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Instigations of Separatism in the Baltic States

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Instigations of Separatism in the Baltic States

This Issue Brief deals with some recent attempts to instigate and foment separatism in certain regions of all three Baltic states – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Although these attempts would appear at first glance to be spontaneous, we argue that certain recurring elements and links between them seem to indicate that they are rather coordinated actions showing a certain level of organization. In turn, these recent cases have direct bearing on the relationship between minorities and majorities in the Baltic states after the Russian annexation of Crimea and the increasingly strong promotion of the Eurasian Union initiated by Russia. Despite the differences between Estonia and Latvia on the one hand – which have large Russian-speaking minorities continuing to face integration challenges – and Lithuania – with a relatively small and well-integrated Russian minority –, these recent calls for separatism are manifest in all three countries under consideration.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Accompanying the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, a so-called ‘information war’ has been deployed by both sides in attempts to denounce the legitimacy of the other side’s claims. In a broader context, Russia and not only Ukraine, but also European Union member states and the United States of America are themselves engaged in a ‘war of words’, making frequent use of the tropes of fascism and anti-fascism, a situation in which news reports are seen as an essential tool to secure people’s allegiances. Moreover, in this context, as a recent report written by Peter Pomerantsev and Michael Weiss argues, the Kremlin is particularly skillful at weaponizing information, money and culture / ideas, in the service of a new vision of ‘hybrid’ or ‘non-linear’ war.¹ This hybrid type of war, a specific 21st century phenomenon relying extensively on the strategic use of information and its

dissemination, is not limited to Ukraine itself, but presents a challenge to the security of all countries in Europe, particularly those that are neighbouring Russia. While the activity of Russian and Russian-sponsored mainstream media (newspapers, radio, TV) has benefitted from significant attention along these lines, instances of grassroots mobilization and social media activity have received comparatively less (or no) consideration.

Following their independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, and even after joining the European Union and NATO in 2004, from the perspective of Russian foreign policy Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania never left the area of the so-called ‘near abroad’ or, from 2007 onwards, “the Russian World”.² Certainly, seeking influence abroad is a legitimate and normal practice of any country pursuing foreign policy; however, after the regime change in Ukraine



and the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, the means and instruments of influence deployed by the Russian Federation have reached the borderline of unacceptability. The evidence presented below applies not only to Latvia and Estonia, having very large Russian-speaking minorities, but also Lithuania, with a relatively small and well-integrated Russian minority. This demographic data provides an important context for the analysis of provocations and instigations of separatism; therefore, one should bear in mind some similarities and differences in the structure of Baltic societies.

According to the most recent population censuses in the Baltic states, the largest ethnic minority groups in Latvia and Estonia are ethnic Russians, constituting 26.9 per cent³ and 25.2 per cent of the total population, respectively.⁴ If one includes other ethnic minority (Slavic) groups, the Russian-speaking populations in these Baltic countries would add up to about 38 per cent in Latvia and 30 per cent in Estonia. In Lithuania, the ethnic Russians comprise 5.8 per cent of the total population; the largest ethnic minority is the Polish community, constituting 6.6 per cent of the population.⁵ Ethnic Russians in all three Baltic states are predominantly urban inhabitants, and most of them arrived in the Baltic republics after 1940 (except for the Latgale region of Latvia, where Russians are also rural settlers and have been living there for centuries). Ethnic Russians are present throughout the Latvian territory, which is not the case in Estonia, where Russians live mostly in the capital city Tallinn and in the north-eastern part of the country. In Lithuania, the Russian minority is mainly concentrated in the cities of Vilnius and Klaipėda, whereas the Polish minority lives in Vilnius and the rural areas around it.

2. OLD AND NEW PROPAGANDA TRICKS: EVENTS REPORTED BY MEDIA

The end of the year 2014 and especially the beginning of the year 2015 witnessed provocations on ethnic grounds and calls for separatism in the Baltic States. This was observed not only on the social platform “Facebook” (with pages created to this purpose in all three Baltic states), but also in the handing out of flyers (in Latvia and Lithuania) and the inscribing of pro-Russian and anti-European / anti-US messages on private and public buildings (Lithuania).

