GROUP COHESION AND MINORITY BARGAINING:

THE CASE OF ESTONIAN AND LATVIAN RUSSIAN-SPEAKERS AFTER 2004

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the repertoire of bargaining measures employed by the Estonian and Latvian Russian-speaking minorities to improve their position in the post-2004 era. Ever since the re-establishment of Estonia and Latvia as independent states, Russophone minorities have suffered from restrictive policy measures stemming from the majority elites' monoethnic state and nation building projects. According to the literature on minority mobilisation and ethnic bargaining, Russia's interest in promoting the causes of its compatriots abroad that has been clearly pronounced in recent years should translate into increased bargaining leverage and radicalisation of the minorities that suffer from the policies of the "nationalising" state. However, as the cases of Estonia and Latvia demonstrate, group cohesion among both the minority and majority is an important variable affecting claim-making efforts. In the case of a fragmented minority, competing interpretations of bargaining opportunity that emerge within different sub-groups can decisively hamper effective claim-making – especially if the minority is trying to challenge a majority that is united in opposition to the minority's demands. Drawing from both theoretical frameworks of ethnic bargaining and political opportunity structure as well as descriptive quantitative data and elite statements, this thesis demonstrates that external support does not thus automatically translate into intensifying minority claim-making. Instead, group cohesion among both the ethnic majority and minority can significantly affect minority behaviour across time.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CoE	Council of Europe
EU	European Union
LRU	Latvian Russian Union (party)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NCA	non-territorial cultural autonomy
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
TB/LNNK	For Fatherland and Freedom/Latvian National Independence Movement (Coalition of two Latvian right-wing parties)
UN	United Nations
ZaRYa	For Native Language [*Za Rodnoy Yazyk*] (Latvian movement and party)

INTRODUCTION

Scholars of both post-Soviet studies and ethnic mobilisation have been equally appealed to study Estonia and Latvia after the two countries re-emerged as independent states in 1991. Unlike Lithuania, the third of the three Baltic States, Estonia and Latvia feature ethnically heterogeneous populations with sizeable Russophone minorities[1] that comprise 30 to 40 per cent of total populations.[2] Twenty-four years after, the ongoing crisis in Ukraine has demonstrated that ethnic divisions within a country can spark off conflict even in regions that did not witness ethnic violence in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Dozens, if not hundreds of articles hinting at the possibility of a "Crimean scenario" taking place in the Baltic states have been written since Russia's annexation of the peninsula in 2013. Although critics habitually point out that Russian-speakers in Estonia and Latvia have little in common with Russians in Eastern Ukraine, it would be wrong to assume that ethnicity plays no role in today's Baltic States. Many "nationalising" laws and policies that seriously affect Russian-speakers' everyday life are still in place today.[3] It is thus not surprising that grievances stemming from such treatment, perceived unjustifiable, still exist in the minds of many members of the minority.[4] Moreover, ethnic Estonians and Latvians that still see Russia as a

[1] In this thesis I apply the term "Russian-speakers" rather than "(ethnic) Russians" to talk about the given section of the Estonian and Latvian societies. While "Russian compatriots" are strictly speaking only those with Russian citizenship, "Russian-speakers" and "Russophones" include all those who speak Russian as their mother tongue and identify with the Russian culture. The identification of the Russophone minority was originally closely linked with perceived alienation from the Baltic languages and cultures. See Chapter 2.1 for further details.

[2] K. Duvold and S. Berglund, 'Democracy between Ethnos and Demos: Territorial Identification and Political Support in the Baltic States', *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* (28(2), May 2014) p. 342 In Lithuania, ethnic Lithuanians comprise 84% of the total populations, Russians and Belarussians 6% and the country's biggest minority, Poles, 6.1%. Duvold, p. 348

[3] By using the word "nationalising" in inverted commas I refer to a certain type of state behavior as described by Rogers Brubaker in his 1996 book *Nationalism Reframed.*The set of legislation enacted by a "nationalising" state will be discussed in detail in Chapter 1. These laws were introduced in the early 1990s to support the restoration of Estonia and Latvia as monoethnic nation states and generally fall into four categories: citizenship, language, education, and voting laws.

[4] For example, a 2010 study found that 95 % of Russians living in Riga, Latvia's capital, believe that their rights are infringed upon. M. Commercio, *Russian Minority Politics in Post-Soviet Latvia and Kyrgystan: The Transformative Power of Informal Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010) p. 98

primary threat to their state sovereignty have also remained somewhat suspicious of those Baltic Russian-speakers wishing to preserve a cultural link to the Russian state.[5] In essence, neither integration policies nor the accession to the European Union and NATO in 2004 have resulted in normalised ethnic relations.[6]

Russian involvement in two major conflicts beyond its borders in the post-2004 era, the Georgian War of 2008 and the Crimean annexation of 2013, have both been veiled in Russia's interest in protecting its "compatriots abroad". Can Russia's new-found assertiveness instigate ethnic mobilisation in the Baltic States, too? Two theories explaining minority claim-making, Rogers Brubaker's model of triadic nexus[7] and Erin Jenne's theory of ethnic bargaining[8], predict affirmatively. Yet this has not been the case. Although radical claims aimed at considerably improving the situation of Russian-speakers in Estonia and Latvia have emerged in both countries, they have only been picked up by a fraction of Russian-speakers. This is puzzling, given the fact that the minorities have engaged in collective activity resisting the monoethnic nation and state building processes in various ways throughout the 1990s and 2000s[9].

> *Research Puzzle:* Why have the Russophone minorities in Estonia and Latvia failed at engaging in successful ethnic claim-making although, judging by the political climate, they could have a good chance of getting their voices heard?

Four research questions emerged from this puzzle. First three are descriptive in character, while the fourth one is an analytical one, constituting the core of the thesis.

> *Research Question 1:* What claims have emerged in the post-2004 era?

5 Duvold & Berglund, p. 361

6 A. Spruds, 'Entrapment in the Discourse of Danger? Latvian-Russian Interaction in the Context of European Integration', in E. Berg and P. Ehin, *Identity and Foreign Policy: Baltic-Russian Relations and Foreign Policy* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009) p. 101

7 The model is presented in R. Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the national question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

8 The theory is presented in E. Jenne, *Ethnic Bargaining: The Paradox of Minority Empowerment* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007)

9 Such cycles of contestation include, for example, mobilisation for establishing non-territorial cultural autonomy and resisting the relocation of the Bronze Soldier monument in Estonia, organising a Russian language referendum in Latvia, and resisting education reforms in both countries.

Research Question 2: Who has voiced these claims? How representative are they of the minority?

Research Question 3: How have policy-makers and majority populations reacted to these claims?

Research Question 4: **Does group cohesion affect bargaining success? If yes, why?**

This thesis argues that group cohesion of both the majority and the minority is an additional[10] factor that effects the bargaining behaviour of the ethnic minority. Extremely fragmented minorities like the community of Russian-speakers in Estonia and Latvia consist of various sub-groups[11] that perceive chances for bargaining differently and thus promote different courses of action. Sidney Tarrow's model on political opportunity structure[12] is applied to unravel the rationale for different perceptions of bargaining success and the significance of framing in claim-making. As some instances of minority bargaining in the Baltic States demonstrate, a majority that is united in its resistance of minority claims does not make concessions even if its members worry about the external lobby actor's intervention. Instead, the opposite seems to hold true: Russia's decisiveness to protect "compatriots abroad" has been perceived by certain minority leaders as a double-edged sword, decreasing rather than increasing their bargaining leverage[13].

Two major factors have contributed to the case selection of Estonia and Latvia. First and foremost, the two countries are *comparable* due to their similar historical experiences, large Russian minorities and restrictive state policies.[14] However, despite the similarities, challenging the central authorities has taken *different forms* in the two countries. While the peak of Russophone contentious activity in Estonia has been to resist the relocation of a Soviet WW2 monument in 2007, Latvian Russian-speakers' mass mobilisation in 2012 was

[10] I do not wish to claim that group cohesion is the only variable affecting minority behaviour. Instead, I base my analysis on Jenne's theory of ethnic bargaining and recognise that the presence of repressive policies and support of an external lobby actor are both significant variables affecting minority claim-making.

[11] The diversity and fragmentation of the Russian-speaking minorities is discussed in section 3.1

[12] S. Tarrow, *Power in Movement (3rd Ed.)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) p. 160

[13] A. Korhonen, 'International Dimensions in the Position of the Russian-Speaking Minority in Estonia', in R. Alapuro, I. Liikanen and M. Lonkila (Eds.), *Beyond Post-Soviet Transition: Micro Perspectives on Challenge and Survival in Russia and Estonia* (Saarijärvi: Kikimora, 2004) p. 199

[14] For a similar justification in case selection, see, for example, J. Kelley, *Ethnic politics in Europe: the power of norms and incentives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004)

aimed at pushing for the recognition of Russian as the second official state language.[15] Understanding the differences in mobilisation behaviour in seemingly similar countries is one of the key tasks of this project.

This thesis draws its data from descriptive statistics, opinion polls and sociological surveys conducted in the Baltic States, as well as from discourse analysis of legal texts and public statements of political elites representing different sections of the majority and the minority alike. It is only by combining the numbers and figures with thick, qualitative data that one can assess the complexity of majority–minority relations accordingly. In addition to providing an empirical contribution by mapping the current state of the "Russian question" in the Baltic societies, the thesis also has theoretical implications by suggesting that group cohesion is an important variable affecting the bargaining capacity and repertoire of claim-making chosen by minorities. The perceived support of an external actor, while hardly ever explicit, becomes even more blurred when it is filtered through the interpretations of various sub-group representatives. Moreover, as in-group solidarity is growing weaker due to uneven patterns of integration and the growing socio-economic gap between sub-groups, a time might soon come when it is no longer meaningful to consider Estonian and Latvian Russian-speakers as distinct minorities that can form a unit of analysis.

The thesis consists of four chapters. The first chapter contains the theoretical body used in the project. It starts with a note on research methodology and a description of data employed throughout the work. After an overview of the two theories explaining minority claim-making, Rogers Brubaker's model of triadic nexus and Erin K. Jenne's theory of ethnic bargaining, it is argued that the theories' explanatory power is limited when applied to the cases of Estonian and Latvian Russian-speakers. Chapter 1.3 introduces Sidney Tarrow's model of political opportunity structure and demonstrates its potential for contributing to the

[15] A detailed description of these events in provided in chapter 4.

study of minority bargaining in the Baltic States. In the subsequent chapter the model of group cohesion and ethnic bargaining is presented. To demonstrate its explanatory power in the Baltic case, the fragmentation of the Russophone minority and the unity of ethnic Baltic majorities *vis-à-vis* the minority question is also discussed at the end of the first chapter.

The second chapter provides some background to the study of Russophone minorities in Estonia and Latvia. It starts by examining the historical origins of the Russian-speaking communities which emerged in the Baltic States above all as a result of Soviet settlement policies.[16] The second section of the chapter includes an overview of the "nationalising" policies employed by the Estonian and Latvian states that directly affect Russian-speakers. Section 2.3 discusses the third actor of the "triadic nexus": the Russian state and the evolution of the Russian compatriot policies. The chapter closes on a study of another aspect that is the central to the thesis: the perceived Russian threat to Baltic sovereignty. The title of this section is "If the enemy does not come from the East, it has taken a detour", an Estonian saying that captures the general Baltic opinion on Russia perfectly.

The third chapter begins where the second chapter ends by looking at the status of Russian-speakers in Estonia and Latvia in the post-2004 era. The three first sections focus on the Russophone minority: its fragmented and diverse character, the present-day leaders of the community and the claims that continue to be voiced by different sub-groups of the minority. These sections demonstrate how in-group diversity has created legitimacy concerns and how claims voiced by Russophone elites can be divided into "radical" and "moderate" ones depending on their stance towards the monoethnic nature of the state and nation building processes. The following section 3.4 is devoted to the ethnic Estonian and Latvian majorities and their continuing support for restrictive policies. In the last section I return to the issue of lobby actor support and perceived (lack of) opportunities for claim-making in today's Baltic

[16] O. Norgaard, *The Baltic states after independence* (Cheltenham: E. Elgar Publishing, 1996) p. 170

States.

In the fourth and final chapter, the model of ethnic bargaining and group cohesion is applied to explain different outcomes in three recent cycles of contestation in the Baltic States: the attempts to establish non-territorial cultural autonomy for Russians in Estonia, the 2007 Bronze Soldier crisis, and the 2012 Russian language referendum in Latvia. The chapter closes with an analysis of the framing competition during the ongoing Ukrainian crisis, in which the prevalence of different narratives within the minority is especially noticeable.

Finally, the conclusion highlights the importance of group cohesion as a variable affecting minority claim-making in Estonia and Latvia. While perceived support from an external lobby actor is crucial, minority representatives are the ones framing the support and communicating it to their supporters. In the case of a fragmented minority, the emergence of competing interpretations of chances of bargaining success can have a paralysing effect. However, due to the limitations of this thesis, the generalizability of the model can only be confirmed after studying the effect of group cohesion in other cases of ethnic bargaining.

