Soldier. If it was wrong to honour soldiers that had fought for the Nazis against the Soviets wasn’t it wrong to honour soldiers that had helped the Soviet Union occupy Estonia? After the removal of the Lihula monument the Bronze Soldier became the target for acts of vandalism, for example on the eve of the 9 May 2005 Victory Day celebration, red paint was

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255 Ibid.
thrown at the monument. Ehala believes that the monument became a symbol for integration battles in Estonia. For many Estonians the statue was a symbol of the oppressive Soviet regime, but for many Russians the statue symbolized the sacrifice of parents and grandparents that fought Nazi Germany. In connection with the 2006 parliamentary elections the Estonian liberal party Reformierakond (Reform Party) promised to remove the Bronze Soldier from the center of Tallinn. At the March 2007 election the Reformierakond became the largest party in parliament with 28 percent of the seats, and the removal of the statue became a reality.

In the early morning of the 26 April 2007 policemen had cordoned the area surrounding the statue and the graves of 14 unidentified Soviet soldiers buried nearby. By the evening of the same day a large crowd of Russophones had gathered at the fence surrounding the excavation side. Bottles and stones were thrown at the police, which were protecting the workers that were removing the statue and the remains of the buried Soviet soldiers. Responding to the violence the police ordered the protesters from the square and began pushing them out of the square into the surrounding streets the same evening. The crowd responded by attacking shops, breaking windows, and burning cars. Nonetheless the statue was removed that same night. The next day was peaceful but during the night of April 27th riots flared up again and lasted for two nights. Demonstrations also spread to other Estonian cities with large Russophone communities. Russophone nationalist groups like the “Night Watch” (the name comes from the popular Russian fantasy movie Night Watch) tried to oppose the government decision to remove the statue. More than 40 people were injured and one person died during the unrests, the police arrested 300 people and had to use

260 Ibid. 142.
264 Ibid. 143.
tear gas to disperse the rioters. For Russians living in Estonia the removal of the Bronze Soldier was a sacrilege, as Tony Halpin states:

“Estonia’s sizeable Russian-speaking minority regard the statue as a liberator. They focus on what they see as the Soviet liberation of Estonia from Nazi occupation in 1944 on the Red Army’s road to Berlin.”

Furthermore the removal of the statue was also ill timed. Erected in 1947 the statue would have celebrated its 60th anniversary on 9 May 2007. In the aftermath it is clear that the Estonian government underestimated the symbolic value of the statue. Perhaps a more open policy on the future of the statue could have avoided the bloodshed that ensued during the removal of the statue.

In response to the removal of the Bronze Soldiers, Sergei Mironov leader of the Russian Senate called for a vote on a non-binding resolution to sever all ties with the Estonian government. The State Duma (lower house) also called for a non-binding resolution to cut ties with Estonia. “Deputies of the State Duma expect the government to take urgent measures against the immoral actions of the Estonian authorities, first of all in trade and economics, namely transportation, energy and finance.” The spokesman of the Russian Foreign Ministry Mikhail Kamynin was quoted by the Russian news agency RIA Novosti: “The actions of the Estonian authorities are disappointing and cannot be justified.” Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov responded to the removal by stating that: "We [Russia] must not overreact but take serious measures to demonstrate our true attitude to this inhuman act.” Meanwhile the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin spoke out against interference into the politics of Estonia on the 28 April 2007 (the day after the statue

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265 Estonia removes Soviet memorial. BBC News.
267 Ibid.
270 Ibid.
removal). Despite Putin’s call for caution there were protests in Moscow organized by the Russian youth organization Nashi (Ours). Nashi is a Russian youth organization, whose main goals according to Spiegel Reporter Anselm Waldermann are “a powerful Russia -- with a tinge of nationalism -- united behind a strong president.” The group is known for spectacular demonstrations which are funded by government, or business people with a “national outlook.” Nashi was founded in 2005 in response to the Orange Revolution in the Ukraine. The organization was created by Vasily Yakemenko, who was a former employee of the presidential administration. Yakemenko stated to the BBC that one of Nashi’s aims was to stand against those that “have gathered under Hitler's banners of national-socialism.” For Nashi the removal of the Bronze Soldier was a symbol of pro-fascist tendencies in Estonia. In Moscow Nashi organized a demonstration in front of the Estonian Embassy. They accused the Estonian government of fascist tendencies; they renamed Estonia into “eSStonia” and called for a public petition to relocate the Estonian embassy from the city centre to the outskirts of Moscow. According to the article by Marko Lehti, Matti Jutila, and Markku Jokisipilä, the strong reaction against the Estonian government’s decision to move the statue, can be explained by the persistent importance of Soviet victory in the Great Patriotic War (as World War II is called in Russia) for Russians. For Russians (in Russia but also in the Baltic States) the removal of the statue was an attempt to question the significance of Soviet victory over Nazi Germany. Furthermore many Russians argued that Estonia was placing the Soviet regime on the same level as Nazi Germany.