2.1. Flyers and Messages

In December 2014, rumours spread of pro-Russian agitators in the region of Latgale (town of Kraslava, Latvia) handing out flyers and arguing for the region’s separation and eventual withdrawal from Latvia. The Latvian parliament reacted to the issue with “a January visit of the parliamentary committee on citizenship issues to the region”⁶.

In Lithuania, flyers in Lithuanian language have been observed in Vilnius, the capital city, the cities of Panevėžys and Šiauliai and, especially, in the areas of Western Lithuania which share a border with the Russian Federation (Kaliningrad Oblast): Klaipėda, Jurbarkas, Tauragė, and the district of Šilutė⁷. The following sentences in Lithuanian were drawn on public buildings in red paint: “USA is terror”, “NATO is terror”, “USA, NATO are world terrorists and occupants” and “USA, NATO get out of Lithuania”. In addition to this, on the 29th of January 2015, in a suburb of Klaipėda city, the private house of the daughter of Lithuanian MP Irina Rozova



was painted in red with slogans in incorrect Lithuanian grammar: “No Russians”, “Russians go home”, “Freedom to Lithuania”⁸. Irina Rozova is a member of the Russian minority in Lithuania⁹ who protested in 2014 against the investigation methods of Lithuanian prosecutors against two secondary schools in Vilnius, which in the summer of 2014 had sent some of their pupils to summer camps in Russia that included a paramilitary education component. She qualified the actions of the Lithuanian prosecutors as “a big provocation against the Russian community in Lithuania.”¹⁰

The authorship of flyers agitating in the Lithuanian language for an ethnic and socialist revolution and against the US-NATO occupation of Lithuania is attributed to Žilvinas Razminas, who identifies himself as a national socialist and “a national worker”¹¹. He claims to lead a national socialist movement, liberating the Lithuanian nation from the US and EU occupation. His activity is not limited to the handing out of flyers, and his propaganda statements are also accessible online¹². The online platform hosts articles written not only by some of the advisers of the Russian President Vladimir Putin, but also by Joseph Goebbels and Mao Zedong. The majority of these articles, however, are authored by Aleksandr Dugin, one of the leading ideologists associated with the Putin regime, and outline the meaning of the ‘war’ pitching ‘Eurasianists’ against ‘Atlanticists’ (USA and EU). Interestingly, Razminas’ webpage also contains some information in English, German, Russian, Polish, Romanian, Spanish and Italian.

In Estonia, no instances of such flyers being distributed were reported in 2014 or 2015. However, in mid-September 2008, roughly a

month after the conflict between Russia and Georgia, flyers demanding Russian autonomy were handed out¹³. The demands for autonomy were referring to certain areas in north-eastern Estonia (the counties of Harju, Lääne-Viru and Ida-Viru, the northern part of the Järva and Jõgeva counties, and a large part of the Peipus lake coast). The flyers were signed by the self-proclaimed “New Generation of the Union of North-Westerners” (in Tsarist Russia, the denomination “North-Western Land” was used for the territories of present-day Estonia). Claiming the right of self-determination for the Russian community in Estonia, the flyers demanded a referendum on the issue of Russian territorial autonomy¹⁴. These claims for territorial autonomy found new ways of expression on the “Facebook” platform in January 2015 (described below).