CHAPTER 1 – CONCEPTUALISING THE DYNAMICS OF MINORITY CLAIM-MAKING

1. 1 Research methodology and sources of data

The aim of this project is to examine the way Estonian and Latvian Russophone minorities have sought to improve their position in the post-2004 era[17]. In terms of methodology, it combines the analysis of descriptive statistics and publicly available opinion poll data with the review of public statements of political elites. While descriptive statistical data provides a nuanced picture of the Russian-speaking minorities residing in Latvia and Estonia, analysing public statements of key politicians, state officials and activists is essential for understanding how the bargaining position of the minorities is *perceived* by various actors. In addition to testing two prominent theories of minority claim-making, Rogers Brubaker's model of triadic nexus and Erin Jenne's theory of ethnic bargaining, this project finds that in the case of Baltic States, group cohesion has had a major impact in determining minorities' course of action. The model of group cohesion and ethnic bargaining is applied to four case studies which feature a thick empirical description of claim-making in the post-2004 era. There are thus elements of both deductive and inductive research in this project.

The opinion poll data employed in this data has been collected by Estonian and Latvian polling agencies and shared in official reports and/or news articles. In addition, I use data from national elections and referendums. While this kind of quantitative data is easy to access and examine, it has its limits: due to time pressures I was not able to collect primary data which has significantly limited the scope of my research. Moreover, in some instances, insightful data about Latvia did not exist for Estonia, or data collected in Estonia could not be compared to that collected in Latvia and vice versa. Yet I believe that studying the two

[17] I have decided to focus on the post-2004 era for two reasons. Firstly, after the Estonia and Latvia joined the EU and NATO, their hard security needs were guaranteed which could have led to the relaxation of restrictive legislation towards Russian-speakers. Secondly, after the EU and NATO accession, the policy-makers in the two countries no longer faced external pressure linked to accession conditionality to improve the minorities' situation.

countries in parallel was valuable for a better understanding in minority bargaining since the two countries are to a large extent comparable.

One of the reasons why I decided to focus on the Russophone minority in the Baltic states over, say, the Romanian minority in Moldova is my fluency in the Russian language. It was due to this that I was able to access data that was pivotal for my analysis, e. g. Russophone political activists' statements on their blogs and websites.

1. 2 Explaining minority claim-making: "triadic nexus" and the theory of ethnic bargaining

There are two theoretical frameworks that are useful for conceptualising the position of the Russophone minorities in Estonia and Latvia in the post-independence era: Roger Brubaker's model of triadic nexus and Erin Jenne's theory of ethnic bargaining. In this section I will provide an overview of the two and apply them to the case of Baltic States, as well as introduce my elaboration to the two, which introduces the variable of group cohesion among both minority and majority to ethnic claim-making. To develop my argument further, I will also draw from Tarrow's political opportunity structure framework which is central to the implications of group unity and fragmentation.

Estonia and Latvia provide textbook cases of Rogers Brubaker's model of triadic nexus, comprising of a "nationalising" state, national minority and external "homeland".[18] 24 after their re-establishment, Estonia and Latvia still tick all the boxes in Brubaker's list of ”nationalising” state, promoting ”the language, culture, demographic position, economic flourishing, or political hegemony of the nominally state-bearing nation”.[19] As I will demonstrate in chapter 2, although some "nationalising" policies have since been relaxed, the core aim to re-establish monoethnic nation states has not changed since the early days of

[18] Brubaker, p. 147
[19] Brubaker, p. 57

independence. The Russophone communities also fit the description of "substantial, self-conscious and (to varying degrees) organised and politically alienated *national minorities*, who demand cultural or territorial autonomy and resist actual or perceived policies or processes of assimilation or discrimination".[20] As for the external homeland, Brubaker's description suits new, assertive Russia of the 2000s better than ever: "the *external national 'homelands'* closely monitor the situation of their co-ethnics in the new states, vigorously protect against alleged violations of their rights, and assert the right, even the obligation, to defend their interests".[21] It is noteworthy that Brubaker does not consider *explicit* support for extreme claims such as secessionism characteristic of the external kin state.[22] While Brubaker's model is good for drawing our attention to the three actors pivotal to minority behaviour, it falls short of explaining what kind of repertoire of action the minority can choose to resist the restrictive policies of a nationalising state.

Erin Jenne's theory of ethnic bargaining[23] builds on Brubaker's model by aiming to address the ways how external actors (particularly regional players) influence minority behaviour at sub-state level[24], and thus improve the predictive capacity of Brubaker's nexus[25]. According to Jenne, the mere perception of increased bargaining leverage creates collective desires for more radical claims (see table 1). The perception of increased bargaining leverage builds on the notion of political opportunity structure and the opening of "windows of opportunity".[26] Indeed, according to the ethnic bargaining model, opportunities generated by unexpected events can mobilise minorities even in the absence of salient collective

[20] *Ibid.* Italics in the original.
[21] *Ibid.* Italics in the original.
[22] *Ibid.*, p. 67
[23] Ethnic bargaining in the author's definition means "the modes and practises by which minorities negotiate with the majority over the group's claimant status to state institutions. If successful, the minority may extract concessions from the majority-controlled government, including transfer payments, power-sharing agreements, and/or inclusion in political coalitions". Jenne, p. 14
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 5
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 39
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 10. See works by S. Tarrow and P. Eisinger as well as the next section (1.3) of this thesis for an analysis of the political opportunity structure

grievances.[27]

Table 1. Minority Behaviour in Four States of the World
(The minority's behaviour largely depends on which state of the world it believes it is in)

	Majority is repressive	**Majority is nonrepressive**
Lobby actor is supportive	1 State of Conflict The minority radicalizes, risking inter-ethnic conflict	2 State of Opportunity The minority radicalizes, receiving concessions
Lobby actor is nonsupportive	3 State of Vulnerability The minority accommodates suffering repression	4 State of Peace The minority accommodates, facilitating interethnic cooperation

Source: Jenne's Theory of Ethnic Bargaining[28]

The Russophone minorities in today's Baltic States represents a hard case for the ethnic bargaining model. In addition to a defined and sizeable minority that is subject to repressive policies of the "nationalising" state, the external lobby actor, Russia, has manifested its support for the minority by generously funding Russian NGOs (and, allegedly, Russophone MPs), issuing Russian passports and openly and tirelessly criticising Baltic leaders for policies violating the rights of the Russian-speakers.[29] In addition, Russia has involved in military operations beyond its borders supposedly in order to protect ethnic Russians, which some Russophone activists see as a demonstration of increased support.[30]

Seen this way, the Russophone minority would find itself in the "state of conflict" which would according to the model entail minority radicalisation and possible inter-ethnic conflict. However, this is not an accurate description of the situation. Even if we assume that the central government is rather non-repressive –indeed, Russian-speakers in Estonia and Latvia are able to engage in contentious collective action without fearing for their lives–, the

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 11
[28] Jenne, p. 43
[29] See, for example, N. Muiznieks, 'Russian Foreign Policy Towards "Compatriots" in Latvia', in N. Muiznieks (Ed.) *Latvian-Russian Relations: Domestic and International Dimensions* (Riga: University of Latvia Press, 2006)
[30] The perceptions of Russian support (or the lack of it) among different sub-groups of the Russophone minority will be discussed further on.

model would take us to the "state of opportunity" and predict radicalising behaviour. In reality, while some radical claims have emerged in the communities, they have not received wide-spread support; instead, the majority of Baltic Russians have decided to act otherwise, actively pronouncing their support for more moderate representatives and consciously *avoiding* ethnic claim-making.[31] In order to understand such behaviour, we need to further develop Jenne's world titled "state of opportunity".

1. 3 Minorities and perceived opportunities and threats

Jenne's model is based on minority's perceptions on bargaining leverage and chances of success through claim-making. Perceptions of opportunity and threat of contentious collective actions are central themes of social movements analysis. Authors like Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow have applied the framework of *political opportunity structure* in their studies to demonstrate how structural changes –widening and narrowing of the opportunity window– impact the repertoire of contentious activity employed by social movements. Eisinger, who was the first to use the term in 1973, defined political opportunity structure as "elements in the environment [that] impose certain constraints on political activity or open avenues for it".[32] Although structural opportunities are objective, it is, however, the subjective beliefs and perceptions of movement activists that determine the repertoire chosen. When writing about desires and opportunities, Elster convincingly argues that "the person may fail to be aware of certain opportunities and therefore not choose the best available means of realising his desires. Conversely, if he wrongly believes certain unfeasible options to be feasible, the action may have disastrous results".[33] Jenne shares this view by pointing out that ethnic bargaining

[31] For example, the Centre parties of the two countries (Harmony in Latvia and the Centre Party in Estonia) that rely mostly on the Russophone support have actively tried to downplay the ethnic dimension in recent years, especially during the last round of elections that took place in 2014 (Latvia) and 2015 (Estonia). See chapter 4 of this thesis for a detailed analysis of claim-making in the Baltic states.

[32] P. Eisinger, 'The Conditions of Protest Behaviour in American Cities', *American Political Science Review* (67, March 1973) p. 11

[33] J. Elster, *Nuts and Bolts for Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) p. 20

often has contradictory consequences for the minorities because openly challenging the government may easily provoke anti-minority retributions.[34]

In Tarrow's conceptual framework, political opportunities are juxtaposed with *threats*, i.e. the risks and costs of (in)action.[35] Moreover, in addition to the availability of influential allies –the key independent variable of the ethnic bargaining model–, Tarrow's model of political opportunity structure takes into consideration three additional factors facilitating the opening of a window of opportunity: increased access to participation, shifting alignments within the ruling elites and cleavages within them.[36] He also points out the importance of *framing* in collective action.

The political opportunity structure is useful for understanding the puzzle of Baltic Russian-speakers for two reasons. Firstly, diversity of the Russophone community generates various interpretations of the "window of opportunity", which means that different sub-groups promote different repertoires of action. Secondly, minority claim-making against a consolidated ethnic majority (characterised by the lack of potential allies for the minority) is extremely difficult.

1. 4 Developing the "state of opportunity": group cohesion and minority bargaining

As discussed earlier, according to Jenne's model, a minority radicalises when it believes it enjoys significant external backing.[37] However, a detailed analysis of Baltic Russophone claims in the post-2004 era demonstrates that variation in both minority and majority cohesion can influence the repertoire and effectiveness of contentious bargaining action.

Following the theory of ethnic bargaining, the new, assertive Russia that is willing to

[34]Jenne, p. 13
[35]Tarrow, p. 160
[36] *Ibid.*, p. 165–166
[37] Jenne, p. 188

promote the rights of its compatriots abroad is the "key piece" the Russophone minorities need(ed) to finally successfully bargain for an equal status in the Baltic societies. However, instead of radicalising, the minority is in fact *divided* between those who want to mobilise and those who, at least for now, want to restrain from claim-making. Seen this way, Estonian and Latvian Russophone communities' behaviour is not a case of ”dog that didn't bark”, but rather a case of a pack of dogs in which a single dog barks but others consciously remain silent, denouncing the barker.

The level of the majority's cohesion is crucial for minority claim-making, too. If there are factions among the ethnic majority that do not believe repressive policies towards the minority are justified or necessary, the minority can approach them as potential allies, which, following Tarrow, changes their perception of the potential success of claim-making. If, however, the majority signals it is united behind the set of repressive policies, the minority will believe it has *less* chances of successful claim-making. Table 2 depicts the combinations of majority and minority fragmentation when the lobby actor is supportive and the majority is non-repressive, yielding four possible states of the world: confrontation, success, competition and opportunity.

Table 2. Ethnic Bargaining and Group Cohesion

(when lobby actor can be perceived to be supportive and the majority is non-repressive)

	Majority is united	**Majority is fragmented**
Minority is united	1 State of Confrontation The bargaining minority is met with opposition from the united majority, risking inter-ethnic conflict	2 State of Success The bargaining minority receives concessions from the fragmented majority
Minority is fragmented	3 State of Competition Framing competition emerges among the minority, no unified bargaining takes place, minority accommodates	4 State of Opportunity Framing competition emerges among the minority, no unified bargaining takes place, yet chances for concessions exist

When members of a minority share the perception of the support of an external lobby actor, the minority is indeed likely to radicalise as the theory of ethnic bargaining predicts. However, the resistance they meet affects their chances of successful bargaining. If the majority is united behind the policies the minority tries to challenge, it will vigorously resist attempts of claim-making and the minority will not be able to find allies within the group. Such situation is the *state of confrontation* (1). In this situation, the bargaining won't necessarily be successful because as long as the lobby actor does not *in reality* intervene to support the minority, the majority cannot be forced to make concessions. However, when the united minority is met with a majority that is split between those who find continuing the repressive policies imperative and those who do not (for one reason or another), the minority has a real chance of receiving concessions because it can make allies with those majority actors that do not support the policies that are challenged. This is the *state of success* (2).

According to Jenne, "groups need not to be homogenous to be coherent players".[38] Instead, she argues that

> Just as policy analysts can speak meaningfully of the behaviour of France or Britain in international affairs, one may also speak of the behaviour of ethnic groups at the substate level whose political existence is universally accepted, and therefore consequential, social fact.[39]

However, if the minority is comprised of individuals as diverse as the Russian-speakers in the Baltic States, group coherence does become an important factor. This is because since the fragmented minority has various actors claiming to represent it, leaders of various sub-groups will engage in a framing competition. The framing competition ensues because the supportiveness of the lobby actor (and sometimes the unity of the majority, too) are *perceived* attributes. Some sub-groups of the minority might radicalise as the ethnic bargaining theory predicts, but since they have to "win over" the support of members from other sub-group,

[38]Jenne, p. 17
[39]*Ibid.*, p. 18

claim-making becomes more difficult in practice. If the majority is united, the minority finds itself in the *state of competition* (3), in which it is unable to engage in ethnic bargaining effectively since some sub-groups consider the ambiguous support of the lobby actor and/or vigorous opposition of the majority to be enough of a reason to restrain from claim-making. As a result, the minority will be more likely to accommodate. If, however, the minority is met with an equally fragmented majority, radicalised minority sub-group representatives might be able to find allies within the majority, which, following Tarrow, would increase their chances of success. However, in this *state of opportunity* (4) a framing competition would first emerge within the minority to determine whether engaging in ethnic claim-making is worthwhile.

