National Integration and Formation of Multi-Ethnic Society: Experiences in Estonia and Latvia after EU Enlargement

Edited by
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Kwansei Gakuin University
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Preface

It has passed 8 years since we started the International Research Project on the contemporary situation of Estonia and Latvia after their recovery of independence. The first stage of our project (“The History and Today’s Situation of Russian-Speaking Population in Estonia and Latvia: From the View Point of the Contemporary History of European Integration and Formation of Multi-Ethnic Society”, 2001-2005) addressed especially the issues of Russian-speaking minorities (people who had migrated from the other various areas of USSR and did not go back home after the recovery of independence by Estonia and Latvia, and their offspring) in both states, because they were the urgent matters of domestic and international discussions since their recovery of independence. The presence of Russian-speaking minorities with huge number of non-citizens in these two countries not only brought the problematic situation of segmentation and segregation of societies in these countries, but also constituted the destabilizing element in their foreign relationship, especially their relation with Russian Federation. As the first stage of our research project coincided with the period of the candidacy when Central and Eastern European countries including Baltic ones were negotiating with Brussels about their accession of European Union, and when the Russian-speaking minorities issues were one of the main agenda which Estonia and Latvia were keenly demanded to resolve by the European international community, the situation was very fluid and dynamically evolving. Then integration policies and action plans were settled and developed by the governments of both states, and they seemed to have been changing and improving the situation of Russian-speaking population. So our focusing on minority matters was very logical and fruitful in this context. We organized international conferences in 2004 and published their proceedings in the next year.1

The second stage of our international research project, “National Integration and the Formation of Multi-Ethnic Society in Estonia and Latvia after the EU Enlargement”, that was started in April 2005 and would be finished in March 2009, inheriting the results and the problems left behind from the first stage, has held the following aim: that is to observe how these two small states, which became member states of European Union in 2004, would surmount their difficulties with regards to the integration of a huge number of Russian-speaking population into their societies, and would accomplish the building of the multi-ethnic and culturally pluralistic state and society in which various ethnic groups can peacefully coexist. Implementing the research project, we have witnessed that the situation in both countries remains to be problematic and, in a sense, become more troublesome and complicated, since these two countries could be liberated from the international pressures and/or assistances to candidate states after their accession to European Union. Some specialists point out that the first integration programmes of both states could not have brought enough successes expected at the beginning, and mutual understanding and integration of both segments in the society were not realized, keeping the segregation and mutual indifference between titular nations and Russian-speaking populations. They also criticize the second stage programme of integration that has recently been developed (though it is sustained one in Latvia). Education reforms of both countries, according to which pupils of secondary schools with Russian-speaking backgrounds should be instructed in the state languages of both countries, provoked serious anxieties and protests among pupils, parents and teachers. Furthermore, in the term of research
project, history and memory of the past became the antagonizing elements domestically and internationally. We have been confronted with the “history policy and diplomacy” developed by Estonian and Latvian governments, stern criticism and aggression from Russian Federation, and the conflict and crash (even bloody one) of plural histories and memories between ordinary people in and out of these states. It seems that history and memory is not only one of the decisive moments for the success/failure of nation building and integration policy in Estonia and Latvia, but also the focal point of international disputes for both states.

It is under such a situation that we organized our final international conferences of the research project on Estonia and Latvia. Considering the situation referred here, we set “Integration Policy in Estonia and Latvia from a Viewpoint of European Dimension” and “the Ethno-Politics of Memories and Histories” as the main themes of our conferences. The former one was held on the 14th November at Hongo Satellite of Tokyo University of Foreign Studies with the cooperation of the Society for European Area Studies (Yōroppa Chiiki Mondai Kenkyūkai), and the latter one was on the 16th November at Nishinomiya-Uegahara Campus of Kwansei Gakuin University with the cooperation of The Society of Western History of Kwansei Gakuin University (Kwangaku Seiyōshi Kenkyūkai). We sincerely acknowledge the members of two scholarly societies that cooperated with us for our conferences.

We invited four foreign scholars, Prof. Raivo Vetik (Tallinn University, Estonia), Prof. Olaf Mertelsmann (Tartu University, Estonia), Prof. Brigita Zepa (University of Latvia, Baltic Institute of Social Sciences, Latvia) and Dr. Hiski Haukkala (The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, Finland) to our conferences and they read remarkable presentations from the viewpoints as specialists of their own fields as well as Japanese colleagues. This publication is proceedings of these two conferences, to which all the presentations at the conferences are included. I would like to show my deepest gratitude toward our foreign colleagues, who came all the way from the Baltic Sea Area to Japan, made excellent presentations at the conferences and contributed to this publication.

We could receive research subsidies for two stages of our research programme from Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research <KAKENHI>). And we could also receive professional supports from administrative and technical staffs of Hiroshima University (in which I worked until 2007), Kwansei Gakuin University (since 2007), Center for Integrated Area Studies, Kyoto University, in which Ms. Hiromi Komori, another editor of this publication, works, and Kyoto Institute of Economic Research, which gave us the opportunities to publish two interim reports of the research as volumes of its Discussion Paper Series. Thanks to these supports and grants, we could continue the research project, hold fruitful conferences and publish the proceedings.

Nobuya Hashimoto (Kwansei Gakuin University, Japan)

1 Nobuya Hashimoto et al. (eds.), A Collection of Papers on the History and Today’s Situation of Russian-Speaking Population in Estonia and Latvia: From the View Point of the Contemporary History of European Integration and Formation of Multi-Ethnic Society, Hiroshima University, 2005.
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Part I

Integration Policy in Estonia and Latvia from a Viewpoint of European Dimension
It has been almost two decades, since Estonia and Latvia regained their independence. In these years the situation of the countries has drastically changed in the various fields, such as political and economic systems, and most remarkably now the countries are the members of the EU and NATO. However these changes have little effect on the inter-state relation with Russia, and this, in turn, has unignorable effect on the inter-ethnic relations in both states.

All of three articles included in the first part of this volume argue that the inter-ethnic relations can not be considered apart from inter-state relations.

Concerning the inter-ethnic relations, as Raivo Vetik and Brigita Zepa point out in their articles, Estonia and Latvia entered the new stage of the social integration process in 2008. The Government of Estonia completed “Integration Strategy 2008-2013”, while the programme of Latvia was not authorized, which should most probably be redrawn up.

What follows here is my understanding on the current situation of Estonia and Latvia from the comparative perspective.

There are as many differences as commonalities in the social integration process between Estonia and Latvia. As Vetik pointed out in his presentation, for both countries the first strategy was ethno-centric. In the second half of 1990s the Governments were forced to modify their strategies by the domestic and international requirements into the more inclusive ones.

What differentiates the new strategy from the former one?

Let us take the Estonian case. According to Vetik's reading, the concepts of the new and the former (State Programme “Integration in Estonian Society 2000-2007”) strategy are almost same. Indeed, if comparing the aim of the strategies, you can recognize the continuation. At the same time, however, you may see that they vary in focal points. For example, the new strategy puts emphasis on the issue of social exclusion more than the former one, one of main aims of which was Socio-economic integration, i.e. the increased competitiveness and social mobility of every member of Estonian society. The assumption here might be that if Russian speaking residents obtained Estonian citizenship and sufficient knowledge and skills of the state language, you can achieve this aim in the end. However the reality proved that it is not the case. According to the latest Human Development Report, even if people with higher education obtained Estonian citizenship and the skills of Estonian language, they are at a disadvantage in seeking jobs or making their career.

Thus in the new strategy more attention is paid to eliminate this problem than the former one.

The second point to be picked up as an example of sift of the emphases is referring to the state identity. The state identity is considered as one of the three main emphasis points of the policy. Here I should note the different perception of history and space between Estonians and Russian speakers. It will be a big challenge for those who concerned with the social integration to find the way to overcome these differences.

It is processes themselves which may cause conflict, since social integration processes require homogenization of society without exception, as Vetik properly argued in his
presentation.

Comparing the latest integration programs (precisely speaking, for Latvia it is a failed version) of Estonia and Latvia, there are differences to some extent. Namely, while the program of Latvia has a wide range of the target group, which includes not only Russian speakers, but also Roma, and even Latvian abroad, the program of Estonia focus Russian speakers exclusively.

These differences are originating partly from the society of Latvia is more diversified in terms of culture and language and thus various ethnic and cultural groups require their cultural and linguistic rights. Besides there is a larger number of Roma in Latvia than in Estonia, which catches attention of the EU and Council of Europe, as there are common features with the other East Central European Countries. Under these circumstances, the politicians of Latvia have been hesitated to ratify the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities until 2005 (The Parliament of Estonia ratified it in 1997) and even after the ratification, the state has been reluctant to provide clear guarantees of protection under the Convention which go beyond cultural rights.

This does not mean that the politicians of Estonia take positive attitude in giving rights to minorities, but in this respect we should recall that in Estonia permanent residents without Estonian citizenship can vote for local election. Besides, the law on Cultural Autonomy gives opportunity for ethnic minorities to organize themselves as a self-governing body, which Russian speakers are going to make use of after long hesitation. But it is too early to judge whether this is the symptom of polarization of the society or the active participation of minorities in society.

It seems that perceptions of history have been made inter-ethnic and inter-state relations tangled, especially after the end of the Cold War. In this sense Finland is not an exception. The issue came to the fore, when President Tarija Halonen made her position clear on the war between Finland and the Soviet Union during WW II in her speech in France in March, 2005. In her speech she maintained that Finland had to fight off an attack by the Red Army in order to preserve her independence and avoid being occupied by the Soviet Union. This speech brought reaction from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, arguing that in the years of World War II Finland was among the allies of Hitler Germany, fought on its side and, accordingly, bears its share of responsibility for the war. According to Haukkala’s explanation, the view of the MFA on Russia is shared by the majority of people in Finland. However the Daily newspaper “Helsingin Sanomat” reported that the views expressed by President Halonen on the nature of Finland’s conflict with the Soviet Union were in line with those made by Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen at the 60th anniversary of the battle of Iломantsi. And according to the comment of Seppinen, the interpretation of the Russian Foreign ministry is based on the old interpretation of events of the Soviet period. It should be noted that most of historians in Finland agree that the myth of a separate war was not based on historic research, although there are still discussions.

2 http://www.president.fi/netcomm/news/showarticle.asp?intNSAID=33673&intSubArtID=14905&intGID=9&LAN=EN&Thread=33673,33650,33568,33083,&intThreadPosition=0
3 http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Russia+takes+issue+with+President+Halonens+views+on+war/1101978754422
4 Ibid.
By taking up the above-mentioned episode, I intended to show the self-restraint of politicians, historians and ordinary people in Finland. After receiving the reaction from Russia, there have been academic discussions among historians, while no political disputes flared up, as far as I know. It seems that the evaluation and perceptions over WW II is not totally free from sensitivity in Finland yet, but it may be safely said that the situation is under control.

In conclusion, two points should be mentioned again. First, the social integration is open-ended process which is accompanied with conflicts. Secondly, the inter-state relations are not static, but variable, depending upon various factors. Thus entanglement in inter-ethnic and inter-state relations is not easily solved.
I. Integration policies
Integration policies in Estonia started in the second half of 1990s. Currently the policies are based on “Estonian Integration Strategy 2008-2013”. Before the strategy was adopted the following steps in developing integration policies can be mentioned:

1. *The integration of non-Estonians into Estonian society: setting the course*, compiled in 1997 on the initiative of the United Nations Development Programme, served as the basis for both the integration-related documents passed by the Government in 1998-1999 and also for the state programme “Integration in Estonian society 2000-2007”. *The integration of non-Estonians into Estonian society: setting the course* examined integration, based on the attitudes of social groups and political, cultural, educational, media and economic policy and regional policy aspects in the area - the same topics that are either broadly or narrowly covered by this programme.

2. On 16.07.1997, the Government formed a 17-member expert committee for the examination of demography and the integration of ethnic minorities into Estonian society, and the making of recommendations to the Government. The main task of the committee became the development of the foundations of the state integration policy. On 10.02.1998 the Government approved the draft document presented by the expert committee, entitled *The bases of the Estonian state integration policy for the integration of non-Estonians into Estonian society*. The above-mentioned document was discussed by the Riigikogu and passed on 10.06.1998. The document was a logical sequel to the document *The integration of non-Estonians into Estonian society: setting the course*, and in concentrated form revealed the principal emphases and objectives of future state integration policy. *The bases of the Estonian state integration policy for the integration of non-Estonians into Estonian society* also serves as a basis for this state programme, which in many respects focuses on the changes made in the field of non-Estonian-language education, devoting particular attention to the target group children and youth. The second important task of the integration process is the enabling of the preservation of non-Estonians’ ethnic identity; as a result the state programme also devotes special attention to non-Estonians’ opportunities for acquiring education in their mother tongue and preserving their culture.

3. On 14.03.2000, the Government approved the state programme “Integration in Estonian society 2000-2007”. It was an action plan for governmental agencies and other institutions for the years 2000-2007. The process of developing the Programme included substantial political debate, although less time was allowed for non-governmental and minority groups to comment.
on earlier drafts of the Programme. The Integration Programme reflects a view of integration as a two-way process. It envisions allowing minorities to retain their distinct identity, while increasing their participation in and loyalty to the Estonian State, mainly through the medium of Estonian language instruction; a common linguistic sphere is viewed as both a means to enhance inclusion of minorities, and to reduce inequalities or tensions that may exist. Minority representatives have expressed concern that the emphasis on language does not take into account other barriers to integration, which the Integration Programme suggests should be addressed through complementary programme.

For the next six years, the state integration policy will be based on “Estonian Integration Strategy 2008-2013”. The Integration Strategy acts both as a strategy and action plan for government institutions and other institutions in the field of integration. The Integration Strategy is comprised of two parts: the strategy that stipulates goals for the plan, and the action plan gives an overview of the planned activities and their costs.

What is the concept of integration in the strategy? Integration is defined as a friendly and safe co-existence that is based on mutual acceptance and respect. Integration means that all residents of Estonia have an equal interest, desire and opportunities for contributing to the development of the state and participating in social life, regardless of their ethnic background and mother tongue.

What is the desired outcome of the Integration Strategy? The strategy stipulates that integration is a long-term process aimed at increasing the feeling of social belonging of every resident by sharing common values of the Estonian society and competence in the state language. The aim of the strategy is to achieve conditions, when all permanent residents of Estonia, irrespective of their ethnic origin feel secure in Estonia, are competent in the state language, share the values underlying the Constitution, are able to lead a fulfilled life by participating in the societal, economic and cultural life of the country. Everyone is guaranteed the right to preserve and develop his/ her language and culture.

The Integration Strategy is aimed at reaching a situation by the year 2013, in which:

| Contacts between people of different cultural background has increased (In 2007 65% of Estonians and 39% of people of other ethnic background had practically no mutual contacts) |
| Differences in the participation of the Estonian- and non-Estonian-speaking population in nongovernmental organizations and the public sphere has decreased (In 2007 12% of Estonians and 1% of people of other nationalities belong to nongovernmental organisations) |
| Majority of inhabitants of Estonia trust people of other nationalities living in Estonia (In 2007 28% of Estonians and 82% of people of other nationalities think that the greater participation of people of other nationalities in economic and political affairs would be beneficial for Estonia) |
| Estonian-language proficiency has improved at all levels among people whose native language is not Estonian (In 2005 22% of 15- to 74-year-olds consider their language skills to be good, 25% regarded it average, 29% poor and 24% could not at all speak Estonian) |
| The share of people with undetermined citizenship among Estonia’s population has consistently decreased (In 2007 they made up 9% of Estonia’s population) |
| The majority of people whose native language is not Estonian regularly get information from Estonian-language media and trust it (In 2005 26% of people of other nationalities regularly consumed Estonian-language media) |
| Differences in the employment rate and incomes of employees of different nationalities have decreased (In 2007 31% of Estonians and 19% other nationalities held senior and managerial positions; 35% of Estonians and 53% of other nationalities were employed as skilled or unskilled) |

The Integration Strategy will be implemented in the following fields:
Educational and cultural integration

The general purpose of the field is to provide equal opportunities for all residents of Estonia for acquiring education in a common educational system, and conditions for preserving their own language and culture.

Goals of the field for the year 2013:

- 90% of children whose native language is other than Estonian have the opportunity to participate in Estonian-language studies in kindergarten, pre-school and other children’s institutions (In 2007 75% of children has access to Estonian language training)
- The average result for the final exam in Estonian among basic school graduates from Russian medium schools is 68 points (In 2007 the average result was 62.7 points)
- 90% of Russian medium secondary school graduates will get 60 or more points in the final exam in Estonian as a second language (In 2007 78% of students received more than 60 points)
- 30% of Estonia’s vocational school graduates will get 60 or more points in the language placement exam (In 2007 20% of vocational school graduates received 60 points or more)
- An equal share of students from Estonian- and Russian-medium vocational schools who enter the labour market or continue their education will be maintained (In 2007 73% of graduates from schools with Russian-language instruction and 71% from schools with Estonian-language instruction started working or continued their education)
- The ratio of students who interrupt their studies in higher education is similar among students who studied previously in Estonian or in Russian (In 2007 10.7% of students who previously studied in Estonian and 13.4% of students who previously studied in Russian interrupted their studies.)
- 50% of teachers receive knowledge about teaching students with various cultural backgrounds and different native languages in the course of their specialized training (2007: reference level unknown)
- Introduction of a multicultural dimension into curricula as a recurrent theme
- State support will continue for actively operating non-Estonian cultural societies and other organizations (2007: 153 organizations)
- 45,000 young people and adults have participated in cooperative projects (almost 7,000 annually) (In 2007: 3,000 young people and adults participated in cooperative projects)

A few important activities:

- teachers and principles of Estonian and Russian medium schools will participate in training in multicultural education;
- some 3-5 new kindergartens and schools will join the language immersion programme every year,
- all teachers and heads of schools Russian medium school will pass courses in the Estonian language,
- the annual support of about 150 cultural societies of ethnic minorities and 15 Sunday schools will continue,
- annual extra-curricular (language) study projects are organised in the summer for about 1500 young people speaking Estonian and other languages,
- about 1450 Estonian and Russian speaking young people will learn about Estonian state, government, history and the cultural history of Estonia via study trips,
- about 2500 adult Estonians and people of other nationalities will participate in joint activities every year.

Social and economic integration
The goal is to guarantee equal opportunities in the labour market for all of Estonia’s residents regardless of their ethnic background or mother tongue.

Purposes of the field for the year 2013:
- About 400 people have participated in labour exchange programmes over the last 6 years, a total of about 5000 people have participated in free language courses and about 4000 people in integrated language and professional courses (2007: 72 people participated in labour exchange, 1009 people participated in language and professional courses)
- Training programmes for employers on working with and in culturally diverse working environment will be developed (new activity)
- About 500 people participate in accommodation programmes and support activities for new adult immigrants. Support systems have been implemented in the workplace (new activity)

A few important activities:
- Labour exchange programmes and courses in the Estonian language are provided annually for about 55 public and private sector employees
- Combined professional and Estonian language courses are organised annually for about 600 unemployed people of other nationalities,
- Intercultural communication courses are organised for employers and employees (new activity).
- Integration programme will be developed for new adult immigrants (new activity).

Legal and political integration
The goal is to guarantee equal opportunities for participation in public and political life for all residents of Estonia regardless of their ethnic background or mother tongue based on the law in and politics.

Purposes of the field for the year 2013:
- The awareness of the population, including civil servants, about the importance of equal treatment and the prevention of unequal treatment is increased (the mapping of the situation and training of the decision makers in the public sector for the assembly and management of multicultural teams, new activity)
• The shared informational field for inhabitants of Estonia will increase through the increase in audience of the Estonian National Broadcasting among the Russian-speaking population upto 75% *(In 2007 60% of Russian speakers followed ENB)*

• 12,000 people have successfully completed the exam on the Constitution and the Citizenship Act (2,000 people per year) *(In 2007:1,800 people successfully completed the exam)* Citizenship ceremonies will continue

A few important activities:

• *About 1500 people will attend the free courses for the exam on the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia and the Citizenship Act every year,*

• *Free language courses for applicants for the Estonian citizenship will be provided for about 1500 people every year,*

• *Every year, awareness-raising activities will be organised for improving people’s knowledge of the conditions for applying for citizenship, equal treatment and tolerance,*

• *As of 2008, new Estonian citizens will receive a certificate of citizenship at a festive ceremony*

• *Every year, forums and debates are organised on the topic of different aspects of integration and participation of other nationalities in the public sphere*

• *Estonian and Russian media publications and channels are supported to introduce the national minorities living in Estonia and the topic of integration to a wider public.*

The implementation plan of the Integration Strategy stipulates the activities of the Integration Foundation, Office of the Minister for Population and Ethnic Affairs, Ministries and other partners for the years 2008-2010. The action plan is prepared for the following three budget years; the second part of the action plan will be prepared for the period 2011-2013. In the action plan consists of more than 200 different activities for promoting integration. The budget for 2008-2010 is 492 554 000 EEK. The activities of 2008 have been approved in the state budget; the budgets for 2009 and 2010 are estimates.

**II. Integration processes**

See appendix
Appendix to the presentation
‘Ten years of integration policies and processes in Estonia’

Sampling

The monitoring survey was conducted by a research company Saar Poll in the period between 27th of March and 13 of April 2008. 1505 face-to-face interviews took place with people aged 15 to 74 years. Proportional random sampling was used to choose the respondents.

Different perception of issues disturbing integration

Q. What disputes ethnic relations in Estonia?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Estonian</th>
<th>Other ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Politics of the Estonian Government</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inequality in economic and social spheres</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences related to war and occupation</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negligence, disregard of other ethnicity</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian Politics</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor knowledge of language</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of education and proper manners</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q. Goals of the integration policies in the order of priority for Estonians and non-Estonians

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals of integration policies</th>
<th>Estonians</th>
<th>Russian speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning Estonian (9)</td>
<td>Respect for the principle of equal treatment (5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education in Estonian (10)</td>
<td>Equal social and economic possibilities (9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lessening the amount of stateless persons (7)</td>
<td>Tolerance (4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing tolerance (3)</td>
<td>Common information sphere (6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect for the principle of equal treatment (1)</td>
<td>Participation in the public sphere (10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Educational integration

Preferred kindergarten types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kindergarten type</th>
<th>Estonians</th>
<th>Russian speaking respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergartens segregated on the bases of language</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All kids in one daycare using Estonian with special staff able to communicate with other ethnicities in their mother tongue</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A restricted amount of Russian speaking kids in kindergartens using Estonian</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 100 100

Q. When should learning in Estonian start?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kindergarten</th>
<th>Elementary school</th>
<th>Middle school</th>
<th>High school</th>
<th>It should never start</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estonians</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…with Estonian citizenship</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…with stateless status</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…with Russian citizenship</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Education possibilities for the children

2. Language integration

The knowledge of Estonian has improved
The knowledge of Estonian has become more diverse among the work age population—the writing and reading skills as well as self-expression has improved.
The integrative power of the Estonian language has declined.
The approach Learn Estonian and all problems will be solved is not appropriate for integration policies.

3. Political integration
Russian speaking people under 40 are mostly Estonian citizens

| Citizenship and Age (different citizenship statuses in age groups, %) |
|-------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|                        | 15-19 | 20-29 | 30-39 | 40-49 |
| Estonian               | 68    | 79    | 61    | 49    |
| Stateless              | 22    | 17    | 25    | 19    |
| Russian                | 11    | 5     | 15    | 10    |

Q. Which citizenship you wish you had?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estonian</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard to say</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why do so many people still remain stateless? (Russian speaking respondents)

- No feeling of belonging in Estonia
- The citizenship exam is humiliating
- Estonia is too small of a country for its citizenship to mean anything
- Disinterest in politics and elections
- Other citizenship
- Lack of citizenship does not come in the way of living in Estonia
- Citizenship exam is too difficult
- Easier to travel to Russia and other former CIS countries
- Inability to learn Estonian
- Citizenship is considered worthless

Why do so many people still remain stateless? (Estonian speaking response)

- No feeling of belonging in Estonia
- The citizenship exam is humiliating
- Estonia is too small of a country for its citizenship to mean anything
- Disinterest in politics and elections
- Other citizenship
- Lack of citizenship does not come in the way of living in Estonia
- Citizenship exam is too difficult
- Easier to travel to Russia and other former CIS countries
- Inability to learn Estonian
- Citizenship is considered worthless
### Which of the following groups should get citizenship in a simplified manner (less strict language requirements)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People born in Estonia</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family members of citizens by birth</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those who have rendered a service to Estonia</td>
<td>-**</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family members of all Estonian citizens</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired people</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young people when they turn 16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with permanent living permit</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No-one</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of respondents</strong></td>
<td>633</td>
<td>667</td>
<td>992</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* respondents could mention multiple groups, so the total exceeds 100%

** ** the category was not included in the questionnaire that year

Source: Integration Monitoring 2008

Russian speakers are three times less trusting towards state institutions than Estonians regardless of their citizenship status.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trust index value</th>
<th>Estonian</th>
<th>Estonian citizen of other ethnicity</th>
<th>Stateless</th>
<th>Russian citizen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not too trusting (0-1)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat trusting (2-4)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly trusting (5-7)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very trusting (8-9)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The overall willingness to include non-Estonians has risen among Estonians: two thirds are in favour of it.
Willingness of Estonians to take the opinions of Russians more into consideration has doubled

Estonians do not see non-Estonians in the leading positions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Parliament</th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Civil servants</th>
<th>Board members of state owned enterprises</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EC Estonian</td>
<td>EC other ethnicity</td>
<td>EC Estonian</td>
<td>EC other ethnicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should not be related to the number of non-Estonians</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-33%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10% or less</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard to say</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Socio-economic integration

Estonian citizens of different ethnicity are successful in the labour market

- Estonian citizens among non-Estonians are doing well in labor market, being even more succesful compared to the Estonians in a couple of aspects. Among them there is the same proportion of people (as among ethnic Estonians) who
- are enterpreuners and people in executive positions (ethnic Estonians 36%, Russian speaking Estonian citizens 39%)
- are able to fulfill high language requirements (35% and 37%)
- are relatively or very certain of their ability ot find work in Estonia (82%) as well as abroad ( 62%)
- have a higher wage expectations than average (over four times the minimum wage, 32%)
The number of people in economic difficulty has declined, nevertheless there are one and a half times more of them among the Russian speaking population.