2.2. “Facebook” Separatism

At the end of January 2015, special pages have been created on “Facebook” calling for separatism in certain geographical areas in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

Estonia: Baltic Russian Republic

The Estonian page in Russian language calls for the creation of a Russian territorial autonomy in the north-eastern part of Estonia (the area with the highest density of the Russian-speaking minority), under the name of the “Baltic Russian Republic”¹⁵. It also presents a new map of Estonia, without its north-eastern part, and proposes an own flag for the autonomy area (which is similar to the Russian flag, supplemented by a white cross in the middle). The Facebook group provides a positive view of and shows support for a similar separatist project in Latvia, the “Latgalian People’s Republic”



(details below), and also for the People's Republics of Donetsk and Luhansk in Ukraine. It urges Estonians to support their Donbass brothers in the fight against the occupation of the Ukrainian government. The current Estonian government is also called an "occupation" and "pro-American" one and is being accused of instigating hatred among ethnic groups and inciting Russophobia in Estonia and the self-proclaimed "Baltic Russian Republic"¹⁶. The Facebook group considers that this is the right moment for fighting for Russian rights in Estonia, since "NATO and other criminal international organizations led by the USA are busy supporting the genocide of the Russian population in Donbass, and therefore they would not be prepared to open a second front in the war with the Russian Federation"¹⁷. As visible from the citation above, the terminology in which the accusations against NATO and the US are expressed is that of an explicit language of war, a war that is seen as not confined to the territory of the Ukraine itself, but encompassing all of Europe and possibly the entire world.

Latvia: Latgalian People's Republic

The Latvian page presented a new map of Latvia without its Eastern region Latgale and showed a flag of the would-be new independent territorial unit, the "Latgalian People's Republic"¹⁸. This flag was based on the historical flag of the ethnographic region Latgale, supplemented with inscriptions in Russian language, inspired by the People's Republics of Donetsk and Luhansk in Ukraine¹⁹. This Facebook activity drew the attention of the Latvian Security Police and was interpreted as a possible attempt to undermine Latvia's territorial integrity. According to Andrew Rettman²⁰ and Beatrix Tölgyesi²¹, this

Facebook action is attributed to the Russian minority activist Vladimir Linderman, a member of the National Bolshevik Party in Russia since 1997, the leader of the Latvian political party "For Native Language!", and an initiator of the constitutional referendum in Latvia in 2012²².

It must be mentioned that the Latgale region, one of the five administrative regions in Latvia, showed the highest support for having Russian language as a second state language in the 2012 constitutional referendum in Latvia²³.

Lithuania: The People's Republic of Vilnius

The Facebook group arguing for the creation of the "People's Republic of Vilnius" (Wileńska Republika Ludowa / Виленская Народная Республика)²⁴ appeals to the potential supporters in two languages: Polish and Russian. It demands deployment of "the little green men" (a term used for the Russian troops that participated in the annexation of Crimea in February 2014) and calls for a referendum among the "autochthonous" inhabitants of the Vilnius region (excluding both migrants and ethnic Lithuanians, since the group claims that the latter are not indigenous to the area). The Facebook group provides also some photos, one of which bears the title "Wilno = Donbass". The Facebook group arguing for the establishment of the "People's Republic of Vilnius" refers openly and positively to the People's Republics of Donetsk and Luhansk in Ukraine and proudly mentions the project of the "Latgalian People's Republic" in neighbouring Latvia. This Facebook group claims that "the Polish little green men have been active in the service of the 'People's Republic of Vilnius' since 2011". According to Mr. Edward Trusewicz, the Vice-Minister of Culture of Lithuania



and a member of the Polish minority party “Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania”²⁵, who considers this activity on Facebook a cheap provocation²⁶, the idea of the “People’s Republic of Vilnius” is supported by the Polish webpage edited by Bartosz Bekier²⁷, leader of the extremist paramilitary organization “Falanga” in Poland. Mr. Bekier calls NATO a terrorist organization and explicitly supports the pro-Russian separatists of Donbass.

3. FRINGE PHENOMENON?

The intelligence services and prosecutors in the Baltic states have identified most of the persons handing out flyers and making inscriptions on the buildings; according to the Lithuanian evidence, this is a small, pro-Russian extreme right group of “professional instigators and protesters” that have been seen before in many demonstrations and events directed against the political system; some of them have been previously sentenced for the instigation of hatred and propagation of neo-Nazi ideas.²⁸ The aforementioned “Facebook” pages have a relatively small number of supporters.