Hence my model suggests that group cohesion within both the minority and the majority is an additional independent variable that can influence minority claim-making (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Causal logic of the ethnic bargaining and group cohesion model

Bargaining leverage	+	Group cohesion	→	Minority demands
including lobby actor support		within both the majority and the minority		
(independent variable)		(independent variable)		(dependent variable)

In this framework of this project I shall focus primarily on the 3rd world of the matrix: the state of competition.

CHAPTER 2 – BACKGROUND TO STUDYING RUSSOPHONE MINORITIES OF ESTONIA AND LATVIA

2. 1 Origins of the Russian-speaking communities

It is impossible to understand the "ethnic policies" of post-Soviet Estonia and Latvia without knowing about the specific circumstances that lead to the emergence of the sizeable Russophone minorities. It was during the Second World War and the subsequent Soviet era when the demographic composition of the two countries changed significantly (see table 3). Although ethnic minorities, including ethnic Russians had lived in the two republics before their annexation, it was not until the Soviet era when they emerged as distinctively heteroethnic societies.

Table 1. Ethnic Composition of the Populations of Estonia and Latvia (1935–1994)[40]

Census date	Estonia		Latvia	
	Estonians (%)	Eastern Slavs (%)	Latvians (%)	Eastern Slavs (%)
1934–5	88,2	8,2	77	12,1
1989	61,5	35,2	52	42
1994	66	32,8	54,2	39,5

The dramatic drop in the share of the titular nationality was to a great extent caused by a massive influx of Russophone migrants from the rest of the Soviet Union during the 1960s. As Nordgaard point out, the immigration was primarily dictated by the labour needs of the Soviet economy: large industrial plants required more workforce that at the time could be provided by the local populations.[41] Russophone migrants also took over high-ranking positions in state enterprises and duties in the Soviet security services, which spurred feelings of injustice in the local populations.[42] The relatively high standard of living was also a factor attracting migrants. Due to its economy relying more heavily on agriculture, Lithuania did not

[40]Norgaard, p. 172. Ethnic Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians – Eastern Slavs – make up the population of Russian-speakers. The terms "Eastern Slav" and "Russian-speakers" can thus be used interchangeably.
[41]*Ibid.*, p. 170
[42]*Ibid.*, p. 169

experience such high levels of Soviet immigration, and as a consequence in 1989 the share of ethnic Lithuanians comprised 79.5% of the total population.[43] While ethnic Latvians, Estonians and Lithuanians were encouraged to learn Russian in order to improve their chances for social mobility, Russophones were not required to learn the local languages as all state affairs were conducted in Russian.

Although the there was a clear split between the two culturo-ethnic groups in both Estonia and Latvia during the Soviet era, the gap only emerged as a distinctively political one during the late 1980s. According to survey data from May 1990, 96% of ethnic Estonians but only 20% of Russians supported the complete restoration of the Estonian state.[44] This initial fear of the non-allegiance of Russian-speakers *vis-à-vis* the newly independent states was a factor when citizenship legislation based on j*us sanguinis* was enacted in both countries.[45]

In this work I have consciously chosen to apply the term "Russian-speakers" rather than "ethnic Russians" or just "Russians" to talk about the given section of the Baltic societies. Russia officially refers to these people as "compatriots" (*sootechestvenniki*) to include in the group all those who are neither ethnic Latvians nor Estonians and identify with the Russian culture and language. Strictly speaking, however, "compatriots" only include Russian citizens, whereas "Russian-speakers" (*russkoyazychnye*) and "Russophones" comprise of all those who speak Russian as their mother tongue and identify with the Russian

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 172

[44] Quoted in M. Kirch, 'Social Problems in Estonia and Formation of New Ethnic and National Identity', presented at a workshop titled *Identity Formation and Social Issues in Estonia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan* (University of Michigan, 1996). The survey was conducted by the Estonian research institute EMOR twice in 1989 and twice in 1990. The exact question was 'Do you think that Estonia must get the status of an independent state?' Juhan Kivirähk, elaborating on the same data, notes that over half of Russian-speakers would have preferred to see Estonia remain in the Soviet Union, albeit with greater autonomy. J. Kivirähk, 'Integrating Estonia's Russian-Speaking Population: Findings of National Defense Opinion Surveys' (Tallinn: International Centre for Defense and Security, December 2014), p. 4. According to Kirch, the lower level of support for Estonian independence in 1990 stems from their socio-economic status. Since most Russian-speakers worked in large military plants or factories which had tight connections with Russia, they (rightfully) feared that in an independent Estonia, they would be the first to suffer from economic restructuring. Thus they were not against Estonian independence *per se*, but rather for maintaining the status quo. However, the fact that the opinion poll results were at the time published in the popular daily Paevaleht probably caused tension between the two linguistic groups already in the pre-independence period.

[45] See, for example, Kivirähk, p. 4

culture.[46] The identification of the Russophone minority was at least originally closely linked with perceived alienation from the Baltic languages and cultures.

2. 2 "Nationalising" state policies in Estonia and Latvia

Upon independence, both Latvian and Latvian and Estonian governments introduced a set of ”nationalising” policies which were aimed at reversing the ”damage” done during the Soviet era, now dubbed as a period of illegal Soviet occupation. The core of these policies was comprised of exclusive citizenship and language legislation based on *jus sanguinis* which promoted monoethnic forms of Baltic nationhood.[47] Although the policies were gradually relaxed in the 1990s and 2000s mainly due to the pressure from international organisations[48], and there have been steps taken towards more inclusive forms of integration, the key notion of *ethnic* Baltic republics, encoded in the constitution, has not changed since 1991[49].

In 1991, both Estonia and Latvia opted for the 'zero' citizenship policy, which only granted automatic citizenship for citizens of the country prior to their annexation to the Soviet Union in 1940, and their descendants.[50] This practice marked the deliberate exclusion of the vast majority of Russian-speakers from the decision-making arena for two major reasons. Firstly, since Russian-speakers were not considered indigenous residents of the Baltic States but a result of Soviet demographic re-shuffling, they were not considered to have the automatic right to remain in the Baltic States after the collapse of the Soviet Union.[51]

[46] S. Simonsen, 'Compatriot Games: Explaining the Diaspora Linkage in Russia's Military Withdrawal from the Baltic States', *Europe-Asia Studies* (53(3), July 2001) p. 774

[47] See, for example, Duvold & Berglund, pp. 347–8

[48] See, for example, Kelley, pp. 7–22

[49] The Estonian constitution ”guarantee[s] the preservation of the Estonian nation, language and culture through the ages", while its Latvian counterpart "guarantee[s] the existence and development of the Latvian nation, its language and culture throughout the centuries". Constitutions of the Republic of Estonia and the Republic of Latvia with their official translations in English are available online at www.president.ee and www.saeima.lv. Accessed 30/5/2015.

[50] H. Morris, 'The non-citizens of the EU', in D. J. Smith (Ed.), *The Baltic States and their region : new Europe or old?* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005) p. 251

[51] G. Smith, V. Law, A. Wilson, A. Bohr and E. Allworth,'Nation re-building and political discourses of identity politics in the Baltic States', *Nation-building in the post-Soviet borderlands : the politics of national identities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) p. 96

Secondly, there were widespread fears that allowing the (allegedly pro-Soviet and/or pro-Russian) Russian-speakers to vote in national elections would jeopardise the two countries' departure from the Soviet Union and state socialism.[52] Consequently, those who had migrated to the two states during the Soviet era were now expected to either leave the country or go along with the policies decided by the new political elites.[53] Most opted for the latter option, put off by the significantly poorer living conditions in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus and the fact that they considered their home to be in the Baltic states.[54] Those who were not eligible for automatic citizenship were issued "non-citizen" passports as they became subject to naturalisation process.

During the 1990s, Estonian and Latvian policy-makers were caught between rock and a hard place when their local constituencies wanted the draconian citizenship and electoral legislation to remain in place, but international organisations were pressuring them to relax them. In the end, EU and NATO accession conditionality proved to be somewhat successful.[55] Yet, the existence of the citizenship law split the Russophone minorities of both countries in three groups according to their status: naturalised Estonian/Latvian citizens, non-citizens, and those who opted for Russian (or sometimes Ukrainian or Belarusian) citizenship.

A second set of “nationalising” policies adapted by the Latvian and Estonian governments were the ones connected to the status of Russian language and Russian-language education. The aim has been to transform the public spaces of the Baltic States from bilingual to monolingual. The language legislation in aimed at the preservation, protection and development of the titular state language – Estonian in Estonia and Latvian in Latvia.[56] While basic requirements for protecting the rights of linguistic minorities were met by 2004, the

[52] Kivirahk, p. 4
[53] Norgaard, p. 188
[54] *Ibid.*, p. 189
[55] Kelley, pp. 92–95
[56] See footnote 48

status of the Russian language has been gradually. According to the language legislation, the state language should be used as a working language in state and local government entities, organisations and enterprises.[57] As a consequence, employees of the public sector are required to pass language exams and might become subject to a check-up by the language inspector. There have been controversial cases of Russophone state employees losing their jobs after failing to demonstrate an adequate level of local language fluency.[58]

Russian-language schools remains another sensitive issue. The network of Russian-language schools, a remnant of the Soviet era, has been targeted by both Estonian and Latvian governments in order to support linguistic integration at an early age. While higher education is only organised in the titular language, public secondary schools in both countries are allowed to arrange 40% of tuition in Russian. As government representatives often point out, this is more than in any other European country in the case of unofficial state languages.[59] While some Russophone parents resist the forced transition to education in state language[60], the necessity of unifying the schools system has been voiced by education specialists in both countries. For example, an article on the school reform on the Estonian state information portal reads:

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[57] For example, §10 of the Estonian Language Act states that "The language of public administration in state agencies and local government authorities is Estonian. The requirement for public administration in Estonian shall extend to the majority state-owned companies, foundations established by state and non-profit organisations with state participation" and "officials of state agencies and local government authorities use the Estonian language in the Estonia language media in Estonia". Furthermore, the infamous §23 states that "officials and employees of state agencies and of local government authorities, as well as employees of legal persons in public law and agencies thereof, members of legal persons in public law, notaries, bailiffs, sworn translators and the employees of their bureaus shall be able to understand and use Estonian at the level which is necessary to perform their service or employment duties". Language Act of the Republic of Estonia (2011). The Latvian State Language Law, in addition to regulations similar to those of the Estonian Language Act, also states that "Employees of private institutions, organisations, enterprises (or companies), as well as self-employed persons, must use the state language if their activities relate to legitimate public interests (public safety, health, morals, health care, protection of consumer rights and labour rights, workplace safety and public administrative supervision)". State Language Law of the Republic of Latvia (1999)

[58] For an emotional overview of such cases, refer to 'Language inquisition: Estonia gets tough on Russian speakers' (1/12/2011), *Russia Today Online*

[59] 'Russian-language schools' transition to partial Estonian-language instruction – What is happening and why?' (31/1/2013) *Estonian State Information Portal 'Estonia.eu'*

[60] For a comprehensive and insightful study on Russophone parents' choice patterns regarding their children's education, see S. Bloom, 'Competitive Assimilation or Strategic Nonassimilation? The Political Economy of School Choice in Latvia', *Comparative Political Studies* (41(7), July 2008)

> The goal of transitioning to Estonian as a language of instruction for secondary education is to encourage all students to practise the state language in different linguistic situations, helping to ensure that they will have equal opportunities to obtain higher education, participate in society, and be successful in the labour market. It is also an important means of integration that can increase the cohesion of society.[61]

Since both Estonian and Latvian national identities are constructed as framing Russia as "the other", it has been extremely difficult to include elements of Russophone culture into the national identity narrative of the two countries. Moreover, some commentators have pointed out Russian-speakers' difficulty of coming to terms with their new status as a minority.[62]

To conclude, all attempts to increase the cohesion of Baltic societies start with the assumption that the Russophone community needs to be integrated *into* the Estonian/Latvian communities. Russian-speakers are expected at accept the Baltic monoethnic nation-building projects and comply by it.

2. 3 Russian state and the "compatriots abroad"

As theories by Brubaker and Jenne suggest, dynamics between the Baltic titular majorities and the Russophone minorities can hardly be adequately assessed without taking Russia into an account. Since the declaration of the Baltic independences and up to the present moment, Russia's policy towards ethnic Russians living outside Russia, i.e. the "compatriots abroad", has undergone various shifts. After the fall of the Soviet Union, there were around 25 million ethnic Russians living in the newly established republics.[63] Although some of them have since then moved to the Russian Federation, the majority has stayed in their new, independent homelands. In the case of the Baltic Russians, the share of the Estonian Russian population dropped from 30.3% to 28.7% between 1989 and 1995; in Latvia the corresponding drop was

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61 Russian-language schools' [...]

62 See, for example, V. Strnad (7/8/2013), 'The Russian-Estonian Debate: The Language of Instruction for Schools in Estonia', *Cultural Rights & Human Diplomacy Online*

63 R. Abdulatipov, 'Russian Minorities: The Political Dimension', in V. Shlapentokh, M. Sendich and E. Payin (Eds.) *The new Russian diaspora: Russian minorities in the former Soviet republics* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1994)

from 34% to 32%.[64] Table 4 presents the migration trends from 1989 to 2007. While the figures of repatriation to Russia peaked during the first half of the 1990s, the Baltic Russophone "exit" has taken a different direction in the 2000s: especially young Russian-speakers prefer to emigrate to Western Europe instead of Russia[65] (the trend is also noticeable from table 4).