Tabel Respondents having a hard time coping with the current income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Estonians</th>
<th>Russian speaking population</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=837</td>
<td>N=224</td>
<td>N=444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=131</td>
<td>N=89</td>
<td>N=1281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 3000 kr</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3001-5000 kroon</td>
<td>60.9</td>
<td>38.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>39.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. International context

Q. To what extent is Russia a threat to...

Conclusions

- The overall changes in the mind-state of the non-Estonians in recent years indicate that the possibilities of the state to influence integration processes are in decline.
- Integration based on the Estonian-mindedness is becoming a key issue for both internal as well as external security of Estonia.
Integration Policy in Latvia: Acquisition and Failures

Integration policy: policy documents and practice
A series of research studies in Latvia over the last several years have focused on integration policy from various positions, both in theoretical and empirical terms, as well as from the position of evaluating policy in this area. These studies have made it possible to draw certain conclusions about successes and failures in this policy area. According to one of the authors, in 1998, of Latvia’s Public Integration Concept, Elmārs Vēbers, the idea of policies related to unity in Latvia’s society emerged not in the late 1990s, when the conceptual document which, to a certain extent, served as a reaction to demands made by international organisations against Latvia as a European Union candidate country was drafted, but a full decade earlier, when Latvia began to deal with problems inherited from the Soviet regime in such areas as ethnic, cultural and language issues. The first step was to define the status of the state language and to introduce the status of Latvian citizenship. The law which declared the Latvian language to be Latvia’s state language was adopted in 1989, the aim being to strengthen the positions of the language in the country. During the Soviet era, the status of the Latvian language in public life had deteriorated rapidly, particularly in the labour and government spheres. The Russian language became increasingly dominant. There was much debate in the context of public unity when the institution of Latvian citizenship was reinstated and the body of Latvia’s citizenry was defined. A law on citizenship which was approved in 1994 identified naturalisation procedures for permanent residents who wished to become Latvia’s citizens. Language and citizenship policies in these and other instances were often the result of a compromise among political forces after a great deal of debate. It must also be emphasised, at the same time, that many public organisations have monitored the implementation of these policies, and research institutions have conducted their research. The thing is that those who have drafted the relevant policies have been in no great hurry to study the conclusions which researchers have drawn. In the early 1990s, for instance, the Latvian Centre for Social Research found that an absence of Latvian language skills would be a serious obstacle against the naturalisation of non-citizens. Despite this fact, Parliament added age limitations to the citizenship law which ensured that naturalisation would at first be open only to young people, with the age limitations being expanded gradually and year by year. As could be expected, the number of naturalised citizens was not substantial during the first years when this process was in effect – just 6,993 naturalised citizens during the three years from 1995 to 1997, inclusive. A national referendum in 1998 led to changes in the citizenship law which eliminated the age restrictions. The fact is that the long-lasting debates about the citizenship law from 1991 until 1994, the limitations on naturalisation, as well as the slow pace of naturalisation – all of these factors caused public tensions. These were exacerbated further by the very critical position which the Russian

1 Vēbers, E.. „Vai teiksim ardievas sabiedrības integrācijai?” (Shall We Say Farewell to Public Integration?). In Pretestība sabiedrības integrācijai: cēloņi un sekas (Resistance to Integration of Society: Causes and Consequences) . Rīga: University of Latvia Institute of Philosophy and Sociology (2007).
3 Naturalisation Board of the Republic of Latvia, data as at 1 January 2001.
language news media took vis-à-vis government policy in this regard. It must be stressed that debates about language and citizenship policy have continued in Latvia since the country’s accession to the European Union in 2004.

According to Vēbers, however,4 Latvian society was not prepared for this idea, and people received it negatively and quite inadequately. Neither the public nor politicians were prepared to accept a democratic understanding of the foundations of their state, and nationalism was often seen as the only possible ideology which could bring the nation together.

Discussions between researchers and the public at large about these issues were interrupted when the discourse of ethnic policy in Latvia was taken over by announcements by politicians, as well as discussions with minority politicians. The approach to issues of ethnic policy were also substantially influenced by the way in which politicians reacted to the demands made by international organisations in advance of Latvia’s accession to the EU.

The Public Integration Concept was drafted in 1998, and a Programme for the Integration of Society in Latvia was prepared in 1999. The conceptual document, it must be stressed, indicates that in the context of public integration, civic identity takes precedence over ethnic identity. Research has found, however, that this claim is not made in other policy documents.5 The Programme for the Integration of Society in Latvia was drafted on the basis of the aforementioned conceptual document, supplementing that document with a list of specific tasks. The aim of both documents was to identify the primary tasks related to ethnic policy – the steps that had to be taken in order to ensure, on the one hand, lawful procedures in the area of ethnic policy that would allow Latvia to become an EU member state, while also, on the other hand, ensuring harmony among ethnic groups in society, as well as, simultaneously, the survival of ethnic Latvian values in the country.

When the Cabinet of Ministers approved the Programme for the Integration of Society in Latvia in 1999, it could be said that a specific period of integration policy design had ended, and a new period of government-approved policy implementation was beginning. The remainder of this paper shall be devoted to an analysis of three different aspects of public integration policy, with an evaluation of the policy’s successes and shortcomings:

• A conceptual explanation of public integration policies;
• The role of social agents (mass media, political parties, political elite, NGOs) in public integration;
• Administration of public integration policies.

A conceptual explanation of public integration policies

There are few ethnically homogeneous locations in the world, and because of this, researchers have used various theoretical approaches to explain the factors which lead representatives of various ethnic groups to feel a sense of belonging as citizens of one and the same country.

As was mentioned in the introduction, there were conferences, articles and books in Latvia during the 1990s which offered a theoretical review of the precepts which serve as the conceptual basis for ethnic policy. These include such concepts as “nation state,” “nation,” “nationalism,” and “citizenship.” At a 1998 conference which was devoted to the concepts of a political nation and ethnic policy, Justice Egils Levits of the European Court of Human Rights presented a report on traditions in the emergence of nations. He emphasised the presence of two different dimensions in this process. In France, one’s belonging to the nation is determined by

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4 Ibid., p. 119.
identification with the democratic political order which prevails in that country, but in other European nations such as Germany, there has been a need for indigenous residents to come to an understanding of their national and cultural community. The questions which Levits posed to Latvians were these: “Would it be preferable for Latvians to remain as a purely ethnically defined cultural nation? Is a nation of the Latvian state desirable or possible? Would it be more realistic and desirable to combine both of these indicators of a nation?” Rogers Brubaker also compares the emergence of feelings of nationalism in Germany and France, he argues that feelings of nationalism can emerge before or after the establishment of a nation state. In Germany, such emotions existed before the nation state was created, and they served as a stimulus for the establishment of the state. In France, for its part, nationalist feelings emerged after the state was set up, emerging from government institutions, the civic community, and the sense of civic belonging. Brubaker emphasises the idea that differences are based on the principle under which society is unified – in France, society is unified politically, and participation therein depends on citizenship. In that case, we can speak of civic nationalism. In Germany, society is unified on the basis of ethnicity, and this is an example of ethnic nationalism.

Professor Rasma Karklins from the University of Illinois at Chicago and the University of Latvia has emphasised the idea that the functioning of a democratic country must be based not just on the relevant institutions, but also on a citizenry of an appropriate level of quality. Karklins reviews citizenship from the perspective of social citizenship, emphasising that in the American context citizenship is much more than legal status, there is the nation of „good citizenship”, e.g. an individual is seen as socially valuable and responsible only if he or she goes beyond caring for their personal career and family, they must contribute to their community and fulfill their civic duties. Democracy can only survive if large part of citizens comply to this ideal. In the same way writes famed citizenship researcher Derek Heater: „Citizenship is more than the label. He has no sense of a civic bond with his fellows or of some responsibility for civic welfare is not a true citizen whatever his legal status. Identity and virtue invest the concept of citizenship with power”.

And yet analysis of public integration policy shows that in practice, nationalism and ethnic citizenship are more important than democratic citizenship in Latvia. Why have ethnic values taken such deep root that they do not make room for other civic values? Explanations of this have been proposed by various theorists. Thus, for instance, György Schöpflin has argued that the contemporary definition of a democratic nation is based on three pillars – state, ethnicity and civic society. Schöpflin believes that these elements have developed in a different way in different countries. In Western Europe, state and civic citizenship have been stronger, while in Central and Eastern Europe, ethnicity has been dominant in the emergence of nations. This has meant a less important role for state and civic identity. In Western European countries, nationalism has emerged in the wake of the existence of independent countries. This applies to nations such as Germany, France, England, Spain and Denmark. Nationalism there has been

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8 Ibid., p. 4.
expressed in relation to economic and political changes in those countries, in the emergence of
democratic institutions and the development of capitalism. In Central and Eastern Europe, by
contrast, nationalism has been manifested as a battle for independent statehood, and in parallel
to the battle for economic and political power, there has been the matter of the “battle for recognition” – an issue that has been enormously important in terms of ensuring that “big” nations accept and perceive new and emerging nations as being equal to them, that they appreciate the importance and uniqueness of the new nations’ culture. Ethnicity and its key elements – language and culture – become decisive values in bringing a nation together. Culture attaches specific meaning and moral norms to practices that have been established by the relevant community, it ensures the presence of ideas which ascertain a sense of community within the group. Meanings that are enshrined in culture help to explain things that are happening on the basis of common meanings that are encoded in ethnic culture – language, symbols, collective opinion and historical memory. All of this helps members of the community to feel and sense that they have a common world view, that they all come from one and the same world of thought.

Several decades ago, the fathers of identity research, Tajfel and Turner, recognised that identity is constructed by distinguishing one’s own group as opposed to others, adding that this is a process which is enhanced by a need for a positive identity – one that can be developed by emphasising the negative properties of other groups, or by pointing to injustices that may emerge from other groups. A neighbouring ethnic (or linguistic) group can often serve as a stimulus for constructing an identity.

Schöpflin speaks to the “powerful attraction of culture,” one which any group feels vis-à-vis its own moral values. Groups will try to ensure that the same values are recognised by others. In answering the question of why ethnic identity remains so important in contemporary societies, Schöpflin explains that collective identity corresponds to human needs for security in the community, for solidarity in purposeful activities and communications. It is understandable, therefore, that ethnic communities seek to preserve themselves, their culture, their assumptions as to what is normal and natural, and their ability to ensure the ongoing development of their cultures. At the same time, however, it must be stressed that the conjoining of ethnicity and democracy is possible if ethnicity is not the only source of power in a democratic regime. As state and civic identity become stronger, this can create a more inclusive and tolerant arena for social action.

Schöpflin also argues that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are typically afraid of disappearing altogether, and this is based on historical memory of “political beasts.” This has facilitated tensions between majorities and minorities. In Latvia’s case, of course, this thought focuses on the very recent occupation which the Soviet Union instituted in 1940. The historical memory of the ethnic community of Latvians has, for instance, led to an explanation of Russia’s foreign policies vis-à-vis Georgia in 2008 which is based on Latvia’s own history. Russia’s actions were seen as a potential threat against Latvia’s independence, as well.

Other authors have argued that the importance of ethnicity as a social construct increases

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when links among social groups are weak. In that case, ethnicity functions as an element in structuring society (Anderson, 1983; Brass, 1985). When other institutional structures such as the civil society are weakly developed, various other kinds of resources develop and function in society. Ethnicity moves to the foreground because of its specific advantages – it is easily perceived by the masses, and it can quite easily be manipulated by the elite. Rothschild, for his part, has looked at how changes in society stimulate the importance of ethnicity in various ways. Rothschild argues that changes in society create a great deal of confusion in all groups of society, and this leads to collective ethnic fears. Ethnic groups feel threatened in terms of the future of existence of their identity.

Similarly, Horowitz attaches much important to group psychology and competition among groups. When the status of one group changes swiftly, ethnic conflicts can be the result. In Latvia’s case, this applies to changes in the status of Latvians and Russians (Russian speakers). In the Soviet Union, Russians could consider themselves to be the majority, while Latvians had to accept a minority status. In independent Latvia, by comparison, Russians have become a minority, while Latvians have the status of the majority.

Empirical research shows that many Latvians still think that their group is under threat. This is expressed through concerns about the status of the Latvian language, and through the fact that Latvians do not always feel themselves to be the majority in Latvia. A concept designed by Estonian sociologists can be used to compare the development of societies and ethnic composition in Latvia and Estonia, and it allows us to say that Latvians feel themselves to be a threatened majority. An analysis of the attitudes of Latvians and the specifics of their social identity shows that Latvian attitudes, when compared to those of Russian speakers in Latvia, are in many cases more similar to the positions which are taken by minorities.

The Estonian researcher Veronika Kalmus has observed that ethnic minorities have a more distinct identity with their ethnic group than is the case with ethnic majorities. The same tendencies can be seen in Latvia, too. Latvians far more than Russians identify with their ethnic group. Latvians tend to be more closed off, they have fewer contacts with people of other nationalities, and they feel more threatened. Russian speakers in Latvia possess some of the properties that are typical of the majority – openness toward others and more in the way of contacts with people of other ethnic groups.

The influence of newspapers on the process of society integration

Analysis of press publications focused on media discourses and their possible influence on the shaping of identities as events which are important in terms of ethno-policy have been discussed between 1990 and 2005. These include the approval of the declaration of independence in May 1990, the restoration of Latvia’s independence in August 1991, the approval of the Law on the State language in 1999, the referendum on EU accession in 2003, and ratification of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in 2005, among others.

21 Mass Media analysis was conducted by Liga Krastiņa and Iveta Ķešāne
Generally speaking, the discourses used in Latvian and Russian language newspapers are radically different, and they shape different collective identities among those who read Russian language newspapers and those who read Latvian newspapers. The gap between these media spaces promotes a separation between the two ethno-linguistic groups, making it difficult to ensure mutual discussions, exchanges of views, and the shaping of unified identities. The gap is closely linked to the polarisation of political identities, because political parties, too, represent the interests of one or the other group. The ethnic interests of parties dominate over ideological differences related to economic, social and other issues. Both the Latvian and the Russian language press those who think differently are marginalized in terms of discourse, depicting them as individuals who do not represent the majority views of the public and discrediting them as being selfish, criminal or radically nationalist.

After the Declaration On the Restoration of Independence of the Republic of Latvia (May 4, 1990) the Latvian and Russian language press mostly published various official pronouncements, along with appeals and declarations, from the Supreme Council, as well as political parties (mostly the CPL (The Communist Party of Latvia) and the PFL (The Popular Front of Latvia) and public organisations.

**Latvian language newspapers**

In Latvian language newspapers, everything that was characteristic of the Soviet system was described in very critical or sarcastic terms. This vividly marked out a discursive strategy that was aimed at constructing a new civic identity. One way to construct an identity was to activate links to the pre-war Republic of Latvia. Newspapers printed a great deal of information about the pages of Latvian history which had been hushed up during Soviet times – the period of independence between 1918 and 1940, as well as the repressions of the Soviet regime. Historical events are of great importance in the discourse of independence, because defenders and opponents of independence use them to justify their positions and activities, albeit with differing interpretations.

The interwar period was particularly important in the creation of a new identity, because it made it possible for people to establish positive identification with the independent country of that time. It was stressed that this was the only period of time in which Latvians had their own independent state, thus justifying and enhancing the efforts of the so-called Latvian Renaissance to achieve independence. The first republic was largely presented in idealistic terms – as a period of general growth, one in which Latvians gained accomplishments in the economy and in other areas.

The focus on the interwar period republic was very specific in Latvian language newspapers, helping to create the impression that as soon as the USSR was gone, Latvia would once again become this first independent Latvian state, one populated primarily by Latvians, with relatively few representatives of other nationalities. Wealthy farmers would work their small farms, they would export butter and pork to Western Europe. There would be no major industries to pollute the environment.

In contrast to the interwar period of independence, the years of Soviet authority were depicted in a very negative light, thus destroying the identity of the Soviet individual and establishing a new civic identity in its place. The crass rejection of the Soviet era and all that

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22 The theory of social identity says that it is important for people to belong to groups which are positively judged by other groups and, especially, by members of the group in question. See Taifel, H. and J.C. Turner (1979). "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict". In Austin, W.G. and S. Worcel (eds.). The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations. Monterey, Calif.: Brooks/Cole.
was characteristic of it – this was a typical foundation and the most vivid manifestation of the new identity.

Along with the rejection of all that was Soviet, the Latvian language newspapers also started to shape the image of Latvians as a nation which belongs to the developed Western world. Newspapers presented a powerful orientation toward Western Europe, the United States and other countries with democratic systems, market economies with private companies, competition, and a wide diversity of products. There was an emphasis on the contrast between these countries and the Soviet Union:

“... The reality of Soviet life among Latvians exacerbated efforts, at least in the world of ideas, to emphasise their belonging to the community of European nations without any hesitation. Of course, the Baltic Republics were far more Western than the rest of the empire.” (Atmoda, (Awakening) 29 May 1990)

Latvians often perceive processes of change as a return to “normalcy” – a “normal” state, “normal” everyday lives, and “normal” economic development.

The ethnic, civic and political identity of Latvians was strengthened through reports about leaving the USSR as an independent country, as well as the return of the Latvian nation into the Western political, cultural and economic arena. This stressed the historical rights of the Latvians, also legitimising the processes aimed at establishing an independent state.

Of similar meaning was the frequent discussion of Soviet repressions. The feeling among Latvians that they had been hurt was strengthened as a component of ethnic identity. Newspapers wrote about the right to compensation – compensation at the expense of other nationalities, in some cases.

The Latvian language newspapers largely spoke to Latvians alone, referring to Latvians as “us” and “the people”, and thus creating the impression that Latvians, as an ethnic group, represented the numerical majority in society and that all Latvians have the same views and attitudes. An ethnic identity was constructed for Latvians, stressing that all people of Latvian origin have certain positive properties – they are hard-working, polite, well educated, able to deal with difficulties, patriotic and musical.

It was also stressed that Latvians are a nation of farmers – all Latvians were farmers in the recent past, and they want to live in single family farms and work the land, as was the case during the rule of pre-war President Kārlis Ulmanis.

When writing about all of the residents of Latvia – both Latvians and members of other nationalities, the phrase that was usually used was “the entire Latvian nation.” People from other ethnic groups, however, were often depicted in negative terms, publishing many scornful epithets. Often all non-Latvians were called migrants, thus depicting the very diverse community of Latvia’s residents as a single mass. Properties attributed to this mass were the dominance of material interests over spiritual interests, the search for one’s own good, as well as disrespect against Latvians and the Latvian language and culture.

**Russian language newspapers**

A review of the Russian language newspapers that were published After The Declaration On the Restoration of Independence (1990) shows that there were radical differences between the Communist Party newspaper *Советская Латвия* (Soviet Latvia) and the Interfront newspaper *Единство* (Unity) on the one hand and the newspaper *Советская Молодежь* (Soviet Youth) on the other.

on the other. The first two newspapers stood firmly for Latvia’s remaining in the Soviet Union, while *Советская Молодежь* was more likely to support the restoration of Latvia’s independence. This newspaper did not stress threats against Russian speakers, although it did print critical reviews of important events of the day.

In the Russian language newspapers, authors predicted an inevitable exacerbation of interethnic tensions, writing far more often about the concept of “national harmony” and emphasising its importance in preserving the public peace. Readers were called upon to promote equality among Latvian residents of various nationalities. This challenge was particularly addressed to The Popular Front of Latvia and those who supported its views. These political forces were often described as “fomenting interethnic hatred,” with the newspaper stressing the friendly and favourable relationships which existed among various elements in society before the processes of independence began.

_I cannot understand what’s happening in this country, in the Baltic Republics? People of all nationalities used to live in friendship. No one kept anyone else from speaking his or her native language. Now, however, Russians are being accused of destroying national culture and national languages.”* (*Едиство*, 21-28 May 1990).

It must be stressed here that the Russian language newspapers hardly ever used the word “renaissance”, which was common in the Latvian press. This can be explained by virtue of the fact that the concept of the “Latvian national renaissance” was used to describe processes at the centre of which there were ethnic Latvians. People of other nationalities could not identify themselves with these processes. The concept of “renaissance” also includes a very positive evaluation of ongoing processes. Russian newspapers, by contrast, were dominated by a very critical view of events.

The Russian language newspapers, unlike their Latvian language counterparts, devoted far greater attention to economic issues, analysing the situation and making predictions about the future economic development of the republic. Russian language newspapers were full of negative statements about the Latvian economy if the country were to split off from the Soviet Union – in most cases, a severe economic crisis was forecast. Newspapers stressed the fact that the Latvian economy was very closely linked to those of the other Soviet republics, both in terms of receiving raw materials and in terms of selling ready-made products. Russian newspapers printed much more information about the shortage of various products, particularly groceries, in the country’s shops, arguing that this was an absolutely unacceptable situation, one that would only worsen if the country were to continue to move along the path of leaving the USSR:

_The Supreme Council of the republic has in fact, set off on the course of restoring the bourgeois Republic of Latvia. (...) This is a political adventure which will cause great harm to the nation – unemployment and a lack of social protections for the poor. Without its own resources of raw materials, the republic may find itself in a difficult situation – industry and factories will close down, there will be problems with fuel and electricity. (*Советская Латвия*, 15 May 1990)_

Unlike Latvian newspapers, which published a great deal of ceremonial information about the approval of the Latvian declaration of independence and stressed its historical importance, Russian newspapers devoted far less space on their pages to this event. There were brief reports of the fact as such, but there was no reportage about the procedure whereby the declaration was approved.
Most Russian language newspapers argued that the declaration was unlawful and unconstitutional, that it was an attempted coup, and that a referendum must be organised before any such decision could be taken:

“It is not the stupid politicians but the people who must take this decision, take a precise decision in accordance with universally recognised legal norms.” (Советская Латвия, 22 May 1990).

The newspaper Советская Молодежь took a different position from that which was presented in the other Russian language newspapers. Generally speaking, it offered its support to the restoration of independence, but its coverage was far less euphoric than that which was presented in the Latvian newspapers. There were also criticisms of what was happening:

„Independence, the need for which has been discussed for such a long time, has been declared. I hope that readers will carefully peruse every word in the approved declaration and that this will, to a certain extent, reduce tensions and fears which have to do with a lack of knowledge about the document which has been published for the first time today.” (Советская Молодежь, 8 May 1990).

These examples show that the Latvian and Russian language news media offer radically different presentations of history and of contemporary events. The Latvian language mass media praised the interwar period of democracy in Latvia and promised that upon regaining independence, Latvia would return to the community of Western nations while ensuring economic growth and welfare. The Russian language media praised the Soviet regime and threatened negative consequences in economic and interethnic terms should Latvia leave the USSR. Differing interpretations of history serve to produce different collective memories in various groups in society. At the same time, this has been effective in helping Latvians and Russians to strengthen their identity, although that also means that the two groups have been positioning themselves against one another. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, this created an increasingly stable gap, one that would be deepened in future years by ethnic policies related to the state language, citizenship, education and integration.

The Political Parties and Elite as Agents for Public Integration

Ethno-political polarisation among political parties: election results

Many experts in the area of the civil society emphasise that the lack of effectiveness in national integration policies can be blamed on political parties and politicians who, in the struggle over political power, make vast use of ethnic and linguistic belonging as an effective form of political capital, thus polarising society. This is confirmed through analysis of election results. In comparing the dynamics of the electorate of political parties during the last four parliamentary elections, one sees that among the parliamentary parties, the ones which have a heterogeneous electorate – ones which receive support from Latvians and Russian speakers – are disappearing. With each election, the trend of each party’s range of voters becoming more and more homogeneous is becoming more distinct, with parties attracting only Latvians or members of ethnic minorities. The most typical example of this is For the Fatherland and Freedom/Latvian National Independence Movement. Since the 1993 parliamentary election, it has always been supported almost exclusively by Latvians, with no more than 2-3% of Russians voting for the party. The electorate of other influential and more recently established parliamentary parties also tends to be homogeneous. Among those who voted for the People’s Party in the 2002 election, for instance, 94% were Latvians. The Latvian Alliance of the Green
Party and Farmers Union, too, received 95% of its votes from Latvian. 91% of the supporters of the New Era party and the First Party of Latvia were Latvians. These are, with good reason, called Latvian parties as a result of the ethnicity of their supporters. The party alliance For Human Rights in a United Latvia is the greatest representative of minority interests, and 72% of its supporters are members of ethnic minorities.