However, both the actions with flyers and “Facebook” should not be treated as a simple fringe phenomenon, failing to mobilize and polarize certain groups. As we have seen above, all of the groups promoting separatism in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania make reference not only to the situation in their own country, but also to similar separatist projects in the other two Baltic states, as well as to the self-proclaimed ‘republics’ in Eastern Ukraine. As such, this feature is indicative of coordinated action and of the existing links between promoters of such separatist agendas, eventually

integrated into an ‘Eurasianist’ ideological perspective, radically opposed to the European Union and the United States.

At this stage, the purpose of these well-planned and coordinated instigations would be not only preparing public opinion and increasing support for territorial autonomy and eventual secession of certain regions from the three Baltic states (long-term action), but also manufacturing alleged ‘evidence’ that such movements already exist, in opposition to the current political situation (short-term action). Such evidence can then be further manipulated and elaborated on for the Russian-speaking audience in other contexts.

The instigations of separatism in the Baltic states thus have to be placed in the context of the entire post-Soviet space. The forthcoming book “Separatism in the Post-Soviet Space and Its Instigators”, by Imantas Melianas²⁹, records and describes as many as 30 ethnic-territorial secession ‘projects’, which Russia attempted and is still attempting to accomplish in 12 post-Soviet states. According to Melianas, the list of these separatist ‘projects’ is one that is still expanding, as the Russian government continues to employ such policies with the purpose of destabilising neighbouring states³⁰.

Hence, these recent instigations and calls for separatism in the Baltic states are not phenomena that are in any way ‘new’ or ‘unique’ to the region; instead, there is considerable evidence for similar secessionist ‘projects’ induced by the Russian government in other post-Soviet states in the past. From the very beginning, after the break-up of the Soviet Union, Russian foreign policy makers (Karaganov in 1992³¹) argued for the utilization of



minorities as instruments of foreign policy in the ‘near abroad’³². The so-called ‘Karaganov doctrine’, claiming protection of the Russian citizens in the ‘near abroad’, was later supplemented by the “Russian World” (Russkiy Mir), which is not a mere cultural foundation established by the decree of President Putin in 2007 but also a “conglomerate of different streams in the anti-Western, anti-liberal and neo-imperial Russian nationalism”³³. However, the “Russian World” (Russkiy Mir), by including not only Russian citizens and the native Russian language speakers, but also those for whom Russian is a second or a third language, together with the ideology of Eurasianism / neo-Eurasianism, differently from the ‘Karaganov doctrine’, goes beyond the post-Soviet space.

4. EURASIANISM / NEO-EURASIANISM AND RUSSIA’S CONNECTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN FAR RIGHT

Associated primarily with Aleksandr Dugin, Russian political commentator and until recently sociology professor at Moscow State University, the doctrine of Eurasianism / neo-Eurasianism entails an irreconcilable dichotomy and conflict between the Atlantic powers (primarily the United States and the United Kingdom, but also some Western European states) and Eurasia (encompassing Russia, Central and Eastern Europe, and Asia). The conflict has a geopolitical dimension (where its foreign policy is revisionist and expansionist), but also a “spiritual” or “metaphysical” one, where ‘Atlanticism’ is associated with “the age of vice’, while the Eurasian revolution that would establish the Russia-led Eurasian Empire is understood as an advent of the

‘golden age’³⁴. While Dugin himself refers to the ideology as ‘Eurasianism’, making a tenuous claim to historical continuity with the interwar Russian émigré movement of the same name, scholars of contemporary Russia prefer to distinguish between the two, and refer to Dugin’s ideology as ‘neo-Eurasianism’. Despite the existing similarities between the two, particularly in terms of geopolitical outlook and Russia’s role in the world, there are also significant differences between them, such as an explicitly acknowledged indebtedness and appreciation of German Nazism, racism, and elements of the doctrine of the post-war European New Right in neo-Eurasianism³⁵. According to Andreas Umland, the concept of ‘ethno-pluralism’ that Dugin’s neo-Eurasianism embraces is one such example, reminiscent of its adoption by “the post-1968 European New Right [...] as a euphemistic term for covering its neo-racist ideology” in an attempt “to utilize the today popular notion of pluralism for anti-democratic aims”³⁶.