Table 4. Net migration to Russia and changes in the share of Russian population[66]

Country	Number of ethnic Russians according to the 1989 census	Net migration of ethnic Russians in 1989–2007	Attrition of ethnic Russians in 1989–2007, in percent to 1989	Number of ethnic Russians according to national census
Estonia	475.000	59.400	12,50%	340.700 (in 2012)[67]
Latvia	906.000	97.600	10,80%	556.400 (in 2011)

The notion that the Russian government is responsible of protecting the ethnic Russians (and Russian-speakers) who live abroad has been coded in the guidelines of the Russian foreign policy since the early 1990s.[68] Rather than encouraging (potentially costly) repatriation of ethnic Russians, Moscow has advocated compatriots to remain in their countries of residence while keeping up their Russian identity.

During Boris Yeltsin's time in the office in the 1990s, the Kremlin's efforts to engage with the Russian diaspora were highly sporadic. According to Zinger, it was Russia's own identity crisis which made it difficult to formulate a more consistent compatriot policy.[69] Having said that, adequate treatment of ethnic Russians and Russian-speakers in the Baltic States has constituted a key sore point in the Baltic-Russian bilateral relations since 1991.[70] In

64 Open Society Institute, *Estonia and Latvia: Citizenship, Language and Conflict Prevention* (New York: Forced Migration Projects, 1997) p. 22–23

65 See, for example, S. Aptekar, 'Contexts of exit in the migration of Russian speakers from the Baltic countries to Ireland', *Ethnicities* (9(4), 2009) p. 507

66 Data cited in L. Karachurina, 'Migration in Post-Soviet Countries', in I. Ivanov (Ed.), Russian International Affairs Council, *Migration in Russia. 2000–2013* (Moscow: Spetskniga, 2013) p. 141

67 Estimate by the Statistics Department of Estonia as of 1 January 2012. *Ibid.*

68 Muiznieks (2006), p. 119

69 C. Ziegler, 'The Russian Diaspora in Central Asia: Russian Compatriots and Moscow's Foreign Policy' *Demokratizatsiya* (14(1), 2006) p. 117

70 Muiznieks (2006), p. 119

1992, Yeltsin decided to postpone the withdrawal of the Soviet troop stationed in the three Baltic States[71] because he was "profoundly concerned over numerous infringements of the rights of the Russian-speakers."[72] The threat of military action to protect compatriots was stated explicitly by Zotov, Russia's chief negotiator with Latvia: "One should not forget that Russia's military personnel in Latvia have access to weapons. If apartheid against inhabitants of Russian nationality continues, conflict is unavoidable."[73] However, as commentators like Simonsen have convincingly argued, the toughness of Yeltsin's stance on the diaspora issue stemmed from the nationalist pressures from both domestic political elites and those of the Russian army rather than solely the poor treatment of the minorities.[74]

Russia continued to voice concern over the plight of Baltic Russophone communities at the arenas of international organisations like the United Nations (UN), the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe (CoE), the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) throughout the 1990s and 2000s. Many of these international organisations had, indeed, issued their own recommendations for the Baltic policy-makers to improve the position of the Russian minorities whose civic rights, most notably the right to vote.[75]

It should also be noted that Russia at no stage explicitly encouraged the Baltic Russian residents to return to the Russian Federation. In the agreements signed with Tallinn and Riga in 1991 that were an important part of Russia's recognition of Baltic independence, citizenship was agreed to be granted for all residents of the newly independent states.[76] Although Russia has been generous in granting citizenship for those Baltic Russophone residents that apply for

[71] By mid-1992, Lithuania still had 43 000 Russian troops, while the corresponding figures for Latvia and Estonia were 40 000 and 23 000, respectively. Simonsen, p. 771–6
[72] Cited in Simonsen, p. 775
[73] S. Zotov, originally cited in Latvian daily *Diena* (14/10/1992), cited in Muiznieks (2006), p. 120
[74] Simonsen, p. 775
[75] Muiznieks (2006), p. 119
[76] A. Pikayev, 'Russia and the Baltic States: Challenges and Opportunities', in B. Hansen and B. Heurlin (Eds.) *The Baltic States in World Politics* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1998) p. 143

it, its policy actions remain heavily tilted towards pushing the Baltic authorities to relax the naturalisation process – or, even better, get rid of it altogether.[77] The need to resettle more than one million Baltic Russia-speakers was a task that Russia was not willing to take on in the turbulent years of the 1990s.[78] Neither has Russia ever openly supported secessionist aspirations of Baltic Russian-speakers.[79]

Putin's ascent to presidency in 2000 marked a shift in Russia's policy towards the compatriots abroad. Ziegler argues that as a pragmatist, Putin recognised the possibility to use the protection of the Russians abroad as a means to enhance Russian influence in the ”near abroad”. He also suggests that Putin is personally more interested in the welfare of the compatriots that Yeltsin was.[80] The 2000s have thus been characterised by increasing material support for compatriots and compatriot organisations in the Baltic States. The biggest individual target groups of these support-based policies have been WW2 veterans and Russophone students.[81] While the funding of culture-oriented Russian NGOs has generally been accepted, material support for Russian-speakers' advocacy groups and other political institutions has alarmed Estonian and Latvian policy-makers. The security officials in both countries claim that the Kremlin has directly funded certain politicians and civil society activists, allegedly for its own gains.[82] The perception and portrayal of the Russophone civil society activists as unpatriotic Russian spies at worst and "useful idiots" at best has significantly complicated the successful representation of Russian-speakers' interests up until the present day. While there exists no "foreign agent" legislation like that of the Russian Federation, organisations and activists voicing open criticism of the state's nationalising policies face implicit forms of control and repression, for example close monitoring of the

77 *Ibid.*, p. 144
78 *Ibid.*, p. 157
79 For example, the result of the 1993 referendum in Narva was not ”picked up” by Russia at the time
80 Ziegler, p. 118
81 Muiznieks (2006), p. 126–7
82 *Ibid*., p. 127

security services and verbal harassment from anti-Russian nationalists.

2. 4 "If the enemy does not come from the East, it has taken a detour": Perceived Russian threat in the Baltic States

Although Russia has not engaged in military operations against Estonia nor Latvia in the post-Soviet era, the Baltic States have been extremely suspicious of Russian activity ever since they re-emerged as independent states. While in the beginning of the 20th century Baltic policy-makers conceived their geographical location to be unluckily positioned between rock and a hard place with Germany in the West and Russia in the East[83], the fresh memory of Soviet occupation evaporated any thoughts about a German threat in the post-Cold War era. Instead, with the Soviet annexation being narrated as forced occupation of the independent Baltic republics, what remains is the notion of the Russian state as a primary threat to Baltic independence.[84] As highlighted by Spruds, "historical experiences, geopolitical proximity and the assertiveness of Russia's stances contributed to the formation of perceptions largely dominated by grievances, insecurity and enmity" shaped Baltic perception of the Russian state.[85] From the very beginning of the restoration of the independence all three – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – have lead a vigorous campaign to join NATO. For them, only such irreversible return to the Western security community would reliably protect them from possible Russian aggression. Due to their small size they could not create sufficient military capacities to deter Russia even if they engaged in regional military co-operation.[86]

The existence of large Russophone migrant communities also became problematic from the security perspective of the early 1990s. A section of the new political elites saw the Russian-speakers as a potential fifth column that could sabotage the Baltic state and nation

[83] H. I. Rodgers, *Search for security: a study in Baltic diplomacy, 1920-1934* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1975) p. 103

[84] M. Haab, 'Potentials and vulnerabilities of the Baltic states', in B. Hansen and B. Heurlin (Eds.), *The Baltic States in World Politics* (Surrey: Curzon, 1998)

[85] Spruds, p. 106

[86] Pikayev, p. 151

building from within – and even drive their reincorporation to Russia.[87] The measures aimed at encouraging Russian-speakers to leave Estonia and Latvia by instating extremely rigid naturalisation processes, as well as limiting the distribution of voting eligibility demonstrated this prevalent thinking among the nationalist-minded elites of the early 1990s.

However, when both Estonia and Latvia had embarked on a track towards EU and NATO membership, it became evident that the fears about support for secessionism among the Russophone minorities had failed to materialise (apart from the 1993 autonomy referendum in the North-Eastern Estonian town of Narva).[88] At the same time, Russia's support towards the compatriots had remained moderate and despite icy bilateral relations with the Baltic States, no military conflict had ensued. Facing pressure from the international organisations to accept the current demographic realities, both countries began to implement policies aimed at integration – not expulsion – of the ethnic Russians.[89] In 2004 Estonia and Latvia joined NATO despite Russia's objections.

87 Spruds, p. 107

88 D. J. Smith, 'Narva region within the Estonian Republic: From Autonomism to Accommodation?', in J. Batt and K. Wolczuk (Eds.) *Region, State and Identity in Central and Eastern Europe* (London: Frank Cass, 2002) p. 97

89 N. Muiznieks, 'Social Integration: A Brief History of an Idea', in N. Muiznieks (Ed.) *How Integrated is Latvian Society? An Audit of Achievements, Failures and Challenges* (Riga: University of Latvia Press, 2010) p. 30

CHAPTER 3 – BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE: RUSSIAN-SPEAKERS IN TODAY'S SOCIETIES

3. 1 Diversity and fragmentation of the Russophone minorities

Today's Baltic Russophone community is a diverse group of individuals that can be divided in sub-groups according to their citizenship status, level of integration, or socio-economic status.[90] In terms of citizenship status, the majority of Russophones living in Estonia and Latvia today are naturalised citizens of Estonia and Latvia. In Estonia, 84.3% have Estonian citizenship, 6.5% have remained as non-citizens, while 9.2% have opted for citizenship of a foreign country (7% of which Russia).[91] In Latvia, only 62% are Latvian citizens, while 260 000 people, around 22% of the total Russophone population remains as non-citizens (12% of the total population of Latvia). 1.8% are Russian citizens.[92] Non-citizens are not eligible to vote in parliamentary elections, work in the civil service or occupy posts directly related to national security, they do not need a visa to travel to Russia.[93] Many ethnic Estonians and Latvians and even some Russian-speakers believe that non-citizens do not want to undergo naturalisation due to their laziness and/or disrespect of the Estonian and Latvian states.[94] However, in fact one of the biggest incentives to remain as non-citizens is visa-free travel to Russia.[95]

Russian-speakers can also be divided among socio-economic status to ”haves” and ”have-nots”, ”haves” residing primarily in the capital area and ”have-nots” in the Eastern

[90] See, for example. A. Aasland 'Russians and the Economy', in N. Muiznieks, *Latvian–Russian Relations: Domestic and International Dimensions* (Riga: University of Latvia Press, 2006)

[91] 'Citizenship' (5/5/2015) *Estonian State Information portal 'Estonia.eu'.* Data from 1 February.

[92] ‘Naturalisation’ (18/2/2015). *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia*. Data from January 2015.

[93] 'Citizenship and Language Policy in Latvia' (14/1/2015). *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia*. 'Citizenship' (*Estonia.eu*)

[94] See, for example, V. Karelova (10/3/2015) Елена Глебова не видит дискриминации русских в Эстонии [Elena Glebova does not believe Russians are being discriminated against in Estonia]. *AN-online.* Retrieved from http://argumenti.ru/world/2015/03/391361

[95] I. Supule, I. Bebrisa and E. Kļave*, Analysis of Integration of Latvia's Non-Citizens* (Riga: Baltic Institute of Social Science, 2014) p. 80

peripheries. During the Soviet era, Russian-speakers used to be over-represented in large industrial enterprises, located mainly in the Eastern regions of both countries.[96] When the large industrial companies faced hardship during the transition period, Russian-speakers were worse hit by unemployment – a trend that is still visible today.[97] Due to language and citizenship regulations they were also worse off in the labour market than ethnic Latvians and Estonians.