Latvia’s Way can be distinguished from amongst other parties as a party with an ethnically heterogeneous electorate and also as a party which served in Parliament for a long period of time (the 5th, 6th and 7th Saeima). The party received votes from 12-14% of voters. We can assume that ethno-political polarisation among political forces dictated the polarisation of voter choices on the basis of the ethnic principle, and this kept non-Latvians from voting for Latvia’s Way, choosing instead to plump for minority parties. The battlefield of Latvia’s political parties has a strictly defined ethnic boundary to separate those parties that are supported by ethnic Latvians and those that are supported by others. This is not a trend which appeared instantly – it has been developing over the last 14 years in the context of ethno-political issues (the citizenship law, the naturalisation procedure, the law on the state language, minority education reforms). This has created a situation which ensures that few parties have an ethnically heterogeneous electorate, and changing this situation will certainly be quite complicated.

Ethno-political polarisation among political elite: attitudes
According to Burton and Higley, there are three types of national elites:

1) An elite that is split up, competitive and not unified, one that has no roots and experiences internal conflicts – sometimes violent ones. These are elite groups which cannot co-operate. There is mistrust among them, and they can be split by political, economic, ethnic, racial, religious or cultural specifics;
2) A totalitarian and ideological unified elite that is based on a single ideology – an example of this was seen in Germany and the USSR in the 1930s;
3) A pluralistic and competitive elite, or a consensually unified elite. Members may have different views about political issues, but they do not tend to hold extremist views which could create a conflict. Such elites are typical of modern democracies.

Researchers of the elite such as Steen insist that an elite can operate successfully only if there is trust amongst its members, if members with different ideological views can debate their ideas and compete among with one another, and if, at the same time, everyone accepts the “rules of the game” of democracy. This is an elite which is integrated into political positions. Among conflicting elites, there is mistrust. There are doubts about the elite groups and their competence. If there are ideological differences, this mistrust is also focused on those who take decisions.

The results of a study of the elite that was conducted in Latvia allow us to review the level of trust among the elite. This allows us to determine the importance of the ethnic gap and to know which issues are the ones in which this gap is manifested most clearly. Third, by

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26 Here we refer to studies of the elite that were conducted in 1997, 2000 and 2003. The methodology was developed under the leadership of Anton Steen, a professor at Oslo University. 300 people were interviewed in 1997, 285 were surveyed in 2000, and 280 were interviewed in 2003. Respondents were high-rank politicians, as well as representatives of the creative professions, science, business and government.
comparing the results of studies conducted in 1997, 2000, 2003 and 2007, we can focus on changes in political attitudes, also looking at how the ethnic gap has developed.

**Trust among the elite**

Studies of the elite make it clear that there is distinct mistrust in Latvia when it comes to the political elite. In surveys (1997, 2003, 2007) it was found that more than one-half of members of the elite (including members of Parliament) agreed with the view that “most politicians cannot be trusted to do what they think would be best for the state” and that “people in important government jobs usually think about their own benefits more than they think about the public good.” This view was supported less often among government ministers and civil servants – only one-quarter of respondents or so signalled agreement. 80% of respondents accused leaders of short-sightedness – “there are very few people who clearly know about their interests over a longer period of time.” It must be stressed here that these views did not change between 1997 and 2007. It turns out that politicians only trust other members of their parties, while accusing others of incompetence and selfishness. This suggests that when Latvian politicians come together in parties, that is usually the result of the interests of the relevant group, while other parties are seen as competitors in pursuit of those interests. This is not competition among different models of political ideology – ones which offer different models as to the development of society. Instead, there is competition among group interests.

If we compare the views of Latvians and non-Latvians with respect to trust in the elite, then we see that non-Latvians are more critical than Latvians are. The biggest differences in opinion are found in response to the statement that “most politicians cannot be trusted to do what they think would be best for the state”. 65% of non-Latvian members of the elite agree with that statement, as opposed to 54% of Latvians. When it comes to the selfishness of politicians, views are not as diverse – the statement that “people in important government jobs usually think about their own benefits more than they think about the public good” was supported by 47% of the Latvian elite and 52% of the minority elite.

Table 1. Trust among the elite

<table>
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<tr>
<th>% of all respondents</th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2007</th>
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<tr>
<td>Most politicians cannot be trusted to do what they think would be best for the state</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People in important government jobs usually think about their own benefits more than they think about the public good</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
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A comparison of the results of the three studies (1997, 2000, 2003, 2007) shows that there have been no positive changes in terms of mistrust in the elite. This is particularly true when it comes to understanding the interests of the state. Between 1997 and 2003, the percentage of respondents who agree with the statement that “most politicians cannot be trusted to do what they think would be best for the state” actually increased.

**Views of the elite vis-à-vis ethnic relations in Latvia**

Between 1997 and 2003, the percentage of members of the elite who think that a confrontation is possible declined, but according to 2007 percentage of respondents who predict confrontation increased again. Floating numbers of respondents in different surveys supported the view that “Russians who live in Latvia are completely loyal to our country”.
Table 2. Views of the elite with respect to ethnic relations and the loyalty of minorities
% of all respondents

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A confrontation between ethnic groups is possible</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russians who live in Latvia are completely loyal to our country</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Study of the elite, BDN, 1997; BISS, 2000; BISS 2003.2007

A survey of members of the political elite show that the views of the Latvian and the Russian speaking elite are most diverse when it comes to issues related to the rights of minorities – 60% of non-Latvians and only 5% of Latvians admit that this is a serious problem. This shows that on the one hand, Latvian politicians do not think that issues of minority rights are of importance among other problems. On the other hand, ethnic policy is the specific issue that is used to manipulate with the votes of viewers and to polarise their choices.

Political party ideas about the future of public integration
The representative of the radically nationalist party\(^{27}\) thinks that ethnic policy and naturalisation rules must be as strict as possible, because otherwise people who are opponents to Latvian statehood find it easier to become citizens. Because the proportion of ethnic Latvians in Latvia has declined, the awarding of citizenship to non-Latvians should be limited through naturalisation quotas – comparing the number of newly naturalised citizens to the number of newborn Latvians, and assessing each case of naturalisation individually.

According to radically nationalist politicians, it is necessary to strengthen the policy of speaking the state language in everyday life, emphasising an increase in the speaking of the Latvian language. They think that as the speaking of Latvian increases and stabilises in Latvia, other integration-related issues will be resolved too – education reforms in minority schools, as well as the issue of new citizens and their Latvian language skills.

Representatives of the conservatively nationalist party\(^{28}\) also say that rules for naturalisation must be made more strict, and the awarding of citizenship should be an exception, not an everyday phenomenon. They add, however, that limitations on naturalisation should not apply to those who have arrived in Latvia since the restoration of its independence.

These politicians don’t support any attempt to amend the basic principles of the Latvian Constitution, and that applies to proposals that non-citizens be allowed to vote in local government elections and that the positions of the state language be weakened in various areas of public life and governance. Latvian is and will remain the only state language, and it must be spoken to a level where there are no situations in which it becomes necessary to speak a different language. For that reason, most classes in minority schools should be taught in Latvian.

The representatives of the conservatively nationalist party say that people should not be judged on the basis of their ethnic origins, but instead on the basis of whether they accept the rules of the game in Latvia and try to become included in society. It has to be stressed, however, that ethnic integration is just a small part of public integration, and more attention must be devoted to the economic aspects of integration and public welfare.

Representatives of centrist parties\(^{29}\) argue that the naturalisation process must continue

\(^{27}\) Everything for Latvia

\(^{28}\) For the Fatherland and Freedom/Latvian National Independence Movement

\(^{29}\) New Era party, First Party of Latvia, The Latvian Alliance of the Green Party and Farmers Union, People’s Party, Latvian Way
at the current pace, but perhaps it could be speeded up because the issue is still far too political, and comparatively large numbers of people are still excluded from political processes.

According to politicians of centrist parties there must be more work on bringing the state language to life, which could be achieved through special programmes and a focus on those territories in which few people speak Latvian. Minority school reforms are one aspect of this policy.

Representatives of centrist parties also say, however, that if we are to facilitate integration and various related process, there must be understanding, tolerance and more dialogue among groups in society. It is necessary to explain things that are happening and to talk about how processes are developing. There should be no populist slogans and polemics about them, because that drives people crazy and makes it hard to know how the situation will end up.

Some representatives of centrist parties call for more attention to public welfare and social issues, as opposed to the ethnic aspect. Social issues can bring society together, and if they are resolved, other problems will be resolved, too. These people think that ethnic conflicts will disappear when the economic situation in Latvia is evened out to a greater degree.

Representatives of minority parties30 say that first of all there has to be a shift in public thinking about the essence of integration. The dominant idea now is that only non-Latvians need to integrate into Latvian society, but integration is not a one-way street for just one segment of society. Rather, it involves co-existence and interaction, including respect toward the representatives of other nationalities, as well as the need to learn about the language and culture of the other nationalities.

There are two communities in Latvia right now – those who speak Latvian, and those who speak Russian, and representatives of minority parties think that dialogue between the two groups represents a set of activities which involve an attempt by Latvian speakers to explain their position and to get Russian speakers to accept it. Latvia’s society, however, must become a community which brings the two sides together and facilitates bilateral dialogue in the true sense of the word. Russian, moreover, should be granted the status of an official minority language, as opposed to a foreign language.

Representatives of moderate minority parties think that more attention must be devoted in future to the non-governmental sector, reducing the influence of political parties and politicians on same. Integration would move in a positive direction if politicians stopped doing purposeful or sub-conscious things which affect integration in various ways, and if public organisations were more involved in working with people and offering them consultations.

On certain issues, representatives of the radical minority parties31 and have more radical views. They think that naturalisation requirements should be made easier if public integration is an issue. They want automatic citizenship for anyone who has been born in Latvia, and they want easier naturalisation terms for older people, arguing that the existing process is too hard for them. When it comes to the Latvian language and other languages, they don’t deny that people must learn the Latvian language, but there must be equal status for the Latvian and Russian language in the public sphere.

In future, according to these members of the elite, the rights of non-citizens must be expanded, particularly in terms of allowing them to vote in local government elections. More attention must be devoted to implementing the requirements of the Framework Convention for

30 Motherland alliance, People’s Harmony Party, New Centre
31 Latvian Socialist Party, The party alliance For Human Rights in a United Latvia
the Protection of National Minorities, and norms about minority rights must be addressed in Latvian law. If minorities and non-citizens are denied their rights, that excludes them from society, and that is in violation of the principles of democracy and makes it impossible to talk about public integration. They add that integration is not a forced process – it must be a natural and gradual one.

The role of NGOs in integration

There are many public organisations in Latvia – ones which deal with culture, education, analysis or the civic society – which directly or indirectly affect public integration. Representatives of minority NGOs admit that the Latvian language must be the state language and the language of communications among ethnic groups, but they also stress that the Latvian language, as a value, is perceived differently among various ethnic groups. Whilst recognising the Latvian language as the state language, it is important to maintain tolerance vis-à-vis other languages and cultures, say these people. Otherwise, there could be a negative counter-reaction among those who belong to other cultures. NGO representatives admit that the Latvian language is a resource for promoting understanding and contacts, but they also insist that the Latvian language and culture cannot serve as a cornerstone for integration:

“The role of the Latvian language in the integration process is only a positive role, because given that Latvia’s indigenous population is made up of Latvians, it is a positive thing if members of all nationalities begin to understand the Latvian language. That, accordingly, breaks down barriers, reduces distrust and everything else. That is a good thing. At the same time, however, this must not be exaggerated. Integration cannot be based on the Latvian language and culture.” NGO leaders stress the role of the Latvian language in establishing a civic society: “The Latvian language is absolutely important for the integration which is known as ‘participation in shaping policy’, and this is not possible without the Latvian language. Without the Latvian language, no minority group can take part in the process of planning or influence, and that means that the group is marginalized. I think that in the process of shaping national or statehood-related identity, the Latvian language is extremely important.”

In talking about their own organisations role in integration process, representatives of NGO often say that they want to promote harmony in society. When talking about the accomplishments of other NGOs, however, there is often the view that such organisations promote greater activity among radical forces, as well as a split in society.

“These activities of the Headquarters32 – they have not allowed the organisation to present itself in a positive way. Rightist radicals became stronger. Why does this happen. Rightists become stronger, and then leftists say ‘oh, so that’s the case.’ Perhaps more precisely, they say ‘the Russians are coming.’ Then the Latvians say, ‘oh, the Russians are coming? Latvian, don’t give up!’”

“The problem of integration as such is handled in the sphere of public organisations at least to the extent of 70%. That’s where people preserve their ethnicity, that’s where there is interaction. There are various problems such as education, and each organisation tries to resolve them.”

When NGOs try to promote integration, they work in several different directions.

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32 Russian Schools Defence Headquarters
Cultural organisations stress that they help each specific ethnic group to preserve its cultural heritage. Representatives of cultural NGOs think that NGOs are intermediaries which ensure the integration of people from the relevant ethnic group into Latvian society (this includes the process of naturalisation), and also ensure that the group is distinguished among others and maintains its culture and traditions.

“I think that it is the job of the non-governmental sector to promote this co-operation among various organisations, among organisations which tend to work just with one or another ethnic group. I think that this is something that certainly needs to be done.”

Analytical NGOs in particular, but also other organisations also work on promoting links between society and political forces. The main job for an NGO is to supervise the work of government institutions, to co-ordinate criticism of that work, and to develop alternative solutions.

“The NGO is doing work that the state has not done, even though we have not been delegated this task. We are at the beginning of the process, we are working on it.” (Golden Ball of Yarn)

“NGOs are a life preserver for Latvian society. Politicians and the entire political system have been compromised. Politicians are elected once every four years, and then it turns out that there are no controls at all in the hands of society. First of all, people choose party lists, not politicians. You can accidentally be on a list whose members are elected to Parliament.”

Minority NGOs offer various cultural programmes which are of interest to people of various age groups and interests. When people attend such events, they communicate within their own ethnic group, which is very important given the alienation of modern urban life.

“We have a social centre, it is a community and a different organisation. It has existed for the last 15 years. We have programmes for people of all ages – musical and cinematic clubs. We bring in lectors, there’s live music. We bring in only knowledgeable professionals so as to ensure quality. These events are not just for Jews, different kinds of people attend – there are no limitations.”

Representatives of analytical organisations say that the role of NGOs is becoming stronger in society, but right now it is weak and insufficient. The same is said about the readiness of people to become involved in NGO work. Respondents think that these problems will be resolved over the course of time, and in the near future, NGO work might improve, and the role of the organisations may become more important.
Introduction

The end of the Cold War heralded a promise of qualitatively new and radically different international relations. This was perhaps especially so in the North, where especially the Baltic Sea region was seen as a potential ‘laboratory’ for new forms of cooperation and bottom-up-based regionalisation (for a discussion, see Browning 2005). To a large extent, these expectations have also been borne out. The threat of bipolar conflict has indeed been removed from the region and traditional geopolitics has been replaced with a more open form of geo-economics that is much better attuned to the wider processes of globalisation. Also, the break-up of the Soviet Union brought the three Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) back into independent existence, opening up also the southern shores of the Baltic Sea for new forms of cooperation. At least initially, also Russia was envisaged as part and parcel of these processes as well. This was a sentiment also shared by the Russians themselves at the beginning of the 1990s.

To be sure, along with the Baltic states one of the biggest beneficiaries of these processes has been Finland. During the 1990s Finland was able to leave behind the previous uncomfortably close relationship with the Soviet Union/Russia, replacing it with more normal good-neighbourly relations. Finland was also finally able to take its place in the European mainstream by acceding into the European Union in 1995. In addition, Finland has clearly benefited from the enlargement and consolidation of other European structures: the dual enlargements of the EU and NATO in the Baltic Sea region have clearly increased security and political stability in the areas surrounding Finland. In this respect especially the full EU membership has locked the Baltic states into an increasingly close relationship with the rest of Europe that can be expected to act as a positive factor reinforcing their independence and economic and political stability.

Indeed, on the basis of this discussion alone, it seems evident that when talking about Finnish relations with the Baltic states – on this occasion especially Estonia and Latvia – it makes rather little sense to examine them in a solely bilateral context. Instead, the wider European structures, be them economic, institutional or political, should be taken into consideration. This means that analysis must be conducted on three different fronts simultaneously: (i) the bilateral Finnish–Estonian or Finnish–Latvian dynamics; (ii) the wider (western) European setting; and (iii) the role of Russia in these processes.

In the following, a preliminary analysis along these three lines is attempted. The rest of the paper is divided into three parts. First, some overall remarks concerning Finnish policies and especially its context are made. This is then followed by a more detailed analysis of Finland’s relations with the two Baltic states. The paper ends with some conclusions.

Finland’s Security Strategies and the Baltic States

In the final analysis Finland’s Baltic policy boils down to the question of security (Vaahtoranta and Forsberg 1998, 191–92). This should not be taken to mean that other links – political,
economic, cultural, ethnic and so and so forth – are not important; obviously they do matter a great deal but as history has shown there are times when they are forced to play second fiddle to the more overriding imperative of security. The Finnish disposition to thing along these lines has been aptly summed up by the anonymous Finnish diplomat who immediately at the beginning of the 1990s remarked how the independence of Estonia would spell bad news for Finland: ‘There is no way we can abandon them. There is no way we can protect them. There is no way that we can civilise them’ (quoted in Lucas 2008, 204).

This observation should, however, be taken with a hefty pinch of salt. Although true to a certain extent – the resources of Finland alone were clearly inadequate for the tasks at hand, as they still are – this has not stopped Finland from devising a strategy, or a set of strategies to handle the immediate and long-term challenges in a more constructive manner.

The most important factor in these strategies is the role of Russia in the region. In the Finnish analysis, Russia’s role as a Great Power is widely acknowledged, as is the fact that on its own Finland’s means of influencing Russian behaviour are very limited. Therefore, by and large, Finland can be seen as having three inter-related security strategies that taken together constitute the country’s attempt at securing an element of predictability and control over the large neighbour: power balancing, non-provocative behaviour, and strengthening common norms and institutions (the discussion that follows draws heavily from Vahtoranta and Forsberg 1998 from where the three security strategies and their discussion is largely taken).

The first of the strategies, power balancing, relies on classical realist notions of international relations. In this vein, Finland has sought to balance the Russian regional preponderance by maintaining a credible national defence while also cultivating close relations with NATO and the United States that have, however, at least for the time being fallen short of actual membership in the Atlantic alliance. Also the Finnish activism in the development of the EU’s defence cooperation can be seen in the same light, as can the repeated Finnish concerns over the possibly harmful effects that the rapidly advancing European integration in the field of security could have on wider trans-Atlantic solidarity and NATO (Forsberg and Ojanen 2000, 118–19).

The second strategy of non-provoking Russia has already a well-established pedigree in Finland. One may say that the whole Cold War Russia policy for Finland revolved around the idea of remaining on friendly terms with the Soviet Union in the hope of acquiring maximal freedom of manoeuvre in the West in the process. During the 1990s, perhaps the clearest example of this strategy was Finland’s decision not to put forward claims concerning Karelia, the territories annexed by the Soviet Union at the end of the Second World War. More recently, the best example of this strategy is perhaps Finland’s relationship with NATO where despite close cooperation and growing links with the Alliance Finland has chosen not to pursue the full membership option, ostensibly in order not to provoke its eastern neighbour in the process.

Finally, the third strategy of strengthening norms and institutions has two facets to it. On the one hand, Finland – in a manner closely resembling the first strategy of balancing – is keen to support norms and institutions that balance and constrain Russia’s potential for negative policies and influence in the region. On the other hand, Finland is seeking to bind Russia into these same structures, hoping to do away with the historical security dilemma once and for all (Pursiainen 2000). It is important in this respect to note the rather active stance Finland has adopted in this strategy. For example, the EU’s Northern Dimension policy launched by Finland in 1997 represents an attempt at countering a host of (soft) security threats emanating from north-western parts of Russia while seeking – at least in its original incarnation – to bind Russia closer to the European norms and institutions at the sub-regional and local level (Haukkala 2008,
Chapter Nine).

To a large extent, Finland’s Baltic policy has been subordinated to these wider security strategies. At the same time, Finland has sought to develop an active policy line vis-à-vis the three Baltic states that can at the same time be seen as an extension and a certain deviation from the wider strategy. Therefore, Finland has supported the Baltic states’ independence through bilateral aid and support. Of special relevance in this respect is the political, economic and military support Finland has granted to Estonia especially during the early years of the 1990s (Archer 1999, 56). Perhaps more significantly, Finland has supported their inclusion into wider European and trans-Atlantic structures, notably the European Union and NATO as well as tying the Baltics closer to the well-established Nordic structures of cooperation. Here the consistent Finnish policy line has been that of inclusiveness: all the Baltic states – and not only Estonia – have been getting the full Finnish support for their European aspirations (Visuri 2001, 213). To a large extent, these policies can be seen as complimentary to the last of the three security strategies, namely strengthening common norms and institutions. This is a policy that has been much appreciated by all the Baltic states that have been eager to strengthen their national identities and security against Russia through close cooperation and integration with Europe (Arnswald and Jopp 2001, 33).

The Bilateral Dynamics between Finland and Estonia and Latvia

When turning our attention to the bilateral, or trilateral, dynamics between Finland, Estonia and Latvia we must first grasp the relatively recent nature of the relationship. Unlike Russia or the wider European dynamics that have been at play for Finland for decades, even centuries, the question of a particular Baltic policy is much more recent. As Visuri (2001, 208) has noted, up to the late 1980s Finland hardly had any systematic Baltic policy in place. To be sure, such a thing had existed during the first part of the twentieth century but the process had been disconnected during the Cold War era. What is more, the first moments of such a policy were hardly problem-free for the country as Finland and especially the then President Mauno Koivisto was forced to take a stance on the delicate issue of the Baltic–Soviet conflict at the turn of the 1990s. At first, the stance was that of caution, essentially urging the Baltics to tone down their aspirations – a policy also advocated by Germany and the United States at the time by the way – but the rapid disintegration of the Soviet Union during the last months of 1991 forced the Finns to unequivocally support the cause of independence for the Baltic states (Archer 1999, 55). Since then – as was already mentioned – the support for the Baltic independence has become one of the leading objectives of Finnish foreign and security policy (see also Visuri 2001, 210).

The 1990s witnessed a rapid development of economic and political links between Finland and Estonia and Latvia. In the process Finland has become the biggest trading partner for Estonia and one of the most important ones for Latvia as well. Finland has also become an important source of investments for the two Baltic states. Also the political ties are intensive with frequent visits taking place between the countries.¹ By and large, the ties between Finland and Estonia and Latvia are smooth and problem-free. This is something that has been noted also by the respective politicians in the countries in question. For example, the Finnish President Tarja Halonen has recently expressed her deep satisfaction with the level and intensity of contacts that Finland enjoys both with Latvia and Estonia (Halonen 2006; 2007).

Of special significance in this context are Finland’s relations with Estonia. For reasons of close ethnic, historical, cultural and linguistic proximity Estonia must be considered one of the closest partners for Finland. This is also something that has been acknowledged on the southern shores of the Baltic Sea as well. Especially Estonia’s accession into the European Union in 2004 has acted as a catalyst for this commonality and it has resulted in attempts at identifying a common joint agenda between the countries. For example, already in 2002 the Foreign Ministers of Finland and Estonia wrote a joint article for the biggest dailies in Finland (Helsingin Sanomat) and Estonia (Postimees) outlining the need to arrive at a joint vision concerning common challenges concerning the post-enlargement Europe (Tuomioja and Ojuland 2002). This was followed a year later by a jointly commissioned inter-governmental report that was probing the possible impact of Estonia’s EU membership on bilateral ties between the countries (Valtioneuvosto 2003). More recently, another report has been produced by the governments that has sought to chart in a more detailed manner the areas of convergent interests between Finland and Estonia, especially in the increasingly important EU context (Valtioneuvosto 2008).