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On the 8 May 2007 (one day ahead of the Victory Day Celebrations) the statue was placed at the war cemetery just outside of Tallinn. Members of the Estonian diplomatic corps and members of the Estonian government paid homage to the monument for the first time. The next day thousands of Russophones commemorated the end of the Great Patriotic War, and covered almost the entire area with flowers. Researcher Martin Ehala believes that the Estonian government underestimated the social meaning of the statue to the Russophone population of Estonia.\(^{278}\) As previously mentioned, for most Estonians the statue was a symbol of Soviet suppression and annexation of Estonia. The Estonian government also believed that the memorial was only significant to a small percentage of the most radical Russophones. Yet as Ehala explains “the symbol was emotionally significant for the majority of Russophone community because of its commemorative and celebratory meanings, meanings that are legitimate and humane in nature.”\(^{279}\) The events surrounding the Bronze Soldier were also significant in terms of Estonia’s integration policies. It showed that even in 2007, three years after EU accession, there was still a polarization between the Russian and the Estonian population. The celebrations of Victory Day show the division between Russophones and Estonians. Estonians celebrate the end of the war on the 8\(^{th}\) of May, whereas Russophones generally celebrated the victory over Nazi Germany on the 9\(^{th}\) of May at the Bronze Soldier statue (the peace agreement was signed on the 8\(^{th}\) of May 1945 at 23:00 Berlin time, due to the time difference it was already the 9\(^{th}\) of May in Moscow). Estonians also view the holiday as a memorial day whereas Russophones see it as a celebratory holiday.\(^{280}\)

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\(^{279}\) Ibid. 145.

4.2. The Statue Crisis and Political Representation:

The Russian Minorities in Latvia and Estonia

The 2007 Bronze Soldier Crisis was also significant for Estonia’s neighbour Latvia. In August 2007 the Latvian government moved a Soviet war memorial in the town of Bauska to a local war cemetery. This move was criticized by the Latvian Anti-Fascist Committee, which is organized by ethnic Russians. The Anti-Fascist Committee was founded in order to combat neo-Nazism and Russophobia. Anti-Fascist Committee leader Eduard Goncharov said “the authorities had created a precedent for similar events in other small towns, which could turn into a trend and reach Riga.” Furthermore he stated that: “What happened in Bauska is evidence that Latvia is not immune to the Estonian scenario of dismantling the ‘Bronze Soldier’.” Following the tumultuous events that surrounded the removal of the Bronze Soldier, Moscow decided to make no statements. The significance of the Bronze Soldier Crisis is the fact that the events in Tallinn are symbolic for Latvia as well. The events represent a polarization between the Russian Federation and the Baltic States and the events surrounding World War II, which was concluded with the annexation of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union. This polarization also exists in the Baltic States between Latvians and Estonians on the one side and ethnic Russians on the other. What is also significant is that the Russian community living in the Baltic States became more organized and more outspoken, following the accession of the Baltic States into the European Union.

In 2010, 20 per cent of all Latvians did not speak Latvian and about 16 per cent of the country’s population was still not naturalized. At the same time, the naturalization of ever

282 Ibid.
283 Ibid.
284 Ibid.
more Russians into Latvian society also led to a stronger voice of Russophones in Latvian party politics. In 2002 the party for Human Rights in United Latvia (FHRUL) gained 19 per cent of the vote and 25 out of 100 seats in parliament. The party was a coalition party of several pro-Russian parties, with the main aim of promoting Russian as the second official language of Latvia. The election success of the FHRUL in the 2002 election was a threat to many Latvians who were worried about the status of the Latvian language. President Vike-Freiberga made it clear that she would not support Russian as the second official language of Latvia. She argued that the survival of the Latvian language was endangered during the Soviet Union, and the Latvian language therefore needed extra support in today’s Latvia. Furthermore the government wanted more Russians to be fluent in Latvian, since most Latvians already know Russian. Before the 2006 Parliamentary elections the FHRUL split into two main parties, the Saskaņas Centrs “Centre Harmony” or SC and the Par Cilvēku tiesībām vienotā Latvijā, “For Human Rights in a United Latvia”, PCTVL. The PCTVL is more radically pro-Russian and pro-Kremlin, whereas the SC publicly shies away from clear affiliation with Moscow. However both parties still maintain their main goals as promoting the Russian language, opposing Latvia’s integration policy, and also supporting Russia’s view on World War II history. In the 2006 parliamentary election the SC gained 14.4 per cent of the vote and 17 seats in the parliament. The PCTVL gained 6 per cent of the vote and 8 seats in parliament. To put this into context the SC was the fifth largest party in the parliament and the PCTVL the seventh largest out of eight parties represented in Latvia’s Parliament. As shown in the next section compared to Estonia, Russophone politics are much more organized in Latvia in Estonia.