While Dugin’s writings and the ideology of neo-Eurasianism appeared during the 1990s and 2000s as fringe phenomena of pure scholarly interest, their popularity skyrocketed following the annexation of Crimea, when this form of extremist rhetoric entered mainstream Russian political discourse. According to Anton Shekhovtsov, this did not entail any moderation of Dugin’s ideology, which “has not changed since the 1990s. What has radically changed is the Russian mainstream political discourse”³⁷. According to one interpretation, the clearly fascist elements in neo-Eurasianism and its ideological affinities with European far right parties and movements are responsible for Russia’s consistent attempts to establish links with such political parties and actors in both



Eastern (Hungary, Bulgaria, Greece) and Western Europe (France, Italy).

These connections have been extensively documented. A recent conference held in St Petersburg on 22 March 2015 brought together far right, ultra-nationalist, anti-EU organisations from all over Europe. While relatively more ‘moderate’ right-wing populist parties have refrained from participating (*Front National*, *Jobbik*, or the Serbian Radical Party) or cancelled their plans at the last moment (such as the Freedom Party of Austria), the conference did bring together “the fringe of the fringe” of the European (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Italy, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom), and American extreme right, with most participants having open fascist or neo-Nazi beliefs³⁸. As we have shown above, the persons calling themselves national socialists and national workers in Lithuania also refer extensively to Aleksandr Dugin, and his writings propagating Eurasianism.

If the extremist fringe might be swayed by the fascist and racist elements of neo-Eurasianism, the more ‘moderate’ anti-establishment parties in Europe are more likely motivated by something more tangible: financial interest. The best known case of financial support offered to such parties or actors is the 9 million € loan secured by the *Front National* in France from a Russian lender³⁹. Among the right-wing populist, far right and extreme right parties in Europe, some of which do not qualify as ‘fringe’ from the point of view of electoral support, a survey published by *The Economist* in February 2015 and significantly entitled ‘In the Kremlin’s pocket’, showed that no less than 10 such parties (*Ataka* in Bulgaria, Golden Dawn in Greece, *Jobbik* in Hungary, Freedom Party

of Austria, *Front National* in France, British National Party in the United Kingdom, *Lega Nord* and *Forza Italia* in Italy, National Democratic Party in Germany, and *Vlaams Belang* in Belgium) and one left-wing party (*Syriza* in Greece) are committed supporters of Putin’s regime⁴⁰. Although the case for such a commitment on the part of *Syriza* is more problematic, as its Euroscepticism does not necessarily translate into a foreign policy stance inclining towards Russia,⁴¹ the support of right-wing parties is much more straightforward. Also, many other political actors, most notably Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who according to Cas Mudde “is worth more to Russia than all far-right parties together”, have expressed their admiration for the Russian President⁴².

Thus, whether out of ideological affinities or pragmatic self-interest, there are numerous political parties and actors who promote Russia’s agenda within the European Union. Beyond the immediate, short-term benefits that Russia can derive from its supporters within the EU, such as opposition to sanctions against it or a supply of ‘official’, ‘independent’ European observers for the referendum in Crimea or the elections in the Donbass,⁴³ the long-term effect of its persistent cultivation of such sympathies is an erosion of the legitimacy of democratic institutions in EU member states. Recalling the abovementioned framework of interpretation provided by Pomerantsev and Weiss, such attempts to secure support within EU member states from Eurosceptic parties and actors or generally from a segment of the public disillusioned with the political establishment could then be interpreted along the lines of the tripartite “weaponization” of information, money, and culture / ideas. Financial support for anti-establishment parties and actors in Europe, the dissemination of information via



mainstream and new media, targeting particularly, but not exclusively Russian-speaking minorities in Europe, as well as the attempts to promote separatist claims, sometimes coupled with an ‘Eurasianist’ outlook, can consequently be interpreted as diversified means for achieving the long-term goal of destabilising the socio-political situation in Europe.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS: WHICH ACTIONS COULD BE RECOMMENDED AGAINST INCREASING ATTEMPTS TO INSTIGATE ETHNIC TENSIONS AND FOMENT SEPARATISM IN THE BALTIC STATES?