But despite this fairly intensive search for a common ground between Finland and Estonia actual and concrete results have been fairly limited. There are, however, a host of good reasons for this state of affairs, the biggest of which stems from the existence of several clear differences between the countries. First, in terms of economic models, Finland has been a well-established Nordic (social democratic) welfare state with a high taxation and large degree of government regulation whereas Estonia has become one of the leading small-government liberals in Europe. In terms of security policy, Finland has chosen to remain non-aligned whereas Estonia has become a member of NATO and an active contributor to the US war in Iraq. Finally, in terms of foreign policy the two countries also differ, especially when it comes to the question of Russia. Finland has pursued a pragmatic policy on Russia that has avoided the politicisation of possible problems and has put the emphasis on developing cooperation and links with the country instead. By contrast, Estonia has taken a much more overtly critical stance on Russia, viewing its development as a potential security threat not only to Estonia but all of the Union and has repeatedly called for a firmer Russia stance on the part of the Union. A clear example of these differences is the policies Estonia and Finland have adopted on Georgia. The Finnish policy can be best described as benign neglect, unwillingness to develop an indigenous policy line that would have gone any further than supporting the EU’s common activities, especially the so-called European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in the region. By contrast, Estonia has developed a very active and distinct profile in Georgia, acting as a mentor prodding Tbilisi towards closer Euro-Atlantic integration. In this respect, the very active role of the former Prime Minister Mart Laar as the special economic advisor to the President Saakashvili as well as the sizable technical assistance and political support given by Estonia to Georgia should be noted. All in all, when taken together, these three key differences in fact account for the relatively modest number of actual achievements that in light of the other factors of common history and affinity should perhaps otherwise be expected.

Interestingly, while the bilateral ties are largely friction-free, the issue of Estonia and Latvia is not entirely void of complications for Finland. Mainly the possible problems stem from other factors not directly related to the bilateral dynamics between the countries. In this respect the role of Russia and especially the issue of Russian minorities in Estonia and Latvia should be mentioned. The root cause is the existence of large Russian minorities in Estonia (approx. 25 per cent of population) and Latvia (approx. 30 per cent of population). These are not old ‘historical’ minorities, such as the Swedish-speaking Finns in Finland, but ones that were
put in place by Moscow’s planned and combined policy of industrialisation, militarisation and eventual Russification of the Baltic states during the Soviet era.

The issue has been becoming more complicated over the years but already at the beginning of the 1990s the issue was gaining in significance. The starting gun in this respect can be seen autumn 1992 when influential Russian analyst Sergei Karaganov advocated using the ethnic Russians residing in Russia’s ‘near abroad’ as a tool of Russian foreign policy in the region (Smith 2001, 161). Since then, the issue of Russian minorities and especially the claims of their ill-treatment has been a mainstay on Moscow’s foreign policy agenda. In the first instance, the biggest problem-case seemed to be Latvia that had a very difficult relationship with Russia during the 1990s (Moshes 1999). More recently, however, Estonia has become the main target of Russian actions and criticism, as exemplified by the intense crisis over the location of the so-called Bronze Soldier war memorial in April–May 2007.

It is precisely the crisis over the relocation of the monument that forced also Finland to take sides in the issue. Traditionally, the Finnish stance has been that the Estonian and Latvian policies concerning the citizenship and minority issues in the Baltic states have been satisfactorily handled both in the domestic Baltic as well as the wider European, including the EU and the OSCE, context (for a discussion of these policies, see Arnowald 2000, Chapter VI). Yet the intense political crisis that followed the relocation of the Bronze Soldier monument showed to Finland that the issue is not confined to the domestic politics of the Baltic states alone but has a wider foreign policy dimension to it that essentially affects also Finland and the whole of European Union as well. In this respect, it was interesting to see that after a short period of initial hesitation that bore all the trademarks of traditional Finnish neutrality, Finland unequivocally took the side of Estonia in the conflict both condemning the Russian actions during the crisis as well as urging the rest of the European Union to show solidarity towards Estonia (Haukkala 2007).

The Finnish policy is especially notable when examined against the backdrop of the three security strategies already discussed above. It seems evident that recently Finland has not shied away from taking sides in Baltic–Russian conflicts in a manner that can be seen as a violation of the second security strategy of non-provocative behaviour towards Russia. It seems that there is an increased awareness of the close-interconnectedness between Finland’s position as an EU member and its own Baltic and Russian policies. In this respect it is highly telling that when ‘forced’ by the events to take sides the traditional Finnish neutrality and political caution have been thrown into the winds by siding so clearly with one of the Baltic states.

Having established this, one should also note that the issue of ethnic minorities is not only potentially divisive, however. A more constructive agenda can be identified especially with Estonia over the question of Finno-Ugric minorities in Russia. Umut Korkut (2008) has suggested that the EU context opens up avenues for Finland and Estonia to take this agenda forward together in a constructive manner. Whether this will indeed be the case still remains largely to be seen – especially when one keeps the Russian stance to these issues in mind – but it is encouraging to think that also a more constructive joint agenda could emerge between Finland and Estonia concerning the question of minorities in the future.

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2 Interestingly, a host of political analyses written by senior Finnish Ambassadors seems to give support to this interpretation. The Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb instructed his Ambassadors to write two-page commentaries concerning the ramifications of the conflict in Georgia in early autumn 2008. The biggest Finnish daily Helsingin Sanomat published excerpts of the analyses on its pages that all seem to point to the interpretation offered above. See Kari Huhta and Tanja Vasama, ‘Diplomaattien tunnustukset’, Helsingin Sanomat, 5 October 2008, D1–2.
Conclusions
The post-Cold War era has witnessed a veritable renaissance of Finnish–Baltic relations. It seems as if the harsh and artificial disconnect of the Soviet era has been overcome very rapidly and with ease. This paper has sought to shed light on the other side of the process, namely Finland’s relations with two of the closest Baltic states, Estonia and Latvia. In both cases we may note how Finland’s relations with these countries have expanded and matured fairly rapidly. Trade has been growing at a fast pace and people-to-people contacts have been mushrooming. Also Finnish industries have been able to acquire a strong position in the Baltic markets, especially in Estonia.

None of this should be taken to mean that the relations are perfect or entirely void of problems. Political spats have been occurring and they will occur also in the future. But the eruption of small conflicts is more a sign of the essential closeness and intimacy of relations than anything else. Having said this, it is worth keeping in mind that despite these achievements the future of Finnish relations with the Baltic states is conditioned by another superstructure, namely that of geo-strategic circumstances and especially the role of Russia. Writing just before the turn of the millennium, Clive Archer (1999, 65) could note how the political debate about the Baltic states was largely framed in terms of Finland’s relationship with Russia and NATO. A decade later the same observation would seem to hold. Therefore, the future development of Finnish–Baltic ties is to a large extent dependent on the developments in Russia and in the wider institutional structures in Europe. In this respect, and despite the positive achievements and the momentum of the past two decades, it is not entirely inconceivable that the gains could be undone and we could witness some kind of a return to the future scenario in the Baltic region as well. If this should be the case, then we can expect Finland to revise its priorities and policies as well. Therefore, we should not write the centrality of Finland’s three security strategies off quite yet.

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Part II
Russia, Baltic States, Europe: Ethno-Politics of Memories and Histories
After the collapse of Soviet Union and the dissolution of the Cold War, some imprudent philosophers of history proudly and euphorically advocated “the end of history”. According to their opinion, we, human beings, are experiencing the final and absolute triumph of liberal democracy and capitalist system, and we never be confronted with the ideological confrontation between plural worldviews and historical theories.

The subsequent real life and events, however, have splendidly demonstrated that we are living in the complicated world filled with economical, political, cultural, religious and ideological antagonism and conflicts, and history is dynamically and fiercely evolving under these strains. Recent economical and political confusion suggests that neo-liberal world system and market-centered (market-suprematist) economical policies, which seem to have swept across all over the world in these decades, are never eternal and imperishable, and they are not only confronted with more and more harsh criticism from theoretical and practical viewpoints, but also have brought serious crisis, which are to become a turning point of world history. Some countries in South America, according to their own statement, seek to establish renewed version of socialist regimes, struggling against the economical globalisation and political liberalisation under the hegemony and unipolarism of United States. Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have in reality continued after the official manifest of their conclusion and they have brought political destabilisation of the wider area around them. Conflicts between Russian Federation and some neighbouring states have been getting severe and harsh, and some hasty scholars, journalists and politicians sometimes talk about “New Cold War” and pessimistically refer to the inevitability of fatal confrontation between plural civilisations and great powers, and the eternal instability of the international relationships. There are exploded not a few military crashes all over the world and so many people are sacrificed under the terrorism, bombing, air attacks and refugeeism from their own homelands. The expansion of social disparity and inequality and the intensification of poverty and social exclusion under the globalisation have brought social instability, psychological irritation or despair among ordinary people even in advanced nations. Even though there are few symptoms that show the rise of “class conflict” or “class struggle”, if utilizing the Marxist terminology, critical feelings against economical and social disparity under unregulated free marketism are prevailing. Maybe these events in all tragically demonstrate and testify that the utter triumph of liberal democracy was the great illusion and we are now still living, suffering and struggling in the complicated and chaotic process of the history, in which various values and interests are tangled and opposed to each other. Such a situation must demand from us the revision and reconstruction of contemporary history.

History, in itself, has been and will be an important, and maybe integral part of such unpleasant and tragic antagonism and confrontations between states and nations. For example, we can refer to the experience after the collapse of former Yugoslavia. There even the so far old memory of tragic defeat at Kosovo in the late 14\textsuperscript{th} century (1389) was utilised as the resource and instrument for inspiring and mobilising Serbian nation, and it functioned as the mythicised national symbol in the battle against Albanians, who also recognised Kosovo as their own indispensable hotbed for national awakening in their memory. In this case, national histories and memories of both sides crashed head-on with each other and were turned into the origin of
national hatred between both sides.

Japanese people also very well understand the national and political implication of histories and memories through their own recent experiences on relationships with neighbourhood. Here I bear in my mind the diplomatic and political strain which broke out between Japan and East Asian states a few years ago, and provocation of nationalistic feelings and movement among people of both sides. They were provoked by the stubborn action by the third former prime minister of Jun’ichiro Koizumi, who so often during his term of office visited and prayed at Yasukuni-Jinja Shrine which deified the military personnel and politicians, including ones who had been sentenced death penalties as the war criminals at Tokyo Trial (The International Military Tribunal for the Far East). We will be able to call the action a challenge to the legitimate historical view, which had been formulated and shared internationally after the WWII. Though there have so often occurred the intense disputes concerning to the description of history textbooks on the forceful colonisation of Korea, genocide in Nanjing, sexual slavery for soldiers and so on between Japan and Asian countries since 1980s, the situation seems to have been aggravated with the backdrop of political renovations and swift economic growth of Asian countries, especially of China and South Korea, and the sluggish decline of Japanese economical and technical presence in the world in the decades of 1990s and 2000s. In these years, some rightist scholars loudly claimed that Tokyo Trial had been the ex parte and unfair judgment by winners of a loser (Japan), and condemned the historical view that recognised the legitimacy of Tokyo Trial as “masochistic historical view”. Though the situation seems to get a little bit calmer after Koizumi’s resignation from the office, potential antagonism seems to remain. Whenever thoughtless or populist statements by leading rightist politicians on the contemporary history and memories of wars would stimulate the neighbouring countries, the relationship might be able to worsen once more. Histories and memories remain to be a potential stumbling block to the friendly relationship between Japan and other Asian countries. Maybe we can find the similar tendency in Europe, too. Jörg Heider and his Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, which came into the ruling coalition in 2000 must have been a good instance.

II

Former socialist states of Central-Eastern Europe including Baltic countries also have challenged the legitimacy or “authenticity” of the prevailed history on the war and peace, though, of course, in the direction quite different from our former prime minister’s way. They decisively refused to accept the view that 1945 was the year of victory and liberation, or, if accepted, with some reservations.

According to the legitimate view of contemporary history constructed after the war (namely under the cold war regime), WWII was the struggle between a democratic camp and fascist one, and so 1945 was the glorious year of the victory of democracy against fascism, the delightful year of liberation from repression and occupation by Nazism, and the beginning of peaceful world under the triumph of democracy. Of course, as the alliance between liberal-capitalistic countries and communists of Soviet Union was the “moment of historical paradox” (Eric Hobsbawm), the very existence of single integrated democracy camp was a great fiction. But such thesis on WWII as the war of democracy against fascism was formulated in the proceeding of the war and shared even under the cold war regime. Especially former Soviet Union, which had been utterly destroyed and made a great sacrifice of population, called it the Great Patriotic War (Velikaja Otetchestvennaja voina), extensively honoured the heroic struggle of the Red Army, partisans and all the Soviet citizens who had perseveringly endured the hard
times under the war, and could pretend to the liberator of Europe and all over the world from the occupation by Nazism and fascism. WWII must have been unquestionably praised, according to Soviet official history and its popular consciousness, literally as the war liberating European nations from despotism and inhumane rule, and nowadays Russian Federation, in principle, maintains this interpretation of history.

Of course, it is impossible and inconceivable for Baltic (and Central-Eastern) nations to share such a simplified vision of the events. According to the Baltic perception, the successful attacks and invasion of Red Army in 1944 to their lands that had been occupied by Nazi Germany, were not anything but re-emergence of occupation and subordination to Soviet Union. They keep in their mind not only the rule by Nazism, but also the traumatic experiences of repression, deportation to Siberia, and migration and refugees from their fatherland to the West, with loss of population of 282,000 in Estonia, 600,000 in Latvia and 550,000 in Lithuania. They were obliged to choose one between two great evils under the successive dual occupation with “No Exit”, or to seek asylum anywhere in the west. Baltic States as the independent nation states need to construct and establish their national histories, putting these tragedies into the pages of world history. Identity politics through history and memory has become their urgent task.

There are other contradictory topics in the history of Baltic States; whether the event in 1940 was a voluntary incorporation of Baltic States to USSR or an illegal forced one under occupation; whether «forest brethren» who fought against Soviet rule until 1950s were national heros for liberation, or the remnants of collaborators for faschists (Legion of Waffen SS: the responsibility of Baltic nations to Holocoust is another dimension of the problem under discussion), whether Soviet heros who attended at the partisan activities against Nazi Germany were honorable courageous fighters or barbarous criminals against humanity, and so on... Divisions through historical perceptions between Baltic States and other states, especially Russian Federation seems to be difficult to get over.

60th anniversary commemoration of the conclusion of World War II (Victory Day) held in Moscow on 9 May 2005 was the arena for these two opposite perceptions of history. The aim of the organizer was, of course, to celebrate the “victory over fascism” of 60 years ago and to emphasize the role and importance of Russia for the world during and after WWII, displaying her contribution to the victory. For this reason, President Putin invited heads of states, including those of Baltic States. This invitation provoked serious dilemma for them, because they could not celebrate the day on the basis of their own historical experience and memories, but their refusal of the invitation from a foreign government was to be problematic from the viewpoint of diplomatic protocol. And the absence from the commemoration might mean their tuning back to the internationally shared history of WWII. So, the responses of each Baltic States were divergent; while Estonian President Arnold Rüütel and Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus refused the invitation delivered by Russian President Putin, and stayed with their own peoples at home, Latvian President Vēinīte-Freiberga, in contrast to them, accepted the invitation, dared to visit Moscow and attend at the commemoration, and explicitly expressed her own (namely official and proper for Baltic States) perception of history in front of the political leaders all over the world. The event impressed the world the existence of a very deep trench around the significance of the day between Russian Federation and Baltic states. The perception of history and memories of the events during and after the WWII were turned into the issues of international politics and diplomacy.

Furthermore, the Baltic States, especially Latvia under the office of a Minister of Foreign Affairs Artis Pabriks, have been developing the history and memory politics and
diplomacy not only toward Russian Federation but also toward Europe. They organized national projects for the exposure of occupation crimes by Soviet Union, held the exhibitions addressed to the occupation in many places, published a great deal of materials and books on Soviet occupation in foreign languages, and distributed a booklet on the event of 1940 to members of European Parliament. Mutual cooperation and exchange of information are organized not only among Baltic States but also with Poland (cf. activities of Instytut Pamięci Narodowej) or other countries, too. It is a challenge to demand European countries to revise the legitimate history, taking Baltic experiences into consideration.

The revisionist demand expressed by Baltic States is very sensitive and so it needs careful treatment for (old) Europe that takes very cautious attitudes with regards to the relationship with Russian Federation from the viewpoint of security and economy. Some scholars (for example, Kristi Raik) point out that the difference with respect to the attitude and relationship to Russia among member states is a factor which divides European Union into “new Europe” and “old Europe”. It means that new member states, especially Baltic states, on the one hand, need supports from EU for their security against Russian Federation, but, on the other hand, may well destabilise the diplomatic policy of EU. The contrast between “old Europe” and “new Europe” distinctly appeared this August, when the battle between Georgia and Russian Federation explored.

The difference and disagreement of histories and memories is the domestic problematic in the Baltic States as well as the international ones. As well known, there live so many Russian-speaking populations in Estonia and Latvia, including non-citizens and citizens of Russian Federation, who migrated from other republics of Soviet Union after the WWII as the military personnel or factory workers. They have their own Lebenswelt differentiated from surrounding Estonian and Latvian lives. They have the right to education, social welfare and communication in their mother tongue, publish their own newspapers and journals in Russian, watch Russian TV programmes through cable TV, and celebrate their own religious feast days. They share the common history and memories about WWII with people of Russian Federation, and, in practice, have a commemorational meeting on the “Victory Day” (9th May) every year in front of the Memorials of WWII that honoured the Soviet military heroes. It has made the existence of dual (non-integrated) societies in Estonia and Latvia visible in spite of integration policies which were developed since the end of 1990s. In contrast to it, some (not so many) nationalists and former Latvian Legionnaires of Waffen SS with SS uniforms organise a march every year around the central part of Riga, the capital of Latvia, on 16th March, the memorial day of the decisive battle against Red Army by Legionnaires in 1944. The dividing line set by police between supporters and protestors (mainly Russian-speaking population including Jewish) may be the symbol of “dual society”. Similar events sometimes occur in Estonia, too. Of course, governments of both states are obliged to handle the events cautiously under the international (European) environment, which takes very rigid attitudes against racism, anti-Semitism and pro-Nazism actions in one side, and with the necessity to praise former Legionnaires as the national heroes who fought against Soviet rule in the other hand.

The violent event around Bronze Soldier (Soviet memorial for Red Army) on 26-27th April 2007 in Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, might be the peak and accidental discharge of historical and memorial conflicts. The removal and relocation of Bronze Soldier, which Estonian government and coalition parties planned in order to poll more votes at the national election in expectation of supports from those holding nationalistic feelings, badly hurt the pride of Russian-speaking population who had lived in Estonia, feeling the discrimination and exclusion in Estonian society in spite of integration policies, and perceiving oneself as
second-rate citizens. Politicised memorial treatment provoked the sense of humiliation among them and made the different perceptions of history the cause of ethnic crash, even though there existed the anti-Estonian campaign and propaganda was organised from Russian Federation.

III

The challenge and demand of Baltic States to revise the history of WWII and the post-war occupation period, and to insert their experiences into it is and has to be acknowledged, justified and respected, because their anguished and complicated history has long been unjustly hidden, ignored and forgotten behind the historical view simplified by the various schemes of binary opposition between East and West, good and evil, democracy and fascism, or liberalism and totalitarianism. But, at the same time, the highly politicised utility of histories and memories as the instrument for the ethno-politics in Estonia and Latvia (as well as in Russian Federation: it also has politically utilised history in favour of their aggression against Baltic countries) has brought the intensification of both international and domestic strains, and functioned as the destabilising element inside and outside of the countries.

Since the collapse of socialist states in Eastern Europe and Soviet Union, we probably might have rushed into the new stage of world history, and lost the comparatively stable and balanced situation under the cold war and mutual deterrence between two rivalry regimes. It means that the legitimate history constructed under the cold war has been condemned, challenged and demanded to revise from various viewpoints with different values and interests. The recent emergence and growth of revisionist history in Japan, in itself surely being a distortion of history, may be the one phase of the situation, and the Baltic challenge - another one, though their standpoints are utterly opposite. Probably we are obliged to re-establish the new world history under the conflicting and tangled international relationships, and then, we need to seek histories that never provoke the mutual hatred and resentment, rather facilitate the tolerance and mutual understanding.

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Estonian contemporary history and especially the years 1939-53 offer politicians and publicists the opportunity of discussing a wide range of controversial topics, which are emotionally loaded and have an impact on today’s relation of Estonia with Russia. Obviously, the scale of the controversies has even increased during the last years. Those topics of debate include many myths, legends and outright falsifications, which are cited sometimes, even by serious historians. The dispute about contemporary history involves even the respective societies and on the first view an impression dominates that there is an “Estonian” and a “Russian” interpretation of the events. It seems that different cultures of remembrance play a role, too.

In fact, there is not really an unbridgeable controversy in academic research. Reading for example the works by Elena Zubkova on Stalinism in the Baltic republics one realizes that her interpretation is not very different from the views of Estonian historians. Zubkova is a leading Russian specialist on postwar Stalinism and Soviet social history. On international conferences and workshops Baltic and Russian historians do not hassle, but discuss. This means, we deal with a conflict about history and not with a conflict among academic historians. Of course, some of the less qualified and renown historians participate with publicists writings in the controversy and are sometimes even hired and paid by there government to heat up the debate.

When I speak about an Estonian and a Russian point of view than this is, of course, a simplification. To begin with, there are different and varied interpretations among Estonians and Russians on World War II, Stalinism and the Soviet experience. Opinions change during time

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1 A different German version of this paper is due to be published in the volume “Erinnerungskultur und ‘Versöhnungskitsch’”.
4 I have organized three conferences with Baltic and Russian participants entitled “From the Hitler-Stalin Pact until Stalin’s Death: Estonia 1939-1953”, “The Sovietization of the Baltic States, 1940-1956” and “The Baltic States under Stalinist Rule”. We had fruitful discussion and no struggle.
under the influence of the media or political changes. Today, some views of opinion makers like journalists or politicians are expressed only in a private circle and not in public. There is a difference between public opinion inside Russia and among the Russian speaking minority inside Estonia. Since the 1990s, Russian media were active in different campaigns against Estonia like against the other Baltic States. Because of those campaigns in Russian society evolved a somehow strange image of Estonia and the country’s history. The Russian minority in Estonia is better informed, but still under the influence of Russian media, especially television, because an independent Baltic TV-channel in Russian is lacking.

Which are the most important points of dispute? Even when risking offering just a listing they should be named:

1. The character of the authoritarian regime in the interwar period
In Estonia an authoritarian presidential regime was established after a coup d’état in 1934 by Konstantin Päts and this fact itself is not discussed. The problem is how authoritarian or dictatorial the regime was. In Russian publicist writing it appeared to be nearly fascist like in Soviet historiography. Often it is stated that the regime was very friendly towards the Third Reich or it was even a German puppet government. These are important aspects when arguing that Estonia entered the Soviet Union voluntarily in August 1940. The government lacked the backing of the population and was dangerous for the USSR, because it was too German-friendly. This argumentation ignores that the Third Reich was perceived as a great threat after the splitting-up of Czechoslovakia and there was a border conflict with Lithuania concerning the Memel region. On the other hand, democracy was not abolished in Estonia in 1940, but already six years earlier. There are also tendencies of belittlement of the authoritarian regime. To state it clearly, destruction and weakening of Estonian civil society and censorship started with Konstantin Päts.

2. The events in 1939 and 1940
In opposite to the Soviet period the existence of the secret protocol of the Soviet-German Treaty of Non-Aggression is not denied sincerely anymore. The secret protocol divided Eastern Europe into spheres of interest of both dictators, Hitler and Stalin. The stationing of Soviet troops in 1939 and the incorporation into the USSR in 1940 remain matters of controversy. As an historian I should add that the known documents in Estonian and Russian archives allow only one direction of interpretation. The stationing of troops in 1939 was the result of blackmailing and Soviet threats after the USSR had already invaded Eastern Poland. In the summer of 1940, a second Soviet ultimatum was given and the increase in the amount of stationed soldiers was, in fact, a military occupation. A Soviet-friendly puppet government was installed and the annexation in August 1940 occurred against the will of the population. Reading Andrei Zhdanov’s documents in the archive, who was Stalin’s plenipotentiary for the Sovietization of Estonia, makes it possible to follow the development step by step. He handpicked the new

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government, let mock elections organized or was responsible for Estonia’s new constitution, which he edited and corrected. The events developed along a scheme he had worked out for the incorporation of Western Ukraine one year previous. There was no voluntary joining the USSR according to the documents of Zhdanov or Politburo, but a staged play. In this context a Lithuanian-Russian joint edition of documents, “The USSR and Lithuania in the Years of World War II”, is important. The first volume covers the development until the annexation of Lithuania and is a qualitative jump in the field. Russian co-editor N. S. Lebedeva uses for the first time the term “occupation” for the period after the entering of Soviet troops in 1940. Two new monographs cover this phase from the Estonian perspective. Older document collections are also very instructive.

Not only are the events in 1939-41 important. While the Estonian side sees a Soviet occupation until 1991 and Moscow uses sometimes the old myths of a “revolution from below” or a voluntary accession, we have to view both interpretations in their political context. If Russia accepts a Soviet occupation of Estonia, then two questions would be raised immediately. Is any compensation for the occupation damages to be paid? What is the legal status of immigrants from the Soviet period? Formally in 1940 only the Third Reich and Sweden did recognize the incorporation of Estonia into the USSR. The majority of western democracies did never offer a de jure recognition. But is the Estonian position more convincing to speak about Soviet occupation until 1991? There are works by scholars of international law in support of this hypothesis. Reading contemporary diaries we understand that many Estonians felt occupied still in the 1950s. Whether this feeling persisted until the rule of Gorbachev is debatable. While the use of the term “occupation” for the entire period of 1940-91 is not broadly accepted, the fact of an illegal annexation during a military occupation in 1940 can not be doubted taking the documents we know today in consideration. Still, to me it seems problematic, when Russian speaking immigrants are seen by many Estonians as “Soviets” or “occupiers”.