288 Budriyte, Taming Nationalism, 126.
289 Vike-Freiberga quoted in Budriyte, Taming Nationalism, 126.
290 Krišjānis Kariņš. Understanding Latvian politics.
291 Ibid.
Unlike Latvia, Russophones in Estonia tend to vote along socio-economic lines. The United Russian People’s Party is Estonia’s largest Russophone party, but it only received 6.1 per cent of the vote and 6 mandates in the 1999 parliamentary elections.\(^{293}\) In 2003 and in 2007 the United Russian People’s Party failed to gain any seats in the parliament.\(^{294}\) As mentioned in Chapter 2.3. Russophones in Estonia did not tend to vote along ethnic lines, but instead chose to vote for parties that represented their social status. Richer Russians would therefore vote for the same parties as richer Estonians, whereas Russian workers would vote along the same line as Estonian workers.\(^{295}\) This is evident through the bad election results of the United Russian People’s Party after 2003. Estonian mainstream parties were especially successful in attracting the Russian elite and Russian voters, by promising to solve the problems of statelessness.\(^{296}\) This also demonstrates that the political and social integration of Russophones in Estonian society in that regard was much more successful than in Latvia. This is due to the fact that Estonia had managed to integrate a larger percentage of Russophones into Estonian society (only 7.5 per cent of Estonians had non-citizenship status in 2010)\(^{297}\) as Latvia (where 16 per cent of Latvians had non-citizenship status in 2010).\(^{298}\) Both Latvia and Estonia enjoyed economic success following the accession to the European Union, Estonia’s more liberal integration policy however made it easier for Russians to integrate into Estonia. Many Russophones chose to integrate into Estonia, because of EU citizenship. Estonian citizenship was therefore not only desirable but also attainable.\(^{299}\) In Latvia, despite its more difficult integration procedure, many Russians chose to obtain Latvian citizenship due to the economic success of the country but also because of EU membership. Latvia and Estonia

\(^{293}\) Budriyte, *Taming Nationalism*, 76.


\(^{295}\) Budriyte, *Taming Nationalism*, 76.

\(^{296}\) Ibid. 76-77.


were the fastest growing economies in the European Union in 2006. The countries were termed the Baltic Tiger states. The term tiger states comes from the mid-1990s and was used to describe the rapid growth of states in the Southeast Asia. Radical liberalization coupled with a skilled and relative cheap workforce led to a rapid economic growth for the Baltic States between 2004 and 2006.300

The 2007 statue crisis in Estonia however demonstrated that not all groups were happy with the integration process. The statue crisis resulted through the identity threat that both Russophones but also Estonian right-wing groups felt through the blurring of ethnic lines in Estonian society.301 The most prominent pro-nationalist right-wing organization in Estonia is the “Estonian Independence Party”302 and in Latvia the “For Fatherland and Freedom Party.”303 Officially both organizations are parties but neither party has been able to win seats in parliament in the recent elections. They have been most prominent by organizing nationalistic events. Nationalistic pro-Latvian and pro-Estonian groups are opposed by pro-Russophone groups like Night Watch in Estonia or the Anti-Fascist Committee in Latvia. In both countries these organizations are divided along the following lines. Right-wing Estonian or Latvian groups strongly oppose the history promoted by the Russian Federation/USSR. They believe that the Baltic States were oppressed and forcefully annexed into the Soviet Union. Right-wing pro-Latvian or pro-Estonian organizations in both countries therefore actively uphold members of the German Army (Wehrmacht and SS) that fought against the Soviet Union as war heroes. In Latvia for example the 16 March is known as Legion Day. This “holiday” celebrates Latvia’s soldiers, who were part of the Waffen-SS that briefly

fought off the Red Army, to defend Latvia’s capital Riga, on 16 March 1944. Every year members of the Division (most of them are over 90 years old) lay flowers at Riga’s Freedom monument. The holiday is opposed by members of the Russian community, like the Latvian Anti-Fascist Committee, but also the Jewish community. In the Baltic States right-wing nationalist groups use the events surrounding World War II to divide society between those who fought with the Soviet Union (members of the Russophone community) and those who allegedly fought for freedom against an oppressive Communist regime.