While Aasland argues that the contemporary Estonian and Latvian labour markets are not segregated as such, Russian-speakers are still more likely to work in low-skilled, non-manual and elementary occupations, and less likely to work in public sector compared to their titular Baltic counterparts (figure 5 demonstrates the differences in Latvia).[98]

Table 5. Occupation in main job by ethnicity in Latvia, 2005[99]

	Ethnic Latvians	**Non-Latvians**
Highly skilled non-manual	38.5 %	27.2 %
Low skilled non-manual	22.0 %	23.2 %
Skilled manual	27.9 %	34.1 %
Elementary Occupations	11.6 %	14.2 %
Total	100.00%	100.00%

There is also a noticeable centre-periphery division line between those Russian-speakers who live in the capital city and those who reside in the peripheral regions of Narva and Latgale. While capital Russian-speakers have a higher socio-economic status and constant everyday encounters with citizens of the titular nationality, peripheral Russian-speakers have a lower socio-economic position and much less contact with representatives with the dominant ethnic

[96] Aasland, p. 55
[97] M. Hazans, 'Unemployment and the Earnings Structure in Latvia', *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper* (Number 3504, February 2005) p. 16
[98] *Ibid.*
[99] Quoted in Aasland. Source: World Bank, *Latvia: Sharing High Growth Dividend. A Living Standards Assessment* (2006) p. 55

nationality; visiting often friends and relatives in Russia instead.[100]

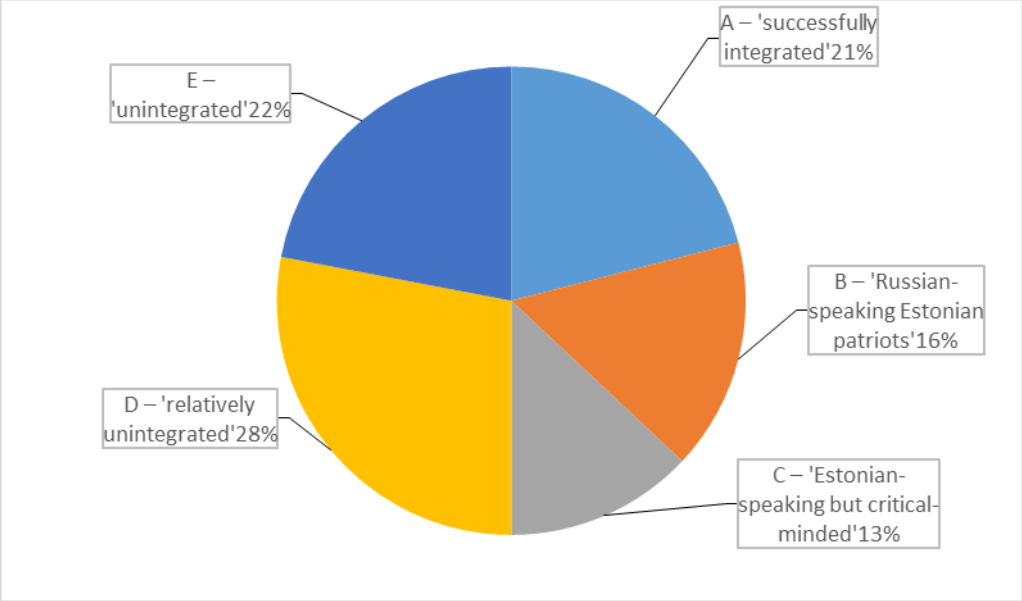
However, even in regions where Russian-speakers form a clearly definable socio-economic subgroup, mobilisation among ethnic lines has been weak.[101] One of the reasons is the split between "insiders" and "outsiders" by state policies that regulate political.[102] In the Estonian case, for example, Smith and Wilson distinguish between the emergence of "integrationist" and "hard-line" Russophone elites in the early 1990s. While "integrationists" chose institutional politics as the arena for bargaining for improved citizen rights, "hard-liners" demanded universal citizenship legislation and state language status for Russian.[103] Moreover, since obtaining Estonian citizenship at that time advanced the status and material prospects of Russian-speakers, the imagined borders of the ethno-linguistic community have been dynamic from the very beginning. In addition, just like better economic prospects motivated Russian-speakers to stay in the Baltic States, they have also to some extent tailed off the minority's willingness to engage in contentious activity.[104]

Russian-speakers can also be divided into several sub-groups according to their patterns of societal integration. Studies conducted in the 2000s have demonstrated that Estonian and Latvian citizenship and language proficiency are not always reliable indicators of successful integration.[105] State policies focusing on one-way linguistic integration of the Russian-speakers have essentially failed to generate a sense of belonging and social cohesion.[106] The Estonian Integration Monitoring 2011 found that the Estonian Russophone community is divided into five clusters in terms of linguistic, political and social integration

[100] Lauristin et al, p. 13
[101] See, for example, E. Berg and A. Sikk, 'Ethnic claims and local politics in Northeast Estonia', in R. Alapuro et al. (Eds.), *Beyond Post-Soviet Transition: Micro Perspectives on Challenge and Survival in Russia and Estonia* (Saarijärvi: Kikimora, 2004), p. 182
[102] G. Smith and A. Wilson, 'Rethinking Russia's Post-Soviet Diaspora: The Potential for Mobilisation in Eastern Ukraine and North-East Estonia', *Europe-Asia Studies* (49(5), July 1997) p. 851
[103] *Ibid.*
[104] Duvold & Berglund, p. 360
[105] See, for example, *Estonian Integration Monitoring* (2011) and *Analysis of Ingration of Latvian Non-citizen* (2014)
[106] N. Muiznieks, J. Rozenvalds and I. Birka, 'Ethnicity and social cohesion in the post-Soviet Baltic states', *Patterns of Prejudice* (47(3), 2013) p. 289

(see figure 2). Cluster A (21%) includes respondents who were both language and identity-wise "successfully integrated". Cluster B (16%) is comprised of Russian-speakers who have a strong sense of belonging to Estonia despite average or weak language skills. Cluster C (13%) represents people with strong linguistic skills but weak sense of belonging. Cluster D (28%), the "relatively unintegrated", includes mostly those with unspecified citizenship and weak language proficiency. Cluster E (22%), finally, is made up largely of elderly Russian citizens residing in Estonia with weak Estonian language skills and low sense of civic and political integration.[107]

Figure 2. Make-up of the Estonian Russophone community according to patterns of integration[108]

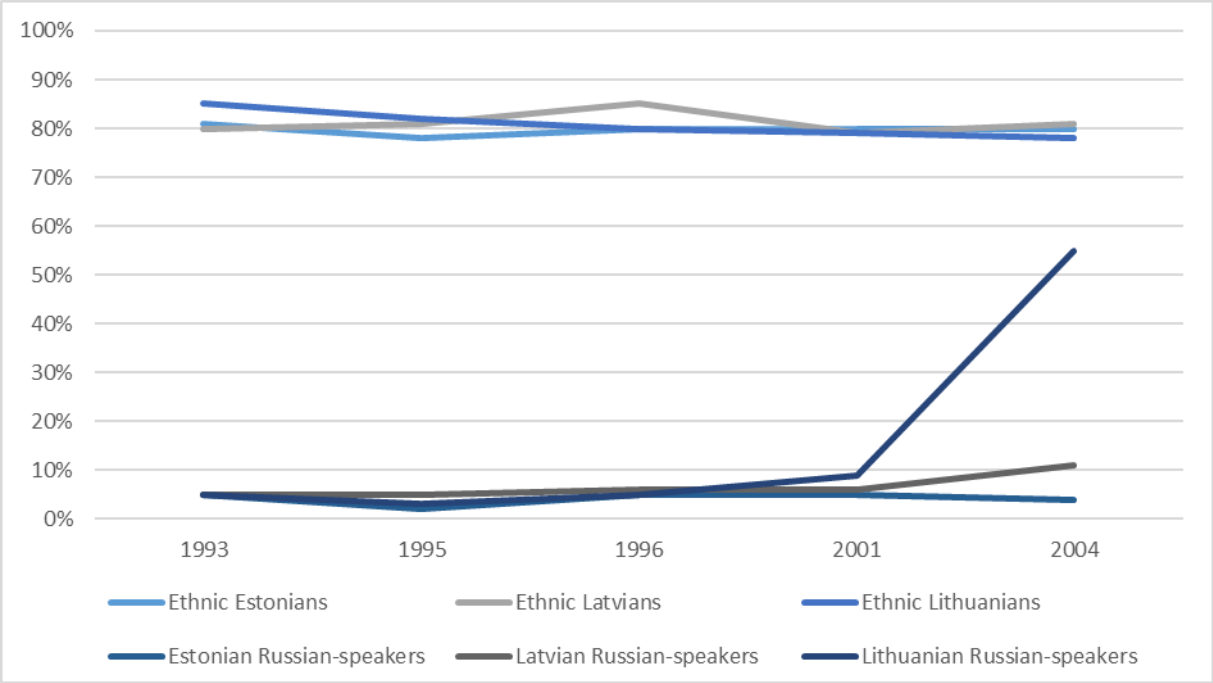


Although some scholars have convincingly argued for the emergence of a new Baltic Russian identity[109], a recent study by Duvold and Berglund demonstrates that 61% of minority Latvians (i.e. Latvian Russian-speakers) and 66% Russophone Estonians continue to identify

[107] M. Lauristin et al. and the Estonian Ministry of Culture, *Summary of Estonian Integration Monitoring 2011* (Tallinn: TNS Emor, 2011) p. 9
[108] *Ibid.*
[109] See, for example, D. Laitin, 'Identity in Formation: The Russian-speaking Nationality in the Post-Soviet Diaspora', *European Journal of Sociology* (36(2), 1995) and works by A. Cheskin and T. Vihalemm

with Russia, Belarus or Ukraine while rejecting Baltic (state) identities.[110] Unlike in Lithuania, where citizenship was granted automatically for all residents in 1991, in Latvia and Estonia the levels indicating identification with one's country of residence have remained low after 1993 (see figure 3). This demonstrates the limited success of the integration campaigns.

Figure 3. Baltic identification among majority and minority groups, 1993–2004 (in %)[111]



Both the Estonian Integration Monitoring 2011 and studies analysing the regional and/or socio-economic diversity of the Russophone minority demonstrate the high level of fragmentation among the Russian-speaking communities of Latvia and Estonia. A naturalised young businessman based in the capital has a lot less in common with a retired, non-citizen primary school teacher living in a small town near to the Russian border than with a member of the titular ethnic group working in the same company and leading a similar lifestyle.

[110] New Baltic Barometer (2004), cited in K. Duvold and S. Berglund, 'Democracy Between Ethnos and Democracy: Territorial Identification and Political Support in the Baltic States', *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* (28(2), May 2014) p. 356

[111] Cited in K. Duvold and S. Berglund, 'Democracy Between Ethnos and Democracy: Territorial Identification and Political Support in the Baltic States', *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* (28(2), May 2014) p. 368. Only those who identify with the country are included in the figure.

3. 2 Issues of legitimacy: Who represents the Russian-speakers?

The lack of group cohesion and the presence of various sub-groups has significant repercussions to the representativeness of the minority. As Smith, Aasland and Mole convincingly argue, it is only the Russian language, their self-identification as Russians and the fact that they live in Estonia/Latvia that unites the members of the Russophone community.[112] The plethora of "Russian" parties and civil society organisations reflects this diversity, while the popularity of some parties and associations over others gives cues about the most prominent views within minority sub-groups. Yet at national level commentators generally agree that the party politics are (still) divided among ethnic, rather that socio-economic cleavage.[113]

Both Estonia and Latvia feature two kinds of parties that draw most of their support from the Russophone electorate: the Centre parties (Harmony Centre in Latvia and Centre Party, *Keskerakond,* in Estonia) and "Russian" parties (at the moment, only Latvian Russian Union fits the description[114]). The two Centre parties voice moderate claims of the Russophone community[115] while advocating for a pro-Russian and anti-austerity (but not anti-European) position. They aim to project themselves as non-ethnic parties to attract ethnic Baltic votes and to be seen as a legitimate players by the majority political elites. However, the reason why Centre parties are generally dubbed as "Russian" parties by other party representatives is because they derive most of their support from Russophone voters and consist of mainly Russophone elites. For example, in 2010 all 26 Harmony deputies were

[112] G. Smith, A. Aasland and R. Mole, 'Statehood, Ethnic Relations and Citizenship' in G. Smith (Ed.) *The Baltic States: the national self-determination of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania* (London: Macmillan, 1994) p. 202

[113] See, for example, D. Auers 'Confirming Latvia's status in Europe', *Policy Network online* (29/5/2014). However, it must be said that there is also a socio-economic dimension to the ethnic cleavage. As discussed in the previous section, Russian-speakers residing in the Eastern, less-developed regions occupy on average a worse socio-economic status which would logically also affect their political preferences.

[114] Today's Estonia lacks a "radical" minority party like the Latvian Russian Union since 2012, when the Russian Party of Estonia merged into the Social Democratic Party. The Social Democratic party has a number of Russophone MPs in the Riigikogu. One of them is Jevgeni Ossinovski, Minister of Education and Science, the only Russian-speaker in the current government.

[115] The „moderate" and „radical" claims will be discussed in detail in the following section 3.3.

Russian-speakers.[116]

In addition to the moderate Centre party representatives, there are also some contentious Russophone activists in both countries who claim to be more legitimate to represent the Russian community. Although explicitly "Russian" parties emerged in both countries in 1991, there is only one such party left at the moment: the Latvian Russian Union (LRU), previously called For Human Rights in Latvia. The Union's party programme starts with the following statement: "Latvian Russian Union promotes the interests of the Russian people of our country" and continues with "We fight for the rights of those who support us, both citizens and non-citizens".[117] The LRU voices radical claims. However, the party has become increasingly marginalised with the Russophone voters supporting the Usakovs' Harmony Centre instead (see figure 4).