3. German occupation, collaboration and the Holocaust

Estonia was occupied by Germany 1941-4. In this period nearly all remaining Jews were killed and locals did help. There is no doubt about this fact and Estonian historians and a special international commission conduct research on this topic. The Russian side uses collaboration...
with the Nazis and participation in the Holocaust somehow to justify the extent of Stalinist persecution in the postwar period. A recently published document collection for example tries to establish an enormous scale of collaboration and war crimes committed by Estonians. Some Holocaust researchers did see the Balts as notorious Anti-Semites. In fact, Anti-Semitism did not play a role before or after the German occupation in opposite to Ukraine or Poland. We know from the reports of the Einsatzgruppen (German killing squads) that the Germans wanted to ignite “spontaneous pogroms” in the Baltic States. In reality, they did not happen in Estonia.

The understanding is widespread that only Estonians served on the German side in the police forces, in fact, also local Russians joined them. The number of Estonians participating in crimes was definitely much smaller, than the amount of Estonians being persecuted as traitors or collaborators after the war.

Many Estonians argue with the “lesser evil”. The scale of persecution was lower under Hitler than under Stalin, but can we see the Estonians fighting in the Waffen SS as “freedom fighters”. This issue is still discussed.

4. The end of war, liberation or re-occupation?

For the Estonians, the arrival of the Red Army in 1944 is seen as the start of a second Soviet occupation, which lasted until 1991. During the reign of Stalin excessive terror was used. In fact, in 1944–5 the largest wave of cleansing took place during 15 months. More than a quarter of all war crimes was committed in Estonia.


The number of Estonians participating in crimes was definitely much smaller, than the amount of Estonians being persecuted as traitors or collaborators after the war.

I do not always agree with Ezergailis’ argumentation, but the Holocaust was initiated by the German occupiers and they tried to depict the Balts, among them the Estonians, as the responsible. In fact, we need more research on the Estonian participation.

political arrests of the Stalin period happened in this time. For the Russian side 1944 marked the liberation of Estonia from the Nazi occupation. The dispute about the interpretation of the end of war escalated in 2005, when the Estonian president did not follow the invitation to Moscow to celebrate the 60th anniversary of den pobedy.

5. Stalinist terror

Persecution, cleansing, torture, the arrest of innocent people, mass deportations and mass killings, ethnic cleansing or crimes against the civilian population belonged to the methods Stalin used in Estonia. Even official Russian institutions do not deny in general the crimes of Stalinism. They became one central issue in the culture of remembrance and the national identity, especially the mass deportations. The scale of terror is debated and the question, whether to persecute the perpetrators today. Stalinist murderers and organizers of mass deportation can be brought to court in Estonia and several convictions have already been reached, while the same persons could be called by the Russian side “anti-Fascists resisters”. This led to certain tensions in Estonian-Russian relations.

Another point of debate the possibility of comparison of Nazi and Soviet terror, if we look at the bitter responses to the remarks of the speech by Latvian foreign minister Sandra Kalniete in March 2004. According to Kalniete, National Socialism and Communism were two equally totalitarian criminal regimes. I do not share her opinion and her claim that after the war more genocides have taken place in the USSR is debatable. Still, from the perspective of the victim there is no difference to be killed in the name of German racism or for the sake of Stalin’s utopia. It is important to remark that Stalin’s terror was a bigger trauma for Estonian society than Hitler’s and, in fact, five times more people lost their life. Stalinist terror hit all strands of society and lasted longer.

6. Monuments and other sites of memory

In Estonia one finds on many cemeteries and in nearly every town monuments for the liberation from the Germans and other monuments with a Soviet connotation. Given their sheer numbers, it is understandable that the victims of Stalinism or those, who fell on the German side, need also places of commemoration and that some Soviet monuments are dismantled. In this context


sometimes heated public discussions might start or even a conflict between Estonians and Russians, which could be ended only by the police. One example was the one year lasting debate about one Soviet monument in Tallinn. When the Estonian government in April 2007 obviously intended to move the monument, a demonstration escalated to two days of riots in Tallinn’s old town. Already during the first night, the government decided finally to dismantle the monument and to re-erect it on a war cemetery. Several weeks of Internet attacks on Estonian institutions followed dubbed as cyber war, the embassy in Moscow was blocked for one week and diplomats were attacked by activists of the organization Nashi. A commission of the Russian Duma demanded even the designation of the Estonian government. Economic and diplomatic relations between both countries suffered. Due to the overreaction of the Russian side, NATO and EU partners finally supported Estonia. The conflict of the monument shed a bad light on the Estonian integration policy in the last decade – one third of the residents are Russian speakers.

Whether the involved politicians were really concerned about history policy might be asked. The party of the Estonian Prime Minister, Andrus Ansip, received after the events the best ranking in opinion polls ever received by any Estonian governing party. Maybe the Russian embassy was directly involved in the riots and plausibly the Russian government tested how far it might go in attacking a small and weak NATO and EU member state. Estonia with its successful democracy and market capitalism outside the influence of the Kremlin serves as a “bad example” for the Commonwealth of Independent States and those member states, who want to leave the Russian sphere of interest. According to that scenario it could be necessary to heat up some small conflicts with Estonia and the other Baltic States from time to time. After Mr. Putin’s reassessment of the “positive aspects” of Soviet history, the conflict about a war memorial came in the right moment. The Soviet victory in World War II is one of the few events in 20th century history uniting Russian society. In the 1990s, the Russian government had shown no interest in the graves of Red Army soldiers or Soviet monuments in Estonia and their maintenance was mainly paid by the Estonian tax-payer.

How historical myths, legends and falsifications entered Estonian contemporary history?

To begin with, legends and myths are natural components of national narratives of history. In Estonia, additional factors apart from constructing national narratives are responsible. One reason are the archival documents itselfes when read without the necessary amount of source criticism. Already the authoritarian regime in the interwar period used propaganda and censorship to improve its image. Possibly, some archival documents and statistics had been manipulated, too. In case of the German occupation we know that the authorities tried to stage the local population as guilty for German crimes, especially the Holocaust. Documents on the German extermination policy were systematically destroyed, too. A work on collaboration might potentially fall into the trap of some Nazi lies. In the case of Stalinism, the situation is even more complicated. Many documents falsify Soviet reality. Life became only better and the Estonians supported enthusiastically mass deportations or arrests. By using the right quotations, this picture might be constructed by an historian using sources. Even serious research might quote Soviet falsifications. In literature one finds until now figures on the damages of German

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33 Reformierakonnatoetus kerkis mais rekordiliselt kõrgele, in: Postimees vom 15.05.07.
occupation established by an Extraordinary Commission directly after the end of fighting. The number of alleged victims was with 61,000 nearly eight times higher than today’s estimate of 8,000, including the murdered Jews. In a small country with efficient means of population registration actually the fate of nearly every single person can be reconstructed today. Obviously, the Soviet exaggeration was made to cover up the enormous population losses due to a mass flight to the West, which in Soviet historiography did virtually not exist, and Stalinist terror.

Another reason for the existence of myths and legends is historiography itself. Right from the beginning, the Soviets tried to manipulate the representation of events and developments in the media and later publications. This does not imply to throw the entire Soviet writing on Estonian contemporary history into the dustbin, because the authors did use documents and some of the works are still readable. Other are better ignored. “Facts” once established have a long afterlife even today.

During German occupation, a first book on the first year of Soviet rule was published under the title “The Year of Suffering of the Estonian People”. It would be wrong to see this publication only as propaganda. Soviet terror was so obvious that there was no big need to lie or exaggerate. Of course, some of the events were not presented correctly, and the volume is sometimes read in an uncritical manner.

The Baltic exile historians were superior to their Sovietized counterparts at home, at least in contemporary history, and they were well informed. They spread several myths and legends, too, because of their anti-Soviet attitude, secondly, they could not enter the archives and, thirdly, because some authors intended to white-wash their role as collaborators with the Germans. Since the exile published much in English and German, it became influential in the West. This might be an explanation, why their estimations on the scale of Soviet repressions in Estonia are so durable, even when being too high.

Since the late 1980s, Estonian history writing has dealt extensively with the war and the Stalin period. Initially, the “blank spots” of history should be explored. Sometimes a nationalist undertone evolved or the authors enter the “competitions of the victims” when speaking about “cultural genocide in Estonia”. Some publications tried to establish a new national meta-narrative of history, but since the mid-1990s quality standards are rising. Nevertheless, some historians are still more active in the creation of myths than in deconstructing them. Few publications take a comparative perspective. It is important that historians from abroad also

36 Andrew Ezergailis has explored the case of a successful Soviet propaganda publication from 1962, which was aimed at discrediting Latvians in western exile as collaborators with the Nazis. For decades, public prosecutors tried to bring those alleged criminals to trial in several countries. Nobody was ever convicted. The mix of truth, half-truth and outright lies was accepted and cited by historians, too. Andrew Ezergailis: Nazi/Soviet Disinformation about the Holocaust in Nazi-Occupied Latvia: Daugavas Vanagi: Who Are They? – Revisited, Riga 2005.
37 Eesti rahva kannatuste aasta, 2 vols., Tallinn 1943.
38 The standard work on the Soviet period was written by the exile: Romuald Misiunas, Rein Taagepera: The Baltic States: Years of Dependence 1940-1990, London 1993.
deal with those questions. The Estonian International Commission for Investigation of Crimes against Humanity published their first volume of reports and papers under the title “Estonia 1940-1945” containing 1,300 pages and weighting more than 4 kilograms. A second volume covering the period until 1991 is expected in the forthcoming years. The first account of occupation damages appeared in print already in 1991, followed by a “White Book” in 2005. Apart from constructive critique, Estonian historiography did a fairly good job in dealing with the period under consideration in this paper.

Politics, under the influence of politics of the day, plays an own role in the Estonian-Russian controversy about history. In this field the concern is less about history, but about instrumentalized policy of history. In the case of Russia, the myth of the victory in World War II and the promotion of the positive aspects of Soviet history are important to foster identity. Estonia on the other hand was quite successful in promoting its own view. One example was the festivities on the 60th anniversary of VE day in Moscow and the different reactions of the Baltic presidents towards their invitation, which received broad media coverage internationally. Unfortunately, we do not have a study yet on Estonian politics of history in opposite to the case of Latvia.

We should not forget society. Sometimes the Russian speaking minority seems to be instrumentalized by different political actors. But people have their own memory and understanding of history, which could not be always influenced by works of historians, the media or political statements. The individual perspective carries a couple of myths and legends and an image of an enemy, but we also meet the demand to see history more differentiated. The young generation has sometimes different and more relaxed views than the old one. Additionally, Soviet rule ended only in 1991, memory is still fresh in comparison to World War II.

The “Museum of Occupations” in Tallinn, a private institution, plays its own part. The steady exposition covers the every-day experience of Soviet and Nazi rule, but stresses Stalinism. Video tapes offer an authoritative account of events, a narrative with which I not always agree. In my opinion, the Holocaust and German terror are not as well represented as Stalinist repressions are. Estonians appear to be victims, while questions of collaboration and participation in crimes are not covered sufficiently. The museum supports some research activities, too. The importance of this museum for Estonian memory culture should not be overstressed, since most of the visitors are foreign tourists. More important is the flood of published memoirs appearing in print in recent years.
The brunch of the dispute about Estonian contemporary history takes place in the media and on the internet. Obviously, a couple of homepages in Russia are supported by the state to express the politically correct views. In the last years the news agency “Regnum” (www.regnum.ru/) for example published dossiers entitled “The War of Monuments in Estonia”, “Fascist Attitudes in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania” or “Nationalism, Xenophobia, Religious Hate and the Fight against them”. Reading those dossiers, one understands that Estonia and the other Baltic States became victims of a propaganda attack. Of course, critique is always necessary and welcome, but several of those texts contain lies, exaggerations and disinformation.

During the discussion about a possible removal of the Tallinn monument, the Russian Duma accused the Estonian authorities to support “propaganda of fascism”.\footnote{Staatsduma ruft zur Verurteilung fashistischer Propaganda in Estland auf, in: RIA Novosti, 15 November 2006, \url{http://de.rian.ru/world/20061115/55678040.html} (15.08.07)} In the Russian press, some journalists relate the fate of the Russian speaking minority with the dispute about history or they question whether Estonia is a democracy. In one enlightening article Russian historian Leonid Mlechin characterized Russia’s attitude towards the Baltic States in the following way: “Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians seem to us to be arrogant and proud. The opinion is very common that the three Baltic States are small, mean and nearly fascist states, which hate Russia and declare ‘foreigners’ to be second class. Let us be honest, the Baltic States are not loved due to three reasons. They left the Soviet Union as the first ones – ‘ungrateful!’ Secondly, they see themselves as part of the West and wanted quickly to join the European Union and NATO – ‘joining our enemies!’ Thirdly, they pose demands, territorial and financial ones for the years of ‘occupation’. Everything else is the result including the discontent with the situation of the Russians there.”\footnote{LEONID MLECHIN: Venemaa ja Baltimaad mineviku vangis, in: Postimees – Arvamus, 31 March 2007, p. 4; Russian original, Rossiia i Pribaltika: v plenu proshl ogo, 22 March 2007, \url{http://rian.ru/analytics/20070322/62433429.html} (10.08.07)} With clear words, Mlechin criticizes the events of 1940-1, but he blames the Balts for fighting on the German side, participating in war crimes and justifying the Nazis later.

A “roundtable” of historians met in February 2007 in Moscow, to discuss a reaction towards the historical accusations from the Baltic States. Only in the time of the conflict about the Soviet war memorial in Tallinn, the public got to know about this event in May 2007. The conclusions and recommendations of this group are instructive: Baltic historians try to rewrite the history of World War II and to ascribe the role of the aggressor to the USSR and the Russian nation. The concept of a Soviet “occupation” is strengthened by them. The Russian government should not leave the history to the historians, but should express “clearly a political position of the state towards important historical questions.” The German- Soviet Treaty of Non-Aggression has to be re-evaluated and the negative assessment by the Congress of People’s Deputies from December 1989 needs correction. The overwhelming majority of Baltic historians is depending on their state and support the pseudo-historic argumentation by the Baltic governments and the discrimination of the Russian minorities. To rebut claims from the Latvian side, access to archives of semi-official Latvian historians should be restricted. Baltic historiography tends to dogmatism and ignores documents and facts, which do not fit into their ideological worldview. One possibility would be a large-scale research and publication program.\footnote{Rekomendatsii rossiiskikh istorikov: “Rossiia i Pribaltika: kompetentnye otvety na istoricheskie pretenzii limitrofov”, in: IA Regnum, 2 May 2007, \url{http://www.regnum.ru/news/821909.html} (10.08.07).} These were the suggestions by the “roundtable”. In fact, more Russian research on Baltic history would be welcome, but when the main goal is an apology of Soviet history, then
the initiative sounds dubious. The Estonian history commission, Estonian historians and the Estonian politics of history and memory offer many opportunities for critique. Not all publications are methodologically sound and of high quality. Sometimes Russia and the Russians are represented in a too negative light, but the approach by the Kremlin to use Soviet falsifications in the dispute let one doubt, whether the niceties of the politics of history have been well understood. Some arguments might appear to be sound inside Russia, but outstanding observers are not that easily convinced. Because western commentators sometimes lack the language competence and knowledge about Estonian contemporary history, they might also be mistaken.

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In this dispute about history, it would be sometimes appropriate to leave politics and legends behind and remind that the historical events contained more complexity and need a more differentiated interpretation. There were Russian guards in German concentration camps, too, Estonians fighting voluntarily in the Red Army or joining NKVD, Jews not letting themselves evacuate to the Soviet rear in 1941 fearing Stalin more than Hitler. There were collaborators, supporters and fellow-runners of Soviets and Nazis, oppositionists and resistance fighters against Hitler and Stalin. In the moment a strong tendency exists to associate each ethnic group with a certain position, but this is unhistorical. Only the historization of events and developments especially of the 1940s and 1950s offers the opportunity to overcome the blockade in the Estonian-Russian dispute about history. Whether the Estonian and the Russian society and their politicians are ripe for such a historization of the recent past poses a different question.

In the case of the Estonian-Russian conflict about contemporary history, the author thinks that this dispute has mainly a political origin. The Estonian politics of memory stressing the victim status of Estonians and the partial rehabilitation of Soviet history in Russia, the use of history as an argumentative weapon against the other side and the utilization of “images of an enemy” hinder historization.

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55 After Elena Zubkova has published her acclaimed book “Pribaltika i Kreml’ 1940-1953” her Russian grant to research Baltic history was not prolonged. Latvian Heinrihs Strods is one so called semi-official historian. After having published extensively on the large-scale mass deportation in 1949 and anti-Soviet resistance, he did not receive a visa to Russia anymore, because he did find many important documents in Russian archives. Not that I always agree with Professor Strods’ opinion, but I think the denial of access to archives is not an indicator for democratical standards.
Brigita ZEPA

Regime Change, Historical Memory and Ethnic Identity

In his outstanding book, “Remembering War: The Great War and Historical Memory in the 20th Century,” Jay Winter writes that over the course of the last 100 years, there has been a substantial increase in interest about history, and that there have even been several cases of “memory boom.” The first wave of historical memories occurred at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, and this facilitated the emergence of new collective identities – particularly national identities, but also social, cultural and individual identities. The second wave, which occurred in the 1960s and 1970s, was in large part a form of remembrance of World War II and the Holocaust.

Winter writes that among other reasons for why there is interest in history today, there is the fact that “for some there is a nostalgic yearning for a vanished or rapidly vanishing world, for others it is a language of protest, seeking out solidarities based on common narratives and traditions to resist the pressures and seductions of globalization, for others still it is a means of moving away from politics.”

If we think about what encourages people in Latvia to focus on historical memories today and why the last two decades have been rife with discussions about such subjects, we can make reference to what Winter had to say about the first, second and third “memory boom.” Among those circumstances which have stimulated historical memory in Latvia, there is not just the strengthening or new emergence of national and other identities, but also the desire to speak frankly about twists and turns in history, about phases and events of history that were taboo during the Soviet period. These included the repressions of Stalinism and the Soviet regime (mass deportations, forced collectivisation, nationalisation of private property, etc.), the Soviet occupation of Latvia in 1940, and the period of independence which existed in advance of that occupation.

At the same time, it is interesting that according to Winter, the historical memories of younger generations often encourage people to turn away from politics. In Latvia, it must be said that one of the most typical elements in the historical memories of the post-occupation generation is the generation’s close links to politics. This can be seen in the fact that institutions of government have commissioned explanations of history that were not possible during the totalitarian Soviet regime, as well as historical memories from members of the public, in which relationships of power (subordination, captivity, offences) are the dominant dimension.

Baiba Bela-Krūmiņa, a researcher of Latvian life stories, writes in her dissertation that regime change created an enormous amount of interest in history in Latvia. The public arena was oversaturated with historical memories. At the same time, however, people typically mistrusted historians, because they knew that during the Soviet occupation, historical events had been interpreted in ideological terms, and documentation has been forged. An alternative method for recording and creating history became very popular – that was the collection and analysis of life stories. The philosopher Maija Küle wrote about the deepest structures of social thought and sense of the world in Latvia of the 1990s, considering the myths which existed.

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2 Ibid.
about the importance of the past in Latvia’s cultural space.⁴ These myths were based on the belief that a true Latvian identity must be sought out in the past, and there were efforts to understand the present day primarily against the background of the past and in its context. This thinking also existed in politics – the state was being restored, and the ideas, symbols and ideology of the state were all found in the past. Even the Constitution of 1922 was reinstated more or less unchanged (the other Baltic States approved a new fundamental law, as opposed to reinstating the old one). Latvia differs from other countries in the post-Soviet bloc in that it is enormously overcome by the past. Historian Irēne Šneidere, an analyst of important events in society and politics, has written that recent history is being glorified in Latvia.⁵ One can agree with the sociologist Tālis Tisenkopfs, who has also noted the enormous level of interest in the past, in arguing that “life stories in Latvia ensured several important social functions. They mobilised ethnic self-understanding and shaped new identities, both individual and collective.”⁶

Interpretation of the term “collective memory”

The term “collective memory” was coined by the French scholar Maurice Halbwachs, but the study of this phenomenon really began when Emile Durkheim started to consider the role of religious rituals in the emergence of social communities. The two scholars established a tradition in which the concept of collective memory emphasises the social dimension. Collective memory is seen as the result of interaction between a social environment and the individual. In the latter half of the 20th century, the study of collective memory was supplemented by so-called interactionists – specialists who explain collective memory as a process of interaction between individuals and social agents. An even more recent explanation of collective memory is offered by constructivism, which views collective memory as a social construct created under the influence of the interests and values of various social agents. In recent years, researchers have also been focusing on discourse analysis, which emphasises the aspect of power structures in the constructing of collective memory.

When seeking a theoretical explanation of the concept of “collective memory,” researchers usually follow along with the traditions of Durkheim and Halbwachs, both of whom put the emphasis on the social nature of collective memory. In his “Elementary Forms of the Religious Life,” Durkheim analysed religious rituals to show that they help people to link the past and the present in their memories. This, in turn, serves as a cornerstone for the emergence of a sense of community and identity in a group, and that helps to ensure group solidarity. A student of Durkheim’s work, Barbara A. Misztal, has argued that “Durkheim’s belief that every society displays and requires a sense of continuity with the past and that the past confers identity on individuals and groups allows us to see collective memory as one of the elementary forms of social life.”⁷ Misztal also emphasises the role of memories in the emergence of group solidarity: “The degree of group solidarity, created through remembering together, depends on the mythical properties of the group’s memories, especially their ability to vitalize energy and arouse emotions.”⁸

⁸ Ibid., p. 125.
Halbwachs believes that an individual’s memories are based on his or her belonging to a group. Memories are not based on the ability of an individual to reflect events. They emerge from human consciousness in interaction with the surrounding society and its social order.\(^9\) One student of Halbwachs’ work has written that “every collective memory requires the support of a group delimited in space and time.”\(^9\) Halbwachs differentiates between history and collective memory: “History is the remembered past to which we no longer have an ‘organic’ relation – the past that is no longer an important part of our lives – while collective memory is the active past that forms our identities,” he has argued.\(^9\)

In accordance with Halbwachs’ explanation, collective memory is not based on the work of professional historians. Instead, it is based on the overlapping influence of various agents – the mass media, family traditions, messages about the origins of the state that are disseminated during national celebrations, and other historical events, as well.

Contemporary authors who write about collective memory write about its role in the preservation of links to history and to the emergence of collective identities of the present day.\(^10\) In this, their thinking is similar to that of Durkheim and Halbwachs. Many researchers have argued that the memories of the past have an influence on the events of the present: “Images of the Vietnam war limit support for American military activities; memories of the Nazi period constrain German foreign and domestic policy; recollections of dictatorship shape the activities of transitional and post-transitional regimes from Eastern Europe to Latin America; and Watergate has become the perennial reference point for all subsequent scandals in Washington.”\(^13\)

George Schopflin, a distinguished student of Eastern Europe, has written that memories are needed so as to create a specific framework for the experience of the present day and for the structuring of the future: “A society without memory is blind to its own present and future, because it lacks a moral framework into which to place its experiences.”\(^14\)

Another tradition related to the research of collective memory is based on interactionism. Representatives of this tradition include Gary Alan Fine and Aaron Beim, who have argued that collective memory must be seen as a process in which interaction among social actors is of decisive importance. This is a process of interpreting and exchanging concepts and meanings, and this serves to create new meanings, too. Fine and Beim believe that Halbwachs has explained collective memory as a result, failing to point out the way in which it is formed. They argue that if collective memory is viewed from the perspective of interactionism, that makes it possible to describe it as a process: “Collective memory is produced through symbolic interaction.”\(^15\) Still, even the representatives of the idea of interactionism recognise the social nature of collective memory – the effects which social context, agents and groups have on interactions and interpretations of meaning. The perspective of interactionists makes it possible to understand the constant development of collective memory: “Collective memory is a living

\(^13\) Ibid.
concept, linked to the behaviours and responses of social actors who generate meanings.”

Since the publication of “Construction of Social Reality” by Berger and Luckman, many researchers have developed the perspective of constructionism further in terms of concluding that collective memory is “constructed.” In analysing this process, researchers have argued that this is, among other things, a battleground for politics: “Societies in fact reconstruct their pasts rather than faithfully record them, and they do so with the needs of contemporary culture clearly in mind – manipulating the past in order to mould the present.”

Wulf Kansteiner conceptualises collective memory as the result of interaction among three types of historical factors – the intellectual and cultural tradition which frames all of our representation of the past; the memory makers who selectively adopt and manipulate these traditions; and the memory consumers who use, ignore or transform such artefacts according to their own interests.