Those groups are opposed by Russophone groups like the Latvian Anti-Fascist Committee, who believe that the Soviet Union liberated the Baltic States from an oppressive fascist regime. For these groups, symbols like the Bronze Soldier are of fundamental importance since they represent the defeat of Nazi Germany by the Red Army. In Estonia such groups are especially prevalent since radical Russian parties are not represented in party politics. Therefore non-governmental organizations like the already mentioned Nochnoy Dozor (Night Watch) are especially important. The “Night Watch” was founded in 2006 in order to protect the Bronze Soldier from vandalism. Vandalism especially became a problem after the Estonian government forcefully removed the Lihula SS monument. They became heavily involved in the April 2007 demonstrations, when they formed a human chain around the statue in order to “protect” it from removal. Since 2007 the “Night Watch” has also collaborated with the Russian youth movement Nashi. Ehala states that “the speedy integration process with the EU, the over-stressing of specific European values and the

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emergence of post-modern consumerist identities created insecurities among Estonians [and Russophones].” At the same time the Russophone community in Estonia felt threatened by the “stressing of Estonian civic identity and values.” Some right-wing Russophones felt that the integration process into Estonian society would destroy the Russian identity of the Russian community in Estonia. The lack of political representation and the confrontation of Estonian society with the Soviet past were felt as identity threats by the Russian-minority. As the statue crisis in Estonia highlighted, the Russo-Baltic debate on World War II history is, along with the integration policy, the strongest polarizer in Baltic politics today. Both Russians and Balts have a different outlook on how to define the history of the Baltic States. Lehti, Jutila, and Jokisipilä point out that “the Bronze Soldier incident must first and foremost be seen as a desperate cry of a minority to be recognized.” This is only partly true; a large majority of Russians living in Estonia or in Latvia have completely integrated into Baltic society. The demonstrations were organized by groups that are on the fringes of society. The demonstrations could therefore also be interpreted as a retreating battle by nationalist groups. This would mean that despite the remaining challenges the integration policy in the Baltic States has been a success. Furthermore the fact that the demonstrations were in Estonia were the integration process is more successful than in Latvia also speaks for itself. In political terms the radical Russian parties have been unsuccessful in the democratic process. Large scale demonstrations like the once surrounding the removal of the Bronze Soldier are the only way for Russian minority parties like the United Russian People’s Party to become political active. In other words the demonstrations were not a desperate cry of a minority to be recognized, but a last stance by right-wing organizations, that have become aware of their waning influence in Baltic society.

311 Ibid. 155.
4.3. After EU Enlargement: Russian Politics towards the Baltic States

In March 2007 Latvia and Russia finally signed a border treaty. The treaty between Russia and Latvia ratified the borders as they were drawn up under Stalin.313 Estonia and Russia had also agreed on a border treaty in 2005, but Russia’s Foreign Minister Lavrov withdrew his signature when Estonia included a statement into the draft that declared Soviet power over Estonia as an occupation.314 After Latvia signed its border agreement in March 2007, Estonia hoped that it could re-approach Russia about signing the border agreement. Yet the Statue Crisis destroyed all hope of reaching an agreement and the treaty has remained unsigned.315 The Statue Crisis in Estonia demonstrated that Russia still tries to be influential in the politics of the Baltic States. In terms of foreign policy, the aggressive stance of the Russian Federation towards Estonia during the removal of the Bronze Soldier also demonstrated that the Baltic States had to take Russia seriously. Russia reacted very strongly to the events of the Bronze Soldier; Moscow imposed temporary restrictions on railroad transport as well as oil, gas and coal deliveries to Estonia.316 Officially Moscow stated that technical difficulties were responsible for the delays of the deliveries. Russia has been accused of using its monopoly over the deliveries of natural resources in other countries (the Ukraine) and Estonia feared that the Russian Federation would not shy away to do the same with Estonia (Estonia receives 100 per cent of its natural gas from the Russian Federation).317 The author Hiski Haukkala points out that Russia has used its military in the past to underline its position “for example, the conflicts with Georgia in 2006 and 2008 over South Ossetia and Abkhazia [this conflict in particular was fueled by an ethnic pro-Russian minority] and with Ukraine over territorial

313 Laura Sheeter. *Latvia, Russia sign border deal*, BBC News.
317 Ibid. 206.
claims on the Sea of Azov in 2005 have shown as much.” Furthermore the “Statue Crisis” and the treatment of Russian minorities were not the only disputes between Russia and the Baltic States.