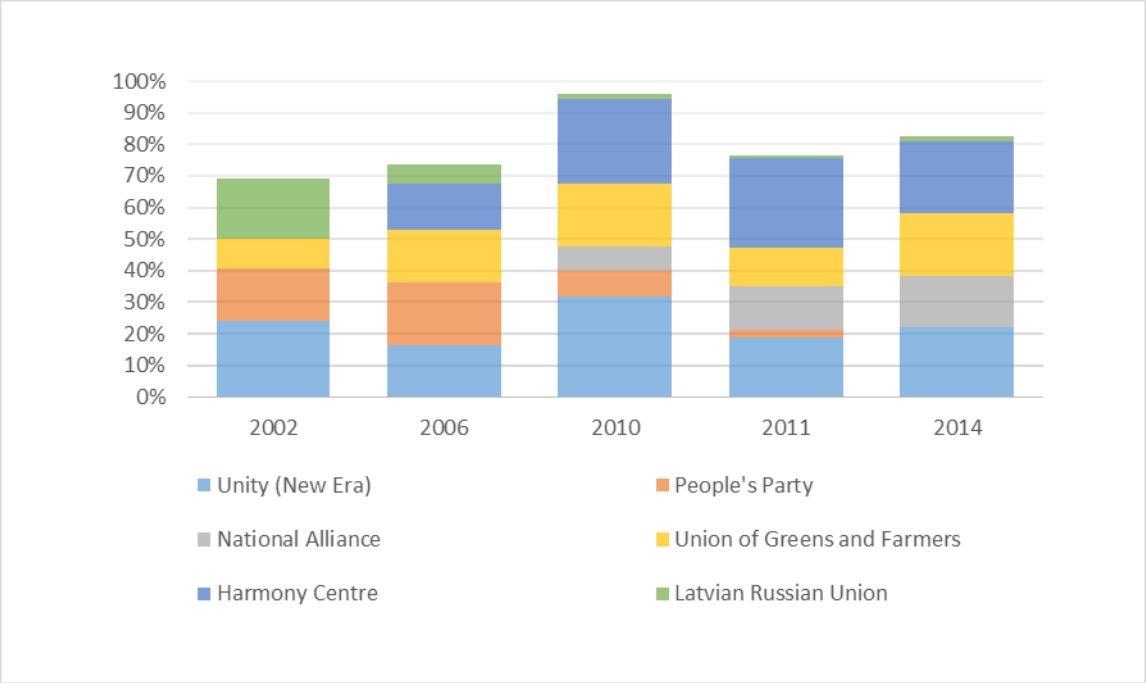
However, despite gaining a large share of votes in both Estonia and Latvia in the last two rounds of general elections, Harmony and *Keskerakond* have been left out of the government because they have not succeeded in finding coalition partners among the parties supported by the ethnic majority.[118]

[116] I. Kehris, 'Citizenship, Participation and Representation', in Muiznieks (Ed.) *How Integrated Is Latvian Society? An Audit of Achievements, Failures and Challenges* (Riga: University of Latvia Press, 2010) p. 113

[117] Latvian Russian Union, *Party Programme for the elections of the 12th Saema*

[118] See, for example, 'How to deal with Harmony' (6/10/2014) *The Economist Online*. Retrieved from http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2014/10/latvias-election

Figure 4. Electoral support of selected Latvian parties at parliamentary elections 2002–2014[119]



In Latvia, civil society organisations that drive radical claims similar to the LRU include Vladimir Linderman's *ZaRYa*[120], established in 2009 and re-organised as a political party in 2012, *Non-Citizens' Congress* that has been active since mid-1990s and the *Headquarters for the Protection of Russian Schools* that emerged in 2004 as a response to the planned education reform. Although the organisations have remained active until this day, they cannot be considered as representable of the Latvian Russophone community. In July 2013, *Non-Citizens' Congress* organised elections of *Non-Citizens' Parliament,* which was supposed to represent the non-citizens of Latvia, but only 15 000 –around 5% of all non-citizens– participated by voting[121]. Moreover, while *ZaRYa* was able to collect nearly 200 000 signatures for the Russian language referendum, only 774 people voted for Linderman in the subsequent elections for the Riga city council.[122] There have been no signs of wide-spread

[119] *Central Electoral Commission of Latvia*. Data retrieved from http://web.cvk.lv
[120] ZaRYa is the abbreviation of "Za Rodnoy Yazik", Russian for "For the native language!"
[121] Voting was organised both online and in major towns. A. Lysenkov, 'Yes, it was provocation – Latvian 'Non-citizens' Parliament' told Lenta.ru about its plans' (26/7/2013), *Lenta.ru Online*
[122] *Ibid*.

Russophone mobilisation in Latvia after the 2012 referendum.

In Estonia, parties and civil society organisations promoting the rights of the Russian-speakers have traditionally been less well-organised. All parties explicitly representing the Russophone minority that emerged in the 1990s, have since then ceased to exist. However, civil society organisations that promote Russian language education, rights of the non-citizens and the use of Russian in public sphere are still active. After the Crimean annexation in 2014, however, the Estonian Russophone community was split between "pro-Russians" (generally speaking those who believed that the annexation was justified) and "pro-Europeans", those who did not. Those who were supportive of Russian state policies re-organised under the umbrella organisation called Russian Alliance of Estonia. In addition to endorsing the annexation, the Alliance began to voice a radical position on the question of Estonian Russophone community. For example, it stated that

> Unfortunately the EU and USA cannot guarantee the protection of basic rights and freedoms of the residents of the [Crimean] peninsula, just like they could not do so in the Baltic States, where the mass discrimination of the Russian population has been continuing for 23 years".[123]

However, the Alliance seems to be even less representative of the Russophone community of Estonia than similar "radical" organisations in Latvia: majority of the organisations affiliated with it have no official websites and the Alliance itself has only 64 members "liking" them on Facebook.[124]

The large share of non-citizens and citizens of other countries continues to be an issue to the adequate representation of Russian-speakers in the political arena. In Kehris' recent study conducted among Russophone MPs in Latvia, respondents reflected on the difficult status of Russophone representatives and the inability to represent the community accordingly. For example, she quotes one interviewee who expressed "frustration regarding

[123] *Declaration of the Russian community of Estonia.* Available online at http://baltija.eu/news/read/36972
[124] Facebook, data from 30/5/2015

the situation of being in constant opposition and not being able to influence any decisions at all, including decisions that are primarily of concern to minorities themselves" and perceived anti-Russian atmosphere of the Latvian political arena.[125] The respondents also felt that the lack of collaboration and co-operation of Russophone representatives influenced their ability to represent the Russian-speaking community.[126]

While there is no specific data available about the voting patterns of Estonian and Latvian Russian-speakers, the marginalisation (and, in the Estonian case, disappearance) of parties voicing radical ethnic claims to the periphery of the political arena coupled with the growing support for the two Centre parties shows that although grievances still exist in Russian-speakers' minds, they are not being translated into support for explicitly "Russian" parties. Moreover, the Russophone communities in both countries lack legitimate leaders or political élites that would be perceived to be representative of the communities as a whole. Effectively, as I shall argue in the last chapter of my thesis, it is this high level of disunity and fragmentation that has contributed to the lack of successful claim-making in the Baltic States.

3. 3 The claims that remain: Today's aspirations of the Russophone communities

As demonstrated in Chapter Two, the Russian-speaking population of Estonia and Latvia continue to suffer from a number of restrictive policies of a "nationalising" state. In this section I list the most prominent claims as well as indicate whether they can be classified as "radical" or "moderate". In the Baltic context, "radical" claims challenge the monoethnic nation and state building processes that have been ongoing since the early 1990s. They are bold, controversial and bound to trigger an outcry of opposition from the majority. "Moderate" claims, on the other hand, do not question the monoethnic nation and state

[125] Kehris, p. 113
[126] *Ibid.*, p. 114

building projects *per se*, but seek to find a compromise between improving the status of the Russophone minorities while recognising the legitimacy of the monoethnic nature of the current set of policies.

First and foremost, Russian-speakers can voice claims regarding the citizenship legislation that requires those who migrated the territory of Estonia and Latvia in the period of 1940 to 1991 to undergo naturalisation in order to gain citizenship. The naturalisation process includes language, history and culture examinations and an oath of loyalty. In addition, certain categories of people are barred from citizenship. The most radical claim regarding the citizenship issue is to demand for automatic citizenship for all remaining non-citizens (and those who want to swap their Russian citizenship for the citizenship of their country of residence). A number of Russophone organisations and parties, such as Latvian Russian Union and Estonian Russian Alliance have voiced such demands, albeit with little success. Moderate claims on the citizenship issue, on the other hand, include asking for relaxation of the current legislation, for example, a simplified naturalisation process for non-citizens, for at the moment the laws do not differentiate between long term resident non-citizens and foreign nationals. While the naturalisation laws of both Estonia and Latvia were significantly relaxed throughout the 1990s due to EU and NATO conditionality, there are no signs of making further concessions.

As for the arena of language-related legislation, the most prominent radical claim is to guarantee an official status for the Russian language on a par with Estonian/Latvian, at least in regions where the majority of population speaks Russian. In the Latvian case, this claim mobilised a large share of the Russophone community in the 2012 referendum, which will be discussed in detail further on. In Estonia, on the other hand, the struggle for the Russian language has been voiced by those fighting for cultural autonomy of ethnic Russians.

In terms of Russian-language education, there is a number of active NGOs in both

countries which struggle to push the government to continue provide Russian-language education. Both countries introduced policy plans to manage gradual transition into tuition in state language already in 1991. While tertiary education in Russian was discontinued in public higher education institutes in the 1990s, both Latvia and Estonia implemented the infamous 60:40 quotas[127] in secondary schools. The most radical Russophone activists wish to halt and undo the transition to state language education, while more moderate activists wish to either to endure the *status quo* or prolong the transition period significantly.

3. 4 Support for restrictive state policies 25 years after

Although NATO was generally perceived to meet the Baltic States' security needs in the post-2004 era, Russia is continued to be perceived as the most likely challenger of Latvian and Estonian state sovereignty. Indeed, the Baltic-Russian relations have not been "normalised" in the post-enlargement era as expected.[128] For the leaders of Baltic States, the Georgian war of 2008 proved that they had been right to assume that Russia would sooner or later engage in aggressive behaviour in its perceived legitimate sphere of influence.[129] The fear of Russian intervention re-emerged in 2014 after Russia's annexation of Crimea and support for separatists fighting in Donbass. As a result of the development of the new ambiguous warfare, political elites in Tallinn and Riga began to question the strength of NATO's famous Article 5. As Karlis Neretnieks, a Latvian-Swedish military advisor, put these fears in words by asking:

> Where is the red line? When there are a hundred green men in Narva? When there is one? And do you need to prove that they are connected to Russia? That is the weakness of the NATO treaty.[130]

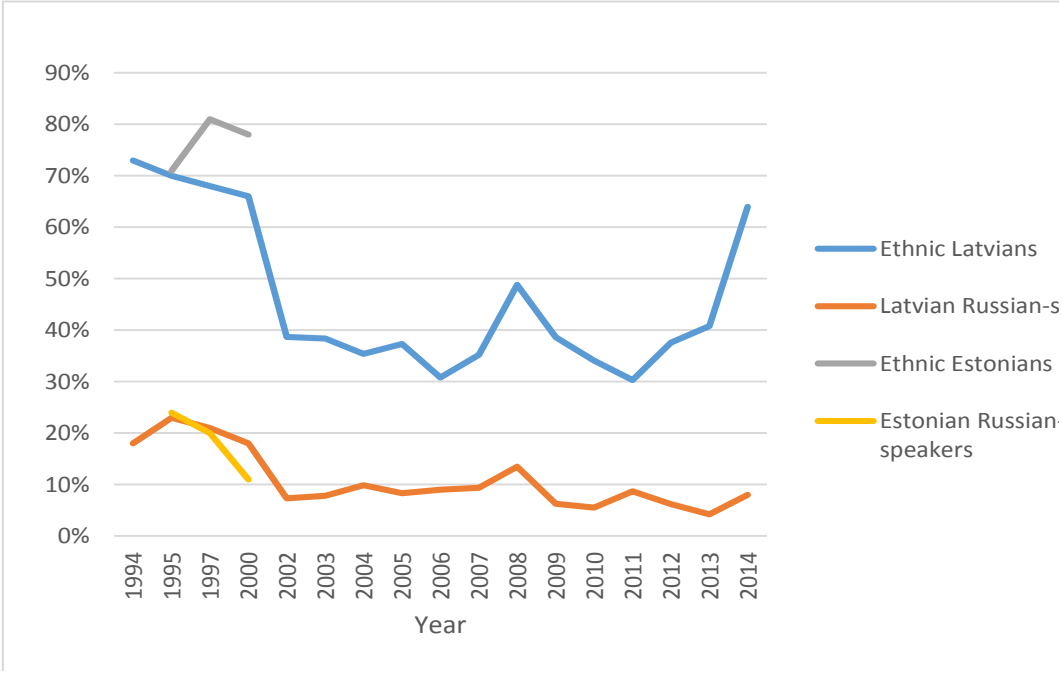
The fact that Russia has masked both of its recent military operations in the discourse of protecting ethnic Russian minorities has raised further fears in the Baltic States that their

[127] According to the laws, 60% of tuition had to be organised in the state language while 40% could still be delivered in minority languages.
[128] Spruds, p. 101
[129] E. Braw, 'Bully in the Baltics: The Kremlin's Provocations', *World Affairs* (March/April 2015), p. 34
[130] K. Neretnieks, quoted in Braw, p. 36

independence might be threatened by contemporary Russia's "expansionist behaviour".

Reliable data regarding Latvian threat perceptions of Russia are available from 1994 onwards. Until 2000, Richard Rose's *Baltic Barometer* surveys regularly asked the question "Do you think any of the following are a threat to peace and security in this country?" Respondents were asked to evaluate the threat posed by "the Russian state", "Other former Soviet republics", "Refugees", *et cetera*. From 2002 on, the Latvian survey research company SKDS has asked respondents a similar, but slightly different question: to evaluate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statement "Russia can be seen as a threat to Latvia's independence". In the chart below (figure 5) I have combined these two studies by creating a total figure of respondents agreeing or somewhat agreeing to the possibility of a Russian threat. There is a significant discrepancy between ethnic Latvian and Russophone threat perceptions, with the latter generally perceiving Russia less threatening.