“Cultural trauma” is also often used in the construction of a community’s collective memory. The concept has been explained by a group of authors as “a phenomenon of collective consciousness, which appears as an effect of social events that have threatened group existence. These events are reflected in the collective memory of the group as a painful and dramatic loss of the identity and significance.” Eyerman has argued that trauma leads people to view history from a different perspective and to reinterpret the past in a way which satisfies the needs of the present.

Life story researchers in Latvia, too, have identified “cultural trauma” as a dimension in collective memory, arguing that it has had a significant influence on attitudes toward present-day situations and processes such as the ethnic composition of Latvia’s population, relevant policies, etc.

**Method**

In this article are used results, which are obtained in several research projects, provided by Baltic Institute of Social Sciences: “We. Celebrations. The State. A Sociological Study of How National Holidays are Celebrated” (2008), “Integration Practice and Perspectives” (2006), “Regime change and State Consciousness” (1994).

1. **Mass media analysis**

The role of mass media (newspapers, TV, Internet portals) in constructing the discourse of the national holidays (2008)

Mass media has important role in reflecting and constructing the discourses of the holidays. Many people face the celebratory events only in a mediated way – through mass media. In order to get insight into how mass media reflects the events of the holidays and what is their constructed discourse in relation to holiday celebration, as well as national identity and sense of belonging to Latvia a separate part in the project is devoted to the study of mass media. In media analysis a special attention is given to discursive differences between media in Latvian and Russian

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16 Ibid., p. 5.
languages.

**Holiday discourse in newspapers**

Three Latvian and three Russian newspapers were chosen for the analysis. Media analysis was conducted for the time periods with important national holidays — May 1, May 4, November 11 and November 18. Several newspaper issues both before and after those holidays were also included in the research.

**The Role of the Press in Constructing Collective Identities (2006)**

In this research project, the approach of critical discourse analysis is used to analyse the press. The aim is to study the way in which collective identities are constructed.

At the centre of critical discourse analysis (CDA), there are various roles performed by discursive actions in terms of shaping and maintaining unequal power relations among various social groups, between men and women, and among national, ethnic, religious, sexual, political and sub-cultural groups. CDA reviews battles which are manifested when one discourse is given privileges and others are marginalized, thus also affecting the positions of individuals and groups that are involved in discourse.

CDA takes into account the situation, the status of participants, time and place, as well as other social factors – participation in groups, age, socialisation, as well as psychological factors which are of great importance in creating texts. When conducting this analysis, one must take into account the psychological, cognitive and linguistic factors that were the foundation for the creation of the text. These factors shape structures or ‘frames’ and ‘schemata’ which help to structure and perceive reality. Wodak defines the concept of frames as general models which bring together our overall knowledge about that or another situation. Schemata are concrete models for realization of a specific situation or text. The concept of strategies is closely linked to these concepts. Strategies are used in pursuit of goals, but that does not mean that participants in discourse are always aware of those goals.

Press analysis was conducted with respect to periods of time when there were public and media debates about issues of ethno-policy. Three Latvian language and three Russian language newspapers were chosen for analysis during each period of time.

For each period of time, researchers selected articles which had to do with the important ethno-political events. In analysing these articles, researchers focused on the way in which ethno-political processes were reflected, as well as on the way in which the newspapers described important participants therein – political parties, non-governmental organisations and international institutions. The main dimensions of analysis to be considered were the content of the discourses and the discursive strategies that were applied.

**2. Study of inhabitants’ civic values, attitudes, representation of collective memory and celebration practices (2008)**

The main focus of this section is on inhabitants’ civic values, attitudes, representation of collective memory and celebration practices of the national holidays. In order to fulfil these objectives focus group discussions involving various groups of respondents were carried out. Objective of the focus group discussions: the study of social practices, memories and opinions about national holidays in various social and ethnic groups, as well as identification of common holiday

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22 Mass media analysis was conducted by Liga Krastiņa  
23 Mass media analysis was conducted by Liga Krastiņa and Iveta Ķešāne  
discourses. Participants were recruited according to the age and sex quotas to represent the different generations and ages. There were four discussions in Latvian and four in Russian accordingly to the native language of the respondents.

Attitudes measurement toward regime change and history.
Empirical and interpretative research of collective memory

1. The influence of newspapers on the process of collective memory construction (1990)
After the approval of the Declaration of Independence (1990) the Latvian and Russian language press mostly published various official pronouncements, along with appeals and declarations, from the Supreme Council, as well as political parties (mostly the LKP and the LTF) and public organisations.

In Latvian language newspapers, everything that was characteristic of the Soviet system was described in very critical or sarcastic terms. This vividly marked out a discursive strategy that was aimed at constructing a new civic identity. One way to construct an identity was to activate links to the pre-war Republic of Latvia.

Newspapers printed a great deal of information about the pages of Latvian history which had been hushed up during Soviet times – the period of independence between 1918 and 1940, as well as the repressions of the Soviet regime. Historical events are of great importance in the discourse of independence, because defenders and opponents of independence use them to justify their positions and activities, albeit with differing interpretations.

The interwar period was particularly important in the creation of a new identity, because it made it possible for people to establish positive identification with the independent country of that time.25 It was stressed that this was the only period of time in which Latvians had their own independent state, thus justifying and enhancing the efforts of the so-called Latvian Renaissance to achieve independence. The first republic was largely presented in idealistic terms – as a period of general growth, one in which Latvians gained accomplishments in the economy and in other areas.

The focus on the interwar period republic was very specific in Latvian language newspapers, helping to create the impression that as soon as the USSR was gone, Latvia would once again become this first independent Latvian state, one populated primarily by Latvians, with relatively few representatives of other nationalities. Wealthy farmers would work their small farms, they would export butter and pork to Western Europe. There would be no major industries to pollute the environment.

In contrast to the interwar period of independence, the years of Soviet authority were depicted in a very negative light, thus destroying the identity of the Soviet individual and establishing a new civic identity in its place. The crass rejection of the Soviet era and all that was characteristic of it – this was a typical foundation and the most vivid manifestation of the new identity.

Along with the rejection of all that was Soviet, the Latvian language newspapers also started to shape the image of Latvians as a nation which belongs to the developed Western world. Newspapers presented a powerful orientation toward Western Europe, the United States and other countries with democratic systems, market economies with private companies,

25 The theory of social identity says that it is important for people to belong to groups which are positively judged by other groups and, especially, by members of the group in question. See Taifel, H. and J.C. Turner (1979). “An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict”. In Austin, W.G. and S. Worchel (eds.). The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations. Monterey, Calif.: Brooks/Cole.
competition, and a wide diversity of products. There was an emphasis on the contrast between these countries and the Soviet Union:

“… The reality of Soviet life among Latvians exacerbated efforts, at least in the world of ideas, to emphasise their belonging to the community of European nations without any hesitation. Of course, the Baltic Republics were far more Western than the rest of the empire.” (Atmoda, 29 May 1990)

Latvians often perceive processes of change as a return to “normality” – a “normal” state, “normal” everyday lives, and “normal” economic development. The ethnic, civic and political identity of Latvians was strengthened through reports about leaving the USSR as an independent country, as well as the return of the Latvian nation into the Western political, cultural and economic arena. This stressed the historical rights of the Latvians, also legitimising the processes aimed at establishing an independent state.

Of similar meaning was the frequent discussion of Soviet repressions. The feeling among Latvians that they had been hurt was strengthened as a component of ethnic identity. Newspapers wrote about the right to compensation – compensation at the expense of other nationalities, in some cases.

The Latvian language newspapers largely spoke to Latvians alone, referring to Latvians as “us” and “the people”, and thus creating the impression that Latvians, as an ethnic group, represented the numerical majority in society and that all Latvians have the same views and attitudes. An ethnic identity was constructed for Latvians, stressing that all people of Latvian origin have certain positive properties – they are hard-working, polite, well educated, able to deal with difficulties, patriotic and musical.

It was also stressed that Latvians are a nation of farmers – all Latvians were farmers in the recent past, and they want to live in single family farms and work the land, as was the case during the rule of pre-war President Kārlis Ulmanis.

When writing about all of the residents of Latvia – both Latvians and members of other nationalities, the phrase that was usually used was “the entire Latvian nation.” People from other ethnic groups, however, were often depicted in negative terms, publishing many scornful epithets. Often all non-Latvians were called migrants, thus depicting the very diverse community of Latvia’s residents as a single mass. Properties attributed to this mass were the dominance of material interests over spiritual interests, the search for one’s own good, as well as disrespect against Latvians and the Latvian language and culture.

A review of the Russian language newspapers that were published at that time shows that there were radical differences between the LKP newspaper Советская Латвия and the Interfront newspaper Единство on the one hand and the newspaper Советская Молодежь on the other. The first two newspapers stood firmly for Latvia’s remaining in the Soviet Union, while Советская Молодежь was more likely to support the restoration of Latvia’s independence. This newspaper did not stress threats against Russian speakers, although it did print critical reviews of important events of the day.

In the Russian language newspapers the Russian speaking population is depicted internationalist contrasting to the growing nationalism of Latvians. It is stressed, that Russian-speakers do not sort people according to their ethnic background. Russian newspapers mostly show their readers as simple and hard-working persons. Comparatively often veterans of

war and work are mentioned, their feelings about actual processes are portrayed.

In the Russian language newspapers, authors predicted an inevitable exacerbation of interethnic tensions, writing far more often about the concept of “national harmony” and emphasising its importance in preserving the public peace. Readers were called upon to promote equality among Latvian residents of various ethnic groups. This challenge was particularly addressed to the LTF and those who supported its views. These political forces were often described as “fomenting interethnic hatred”, with the newspaper stressing the friendly and favourable relationships which existed among various elements in society before the processes of independence began.

„I cannot understand what’s happening in this country, in the Baltic Republics? People of all nationalities used to live in friendship. No one kept anyone else from speaking his or her native language. Now, however, Russians are being accused of destroying national culture and national languages.” (Едиство, 21-28 May 1990).

It must be stressed here that the Russian language newspapers hardly ever used the word “renaissance”, which was common in the Latvian press. This can be explained by virtue of the fact that the concept of the “Latvian national renaissance” was used to describe processes at the centre of which there were ethnic Latvians. People of other nationalities could not identify themselves with these processes. The concept of “renaissance” also includes a very positive evaluation of ongoing processes. Russian newspapers, by contrast, were dominated by a very critical view of events.

The Russian language newspapers, unlike their Latvian language counterparts, devoted far greater attention to economic issues, analysing the situation and making predictions about the future economic development of the republic. Russian language newspapers were full of negative statements about the Latvian economy if the country were to split off from the Soviet Union – in most cases, a severe economic crisis was forecast. Newspapers stressed the fact that the Latvian economy was very closely linked to those of the other Soviet republics, both in terms of receiving raw materials and in terms of selling ready-made products. Russian newspapers printed much more information about the shortage of various products, particularly groceries, in the country’s shops, arguing that this was an absolutely unacceptable situation, one that would only worsen if the country were to continue to move along the path of leaving the USSR:

„The Supreme Council of the republic has in fact, set off on the course of restoring the bourgeois Republic of Latvia. (..) This is a political adventure which will cause great harm to the nation – unemployment and a lack of social protections for the poor. Without its own resources of raw materials, the republic may find itself in a difficult situation – industry and factories will close down, there will be problems with fuel and electricity.” (Советская Латвия, 15 May 1990)

2. National Holiday discourse in the mass media

May 1 is a holiday with deep traditions of celebration in Latvia. Between the two world wars, this was a holiday where the concepts of social democracy were manifested. During the Soviet era, May 1 was extensively celebrated as the international day of worker solidarity. The law on state holidays in Latvia now states that May 1 is to be observed as the date on which the Latvian Constitutional Convention was convened (1920) and also as Labour Day.

The date when the Soviet Latvian parliament declared the reestablishment of independence in 1990

Day **November 11**, which is known as Lāčplēša Day and is Latvia’s version of Veteran’s Day. The day is established in honour the victory over Bermont’s army on November 11, 1919, when independence of Latvian state was defended.

**November 18**, the date on which the Republic of Latvia was established in 1918.

**May 1. The date when the Constitutional Convention of the Republic of Latvia**

Mass media reports devoted to national holidays and celebration of same serve to construct collective memories and identities. This is seen in the way that the mass media present the historical context of a holiday, as well as in the way that the behaviour and mood of people who are attending the celebrations are presented.

May 1 is the only state holiday which was celebrated both in Soviet times and after the restoration of Latvia’s independence. Since the restoration of independence, May 1 has been celebrated as Labour Day in Latvia, as was the case between the wars, but public attitudes vis-à-vis the day are quite contradictory. Attitudes are based in large part on the collective memories which have been preserved quite well about May Day traditions during the Soviet era. The Russian language newspapers are not shy about recalling emotional associations with the Soviet celebration of May 1, thus constructing a link to the Soviet era in the collective memory. Latvian language media outlets are more likely to treat the holiday in an ironic way, thus seemingly reducing the importance of these historical associations.

There was not very broad celebration of May 1, one of the event was meeting of Social Democrats. Newspapers noted that the meeting was organised by the Socialist Party (SP). Articles stressed that the few people who took part in the event were mostly elderly. This indirectly suggested that the event was a marginal one. Latvian newspaper NRA also noted that the participants were Russian speakers, thus telling its readers that their group (Latvians) did not organise the event. There were indirect suggestions that organisers were manipulating the audience. The meeting and participants were discredited and seen as rather laughable and childish. NRA emphasised the fact that those who were present were drinking alcoholic beverages, thus eliminating discursive power of the meeting and the march, as well as the ideas which were expressed. The article Latvian newspaper NRA was mostly sarcastic: “Pensioners sat in the sun on park benches to warm their frozen limbs in the cold and damp weather with something more stimulating” (NRA, 2 May).

Several newspapers recalled the demonstrations which were held on May 1 during Soviet times. Russian newspapers Chas and Vesti Segodniya used Soviet-era terminology – “the date of international solidarity among working people”, thus creating a link with the Soviet regime. The Russian newspapers which dubbed the holiday “the date of international solidarity among working people” presented photographs with posters bearing Soviet-era slogans such as “Peace, Work, May” and “Long Live May 1!” (Telegraf, 02 May). The newspaper also suggested that the event was focused on the past and not particularly important by focusing on the place where the meeting was held and by continuing Soviet-era ideological positioning: “Speakers denounced Latvia’s capitalist regime” (Telegraf, 2 May). Articles often mentioned the events of May 8 and May 927 that were in the future. In Victory day celebration usually participate a lot of Soviet Army veterans with their friend and families and it is a way through

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27 During Soviet Union's existence, the May 9 Victory Day was celebrated throughout USSR and in countries of the Eastern Bloc.
memories to strengthen Russian identity in Latvia.

Most of the reporting on May 1 focused on Labour Day, and only a few articles mentioned in passing the fact that May 1 is also the date when the Latvian Constitutional Convention was convened.

The way in which the May 4 holiday was presented in the Latvian and the Russian press was very much different. For example, Russian newspaper *Chas* printed a front page photograph of young people in folk costumes dancing folk dances at the Freedom Monument. The caption listed the main elements of the holiday. The events were described with much alienation, as if they had taken part in some other country. The participation of local residents was not mentioned at all (“... the state celebrated…”), thus leaving the impression that the holiday was not meant for the newspaper’s readers: “Yesterday was a holiday in Latvia. The state celebrated the 17th anniversary since the signing [sic.] of the declaration of independence. The capital city was decorated with flags, banners and pennants in the colours of the flag” (*Chas*, 5 May). May 4 was also mentioned in the weekly review of events in *Chas*, which was printed on the commentary page. One paragraph drew parallels between the 17th year after the proclamation of the declaration of independence and the 17th year after the establishment of the Republic of Latvia in 1918. Russian journalist29 insisted that the level of welfare in 1935 was better than was the case in 2007, even though back then people had to overcome the losses of World War I. In 1990, he wrote, Latvia was one of the wealthiest Soviet republics, but now, 17 years on, it had more dissatisfied and impoverished residents than had been the case during the first period of independence. Thus the author expressed criticisms of events since the restoration of Latvia’s independence, focusing particularly on the country’s economic and social policies, moreover the economic and social comparison is given in very subjective way.

The Latvian language press, by contrast, was dominated by uplifting descriptions of the decisive vote that was taken on May 4 and the great emotions which that day involved. In Latvian language newspapers celebration of May 4 was shown as event for Latvians only. For example, organisers of the holiday, in talking about their plans, stated several times, both directly and indirectly, that May 4 is a holiday for ethnic Latvians, not all of the people of Latvia: “The Latvian today is observant and spoiled. (...) We want to involve the Latvian in the preparation of this event, which has as its concept ‘The River of Destiny’. Your river of destiny and mine. Latvia’s river of destiny.” (*Latvijas Avīze*, 5 May)

November 11, Lāčplēša Day
The historic origins of Lāčplēsis Day and the way in which the day is commemorated are presented very differently in the Latvian and the Russian language press. In the former, the emphasis is on the historical importance of the defeat of Bermont’s army in ensuring the national independence of Latvia, while the Russian language press seeks to reduce the role of Latvian military forces in these battles. In the context of events of the past, the Russian language press also poses rhetorical questions about the loyalty of ethnic Russians toward the Latvian state in the context of present-day politics. It can be seen here that one and the same historical events serve to construct different collective memories.

Latvian language newspapers stressed unity and patriotism, insisting that people from

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28 *Chas* also printed false information about the meaning of May 4, making reference to “(…) the ceremonial meeting at the Saeima in honour of the date when the Constitutional Convention was convened and the independence declaration of Latvia was proclaimed”. The anniversary of the Constitutional Convention, of course, was on May 1.

29 Leonids Fedosejevs
very different social and age groups were taking part:

“(..) One could see elderly people, as well as families with children and young people. One could hear both Latvian and Russian being spoken”, and “This is a holiday which consolidates people and brings them closer together” (Diena, 12 November). The Latvian language press idealised and exaggerated unity and patriotism among the people on Lāčplēša Day, trying to create the impression that absolutely everyone was proud of the National Armed Forces: “National excitement on Lāčplēša Day: Proud of the Soldiers”, as well as “Children were truly interested in the handsome soldiers, and they asked constant questions about soldiers and the Latvian Army” (NRA, 12 November).

The Russian language newspapers, however, insisted that there was an ethnolinguistic gap in society: “The events of 1919, which everyone is supposed to remember on November 11, do not pose any questions even in our split society” (Telegraf, 12 November). Writing about a parade staged by the National Guard in Daugavpils, another author contrasted groups in society and the state:

“Who said that we would march under the flags of the Latvian Army even in the case of war? We took an oath in one country, and few of us has any plan to go to the other side. I am not even speaking of non-citizens – how can anyone defend a country which does not consider you to be a human being, one which has taken away many of your rights. (..) I had to laugh at the little soldier who seriously thinks that I will march under the flags of the Latvian Army and go to war against my brothers in Russia and Belarus” (Vesti Segodniya, 12 November).

Telegraf also claimed that the liberation battles in Rīga in 1919 were the first time when all of the residents of the capital city stood together irrespective of age and nationality. Only Chas printed precise numbers about the size of the opposing forces. Vesti Segodniya chose to publish a biographical report on Bermont-Avalov, offering a different interpretation of what happened in 1919: “This was against the background of hysterical rejoicing about the ‘heroic defence of Rīga’ in 1919 – something which was ensured almost exclusively by a British-French naval squadron” (Vesti Segodniya, 12 November).

November 18, The date when the Republic of Latvia was proclaimed

November 18, the date when the independence of the Republic of Latvia was proclaimed in 1918, is the central state holiday. The Latvian press makes use of historical symbols and myths in an effort to strengthen collective memory and the sense of belonging to the state. Typically, the holiday discourse in the Latvian language press does not overstep ethnic boundaries – Latvians address Latvians. The Russian language press seemingly denigrates the importance of the holiday, devoting more attention to accidents, examples of carelessness, and shortcomings in the way in which the holiday is organised. The Russian language press clearly is in no hurry to use the national holiday as a way to strengthen legitimising identity among Russian speakers in Latvia. At the same time, the Russian language press did emphasise the fact that President Valdis Zatlers spoke to all of the people of Latvia during his November 18 address, not just to ethnic Latvians.

The Latvian press mostly presented the November 18 holiday in a positive light, while the Russian language newspapers focused far more on negative phenomena in the holiday proceedings. Russian newspaper Vesti Segodniya, for example, tried to link the fact that 13 people had perished in fires over the weekend to the state holiday: “While local residents celebrated the holiday, fire-fighters battled the flames and counted up the dead” (Vesti
The Latvian language press brought up the subject of patriotism – how oppressed or powerful it is in Latvia, how it can be inculcated into young people. Several authors focused on patriotism among Latvians, not among all of the residents of Latvia. Newspapers printed several patriotic portraits of ordinary individuals. Representatives of the “Everything for Latvia!” party were presented as experts on promoting patriotism on several occasions in Latvian newspaper NRA and Latvijas Avīze.

There were also articles in the Latvian newspapers which focused on links to historical events in 1918. Diena reported on the photographer who took the only known picture of the event at the Latvian National Theatre where the new state was proclaimed. Historical links among generations were emphasised in an article about the Latvian national flag – a flag which was sewn during the first period of independence, hidden carefully away during Soviet years, and brought out again during the period of the National Renaissance. Latvijas Avīze offered its readers several reviews of historical events.

Only the Russian language newspapers mentioned, regarding the president’s address, the fact that the president was speaking to all of Latvia’s residents: “At the conclusion of his address, the president called on everyone – both politicians and members of the public – to prepare for change. What is more, this statement was addressed not only to representatives of the titular nation” (Telegraf, 20 November). Previous president of Latvia usually used to speak to Latvians (what in Latvian means Latvians as ethnic group only), that fact was very negatively perceived among Russians.

3. National holidays and historical memory

People in the focus groups in which the discussion was in Latvian often shared their memories about what happened on May 4, 1990 – the proclamation of the declaration of independence, their emotions on that day, and their presence at the most important events or the watching of those events on TV. Respondents, largely in the Latvian language groups, remembered the events and processes under which Latvia regained its independence very vividly and, in some cases, with quite a bit of pathos.

“I really link the 4th of May with myself and my presence in Latvian history more than with anything else. (...) It’s part of me and a few other people who have common memories about that time when May 4 occurred. (...) I remember myself on May 4 to a great degree.” (Latvian)

In Russian speaking groups, several respondents indicated that May 4 and November 18
are identical dates in terms of what happened on each of them – Latvia won its independence. Some respondents could not understand why the achievement of independence is celebrated on two different dates. In-depth analysis of statements shows that among Russian speaking residents of Latvia, discourse considers both dates to involve obtaining independence:

(\ldots) Independence was proclaimed in 1918, so why do we need two different days, also one in 1990. The occupation ended, they believe, and independence was already proclaimed in 1918. I see no point to this May 4.” (Russian)

[In reference to May 4] “The second proclamation – the first one was on November 18, after all. The second one was on May 4, right? That’s the situation, right?” (Russian)

“Because the state was established on May 4 as a state, but on November 18 a document was signed on a free Latvia. I believe that the establishment of the state is stronger, and no matter how much we might not want that, I hold May 4 as a holiday to be higher than November 18. Freedom could be obtained in 1917, in 1910, perhaps at some other time, but there is only one May 4.” (Russian)

(\ldots) “Independence day arrived one day, a little group of people took a decision, and that was all. A little group of nationalists emerged. The Soviet Union collapsed, and all of the unified nations started to stand against one another, because as a result of propaganda, someone said that Jānis must hate Ivan and vice versa, even though they used to work for the same company and were good friends and colleagues. A little group of idiots established the mass media, they only broadcast negative information, and that is why people have a very negative attitude toward November 18 specifically”. (Russian)

This latter statement reveals several causes which serve to establish and influence attitudes vis-à-vis state holidays. Russian speaking respondents believe that the restoration of independence had a destructive effect on ethnic relations, and the media have played a role in creating hostility in such relations.

Russian speaking respondents tend to question whether their knowledge is valid. Typically they use the strategy of excuses, pushing the responsibility on a non-specific subject which has not done enough to explain things and educate people.

“No one has explained to the Russian speaking people of Latvia what May 4 means, what kind of document was signed back then. “ (Russian)

“The second proclamation – the first one was on November 18, after all. The second one was on May 4, right? That’s the situation, right? “(Russian)

There is more knowledge about November 18, the date when the Republic of Latvia was proclaimed, than there is about May 4. Among Russian and Latvian respondents, people recognised November 18 as the date when the establishment of Latvian statehood is celebrated, and people say that is the main element in identifying the holiday.