In the end a military solution to the conflict was out of question for Russia because both EU and NATO stood firmly behind Estonia, and according to Haukkala, this reality “clearly affected Russia’s room for maneuver in the crisis.” While Haukkala believes that military action was an option for Moscow, this seems doubtful considering Estonia’s position in NATO and the EU. During the Bronze Soldier Crisis both NATO and the EU reacted quickly to support Estonia in their ongoing disagreements with the Russian Federation. There is no evidence that the Russian Federation planned to use military means against the Republic of Estonia. NATO and EU also mostly criticized the rhetoric that came out of Russia. Especially the fact that the Nashi youth group was allowed to attack the Estonian embassy, was criticized by the EU and NATO. The EU and NATO pointed out that failing to protect an embassy is a violation of the Vienna Convention on diplomatic relations. A spokesperson for NATO was quoted in the New York Times as saying that: “These actions are unacceptable and must be stopped immediately.” Angela Merkel (Germany’s Chancellor and EU President at the time) also criticized Moscow’s actions during these events and hoped for a diplomatic resolution to the conflict. In May 2007 Estonia was target of a major cyber-attack, which targeted important government and banking agencies in Estonia. The government of Estonia claimed that it had lost several million Euros because of the assault, and immediately began to blame Russia (in particular Nashi). NATO reacted by providing Estonia with defence

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318 Ibid. 207.
319 Ibid. 207.
321 Ibid.
mechanisms. There was never any proof that the Russian government was responsible for the attack. Both NATO and EU reacted swiftly to defuse the situation between Estonia and the Russian Federation, through political pressure on the Russian Federation, and also by urging Estonia to practice restraint to defuse the status crisis, and the political spat that ensued afterwards. In the end Russia and Estonia both are equally to blame for the international crisis that ensued after the removal of the Bronze Soldier. Estonia could have been more diplomatic about the statues removal, instead of doing so just days ahead of the May 9th Victory Celebrations. By not announcing the plans for the statue, Estonia demonstrated its inability to judge the importance of the Great Patriotic War to the Russian Federation. Russia on the other hand should have restrained Nashi’s demonstrations in front of the Estonian embassy in Moscow. Yet the Statue Crisis would not remain the only political crisis between the Russian Federation and the Baltic States.

On the 7th of August 2008, Georgia shelled positions of Russian Peacekeepers and Ossetian military in South Ossetia in an attempt to regain control over what it sees as its northern province. Russian forces (which were stationed in South Ossetia as peacekeepers) quickly repelled the assault and drove deep into Georgian territory. After just five days of conflict a cease fire agreement was signed between Georgia and the Russian Federation. Russia, however maintained control over what Georgia sees as its provinces South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The conflict between Russia and Georgia sparked controversy because it was assumed that Russia had started the conflict. It was not until a year later that a report proved that in fact Georgia had started the hostilities. The Baltic States immediately showed their support to Georgia following the invasion of Russian troops into Georgian territory. Furthermore demonstrations against Russia broke out in Estonia and Latvia. In the

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Latvian capital Riga more than a thousand people rallied in front of the Russian embassy waving Georgian and Latvian flags. A similar event took place in Estonian’s capital Tallinn. Furthermore the presidents of the Latvian, Estonian and Lithuanian governments issued a joint statement in which they declared that “they were watching events unfold in Georgia with deep concern and anxiety.” Furthermore the statement read:

“Justification of Russia’s actions in Georgia by the need to protect its citizens is unacceptable. Alleged reasons for taking up a war against Georgia raise concerns about the future in every state with Russian citizens living on its territory.”

Russia’s ambassador to Latvia Alexander Veshnyakov warned the Baltic States not to react emotionally, “[o]ne must not hurry on such serious issues, as serious mistakes can be made that have to be paid for a long time afterwards.” This remark became especially important when it turned out that Georgia was responsible for the hostilities in 2008. Russia felt that it was attacked wrongly by certain states and the media on how it handled the situation in South Ossetia. The alleged invasion of Georgia was especially relevant to Latvia and Estonia. Both Latvia and Estonia viewed the incident as an attempt by the Russian Federation to protect a pro-Russian minority (Ossetians are not Russian, but many of them hold Russian passports). Russians living in Latvia and Estonia, however are for the most part not Russian citizens, they either hold Estonian or Latvian citizenship or are stateless. Both Latvia and Estonia made statements to the media, in which they argued that Russia could be a threat to the security of the Baltic States since both countries harbour large Russian minorities within their borders. Estonia’s and Latvia’s proximity to Russia however means that both the EU and NATO have a greater interest in investing into the Baltic States, especially if Russia is perceived to be a threat to political and economic security to Member States of the European Union and NATO. The strong reaction by the Baltic States to the alleged invasion of Georgia by Russia can
therefore be perceived as a means to gain more attention by NATO and the EU to invest into the security of the Baltic States. The events since 2007 demonstrate that the relationship between the Baltic States and Russia are strained at the least. The statue crisis and the reaction of Baltic States to the war in Georgia show Latvia and Estonia have work to do when it comes to their relationship with Russia.