Figure 5. Perceived Russian Threat in the Baltic States [131]
(in Latvia 1994–2014, in Estonia 1995–2000)



[131] Sources: R. Rose, New Baltic Barometer II (Glasgow: Centre for the Study of Public Policy, 1995), III (1997) and IV (2000); Polls conducted by SKDS (2002–2014) quoted in N. Muiznieks, *Latvian-Russian Relations: Dynamics Since Latvia's Accession to the EU and NATO* (Riga: University of Latvia Press, 2011) p. 20

For Estonia, data about the perceived Russian threat is equally available until 2000 (from the very same survey data from Rose). From the 2000 onwards, however, accessing applicable data becomes increasingly problematic. The only data I found that was comparable to Rose's and SKDS's data was a 2014 poll organised by the Estonian MEP Yana Toom, according to which 39 % of ethnic Estonians and 8% of non-Estonians believe in the possibility of an open conflict with Russia.[132]

How is perceived high Russian threat significant regarding the dynamics of majority-minority relations in the Baltic States? Due to the way how Latvian and Estonian identities are constructed, the aggressive behaviour of Russia, 'the Other', which is also the patron of the minority, is hugely important. There is doubt among the ethnic Estonian and Latvian political elites that in the light of recent events, Russia presents a natural ally of the Russophone minorities. This realisation has spawned attempts to hamper the co-operation between the Russian state and Russian-speakers in both countries. Such "safety measures" included increased supervision over pro-Russian civil society activists and temporary bans on Russian TV channels. There has also been a surge in local attention to the level of loyalty of Russian-speakers *vis-à-vis* their states of residence.[133] Despite the hard and soft security guarantees provided by NATO and the EU, people in the Baltic States worry about potential Russian intervention or even military attack veiled in the rhetoric about protecting compatriots abroad – and that Russian-speakers would act as a "Trojan horse", going along with it.

According to Tarrow's model on political opportunity structure, shifts in political alignments and elite alliances signal openings in the bargaining structure. In the Baltic States, there have been literally no such changes that could be useful for the Russophone community.

[132] 'Survey organised by an Estonian MEP say that people skeptical about a war with Russia' (25/2/2015), *Yana Toom's Blog*. Retrieved from www.yanatoom.ee.
[133] For example opinion polls, integration reports, public statements from politicians, etc.

Despite their electoral success, Harmony Centre and *Keskerakond* have so far never managed to find a coalition partner.[134] Although parties supported primarily by ethnic Estonians and Latvians might disagree in terms of social and economic questions, they are united on questions related to the Russophone minority: that the current transition to titular language education should proceed as planned, that there is no reason to change the current naturalisation legislation, and that Russian should not be granted official language status. If anything, some more nationalist-minded MPs have called for the introduction of stricter policies.[135]

Perhaps surprisingly, among potential allies of the Russian-speaking activists within the majority elites are certain security service employees, as well as some scholars of societal integration. While security services are deeply suspicious of Russia and, consequently, the Russophone minority, the loyalty of which they have continued to question, they have also voiced their support for engaging with the Russian minority "properly", i.e. winning over the minority's hearts and minds by "making a genuine, meaningful, and sustained effort [...] to reach out to a minority in order to understand it, sympathize with it, and address its needs, aspirations, grievances, anxieties, and concerns".[136] Those whose task is evaluating the success of the integration programmes have also voiced their concern about improving the status of minority representatives.[137] However, since signalling readiness for concessions in this salient issue is considered political suicide, the majority-backed political elites are, at least for the time being, united behind the current minority legislation and wish to sustain the *status quo.*

3. 5 When the lobby actor is not enough: Framing Opportunity in Estonia and

[134] However, it should be noted that shutting the Central parties out of the government can also stem from their very different vision on economic rather than ethnic policies
[135] Russian-language schools' [...]
[136] T. Jermalavicius, 'Foreword', in Kivirähk, p. 3
[137] See, for example, works by Muiznieks, one of Latvia's leading sociologists

Latvia

There are various reasons why the more radical Russophone activists have failed to convince their communities about the chance of success through claim-making. First and foremost, they suffer from a serious credibility deficit. Unlike representatives of the Centre Party in Estonia and Harmony Centre in Latvia, they have been unwilling to co-operate both with state officials and those Russian-speakers who collaborate with the state. Secondly, their radical position has alienated them from the general public which, despite its grievances, has proved to be more likely to align with the centre-left wing political elites. Thirdly, since the two recent waves of mass mobilisation – the Estonian Bronze Soldier crisis in 2007 and the Latvian Russian language referendum in 2012 – did not lead to any significant concessions for the Russian-speakers, majority of the community probably feels pessimistic about potential success of contentious claim-making.

Finally, Russia is still not perceived to be *completely* reliable as an external supporter, even by the most radical Russophone activists. Vladimir Linderman, one of the most outspoken radicals, wrote in April 2015:

> Neither Baltic Russian residents nor those Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians who sympathise with Russia are going to step up and fight if they do not clearly understand that Moscow is with them. From the experience gained in the Baltic struggle and from the Crimean and Donbassian experience people have drawn a justifiable conclusion: if there is no support from Russia, there is no chance of success. There will be always be kamikazes, of course, but only few of them. I do not know whether the work of Russian compatriot agencies will be better in future. I really want to believe it will. Thanks to the Ukrainian crisis, Russia has made one thing clear: that its national interests and rights of Russian people living abroad are not separate problems, but one and the same.[138]

Instead of encouraging people to "take the streets", Linderman is proposing the establishment

[138] V. Linderman, 'If tomorrow was war. If Latvia wants war. If Russia needs victory.' *Politikus Online* (11/4/2014)

of non-profit organisations with Russian support. His logic of reasoning is, however, in lines with the ethnic bargaining model: since international organisations no longer push the Baltic States to grant greater rights for Russian-speakers, Russia is the only plausible external ally for the minority.

CHAPTER 4 – DISABLED MINORITIES?

CYCLES OF CONTENTIOUS COLLECTIVE ACTION AFTER 2004

The Russophone minorities in both countries have engaged in contentious collective activity and bargaining in order to improve their status from the early days until the present day. The major instances of mobilisation in the post-2004 era include the following: attempts to gain cultural autonomy in Estonia (2006 onwards), the 2007 Bronze soldier crisis, the 2012 Latvian Referendum on the status of Russian language, and wide-spread resistance to education reforms throughout the 2000s. However, the last ten years have also witnessed reduced support for radical Russophone parties, NGOs and activists. In this chapter I shall analyse four attempts to mobilise the Russophone community and demonstrate how the lack of unity within the minority eventually lead to lack of success in ethnic bargaining. I shall also consider alternative explanations to the failures.

4. 1 Attempts to establish cultural autonomy in Estonia

To international observers'' delight, Estonia passed the Law on Cultural Autonomy for National Minorities in 1993. The law enables Estonian citizens with a distinct ethnicity, culture, language or religion but with "long-term, sound and permanent ties with Estonia"[139] to establish government-affiliated bodies with the task of organising cultural and educational life, as well as social welfare, of national minorities. Paradoxically, only two national minorities – the Igrian Finns and the Swedes – have been established cultural minorities, while an application made for the Russian minority has been rejected three times since the establishment of the law – in 1998, 2006 and most recently in 2009.[140]

While many aspects of the law still need to be clarified for cultural autonomies to

[139] National Minorities Cultural Autonomy Act of the Estonian Republic (1993)
[140] M. Lagerspetz, Cultural Autonomy of National Minorities in Estonia: The Erosion of a Promise, *Journal of Baltic Studies* (45(4), 2014) p. 458

function accordingly, it can hardly be considered a coincidence that the Russian community has struggled to establish non-territorial cultural autonomy (NCA) in the newly independent Estonia. Commentators generally agree that the policy-makers never truly wanted the law on cultural autonomy to be utilised by the Russian community for various reasons: Firstly, due to the size and the special character of the Russian minority, Russian NCA could challenge to the dominant status of the Estonian language and culture. Secondly, it would be difficult to manifest the representativeness of a given civil society organisation of the heterogeneous Russian community.[141] Thirdly, Smith points out that at least in the first application, "NCA was explicitly couched as a means of uniting the Russian population politically in order to [...] further the representation of specific Russian minority interests within state structures", which policy-makers could not tolerate.[142] Aidarov and Drechsler have also pointed out Estonian Russians' social and political passiveness[143] and the lack of representative leadership of the community. They conclude that given the state's unwillingness to grant cultural autonomy for Russians, combined with the Russian community's fragmentation (also on the question to whether or not establishing NCA is in the community's interest[144]), there is little chance that cultural autonomy will be established for Russians in the near future.[145] Moreover, since only Estonian *citizens* can apply for cultural autonomy, those Russians who are either non-citizens or Russian citizens residing in Estonia would be left out of the NCA structures even if the authorities accepted the application in the future.

[141] See, for example, Lagerspetz; A. Aidarov and W. Drechsler, 'The Law & Economics of the Estonian Law on Cultural Autonomy for National Minorities and of Russian National Cultural Autonomy in Estonia', *Halduskultuur – Administrative Culture* (12(1), 2011); and D. Smith, 'Non-Territorial Autonomy and Political Community in Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe', *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in* Europe (12(1), 2013). However, it should be noted that questioning the representativeness of such organs is a common and persuasive way to invalidate group claims whenever necessary.

[142] Smith (2013), p. 41

[143] I am personally very sceptical of such conclusions because they have primordial connotations; however, Russians' "social and political passiveness" might also be seen as the result of state policies that have alienated many Russian-speakers due to their exclusive ethnic character.

[144] For example, Smith and Hiden point out that "a reluctance to put at risk what is already in place is a major factor behind the reluctance of Russian-minority leaders to take up the option of cultural autonomy". D. Smith & J. Hiden, *Ethnic Diversity and the Nation State: National cultural autonomy revisited* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2012) p. 112

[145] Aidarov & Drechsler, p. 55

Despite the existing legal framework of NCA, aimed at facilitating minority representation within state structures it is thus clear that the policy-makers discourage rather than support Russian-speakers to establish non-territorial cultural autonomy. In addition to Russians, attempts to establish NCA for other Eastern Slav ethnic groups, Ukrainians and Belarusians, have failed in a similar manner. Ethnic Estonians are united in their understanding that NCA is not necessary for (even) those Russian-speakers who have obtained citizenship and demonstrated their bond with the Estonian state, and are thus united in opposing such attempts. Meanwhile, even the sub-group of ethnic Russians with Estonian citizenship are split on the question of whether NCA is something that they should even strive to achieve.[146]

4. 2 Estonian Bronze Soldier Crisis of 2007

In Estonia, an inter-societal relations became tense in 2007, when Tallinn city council decided to remove the Soviet monument for the victims of the Second World War, generally referred to as the 'Bronze Soldier', from its location in the centre of the city and relocate it in the city's suburbs.[147] Just before the planned relocation, a large crowd of mostly young Russophones gathered around the statue to protect it. When the protesters were forced to leave by the police, they responded by shouting "shame" and "Fascists" and throwing empty bottles at them and vandalising property in the nearby area. The government had not expected such a fierce opposition, which was also echoed in Russia with judgemental statements from political leaders, cyber-attacks on Estonian websites and a week-long blockade of the Estonian Embassy in Moscow by the Russian pro-establishment youth organisation *Nashi*.[148] The spontaneous mobilisation of Russian-speakers was in fact an outcry against the current Estonian history narrative, according to which Estonia was illegally annexed to the Soviet

[146] *Ibid.*
[147] M. Ehala, 'The Bronze Soldier: Identity Threat and Maintenance in Estonia', *Journal of Baltic Studies* (40(1), 2009) p. 139
[148] *Ibid.*, p. 143

Union and that the Red Army had not represented liberators, but occupants and colonisers. Indeed, the continuing "memory war" in the Baltic States shows that non-material claims have the capacity to mobilise Russian-speakers.[149] However, the protest died out within weeks, perhaps because aggressive behaviour and looting discredited those who were involved in the protests and alienated them from other Russian-speakers. Moreover, the repertoire of the Bronze Soldier crisis remained strictly historical: claims related to citizenship, language or education were not voiced at the protests.

Duvold and Berglund convincingly argue that the riots dramatically undercut the achievement made in the post-1992 era to foster good inter-ethnic relations.[150] Four Russophone activists that were responsible for organising protests faced criminal charges, but were later acquitted. Later, however, the Estonian government passed legislation to reinforce penalties, and refined the laws relating to the distribution of national secrets, action against the state, action of promoting against the state and action encouraging or participating in riots.[151]

For the purpose of this analysis it is important to note that the decision to relocate the Bronze Soldier was not supported unanimously by ethnic Estonians. Opinion polls conducted in May 2006 found that 29% of ethnic Estonians were opposed to the idea of moving the statue, with another 18% undecided at the time.[152] However, since the relocation of the monument was an important part of the electoral campaign of the winning Reform party, relative opposition to the relocation plans was not a good enough reason to back down on the decision. Perhaps as an attempt to pacify the Russophone community which perceived the relocation as a humiliating act of injustice, the Estonian government and members of the

[149] See, for example, works by M. Mälksoo
[150] Duvold & Berglund, p. 342
[151] V. Pettai and M. Mölder, 'Estonia', *Nations in Transit* (Freedom House: 2010) p. 204
[152] 'Eestlased ei poolda pronkssoduri omaalgatuslikku korvaldamist' ['Estonians do not support the relocation of the Bronze Soldier], *Postimees* (23/5/2006)

diplomatic corps organised a ceremony at the new location on May 8. This was the first time Estonian officials paid homage to the monument, laying a wreath for those who fell in WW2.[153]

The willingness of the officials to offer such a (minor) concession could, in fact, be explained by the united position the Russophone community held on the issue of the Bronze Soldier. Although only a fraction of Russian-speakers took part in the protests, there was little doubt on whether the Bronze Soldier should remain untouched already in 2006: while only 16% supported the idea of relocation, 73% were against it and the remaining 11% were undecided.[154] However, the lack of mobilisation after the relocation meant that the Bronze Night did not mark the beginning of long-lasting contentious ethnic bargaining, but rather just an impromptu manifestation of disgruntlement about the state's official historical narrative.