“Each country probably has such a date, an independence day. We have November 18.” (Latvian)

“Of course I am happy about this country, that it has a specific birthday. (Latvian)

November 18 is the anniversary of the proclamation, while May 4 is the date when a document was signed.” (Russian)
4. Historical memories and attitudes toward state holidays

The level of understanding among local residents about May 4 and November 18 as the most important state holidays in Latvia is relevant to ways in which the issue is interpreted. Participants in Latvian language focus groups offer a priori acceptance of November 18 as the most important state holiday in Latvia, with little in-depth discussion of historical events which have to do with the proclamation of the state. In Russian speaking groups, however, historical issues were brought up every single time. There is no reason to believe that people in those groups are unaware of what happened in Latvia on November 18, 1918. In each group, some respondents offered concrete responses as to what happened on that date, and this indicated very different interpretations of historical events. In all groups, however, there were also people who told their own stories about November 18 in Latvian history. Here are two such stories:

“About May 4 – no one here has cited the year! No one has cited the year for November 18, either!”

[Moderator] **Who can state the year?**

“1818.”

“What’s more, I think that Uncle Lenin turned Latvia into a country, but for some reason the monuments are being removed. (..) After all, he signed the directive on Latvia’s freedom?! [This last was said in a questioning voice.] If there hadn’t been Lenin, who granted freedom to Finland, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia, then what would we have now – Courland? But we took down all the [Lenin] monuments! He should be lifted up. [Respondent laughs] And the Latvian riflemen protected him willingly. I have a neighbour in my building, a Latvian woman, a repressed woman who returned from Siberia and went to work at our pedagogical institute. Somehow we once got into a quarrel. A week later, however, she apologised to me and brought me a pile of literature which showed that what I just said was true. “(Russian)

The other example:

[Moderator] **How important an event in Latvian history do you think November 18 is?”**

“November 18. The truth is that it was not on November 18, but as far as I know on November 15 that Anton Pavlovich von Lieven was injured. Anton Pavlovich von Lieven was a project of [Andrievs] Niedra30. He was very seriously injured and could not take part in negotiations with our British allies about turning over Riga. There were two governments in Liepāja and Cēsis, and the question of which would become the government in Riga was at an equal level – one of them or the other. The fact that an important participant in the negotiations was injured – this very visible person from Liepāja – led to the situation in which the government that was in Cēsis became the government in Riga. This is the date that is celebrated. To tell you the truth, at that time both governments were equally important. (..) If Lieven had been a few metres away from the explosion, perhaps we would now say that Niedra was our founder. There was an accident, in other words. (..) But the Almighty decided that we would have a better life with the boys from Cēsis that those from Liepāja. Every event of this type can be seen as another manifestation of God, how He leads us, how people think, but God does. That is how we should refer to

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30 See p. 27
From one side, Russian speakers in Latvia have different interpretations of what happened on November 18, from another side, very different levels of historical knowledge is seen in their doubts about the year in which the historical events of May 4 and November 18 occurred. It is characteristic that a lack of interest about history, the idea that historical events have been unimportant, and the use of critical interpretation in schemes of argumentation are used by respondents to reduce the pathos of the holiday and to justify their neutral and sometimes ignorant attitude vis-à-vis the holiday and their refusal to celebrate it.

“I think that November 18 was the date when an agreement was signed on Latvia’s independence. When was it signed? It is quite hard for me to say.” (Russian)

“If you think about it, then the country needs this holiday, and I don’t always personally think too hard about why this is a holiday, I just accept it as it is. The state celebrates the fact that it is seen as a country in which the rule of law prevails. As a citizen, I feel that very much, and perhaps it is not necessary for me to dig around in history. That is why other state holidays also don’t seem that important to me.” (Russian)

In various contexts of the arguments presented by Russian speaking respondents who are trying to justify their weak level of knowledge about November 18 and its importance in Latvia history, one sees an attempt to transfer responsibility for this to “someone else” – the state, ethnic Latvians or schools. These tend to be highly generalised statements:

“There’s no information about November 18. When we celebrated November 7, we knew about it well in advance. Propaganda was effective, and we celebrated, but we don’t really know about the meaning of November 18.” (Russian)

My six-year-old son also doesn’t know what November 18 is, and I am just terribly thankful to the state that he doesn’t know anything. When I was his age, I knew what May 1 and May 9 were. He doesn’t know, he thinks it’s my name’s day. And for the time being I haven’t explained this holiday to him, because the state has not gone to the effort of explaining to all of its residents what this date of November 18 means. When my son asks why we are watching fireworks, I tell him that it’s because of my name’s day. Someday surely someone at school will explain to him what this holiday means.” (Russian)

Participants in focus group discussions, and particularly those that were conducted in Russian, emphasised the need for long-term explanatory work so as to shape people’s understandings about the meaning of the state holidays, give them greater motivation to take part, and strengthen the habits and traditions of celebrating the holidays in a larger segment of the population.

“Because it [November 18] is a specific brand, and it requires work. What you said about November 7, that didn’t happen over the course of 10 years, but I think that our state has devoted comparatively little attention to it.” (Russian)

An important aspect of the historical context is that historical memories construe the understanding of state holidays today, and the same can be said about attitudes toward the state and those who are in power. Respondents said that of great importance in forming an understanding of holidays is the set of individual historical memories and myths which become integrated into the collective historical memory and myths. Very powerful positive influence is
ensured by the presence and participation of the individual, whether directly or indirectly via social networks, in those historical events which relate to specific state holidays. People who took part in the 1991 barricades or actively took part in the events of May 4, 1990, remember powerful emotional experiences, and these continue to influence the extent to which they feel a sense of celebration. Respondents who took part in those events have a clearer understanding of the May 4 holiday, and their statements include linguistic constructs which indicate a sense of community with other Latvian residents who were also involved in the events.

“Those of us who saw that ceremonial and decisive moment when the vote was taken (…) we saw how the people reacted when the vote was affirmative. Those emotions pass through all of the years on this date [May 4]. That is important for me personally.” (Latvian)

“The day when Latvia regained its independence and it was announced on May 4, my wife and I arrived in Moscow specifically on that day, and we heard about it there. We felt so very uplifted and joyous.” (Russian)

“We watched television, but we had to work that morning, after all, and during breaks we turned on the TV to see what was happening. And then we had to go back to work. I still remember how we ran back and forth, how we wondered whether it would happen or not.” (Latvian)

Family and school – where understandings of state holidays originate

The family and the school are traditionally seen as the two primary agents of an individual’s socialisation. The group discussions involved several respondents with children of preschool or school age. The parents said things to indicate that families seldom talk about the historical events which relate to state holidays, and that is particularly true in Russian speaking families. Among Latvian speaking families too, however, such discussions tend to be of an incidental nature.

“In our family – I have a grandson who is of a thoughtful age, for instance. He’s 12 years old, and we watch these shows together if they’re on television. We talk about all of it, and it’s interesting to him. He asks questions, and try to ensure that as he grows up, he knows what May 4 is. “(Latvian)

In both the Latvian and the Russian language groups, there was a tendency to delegate the responsibility for shaping an understanding about the meaning of state holidays among children to kindergartens and schools. People insisted that educational institutions are responsible for the patriotic raising of children and for their political socialisation.

“Latvia basically doesn’t have any ideology, young people are directed in specific directions, and that is the right thing to do. In the kindergarten, there are little flags and the like, and just try to refuse to do something! From the very beginning children are told that November 18 is a holiday. But why should we ourselves [do the same]? ” (Russian)

“I think that at school it is invaluable. That means that the family is important, of course, but the school is enormously important.” (Latvian)

There were others who expressed quite the opposite view – that the political socialisation of children cannot be the responsibility only of schools. Families, said such respondents, must work together with schoolteachers on this subject. The experience of focus group participants, however, showed clearly that kindergartens and schools play a very
important role right now in establishing habits related to the celebration of state holidays:

“Look, she is five years old. Perhaps she does not yet understand that the holiday is November 18 as such, but she does get up on stage to read a poem at the microphone (...) I can’t think of anything that is written in Russian that is dedicated to November 18. That is a bad thing, given that 40% of the population are Russian speakers”. (Russian)

Parents offered several arguments in support of their passivity in educating their children and shaping traditions of holiday celebrations. First of all, respondents think that the issues are too complicated to explain to a child in an understandable way.

“I can say that I have not gone into any great depth in trying to explain the meaning of May 4, because it is so complicated for small children. First of all, we have November 11 and November 18. Those are dates which are close to one another, and even that confuses the kids – they can’t remember whether Lāčplēsis fought on November 18, whether it was Lāčplēsis or a victory. It is all quite confusion even for teenagers and children who are of a more mature age. If you bring in May 4, too, particularly among small children, then you get sort of a porridge.” (Latvian)

Second, parents – and particularly Russian speakers – feel no real motivation to explain Latvian history to their children.

“Whatever the child is told, the child is told. I have no plan to speak in favour or against this. We do not discuss this holiday [November 18] as a fact in our family. It’s simply a holiday with fireworks, we don’t go into in-depth explanations.” (Russian)

As the comments of these respondents are analysed in the context of what else they said in the focus group discussions, one sees that these participants are not pleased with the state’s ethnic policies. They are unhappy with social protections and material welfare, they lack a sense of belonging in the country’s community. On the contrary, they say things which indicate that they are alienating themselves from the community.

Third, analysis of the way in which respondents in the research understand state holidays and the reasons why they are celebrated shows clearly that some parents lack knowledge about history. They become confused because of differing interpretations of history, they do not feel convinced of their knowledge, and the official interpretation of history in Latvia is often not in line with their ideological beliefs.

5. Latvians and Russians: Interpretation of Regime Change
As the state status has been changing (1991) political system has undergone changes as well: totalitarian regime was replaced by parliamentary power. Therefore a question is logical, to what extent this system supported by the masses: Latvians, non-Latvians, citizens and non-citizens. One of the moments forming the attitude towards today’s ideology, politics is the historical experience formed in the high level of economic development and high cultural level, or the international policy promoted the development and friendly relations between the nation.

In the opposite to official policy there existed also such opinion that if Latvia would independent country, like Finland, its economy would have been much more stronger and the standard of living of the residents of Latvia would have been much higher.

These two opinions were widely spread in the soviet time. Of course, in totalitarian regime there were no possibilities for sociological study of these opinions.

The results of the survey carried out in May 1994 show that also at that time the opinion
were discussed about Latvia’s possible fate after 1940: in USSR or as independent country. Latvians think that the development of Latvia would have been more successful if it would stay independent, but non-Latvians more support the opposite opinion – only because Latvia joined USSR it secured its development.

**Table 1. Regime Identity: attitude towards various opinions by nationality, citizenship, education, social status, age**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
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<tr>
<td>Just due to the help of the republics of USSR, Latvia had reached such a high level of development in the soviet times</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Soviet international policy promoted development of the nations and friendly relations between the republics</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exactly due to the newcomers Latvia could restore the destruction brought by the war and reach today’s high level of development</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The newcomers have done more harm than good, the living standard of the native population have become worse</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.07</td>
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<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If Latvia would have stayed stay independent country like Finland in 1940 the standard of living would be much higher</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
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*Source: Zepa, B. Paulins A., Regime change and sense of citizenship. (Latvia case) Paper presented in Second European Conference for Sociology European Societies: fusion or fission. 30 August – September 1995 Budapest, Hungary*

In the soviet period so called economical migration was promoted in Latvia by Communist leadership, it was drawing in the labor force from other republics of USSR in order to build new industrial enterprises and foster Russification in Latvia. Migration became one of the most urgent social problems in Latvia and opinions on this problem polarized sharply. The results of the survey of 1994 showed that two thirds of Latvians negatively estimate the role of newcomers in Latvia, but the opinion of Russians is absolutely opposite: three fourth express the opinion that newcomers have furthered the development of Latvian economy, at the same time more than one half of non-Latvians agree that if Latvia would have stayed independent country like Finland the standard of living would be much higher. These results show that the opinion of Latvians and non-Latvians about the events of soviet period differ sharply. They also differ sharply among citizens and non-citizens (see Table 1.) The results of the survey of May 1994 show that the opinion of Latvians and non-Latvians and citizens and non-citizens about political stereotypes differ sharply, but much less this opinion is influenced by educational level, social status and age. It testifies that opinions connected with Latvia’s soviet period mostly differs among Latvians and non-Latvians, citizens and non-citizens.

**General discussion**

*The Latvian and Russian Press: Constructing a Legitimatising Identity and an Identity of Resistance*

In 1990 and 1991, after the restoration of Latvia’s independent statehood, institutions related to
democracy and the market economy were established. Along with this, there were massive transformations in society, although these were more difficult to spot. The construction of new identities is one aspect of social change, because identities are based on a sense of community with a specific group – something that makes it possible to ensure one’s own sense of procedure and views about social reality, to understand which people are “ours” and which are “others,” and to enjoy a sense of security in society. Identity is a source of meaning and experience for people.31 Of particular importance during the stated period in time was ethnic identity, because the importance of ethnicity as a social construct increases when links among social groups are weak. In that case, ethnicity functions as an element in structuring society (Anderson, 1983; Brass, 1985). when other institutional structures such as the civil society are weakly developed, various other kinds of resources develop and function in society. Ethnicity moves to the foreground because of its specific advantages – it is easily perceived by the masses, and it can quite easily be manipulated by the elite.

The importance of ethnic identity in Latvia has been dictated by the presence of a second major sociolinguistic group – Slavs. In 1935, they made up just 12% of Latvia’s population, but during the Soviet occupation, that percentage shot up to 42%.32 Historical memory played an enormous role in the construction of the ethnic identity of Latvians, because it was only under the circumstances of democracy that they could be free of the interpretation of history which was forced upon them by the totalitarian Soviet regime. A particular role in the construction of collective memory, for its part, is performed by the fact that there are two parallel media spaces in Latvia which exist simultaneously. Here we find the Russian language and the Latvian language media space, and overlap between the two audiences is very negligible, indeed.

Analysis of the Latvian and Russian mass media of Latvia show that on the one hand, they are very active agents in the shaping of collective identity, while on the other hand, each of them interprets history in a different way – focusing attention on different phases of history, constructing a different collective memory, and thus helping the relevant target audience to construct its identity, too. For example, to construct Latvian identity was to activate links to the pre-war Republic of Latvia. The first republic was largely presented in idealistic terms – as a period of general growth, one in which Latvians gained accomplishments in the economy and in other areas.

In the early 1990s, the Latvian language press sought to create the impression that the Latvian state which existed between the two world wars was an ideal model for state and society – one to which Latvia would soon be returning. The population of interwar Latvia was presented as mono-ethnic, economic development was said to have been focused in particular on agricultural output, and Latvia itself was offered up as an organic member of the community of Western countries. An ethnic identity was constructed for Latvians, stressing that all people of Latvian origin have certain positive properties – they are hard-working, polite, well educated, able to deal with difficulties, patriotic.

In contrast to the interwar period of independence the years of Soviet authority were depicted in a very negative light, thus destroying the identity of the Soviet individual and establishing a new identity in its place. At the same time people from another ethnic groups, especially Russian speaking, were often depicted in negative terms, publishing many scornful

epithets. In that way, from one side, negative image of „others” was created, but from another side, positive image of Latvian identity was strengthened.

From another side, in the Russian language newspapers the Russian speaking population is depicted internationalist contrasting to the growing nationalism of Latvians. It is stressed, that Russian-speakers do not sort people according to their ethnic background. Russian newspapers mostly show their readers as simple and hard-working persons. Comparatively often veterans of war and work are mentioned, their feelings about actual processes are portrayed. In the Russian language newspapers, authors predicted an inevitable exacerbation of interethnic tensions, writing far more often about the concept of “national harmony” and emphasising its importance in preserving the public peace. The newspaper stressing the friendly and favourable relationships which existed among various elements in society before the processes of independence began.

The Russian language press, by comparison, constructed the identity of its audience on the basis of symbols of collective memory from the Soviet era – “labourer,” “internationalism, etc. These concepts and others appeared in the Russian language press of the early 1990s quite regularly. Audiences readily recognised them, and they presented a contrast to the historical memory that had been constructed among Latvians.

Analysis of newspapers that was conducted in the early 1990s showed that the interpretation of Latvia’s history was different in the Latvian and the Russian language print media. The study stressed the fact that Russian and Latvian historians themselves had different views, and this affected the differing political positions which were taken vis-à-vis important aspects of Latvian history. Given that the subject of history in Latvia is a timely one, historians have published articles in the mass media, thus becoming involved in the construction of collective memory.

Mass-media analysis show that the Latvian and Russian language news media offer radically different presentations of history and of contemporary events. The Latvian language mass media praised the interwar period of democracy in Latvia and promised that upon regaining independence, Latvia would return to the community of Western nations while ensuring economic growth and welfare. The Russian language media praised the Soviet regime and threatened negative consequences in economic and interethnic terms should Latvia leave the USSR. Differing interpretations of history serve to produce different collective memories in various groups in society. At the same time, this has been effective in helping Latvians and Russians to strengthen their identity, although that also means that the two groups have been positioning themselves against one another. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, this created an increasingly stable gap, one that would be deepened in future years by ethnic policies related to the state language, citizenship, education and integration.

The strengthening of the democratic regime gave Latvians an opportunity to return to their “interrupted history.” References related to historical memory largely served as an argument in support of collective identity. Manuel Castells, a distinguished researcher into the field of collective identity, has offered a separation of two different kinds of identities, his thinking being based on the extent to which the construction of an identity is in line with the positions taken with institutions of power and governance or the way in which identities emerge as a form of protest or opposition. Castells wrote of a “legitimising identity” and a “resistance identity.” He defined the former as being “introduced by the dominant institutions of society to

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extend and rationalise their domination vis-à-vis social actors.” Castells also noted that this explanation of legitimising identity fit in well with the theories about nationalism that were proposed by Anderson and Gellner. Thus Castells indicated that nationalism is a key dimension of the identity. From this perspective, the legitimising identity describes the construction of the national identity of ethnic Latvians very well. On the one hand, the civil society is very actively and responsively constructing the national identity, but on the other hand, it is also, and simultaneously, rationalising and strengthening the power of the state.

The collective memory of ethnic Russians, as opposed to Latvians, is rooted organically in other memories. Three generations grew up during the 70 years of the Soviet Union. That is a sufficiently long period of time to ensure that habits are firmed up in the informal environment and that there is a desire to ensure the continuity of these memories. What is more, the discourse about historical memories in informal settings (i.e., in families) is in line with that which is expressed by communicators in the formal setting (the Russian mass media). This serves to construct the legitimising identity of citizens of Russia. Russians who live in Latvia, by contrast, shape their identity by confronting their collective memories with those of Latvians, who prefer to focus on “restored history” and the interwar period. What kind of identity is constructed on the basis of this confrontation between different historical memories? According to Castells, we could speak of the resistance identity here. Castells identified it as being one which is “generated by those actors who are in positions/conditions devalued and/or stigmatised by the logic of domination, thus building an identity of resistance and survival on the basis of principles different from, or opposed to, those permeating the institutions of society.”

**Discourse about holidays in the press and in collective memory**

The Latvian and the Russian language press depict the historical context of state holidays and the associated celebrations in different ways. The Latvian press usually pays little attention to those holidays which many people associate with the Soviet era – May 1, for instance. Basically the focus is on the anniversaries of Latvia’s independence and on holidays which are related to historical events. The Latvian language press makes use of historical symbols and myths to create links between historical events and the present day so as to construct the officially recognised and legitimising identity. The discourse about state holidays in the Latvian press and the audience for such content are ethnically limited. Latvians tell stories about the state, Latvians offer evidence about history, and the target audience for all of this is also made up of Latvians. As an agent for collective identities, the Latvian press performs an active role in constructing ethnic nationalism.

The Russian language press, by contrast, seeks out different ways of presenting state holidays. It writes about holidays and participants therein with emotion and joy only if the celebration has to do with Soviet-era traditions such as May 1 and “Victory Day” on May 9 – an extensive celebration in the USSR to commemorate victory over Nazi Germany in 1945. When it comes to state holidays of present-day Latvia, however, the depiction is often rather alienated or contrary in mood. Most often there is just a politically neutral listing of holiday events, other times the focus is on accidents, carelessness or shortcomings in the way in which the events are organised. Sometimes the press presents holiday events in an alienated way – as if they were taking place in some other country and had nothing to do with Russian speakers in Latvia.

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Russian press, in other words, is constructing an identity which is different from the legitimising identity which is constructed by the Latvian press. It is group identity which is more in line with resistance identity in that it includes people “who do not celebrate because they see much in the way of injustice or disorder”, who “once (in Soviet times) did celebrate, and who are invited by the Russian language press to take part in holidays which the Latvian state does not celebrate.” It is evident here that the Russian language press is in no hurry to make use of state holidays as a resource for constructing a legitimising identity in the Russian speaking part of society.

George Schopflin, who is a researcher of Eastern European issues, emphasises the deep link between the celebration of holidays on the one hand and a group’s identity on the other: “When agreement is deep and unbridgeable, when two groups both believe that their way of life is valid, moral and driven by the imperative of reproduction, then conflict seems inevitable. It is very difficult for one community to look with nothing worse than indifference at the commemoration pursued by another.”

Collective memory and values

In a study about the ethnic identity of Latvians, Ilze Boldāne has found that the ideas which Latvians have about their history at the level of everyday interpretation is constructed as a dichotomy. Negative meaning is attached to those phases in history which are described on the basis of occupying nations – the “German era,” the “Polish era,” the “Swedish era,” the “tsarist era,” and the “Russian era.” The period of Latvian independence, by contrast, is defined as “Latvia’s era” or “Ulmanis’ era,” after the Latvian dictator of the 1930s, Kārlis Ulmanis (p. 60). The concepts which are used to describe “Latvia’s era” or “Ulmanis’ era” are mostly based on economic development and the strengthening of ethnic identity, the emphasis being on national independence and the collective understanding of freedom. Freedom in this case is described as an individual, not a democratic value. The collective memory of ordinary people does not include words such as “democracy” or “authoritarianism.” In everyday interpretations of history, the entire interwar period of Latvian history is seen as a unified whole, with a particular emphasis on the period when Ulmanis was the country’s leader. He is depicted only in positive terms, as a man who enhanced the country’s wealth. Ulmanis had links to the countryside, and this creates a chain of associations about Latvia as a country in which agriculture was a powerful economic sector. This everyday interpretation of history does not involve a more detailed interpretation about interwar Latvia so as to differentiate between the period of democratic development (1918-1934) and the authoritarian regime (1934-1940).

When it comes to legal experts, the continuity of the Latvian state has been discussed to the point where there is a clear position vis-à-vis this issue: The Latvian state which was restored in 1991 represented a continuation of the statehood that was begun in 1918 and was interrupted in 1940, when the Soviet Union occupied the country. If we look at the development of political processes between the two wars, however, we must note that there are at least two phases here, as noted above – the period of democratic parliamentarianism between 1918 and 1934, and the authoritarian period after Ulmanis staged a coup in May 1934. These are phases of history in which different values predominate. Between 1918 and 1922, the new

Latvian state set up the various institutions of statehood – citizenship, the parliament, the military, a constitution. The economic, social and cultural life of the country was also established: “During the period of the democratic state, there was serious development of a civil society in the Western, liberal and democratic sense of the word – government-protected individual and minority rights, a capitalist society based on private property, a diversity of active associations, as well as free and critical political openness.\(^{41}\)

The coup of May 15, 1934, interrupted the period of democracy, and the resulting authoritarian regime destroyed democratic institutions, including Parliament and the country’s political parties. The constitution was suspended. The authoritarian state very quickly dismantled almost everything that had been achieved during the democratic period in terms of establishing the prerequisites for a proper civil society – individual rights and freedoms were strictly limited, the operations of associations were subordinated to authoritarian control, free and critical openness was replaced with censorship and the dominant ideology of state. Ulmanis’ authoritarian regime emphasised national values, supported the concept of a “Latvian Latvia,” and proclaimed the unity of the nation.

Historians have strictly differentiated between the democratic and authoritarian periods, but despite this fact, there have been statements, signs, symbols and challenges in the public space which seek to define the first period of Latvia’s independence as a unified whole. The values and ideals of the authoritarian period are described as ones which apply to the entire interwar period. The slogan of a “Latvian Latvia,” which was popular after the 1934 coup, is often proclaimed by representatives of various organisations, not just ones which are radically nationalist. Those who seek to popularise history often refer to interwar Latvia as the “Ulmanis era.” Politicians, too, are often careless about the differentiation between the democratic and the authoritarian period of history. For instance, the country’s minister with special portfolio for public integration, Oskars Kasts, quotes Ulmanis on his secretariat’s homepage: “Kārlis Ulmanis has said that we do not belong only to ourselves, we also belong to the state and to the nation.” Thus the integration minister accepts the image of Ulmanis that exists in collective memory, ignoring the discourse of historians and political scientists about Ulmanis’ policies vis-à-vis ethnic minorities after the coup. Another example of how politicians can manipulate with collective memory refers to the first post-occupation president of Latvia, Guntis Ulmanis. Kārlis Ulmanis was the brother of Guntis Ulmanis’ grandfather. The younger Ulmanis had no political experience or achievements, but his symbolic surname was sufficient for him to be elected by Parliament as the restored republic’s first president.