4.4. Economic Relationship between Russia and the Baltic States

The economic relationship between the Baltic States and the Russian Federation is of particular importance. The Baltic States are in particular dependent on natural resources from the Russian Federation. In 2005 Russia and Germany signed an energy deal that entailed the construction of a pipeline from Russia’s Vyborg to Germany’s Greifswald through the Baltic Sea. After completion in 2012 the pipeline will bypass the Baltic States and Poland.329 The Nord Stream pipeline has been criticized by the Baltic States who see it as a threat to their energy security. They believe that this pipeline would allow Russia to be able to cut off transit countries from gas without affecting Russia’s main European energy partner, Germany. Poland has compared the Nord Stream project to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (which divided Eastern Europe between Soviet and German spheres of influences before World War II).330 This sentiment is shared in the Baltic States. The Baltic States believe that the Nord Stream pipeline could be used by Russia to change policies in the Baltic States. Russia has used energy politics in the past to gain a political advantage. To take an example from the Baltic States in 2002 the Russian oil companies Lukoil and Transneft attempted to take a controlling stake of the Ventspils Nafta oil terminal. Both offers were turned down since the company

was not for sale, in response Russian oil companies stopped delivering oil to the terminal.\textsuperscript{331} Estonia has similar experiences, in 1993 Russia cut of gas shipments in response to Estonia’s Law on Aliens and in 2007 resource deliveries were delayed following the removal of the Bronze Soldier.\textsuperscript{332} Understandably both Latvia and Estonia are against the Nord Stream project. Both countries have offered Russia the opportunity to run segments of the pipeline over their territories but Russia’s ambassador to Latvia Viktor Kaluzhny has stated that “the reason any onshore pipeline through the Baltic States has not been considered is that it has been impossible to find a political dialogue between the countries.”\textsuperscript{333} This statement was made even before the statue crisis, and the South Ossetia conflict. Since then political dialogue between Russia and the Baltic States has become even more difficult. Germany meanwhile has tried to calm controversies surrounding the construction of the pipeline.

\begin{center}
\textbf{Figure 4: Main Gas Pipelines in Europe}\textsuperscript{334}
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{332} \textit{Ibid.} 302.
In an interview with the BBC Alexander Rahr from the German Council on Foreign Relations said that Central Europe's (the Baltic and Bulgaria are served by independent pipelines) dependence on only two existing gas pipelines makes it a hostage to disputes.\(^{335}\) Currently Germany and Central Europe are only served through two pipelines, one going through the Ukraine and another going through Belarus and Poland. This makes the construction of the new gas pipeline through the Baltic Sea an economic necessity.

Another aspect in the relationship between the Russian Federation and the Baltic States is economic trade. Russia is the second largest trading partner of both Baltic States after the European Union.\(^{336}^{337}\) Trade between the Baltic States and the Russian Federation is mostly focused on natural resources (energy and mineral fuels), 77 percent of Russia’s export to the EU is natural resources.\(^{338}\) Russia’s economic relationship with the Baltic States is therefore heavily influenced by energy. Outside of energy Russia has very little influence in the Baltic States economically. Russia’s foreign investment into the Baltic States has been marginal at least. In an interview with the Russian Daily Kommersant Latvia’s President Valdis Zatler stated that although western investment brings less profit then Russian investment it brings more stability. Furthermore Zatler stated that “Russian investment is also a risk for economic independence and, possibly, as a consequence, for political independence.”\(^{339}\) Also Zatler believes that because most large Russian companies are state owned Russian investment would mean that those companies would then act on behalf of the Russian state in Latvia.\(^{340}\) This statement reflects the worry by Latvia that Russia could use foreign investment in order to control politics in the Baltic States. Russian investment in


\(^{337}\) Unknown. *Foreign Trade Statistics*, LIAA.


\(^{340}\) Ibid.
Latvia is however very small with only 4 percent. In comparison the largest investor in Latvia is Estonia which comprises of 16 percent of all foreign investment. In Estonia Russia’s direct investment is even smaller with only 2.9 percent or 306 million Euros.\textsuperscript{341} In comparison Sweden invests 4 billion Euros a year into Estonia and is therefore accountable for 39.7 percent of all investment into Estonia.\textsuperscript{342} In general Russia receives more investments than it spends itself in foreign countries. For example Russian investment in the EU in 2008 was only 2 billion Euro compared to 28 billion Euros that were invested in Russia by the European Union.\textsuperscript{343}

For Russia this means that their only economic influence on the Baltic States in terms of trade and investment is through energy and natural resources. Furthermore the Baltic States are important economically to Russia, towns like Riga and Tallinn used to be important port cities for the Soviet Union at the Baltic Sea, and even today Russia is still dependent on those cities for international trade.\textsuperscript{344} The accession of the Baltic States into the European Union also means that Latvia and Estonia have become important economically for the Russian Federation. Sleivyte argues that Russia hopes that the Baltic States may serve as a contributor of development to adjacent regions such as Saint Petersburg or Kaliningrad.\textsuperscript{345} Sleivyte believes that Russia uses the Russian minority in the Baltic States in order to maintain its influence in the region.\textsuperscript{346} Russia is dependent on economic investment by the Baltic States especially in Russia’s Baltic Sea Region (Kaliningrad and Saint Petersburg). Estonia’s and Latvia’s membership to NATO and the EU means that energy remains the only muscle that Russia has towards the Baltic States. The threat of an energy war, between the Baltic States and Russia can only be solved by a political dialogue between the two countries.