It has been argued that Estonian Russian-speakers' reluctance to engage in ethnic bargaining can be explained by the impressive economic growth and rising living standards. In addition, EU membership has made "European exit" possible. If fact, however, as has been discussed in the previous chapter, not all Russian-speakers have gained from the economic growth. The fragmentation of the ethno-linguistic community among socio-economic lines (i.e. the growing gap between Russophone "haves" and "have-nots") means that the grievances of the lower class Russian-speakers are no longer shared –and thus not voiced– by those Russian-speakers who have found themselves in an improving socio-economic position in the 2000s.[155] The in-group cohesion and, as a result, in-group solidarity has become far less pronounced since the 1990s.

[153] Ehola, p. 143
[154] 'Eestlased ei poolda [...]'
[155] See, for example, Muiznieks (2010), p. 36

4. 3 The 2012 Russian language referendum in Latvia

The dominant status of the Russian language was openly contested in Latvia in February 2012, when a constitutional referendum was held about making Russian second state language. Russian-language activists collected over 187 000 signatures for a petition in autumn 2011, which was enough to organise a petition. The referendum was rejected with 74.8% voting against and 24.9% voting for the change,[156] with a turnout of 70.9%[157]. Although most yes-votes came from the easternmost provinces of Latgale, the Russophone community was not united behind the motion. For example the leader of the Harmony Centre Party, Nils Usakovs, was originally against the petition, only voicing his support for it in the last minute to show his disapproval of Latvian nationalists that were campaigning against the referendum.[158] Perhaps unsurprisingly, the referendum sparked a response from the ethnic Latvian right-wing national conservative political alliance, All for Latvia!–For Fatherland and Freedom/Latvian National Independence Movement, which initiated a parallel drive for a referendum to stop Russian-language tuition altogether. Also more moderate "majority" parties voiced their opposition to the suggested amendments. For example, Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis from the Unity party stated that "the Latvian language is at the foundation of statehood in Latvia"[159]. The All for Latvia!–TB/LNNK leader, Raivis Dzintars went even further, calling the referendum a "declaration of war against Latvian statehood".[160] According to Lublin's analysis, while referendum advocates argued the point of the referendum was simply to highlight the presence of the Russian-speaking minority and the need to treat them equally, the referendum in fact only strengthened ethnic political

[156] Due to Latvia's legislation, non-citizens were not allowed to vote. However, analysts calculated that even if the had been eligible to vote and had voted yes, the final results would not have changed considerably.
[157] This was considerably higher figure than in any of the recent Saeima elections, where turnout varied from 59.45% (in 2011) to 63.12% (in 2010). Data from the website of the Central Electoral Commission of Latvia
[158] M. Hanley, 'The Voice of the People', *The Baltic Times Online* (15/2/2012)
[159] Dombrovskis, quoted in D. Lublin, 'The 2012 Latvia language referendum', *Electoral Studies* (32(2), 2013) p. 386
[160] Dzintars, quoted in Lublin, p. 386

divisions.[161] Although campaign activists originally said they would continue to fight for the Russian language even after the referendum failed[162], the support for the referendum did not translate into greater activism in political or civil society arena in the post-2012 era. In Estonia, such well-coordinated attempts to challenge the status of the Russian language have not taken place, possibly because of the weaker organisational structures of the Russophone community.

The case with the Russian language referendum is similar to that of the Estonian cultural autonomy, albeit over a more salient issue. The Russophone minority was not united behind the motion until the very last moment[163]; primarily because the referendum was based on a radical claim not initially supported by the Harmony party elites. Simultaneously, the ethnic Latvian majority was unyielding in its opposition from the very beginning. Although Moscow was formally behind the motion, Russia did not engage fully in supporting the organisers of the referendum. As a result, popular support for organisations voicing radical claims plummeted after the referendum was defeated. The decision-makers also changed the legislation to make it less easy to initiate future referendums.[164] The case of the 2012 Russian language referendum demonstrates that even if the minority manages to become united, it does not necessarily win concessions if the majority is equally united in its opposition and the lobby actor does not significantly intervene in the process.

4. 4 Russian-speakers and the ongoing Ukrainian Crisis: Is Russia a threat or an asset?

Following Tarrow, mechanisms that signal opening of the opportunity window include the attribution of opportunity or threat, the availability of potential allies, the formation of

[161] Lublin, p. 387
[162] Hanley
[163] According to the estimates of votes by ethnicity, only 4% of non-Latvians voted against the referendum while 96% voted for. Among ethnic Latvians, 97.7% voted against and only 2.3% for. Lublin, p. 387
[164] *Ibid.*

coalitions (both on the margins and within the polity) and the framing of entire episodes of contention.[165] Explaining what the ongoing Ukrainian crisis means for Baltic Russian-speakers has been a task undertaken by all major actors claiming to represent the community. While some have interpreted Russia's increased interest in promoting the rights of its compatriots abroad as an asset, improving their bargaining leverage *vis-à-vis* the majority, others see Russia's behaviour as a factor undermining their bargaining capacity. The emergence of different frames is a key attribute of a fragmented community like that of the Russian-speakers. A study by Korhonen conducted among the most prominent activists of the Estonian Russophone community[166] found that the activists had mixed feelings regarding Russia's support for the community even before the Russian–Georgian war and the annexation of Crimea:

> Some of them [the interviewees] believed that Russia had had a negative impact on the status of the minority because it had been rude and indifferent to the Estonian context; its involvement was not welcomed. Some interviewees anticipated that Russia's statements would evoke a negative response among Estonians, who in turn would be echoed in the attitudes towards the Russia-speaking minority. [...] However, to some politically and culturally engaged interviewees, Russia showed another, more benevolent face: it should help, especially in the cultural sphere, but due to its own difficulties it has not been able to do so.[167]

The Centre party MPs who voice moderate claims are perceived by the majority politicians to be the most legitimate and trustworthy representatives of the Russophone community. Judging by their recent behaviour, they perceive the current political opportunity for claim-making to be minimal and refuse to take advantage of Russia's assertiveness, instead voicing their loyalty to the Latvian and Estonian states and the EU. For example, Nils Usakovs, the leader of the Latvian Harmony Centre, in March 2013 reflected on the possible effects of the Ukrainian crisis on Latvian domestic issues by noting the following:

[165] Tarrow, p. 163
[166] The interviews for the study were conducted in 2000–2002 and included "most of the leading figures in the Russian-speaking political landscape". Korhonen, p. 198
[167] Korhonen, p. 199

> The majority of Latvian society is worried. It is understandable given that in the history of Latvia there were instances of foreign countries marching in with their armies. It is absolutely clear that Russia is linked to the events in Ukraine. Ethnic Russians must calm down their friends, neighbours and colleagues, they must explain that while we disagree about many things, we share our country – Latvia. Nobody wants the Ukrainian scenario to repeat here.[168]

While Harmony condemned the annexation, more pro-Russian organisations did the exact opposite. Latvian Russian Union buttressed its position as a channel for more radical claims (compared to Usakovs and Harmony) by openly expressing its support for the peninsula's annexation and the separatist aspirations of People's Republic of Donetsk and that of Lugansk.[169] However, they failed to regain the support of the electorate, only guaranteeing one seat in the 2014 elections for the European Parliament (which they also actively use as a channel to voice their anti-establishment agenda) and gaining no seats in the 2014 parliamentary elections. This means that their claims fail to resonate among their target supporters, the Russian minority – at least those who have the right to vote.

In Estonia, Russia's assertiveness was picked up by only those civil society organisations that are affiliated with the new umbrella organisation, Russian Alliance of Estonia. However, since only a handful of Russian-speakers support the organisations voicing radical claims, the frame promoted by the Alliance to push the central government for concessions has not been recognised by the vast majority of Russian-speakers. Instead, representatives voicing moderate claims that enjoy wide-spread support of the electorate are seen to be more "genuine" representatives of the Russian community. However, Centre party MPs are reluctant to argue they represent the Russophone community, rather asserting that they represent individuals a set of certain socio-economic values rather than ethnic background.

Russia's growing assertiveness in the international arena and its demonstrated

[168] N. Usakovs, quoted in 'Usakovs: The Crimea must stay in Ukraine', *Delfi News Online* (12/3/2014)
[169] Official website of the *Latvian Russian Union*

willingness to back up compatriots abroad has thus not been interpreted by the most Baltic Russian-speakers as increased bargaining leverage[170]. Instead the fragmented Russophone communities of Estonia and Latvia have learned from recent cycles of contestation that as long as they remain divided and are met with a unified majority determined to keep the current restrictive policies in place, contentious activity based on radical claims is likely to be unsuccessful. In essence, the perceived support of a lobby actor –in this case, Russia– loses its potency when filtered through the prism of minority sub-groups' interpretations.

[170] In fact, an informal opinion poll conducted in Estonia in 2012 suggests that a significant share of Estonian Russian-speakers do not believe Russia to have any influence in their lives. The respondents were asked "What has Vladimir Putin done for Russians in Estonia?" to which 64 % chose the answer "nothing", while 26 % believed that Putin had "strengthened Russians' authority" while only 2,3 % stated that he had "made the situation for worse for Estonian Russians". 'Estonian residents: What has Vladimir Putin done for Russians in Estonia? Nothing!' (27/2/2012), *Postimees Online.* Accessed 30/5/2015.

CONCLUSION

This thesis set out to solve the puzzle of unsuccessful ethnic claim-making in Estonia and Latvia by the countries' sizeable Russophone minorities in the post-2004 era. As the four chapters have demonstrated, the Russophone community's attempts to challenge the *status quo* have been sporadic and unsuccessful despite the persistence of restrictive policy measures and Russia's apparent interest in supporting the rights of its ”compatriots abroad”. It has been argued that group cohesion within both the majority and the minority can significantly influence the effectiveness of claim-making and the repertoires chosen by minority representatives. If the minority is as inherently fragmented as the Russian-speaking communities of Latvia and Estonia, claim-making becomes increasingly difficult, especially if it is met by united resistance of the majority. Different patterns of integration into the Estonian and Latvian societies as well as varying trajectories of socio-economic development have contributed to the lack of unity within the minority of Russian-speakers and the waning of in-group solidarity, crucial for ethnic claim-making.

One of the major issues that divides opinions among various sub-groups and their leaders is the role of the Russian state. While those who voice "radical" claims see Russian interest in protecting its compatriots abroad (even by use of force) as an asset improving their bargaining position, the "moderate" representatives believe Russia's assertiveness can turn the ethnic Estonians and Latvians against the Russian-speaking minorities, thus acting as a double-edged sword. Indeed, Russia's intervention in ethnic disputes in Georgia and Ukraine have made the ethnic Baltic populations extremely anxious despite the security guarantees of EU and NATO membership. The perceived high Russian threat to Baltic sovereignty has given centre-right and right-wing parties the incentive to play the "ethnic card" at elections which has translated into a consolidated support for the existing restrictive policies. Russia's assertiveness in the compatriot issue has thus indirectly contributed to the emergence of

"united" majorities that believe that maintaining the status quo or even increase control over the Russophone minorities is essential for peace and stability in the Baltic States.

Although nuances between cases of contentious bargaining activity exist, the inherent heterogeneity of the Russophone communities generates a plurality of interpretations and competing frames about the chances of success via claim-making. Minority representatives voicing radical claims have been the ones defeated by their more "moderate" peers in such situations: not only have explicitly Russian parties marginalised in the political arena, but motivation to engage in new campaigns targeting unequal treatment has dropped.

The thesis has theoretical implications to the field of ethnic mobilisation and minority politics. Too often minorities are conceptualised as uniform actors that are able to challenge central authorities with a single voice. However, the close analysis of the Baltic Russophone minority demonstrates, minorities that seem as unitary actors (due to their distinct voting patterns, for example) can in fact consist of various sub-groups whose members have little in common with each other. Moreover, since there exists no mechanism to define legitimate leaders of the group, fragmentation becomes a serious issue impeding bargaining behaviour. Moreover, if the minority is unable to identify allies within the majority elites, their claim-making success can remain limited even if it managed to unite behind a given motion. In addition, external lobby actor can be perceived as both an asset and a threat which further blurs the picture of ethnic bargaining. Radicalisation, rather than accommodation in the form of non-action, is a big leap to the unknown. This is why minority members think twice before opting for it – especially if they are presented dissimilar, conflicting frames that portray changes of success differently.

How generalizable is the model of group cohesion and ethnic bargaining? This is a question that is difficult to assess at this stage. For understanding the potential value and accuracy of the model, one should look at a variety of cases of ethnic mobilisation around the

world. Time and scope limitations have made a broad application of the model impossible in the framework of this thesis. Moreover, the lack of primary data from Latvia and Estonia has meant that I have had to limit my discussion to data which has been accessible from outside the Baltic States. Further research in the field could focus on filling in the gaps that these theoretical and empirical limitations have generated.

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