Collective memory operates as a kind of a filter which serves to emphasise some facts and forget about others. An example of this in Latvia is the fact that while the country had four presidents during the interwar period, only one has a state-financed museum and memorial home. That is Ulmanis. The other three presidents were Jānis Čakste (1922-1927), Gustavs Zemgals (1927-1930), and Alberts Kviesis (1930-1936), but none has received that type of attention from the state. In this case, the state is one of the agents in promoting historical memory in Latvia that is centred upon values such as an economically strong, independent and mono-ethnic country in which democratic values are not accented. It might be added here that Kārlis Ulmanis became president because his own Cabinet of Ministers appointed him to the office in 1936. Ulmanis, who was prime minister, announced that he would serve as president

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until reforms of the constitution, but he remained in the post until the Soviet occupation. The last president to be elected by the democratic system of government, thus, was Alberts Kviesis.

There are no discussions in the public space which seek to differentiate between the democratic and the authoritarian period of Latvian politics, to emphasise what was achieved during the democratic period, or to evaluate the differences in values during the two periods. Collective memory constructs a correlation of Latvia’s images in terms of economic growth, national values and unity among the people as achieved by the hand of the “strong leader.” The period of democracy is ignored in this thinking, as is the fact that the Ulmanis regime destroyed the values of democracy.

The distinguished Latvian historian Edgars Andersons, in his two-volume examination of Latvian foreign policy, concluded that democracy and nationalism were two important dimensions of the Baltic States: “The Baltic States were created under the signs of nationalism and democracy. The Baltic peoples, however, soon learned that nationalism and democracy can not only be constructive forces, but also sources of destruction.” The fact is that Latvia’s political system after World War I had a great many different political parties, and this helped to denigrate the authority of democracy. The slogan of nationalism was used to pave the path toward authoritarianism. The balance between democracy and nationalism is still a very important issue in Latvian politics.

STATE HOLIDAYS AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY

During state holidays, myths concerning the origins of the country and its most important phases of history are brought into the public arena, the aim being to ensure that local residents are proud of their country, that they feel a sense of belonging, and that all of this serves to enhance the legitimacy of the state. Focus group discussions organised to discuss state holidays with Latvians and Russian speakers showed that these are two groups in which the interpretation of history is very different, indeed. Russians focus on the idea that there are several different interpretations as to how Latvia’s statehood was established. They emphasise the role of Lenin in the establishment of Latvia as an independent state, for instance. Others argue that the events of 1918 were chaotic and accidental, pointing to various historical figures who may have had an effect on history and its various possible scenarios, including the emergence of Latvia as an independent state.

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45 The role of Lenin in the history of Latvia’s statehood was varied. Lenin chaired the Russian Council of People’s Commissars which, late in 1918, established the government of Pēteris Stučka in Latvia. It retained office until May 1919. In 1920, however, Latvia and Soviet Russia signed a peace treaty which, in political terms, remains of great importance to this very day, because it states: “Russia unequivocally recognises the independence, self-dependence and sovereignty of the Latvian state and willingly and for all time eternal waives any sovereign rights that Russia has had vis-à-vis the nation and land of Latvia.” This statement remains one of the cornerstones of Latvia’s statehood in legal terms, and it is a key argument in favour of the idea that the post-Soviet Latvian state is a continuation of the state which existed between the two world wars.
46 The Latvian People’s Council, which was made up of eight political parties, proclaimed the Latvian state on November 18, 1918. The People’s Council operated as a legislature. It defined the foundations of the Latvian constitution, and it established a temporary government headed by Kārlis Ulmanis (Šīlde, Ā., op. cit., pp. 257-287). On December 17, 1918, with the support of the Russian Council of People’s Commissars, Pēteris Stučka, proclaimed an alternative, Soviet Latvian government, announcing that from that day forward, all power of state would be turned over to the Soviet government (Šīlde, p. 289). The Soviet army entered Riga on January 2, 1919. The provisional government and members of the Latvian People’s Council withdrew to Liepāja, where they remained until May 22, 1919. On that date, Riga was liberated by Latvian defence forces in co-operation with Estonian and German military
Other Russian speakers seek to simplify history by emphasising just one of the two decisive events in Latvia’s history – the proclamation of independence of 1918, or the proclamation of restored independence on May 4, 1990. Some focus group participants differentiate between these two dates, arguing that “the state was established” on May 4, 1990, while “independence was proclaimed” on November 18, 1918. Others feel that the 1918 date is more important, because that was the date when “the state was proclaimed.” To them, any celebrations on May 4 are entirely unnecessary.

Russian speakers do not think much about whether the collective memory of their community includes archetypal ideas about Latvian history. This is showed in the fact that when it comes to education, Russian speaking focus group participants say that they are satisfied with a situation in which schools do not educate Russian speaking children about historical events related to Latvia’s statehood. Participation in state holiday celebrations along with children is interpreted by Russian speakers as a form of entertainment, with no importance attached to the historical purpose of the holiday.

For Latvians, by contrast, the important date is November 18, 1918, when the state was proclaimed. Latvians treat this fact with civic piety, but without any in-depth understanding of the historical events which related to the complex process of the state’s emergence. According to Schopflin, “myth creates an intellectual and cognitive monopoly in that it seeks to establish the sole way of making the world and defining world views. For the community to exist as a community, this monopoly is vital, and the individual members of that community must broadly accept that myth.”

Asked about education for their children, Latvian focus group participants hope that schools will handle the task, arguing that history is complicated and that it is difficult to explain the historical meaning of different events to children. A good example is the veteran’s commemoration on November 11 which is known in Latvia as Lāčplēša Day. This is explained to a certain extent by the fact that the parents were born during the Soviet era, when history at schools was taught in accordance with the interpretations of the prevailing regime.

Inclusion and participation in the maintenance of collective memory, including the reproduction of myths on the event of holidays of state, is a way for the Latvian community to strengthen its legitimising identity. By protesting against this monopoly in the myths, Russian speakers construct their own identity, and it can more be seen as an identity of resistance.

47 Schopflin, G. op. cit., p. 80. Schopflin adds that members of a community may be aware of the fact that the myth which they accept is not strictly accurate, but because myths are not history, that does not matter.

48 November 11 commemorates an attack against Latvia in the autumn of 1919 which was launched by the military forces of Pavel Bermont-Avalov and Rüdiger von der Goltz. These forces were largely made up of prisoners of war from the Russian Empire who had been captured in Germany, and their aim was to destroy the Latvian state so as to ensure that it would not hinder the goals of Germany and Soviet Russia in the future.
Polarised memory and polarised collective identity

A survey which was conducted in Latvia in 1994 showed that Latvians and Russians have radically different views about the events of 1940 and the subsequent Soviet era in Latvia. Most Latvians argue that Latvia was occupied in 1940 and support the view that Latvian would have been better off if it had developed as an independent country similar to Finland. Most Russians, by contrast, support the view that it was “just due to the help of the republics of the USSR [that] Latvia had reached such a high level of development of the economy in Soviet times” and that “Soviet international policy promoted development of the nations and friendly relations among the republics.” The American sociologist Barry Schwartz has identified as one of the phenomena of collective memory the idea of consensus and conflict, which describes “which beliefs about the past are shared; which beliefs [are] polarising.” 49 Schwartz also notes that when two different groups construct different memories, this creates polarised memory, and it, in turn, creates a polarised collective identity. That is the situation in Latvia, particularly given that studies conducted since the turn of the millennium also show that the historical memory of Russians and Latvians remains very different, indeed.

The Latvian researchers Boldāne and Šņiņikovs have studied “cultural trauma” as a phenomenon in collective memory. 50 The authors have looked at the different interpretations which Latvians and Russians have vis-à-vis various historical events, arguing that cultural trauma creates different attitudes toward contemporary politics and government institutions, thus serving as a hindrance against the integration of society.

Conclusions

Different social actors are very influential in the construction of the collective memories of Latvians and Russian speakers. Of particular importance here are the Russian and Latvian language mass media. The result of this is that the memories that are constructed among Latvians and Russians shape a polarised memory, one which serves as a foundation for polarised identities, too. The identity of Latvians flows together with the legitimising identity, while that of Russians is more typically the resistant identity. Research conducted in the early 1990s and in more recent years show that the construction of differing collective memories continues to this very day. This is also seen in the way in which the celebration of national holidays is presented, as well as in differences in the historical message that is offered in the Russian and the Latvian mass media.

The construction of historical memory has to do with an emphasis on specific values and with the concealment of others. The historical memory of Latvians, for instance, typically emphasises the personality of Kārlis Ulmanis and the nationalism which he established. This means less attention to Latvia’s achievements in terms of implementing democratic values during the period of democracy in the country. This imbalance in values can be seen in public life in Latvia today, as well. There continues to be more reliance on “strong leaders” on the one hand, along with insufficient faith in the ability of democratic and civic forces to influence events on the other. The construction of historical memory offers potential that can facilitate the striking of a balance between democracy and nationalism in Latvia.

Recent Lithuanian Historical Self-image: Based on Analyses of Commemoration

Introduction
I consider the recent (mainly from 1990s to the present) Lithuanian historical self-image as based on Lithuanians’ understanding of their history. Perceptions of history are colored by present relationships and needs. In other words, a historical self-image is an amalgam of personal and collective identities, value systems, and orientations. Although it is not always acceptable to historians, history is used as a tool for forming national identity among various groups in a nation and for segregating other elements from the nation.

Since the late 1980s new Lithuanian political leaders had gradually shown the orientation that new Lithuania should be composed mainly of ethnic Lithuanians. But in practice what the term “ethnic Lithuanians” stood for was unclear, and the process of “nationalization” of the populace was never finished. For example, the concept of “ethnic culture” began to be applied in Lithuania not so long ago. Its meaning was determined only in May 1990. Thus, after regaining political independence in 1991, Lithuania had to construct its nation and society newly.

Compiling a national history and generating historical consciousness among the populace by celebrating some events out of national history and forgetting others constitute important steps in nation building. In considering the historical self-image of the Lithuanian nation, I focus on the commemoration of history, mainly national holidays. In Lithuania, in addition to the national holidays there are officially established memorial days; however, I primarily analyze the major anniversaries, that is, the national holidays. The national holidays of Lithuania can be categorized as follows: laic holidays, which are mainly memorial days of its historical events, and religious holidays, which can be classified into Catholic holidays and a holiday of pagan origin (additionally, Lithuania has a comparatively strong consciousness of pagan tradition as the last pagan state in Europe in medieval times). Three national holidays of the first type are analyzed in the following sections. Some aspects of the recent nation building are common among the three Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), but Lithuania has followed a somewhat different way. For example, during the independence movement from the Soviet Union, the main conflict had occurred not between Lithuanians and the Russian minority, but between the former and the Polish minority, which is indigenous to the Vilnius region. At the same time, Lithuania has historical connections with Poland and Belarus rather than Latvia and Estonia.

1. The concept of the 20th-century history of Lithuania
I would like to begin with two independence days in the Republic of Lithuania as symbols of the understanding of 20th-century history. The first of them is Lietuvos nepriklausomybės atkūrimo diena (the day of the Restoration of Lithuanian Independence) on March 11th, on

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1 Irena Ėpěienë, Historia litewskiej kultury etnicznej, Kaunas, 2000, s.4.
2 The other laic national holidays are Labor Day on May 1st and Mother’s Day on the first Sunday in May.
which day in 1990, Sajūdis (the Movement) and independent communists of Lithuania proclaimed its independence ahead of the other republics of the USSR, disclosing and condemning the Secret Protocol of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in 1939. The second is *Lietuvos valstybės atkūrimo diena* (the day of the Restoration of Lithuanian State) on February 16th, on which day in 1918, Taryba (the Council) signed the Acts of Independence of Lithuania, proclaiming “the restoration of an independent State of Lithuania” after over a 100-year rule by Russia. This day used to be celebrated as a national holiday in interwar Lithuania.

The word “restoration” in the names of the holidays indicates the continuity of the Lithuanian State from the previous era. According to the official view of the Lithuanian Government, the existing Republic of Lithuania is a successor state of the Republic of Lithuania in the interwar period, which succeeded the Lithuanian State of the previous era. The Lithuanian Government argues that Lithuania had been occupied by the USSR from 1944 to 1990, but that legal statehood is inherited from the interwar Republic of Lithuania and the country’s independence is legitimate. Though such an understanding of history, crystallizing into these holidays, is shared by Estonia and Latvia, Lithuania has never been engaged in a fierce conflict with Russia or the Russian minority unlike Estonia or Latvia. However, Lithuania also has problems with this understanding of its history.

The first problem is related to the so-called continuity between the two Lithuanian states and the so-called gap in nation building during the Soviet era. When the Soviet Union began to occupy Lithuania in 1940, thousands among the populace in Lithuania were deported to Siberia. The day on which the occupation began is currently an official memorial day. The second occupation, which began in 1944, was also accompanied by large-scale deportation of inhabitants and execution of anti-Soviet partisans, who continued to battle in Lithuania even after World War II. It’s commonly said that during the Soviet era, Lithuanians were Russified and Sovietized, that Russian workers were invited not only to develop industry but also to Russify Lithuania, and that Lithuanian language, culture, history, and religion were suppressed. Even the word “genocide” is used to refer to the abovementioned phenomena.

But before World War II the process of nationalization of the Lithuanian populace had not been complete and developed rather in the Soviet era. In the interwar period, the overwhelming majority of the Lithuanian-speaking populace was the peasantry, and its national awakening had not been accomplished. Cities and towns were in many cases inhabited by ethnically non-Lithuanians, mainly Jews and Poles. Furthermore, in Vilnius, which was the official capital of Lithuania but was actually under control of Poland from 1922 to 1939, traditionally there were few Lithuanians. It is in the Soviet era that the Lithuanians became the majority in Vilnius city, where the ethnic composition of population was drastically changed after the Holocaust and the “repatriation” (actually the forced emigration) of the Poles after World War II. But the recent common understanding of the 20th-century history is premised on the identification of the existing Lithuanian State with the interwar Republic of Lithuania in spite of the change of territory and population as a result of World War II. Thus, it is possible to say that such an understanding is one sided and ethnocentric. It is also apt to neglect the

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Lithuanians’ collaboration with Nazi Germany and voluntariness to execute Jews\(^7\), although recently there has been a perceptible increase in the number of academic researches on the Holocaust and the Jewish history. At the same time, the Lithuanian view of contemporary history considers the Soviet era quite negative in the processes of Lithuanian nation building, so it would lead the public to forget certain aspects of the “successful” nationalization of Lithuanian society under the Soviet rule, especially after the last half of 1950s.

Another problem is a connection between the commemoration of February 16th and the evaluation of an authoritarian regime in interwar Lithuania. In the Taryba, which signed the Acts of Independence in 1918, a leading role was played by Antanas Smetona, who was a leader of the Nationalists Union and became dictator after the coup d’état in December 1926. February 16th is the only laic national holiday in present-day Lithuania that had been celebrated in the interwar period. But even in the interwar period, the left wings emphasized the commemoration of the enactment of the Constitution in 1920, fearing the conservative nationalism expressed in the celebration of the Acts of Independence\(^8\). Thus, one of the main national holidays cannot be “brilliant in every way.” Furthermore, the way of the recent commemoration has brought the situation that the date February 16th 1918 is inclined to be associated with Smetona and March 11th 1990 with Vytautas Landsbergis, who was the leader of Sąjūdis and headed the parliamentary session on the day. Alvydas Nikžentaitis, the director of the Lithuanian Institute of History, has pointed out the problems of personalization of history\(^9\).

2. Lithuania from medieval times?

As mentioned above, the Lithuanian national holidays show the continuity of the Lithuanian State. The two independence days indicate that the existing Republic of Lithuania is linked through the Republic of Lithuania in the interwar period to the Lithuanian State in the remote past. Another national holiday related to the state origin is \textit{Valstybės diena} (the day of the State), on July 6th. It’s also called \textit{Karaliaus Mindaugo karšnainavimo diena} (the Coronation day of King Mindaugas). King Mindaugas was a ruler of medieval Lithuania. Thus, the national holidays imply the continuity of statehood from medieval times. This long tradition of the statehood is unique among the three Baltic States, but this linkage and continuity of statehood is not uncontroversial and is connected to the problems of the Lithuanian historical consciousness.

On the approximate territory of present-day Lithuania, Baltic tribes began to establish a loose political unity in the late medieval period. They were the last pagans in Christianized Europe. In 1251 the Lithuanian ruler, Mindaugas had been baptized as a result of a political coalition with the Livonian Order after a severe war, and in 1253 he had been crowned King of Lithuania by a bishop of Chełmno (now in Poland). Although this official baptism of Lithuania did not transform the pagan society and the succeeding rulers and the society returned to their own religion after the murder of Mindaugas in 1263, Mindaugas has occupied the essential place in the history. One of the reasons is that he is the first and the last “King” of Lithuania and is thought to be a founder of the state. The other rulers were titled Dukes or Grand Dukes, and Lithuania was the ducal state subordinate to a kingdom. Another reason is that the event of the coronation of Mindaugas shows that Lithuania had good relationships with the Western Europe as early as in the 13th century. When Lithuania was preparing for the membership of NATO

\(^8\) Sirutavičius, op.cit., p.135.
and European Union, the historical events that could testify the Lithuanian belonging to the western parts of Europe were actively celebrated or mentioned. Especially the 750th anniversary of the coronation of Mindaugas was celebrated on July 6th 2003, the year before Lithuania joined NATO and EU\(^\text{10}\). On that anniversary, Mindaugas’s monument in front of the National Museum in Vilnius was unveiled\(^\text{11}\).

But this symbolization of the continuity of the Lithuanian State is also problematic. Here three issues are observed. First, the date of Mindaugas’s coronation itself is not clearly specified. Although historical resources mention only the month of his coronation, the view of a historian, Edvardas Gudavičius, is adopted by the Government. On the basis of circumstantial evidences as well as historical resources, he has concluded that Mindaugas was crowned on July 6th\(^\text{12}\). But it is still in controversy.

Secondly, the fact that Mindaugas was baptized as a Catholic and its repeated commemoration may minimize the influences from the Orthodox church and Eastern Slavs on the territory of Lithuania in its past. The territory of present-day Lithuania was originally situated between a Catholic and an Orthodox sphere. In fact, Lithuania had also been influenced by the Orthodoxy from the Middle Ages. Some members of the ducal family and powerful and wealthy noble families were of Orthodox belief even before the official conversion of the state in 1386 to Catholic. The state official language was not Latin, but Chancellor Slavonic (Old Eastern Slavonic or Old Ruthenian). Furthermore, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania gradually brought the territory of such duchies of Eastern Slavs as the Duchies of Polotsk, Smolensk, Kiev and so on under its control. As its aftermath, the majority of the nobility and of the whole populace of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania were not Lithuanian, but Orthodox Eastern Slavs (nowadays Belorussians and Ukrainians).

But these aspects of the history are seldom featured in Lithuania. Or I would rather say that the recognition of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as the “Lithuanian” state causes the public and even historians to set aside the Eastern Slavic and Orthodox elements in its history and to pay excessive attention to the elements related to the Lithuanian-speaking populace and paganism or Catholicism in the later period. The commemoration of the coronation of Mindaugas is one such phenomenon.

It must be referred that in the Soviet official historiography, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was treated as a Rus’ state to be integrated into Russia and that now Belorussians argue the Grand Duchy of Lithuania is the Rus’-Lithuanian state and regard its statehood as an embryo of the present independent Belorussian State. Between the historians of Lithuania and Belarus there is a dispute about the successor state of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and its character.

The third issue is that the glorification of the medieval Grand Duchy of Lithuania brings about the neglect of some aspects of early modern history. Throughout medieval times, pagan Lithuania had protected itself well from the militant Catholic Orders and retained its statehood unlike the other tribes on the Baltic Sea coast, who were ruled by the Orders or bishops. At the end of the 14th century, Lithuania became the last country in Europe to convert to Christianity—through the marriage between Catholic Polish Queen Jadwiga and former pagan, now Catholic Lithuanian Grand Duke Jogaila (Jagiello in Polish). Here the Lithuanian-Polish

\(^{10}\) Nikžentaitis, “Vasario 16-oji,” p.7.
\(^{11}\) Leonardas Aleksejūnas, “Karalius Mindaugas atgimsta granite,” Voruta, nr. 21 (519), 2002 m. lapkričio 9 d.

union started. Jogaila’s cousin Vytautas (Witold in Polish) was appointed Grand Duke but ruled the Grand Duchy rather independently from Jogaila. He gradually broadened its border, and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania stretched “from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea” keeping the territory of the former duchies of Eastern Slavs under its control. Lithuanians are proud of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania of medieval times as a golden age.

As time went by, the Lithuanian-Polish Union was strengthened. The influences of Catholicism and Latin culture from Poland got stronger. In 1569 Sejm (the Parliament) at Lublin sanctioned the official union between the two states, and the Commonwealth of Two Nations was formed. Catholicism and Latin/Polish culture became dominant as a high culture in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Its nobles were linguistically and religiously Polonized, and the official language was changed from Chancellor Slavonic to Polish in 1699. In spite of the partitions of the Lithuanian-Polish Commonwealth, the adherence to Polish culture and the Polish language among the nobles and the social elites remained unchanged till the beginning of 20th century. According to historiographies in the 19th century it was thought that Lithuania had been integrated into Poland by the acts of the Union of Lublin and it put an end to Lithuanian history. But in the latter half of the 19th century, intellectuals of peasant origin had started the Lithuanian national movement, aspiring cultural independence mainly from the Polish high culture. After Lithuania gained political independence in 1918, Vilnius, which was expected to be its capital, was occupied by the Polish Army and came under the control of Poland. The relationship between independent Lithuania and Poland got worse. Thus the Polonization of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and its nobility in the early modern ages, the emergence of Lithuanian nationalist sentiment against Poland, and the Polish occupation of Vilnius precipitated the anti-Polish character of Lithuanians’ understanding of their history. This type of understanding complicates Lithuanians’ relationship with the Polish minority in their territory.

Since Lithuanian history is expected to be the history in which the Lithuanian-speaking people played a leading role, there is discontinuity and interregnum in Lithuanian history between medieval times and the latter half of the 19th century. It is paradoxical that in disregarded early modern ages the influences from Western Europe were definitely visible in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and Lithuania was then involved in the tides of European history, such as the Renaissance and the Reformation.

In the same way, Lithuanian history lacks also its own elites of early modern ages because of the Polonization of them. The objectives of the commemoration are mainly such great rulers of the Middle Ages unifying the territory and/or broadening its border, as Mindaugas, Gediminas, and Vytautas, but not Jogaila who officially converted Lithuania to Christianity and opened a road to the Western Civilization, nor the other succeeding rulers in early modern ages. Especially Vytautas had been glorified extensively in the interwar period. The year 1930, the 500th anniversary of his death was designed by the Government as “the year of Lithuanian Grand Duke Vytautas”. The Government decided that the two memorial days should be celebrated most imposingly this year: September 8th, commemorating the planned coronation of Vytautas, which had not been realized because of the Polish interruption, and October 27th, the anniversary of his death. Vytautas sometimes had opposed Jogaila and sought his own interests. Thus, he was (and is) given an image as a genuine, strong Lithuanian monarch and an anti-Polish character. This connotation of Vytautas was suitable to interwar Lithuania, which had a territorial conflict with Poland. On the other hand, Jogaila was then

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13 Sirutavičius, op.cit., p.134.
treated as a traitor of Lithuania. Now the two anniversaries of Vytautas are not included in the national holidays.

Recently some changes have occurred. True, the discontinuity of early modern ages in the historical consciousness of the public has not been filled in completely. But historians in Lithuania have got more interested in the separate statehood of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the sense of belonging of its nobility to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania even after the Union of Lublin. Generally, among the historians the linguistic criterion of the Lithuanian nation in the past has weighed less and the political criterion has been more important. Some historians positively consider the Grand Duchy of Lithuania multiethnic. Nikžentaitis has even written that the Constitution of May 3 in 1791 could be a remarkable attainment not only in Polish history but also in Lithuanian history. Now Lithuania and Poland—and to a certain extent the publics of both countries—have a much better relationship with each other in the structure of European Union than in the interwar period. The cooperation of the historians of both countries is often organized, and they refer to works of the other country. Furthermore, unlike Vytautas, the recently embraced symbol of the medieval origin of the Lithuanian state, Mindaugas, does not possess an anti-Polish character. It might be possible to say that the character of Mindaugas’s achievements, which bothers no state in Western Europe, is fitting for the recent international position of Lithuania.

Conclusion
As observed above, the national holidays reflect the historical consciousness, and this consciousness is enhanced by commemoration of history in Lithuania. The choice of the historical events depends on the aspirations and the historical self-image of the society and also on the international position of the state. In Lithuania, history wields social influence and political power, but the recent Lithuanian historical self-image is problematic in certain respects.

In Japan and most of the Western countries, exploiting the past for present ends or colonizing the past is criticized. But history plays a positive role also in integrating minorities into the society. At the same time it should be noted that in the international arena, a nation that does not have its own history is less legitimate than the one that has it. We must be aware that implicitly and structurally, existing nations ask newly born nations to have their own history.

15 Nikžentaitis, “Vasario 16-oji”, p.7. Additionally, in Poland, May 3rd is a national holiday but in Lithuania it is not.