\textsuperscript{343} Unknown. \textit{Russia}, European Commission Trade.
\textsuperscript{344} Janina Sleivyte, \textit{Russia’s European Agenda and the Baltic States}, 122.
\textsuperscript{345} \textit{Ibid.} 122
\textsuperscript{346} \textit{Ibid.} 122
Final Conclusion

This thesis has analyzed the integration process of the Russian-minorities in Latvia and Estonia. With the historical background of the Soviet Union, Latvia and Estonia had a monumental task of integrating a large Russian-speaking minority. Most Russian-speaking migrants and their descendants living in Estonia and Latvia today arrived in the Baltic during the time of the Soviet Union. Most of the Russians who migrated to the Baltic did so because the Soviet Union needed workers to help industrialize the Baltic region. The migration of Russians to the Baltic was also part of the Soviet Union’s Russification policy. Moscow believed that Russian settlers in the Baltic would help stabilize their control over the region. It also caused a marginalization of Estonian and Latvian culture. Gorbachev’s policies of Glasnost and Perestroika meant more liberalization of all spheres of life in the Soviet Union. The liberalization of daily life (even though it was within the restraints of the Marxist-Leninist thought) meant that it was possible for Latvians and Estonians to be more outspoken about their nationalities. National movements in the 1980s in Latvia and Estonia were focused on the preservation of language, culture, and the environment. Environmental protection in the Baltic States can be perceived as an attempt to preserve the natural identity since large projects like the phosphorite mines in Estonia or the metro line in Riga were not only damaging to the environment but would also have meant a greater influx of Russian workers. Latvians and Estonians felt that they had become marginalized in their own countries. The Soviet Union’s policy of Russification meant that both states independence movements were focused on preserving their national identities.

This meant that post-independent Latvia and Estonia introduced radical citizenship and language laws in order to regain their national identities. Citizenship was only restored to those (and their descendants) who were citizens in pre-World War II Latvia or Estonia. This policy was especially advocated by the Restorationists of both countries, who believed that Estonia and Latvia were continuations of the pre-World War II republics. In their eyes the
“occupation” of the Soviet Union was illegal and therefore the Republics of 1918 never ceased to exist. This meant officially that Russians who had moved to Latvia or Estonia after 1940 were illegal immigrants. Those immigrants were given the status of aliens, who had to apply to become citizens of Latvia or Estonia if they wanted to stay. Russians living in the Baltic States felt that those laws were unjust. Furthermore most Russophones living in the Baltic identified themselves not as Russians but as Baltic Russians and had only very little identification with the Russian Federation. The language requirements of the citizenship law were deemed to be especially harsh. Integration in Latvia was especially criticized for being too slow due to the “window” policy that capped the amount of yearly applications. Not surprisingly Russia criticized the integration policy as harsh. International pressure would make it necessary for both states to liberalize their integration policies.

Integration-focused citizenship laws, language laws, and education policies were perceived as too harsh on the Russian minority by international institutions like the European Union the OSCE and NATO. The Russian Federation also criticized the language laws and citizenship laws of the post-Soviet states. Furthermore the Russian minority itself felt alienated by the new policies of Latvia and Estonia. Many felt that they had suffered as much under the yoke of the Soviet Union as Latvians and Estonians. Russians living in Estonia and Latvia perceived the citizenship laws, language laws, and language education reforms to be socially exclusive. In the face of NATO and EU expansion, but also through the criticism by Russia, both Latvia and Estonia had to make amendments to their integration policies. Especially Latvia’s “window” policy was criticized. Latvia was much slower than Estonia when it came to naturalizing its Russian minority. Both countries made amendments to their citizenship laws in order not to threaten their inclusion in the European Union. The liberalization of the citizenship laws was met with changes to language laws and education. Both Latvia and Estonia felt that a more liberal integration policy had to be met with a more conservative language policy. Both states liberalized their integration policy because of
international pressure from the EU and the Russian Federation. Yet Russians living in Estonia and Latvia still felt that they were not properly integrated into Baltic society. The Russian Federation in particular believed that citizenship laws in the Baltic States were exclusive. Russia exerted political pressure on the Baltic States in order to encourage more inclusive policies. This pressure forced the Baltic States to make changes to their integration policy, since Russia is an important player at European institutions such as the OSCE. NATO and EU membership were seen as essential to secure national independence. The 2004 EU and NATO eastern enlargements included Latvia and Estonia. Russia views the expansion of NATO into the territory of the former Soviet Union as a military threat. The expansion of the European Union into the Baltic on the other hand was seen as a move towards excluding Russia economically and politically from Europe. Russia is in particular unhappy about the fact that Russian citizens cannot travel freely into the EU and through the EU to its exclave Kaliningrad.

For the Baltic countries membership to the security alliance of NATO and the economic alliance of the European Union meant an important step towards stabilizing the security of their young nation states. On the other hand, both countries still had unresolved challenges when accepted into both NATO and EU. Both countries are home to a sizeable minority of Russian-speakers. Many of them have successfully integrated into Latvian or Estonian society. Especially Estonia’s integration policy was successful and in 2010 only 7.5 per cent of Russian-speakers were non-citizens. In Latvia integration has also sped up, although not as successfully as is the case in Estonia. The lower integration rate in Latvia has led to a division of party politics; Russian-speaking parties have far better results in Latvian politics than their counterparts in Estonia. This shows that Estonian parties have been much more successful in integrating Russian-speaking politicians and voters into mainstream politics. In both Latvia, but especially in Estonia integration policies have led to a questioning of identity politics. The situation surrounding the removal of the Bronze Statue in Tallinn
shows that historic symbols have become especially important in the Baltic States. Some Russians living in Estonia or Latvia feel threatened by a historical narrative that places the Soviet Union (Russia) as an oppressor and occupier of the Baltic States along the same lines as Nazi Germany. Russian groups like “Night Watch” or the Latvian Anti-Fascist Committee have formed in opposition to this view of this unjust history. The successful integration process in Estonia means that radical groups on both the Estonian but also Russophone side are losing influence. The protests surrounding the statue removal can therefore be interpreted as a last stance of radical groups in Estonia. Those groups are being supported by Russia, which sees them as a tool to influence Baltic politics. Russia views itself as the protector of all Russians. In the wake of the unrests surrounding the removal of the Bronze Soldier, Russian groups like Nashi have behaved aggressively towards Estonia. At the same time tumultuous activities surrounding the statue removal in Tallinn can also be interpreted as a success of Estonia’s integration policy.

Although it has been proven that Russia did not initiate the conflict, the Baltic States reacted strongly to the invasion of Russian troops into Georgian territory. The Baltic States believed that this showed that Russia was capable of brutal measures when it comes to defending its interests. On the other hand Russia felt that the Baltic States protests during the Georgia conflict were not righteous. In retrospect it turned out that Russia was not responsible for the conflict, and that it acted within the perimeters given to Russia as a peacekeeper in the South Caucasus. The possibility that Russia will use military force in the Baltic States seems highly unlikely, since both countries are members of NATO and the European Union. At the same time an aggressive Russia is at interest for the Baltic States since it justifies security investments by NATO and the EU into the Baltic States. Furthermore Russia has no interest in invading the Baltic States since it would have nothing to gain politically or economically. Yet Russia has been accused to use its monopoly over the energy sector to influence policy changes in foreign countries. In economic terms energy is Russia’s only muscle in protecting
its interests in the Baltic States. Both Latvia and Estonia have been successful in orientating their economics towards the west and the European Union. Outside of energy and natural resources Russia has only a small influence on the economies of the Baltic States. In the wake of the statue crisis and especially the harsh reaction by the Baltic States after the war in Georgia, Russia has stated that a political dialogue with the Baltic States has become impossible. This is the reason why Russia has chosen to build the Nord Stream pipeline through the Baltic Sea directly to Germany instead of choosing a land route through the Baltic States. This ensures that the Baltic States will remain completely dependent on Russian energy, which in turn ensures that Russia has a bargaining chip in any future negotiations (border, Russian-minority politics, and trade) with the Baltic States.

The future steps have to include integration through identity. The creation of inclusive rather than exclusive policies for Baltic minorities in order to create a common Baltic identity will function to increase political stability in the Baltic region. The Baltic States need to take the historical, linguistic, cultural and ethnic identity of Russians living in the Baltic region into serious consideration. If the Russian minority is not properly recognized, these circumstances will continue to anger the Russian Federation. The next step towards the full and successful integration of the Russian minority in the Baltic region has to be greater flexibility towards a common Baltic identity. Inclusive rather than exclusive policies towards the Russian minority will help to continue a successful integration process in the region. Furthermore the Baltic States need to normalize their relationship with the Russian Federation. Russia believes that branding the Soviet Union along the same lines as Nazi Germany is unjust. Furthermore Russia demands that the treatment of the Russian-minorities in Latvia and Estonia must improve. More political dialogue between the Baltic States and Russia is not only necessary for the Baltic States, but is also an important step towards improving relationships between the European Union and the Russian Federation.
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