- *Building trust and enhancing dialogue between majorities and minorities in the Baltic states*

One of the most significant premises that contributes to the success of information warfare is the lack of communication between different communities. In the case of the Baltic states, this is directly related to the mutual suspicion and distrust between majorities in each country and their respective minorities, whose primary loyalties are assumed to lie with Russia rather than the countries they live in or the European Union. Separatist claims can only reinforce this perception, as well as making the issue more salient for majorities, who can, understandably, view the situation as a potential threat to the territorial integrity of their states. The instigations and provocations reported above (as well as TV broadcasts from Russia) aim to polarize ethnic groups by encouraging them to choose only one identity dimension at the

expense of the others, for persons with double or multiple ethnic identities. The Russian-speaking minorities’ exposure to the aforementioned ‘information war’ can be seen as gradually eroding their multiple identities (local, regional, and national; linguistic; cultural; religious, etc.) and rigidifying a certain ensemble of identities that is more unilateral in nature and oriented primarily towards their ‘kin-state’. Moreover, such an orientation is not politically neutral, but rather one that is used by Russia for the purpose of destabilizing the situation in the Baltic states.

As such, direct engagement and intensified dialogue between the primarily Russian-speaking minorities and majorities in each of the Baltic states appears as a necessary precondition for a successful tackling of such cases of instigations of separatism. Such an initiative requires commitment from majority and minority communities alike; while the former need to take into account the needs and perspectives of minority communities, minority representatives should in turn clearly dissociate themselves from separatist agendas. For these purposes, opportunities for institutional dialogue between the majorities and minorities should be facilitated. With particular regard to information policy, a common information space / forum where both minorities and majorities can express their views and needs appears welcome. Such an initiative would apply not only to Estonia and Latvia, with significant Russian and Russian-speaking minorities, but also to Lithuania, where the largest integration challenge after 1990 was and remains not the Russian but the Polish ethnic minority.

Such a dialogue appears more fruitful in the long term than punitive institutional actions that lead to increased resentment from the



minorities. For instance, in autumn 2014 the Lithuanian state prosecutors carried out an investigation against two secondary schools in Vilnius which in the summer of 2014 had sent some of their pupils to summer camps in Russia that included a paramilitary education component. The unduly brutal action by police caused resentment among young bilingual citizens of Lithuania⁴⁴. The recent banning (on the grounds of instigating war and ethnic hatred) of the channel “RTR Planeta” broadcasting Russian TV programs made in Russia also alienates many of the bilingual citizens of Lithuania⁴⁵.

- *A common European communication strategy responsive to the needs of Russian-speaking EU citizens*

Politicians in the Baltic states are aware that the blocking or banning of Russian TV programs broadcast from Moscow does not represent a viable solution, and it represents a simplistic and incomplete (since these channels can be accessed online) manner of dealing with this issue. Russian-language broadcasting providing news and cultural events has been part of the programme of the national Baltic channels (TV and radio) for years, in line with the provision of minority rights to the significant Russian-speaking communities in the country, as well as to other minorities. However, these were not able to compete with the well-financed and high quality TV programmes offered by Russian state TV, including not just news, but a significant entertainment component that can appeal to a majority of the population that is not directly interested in politics⁴⁶. Therefore, in January 2015, the foreign ministers of Estonia and Lithuania, with the support of their colleagues in Denmark and the United Kingdom, raised the issue of establishing an alternative, well-funded TV channel for the Russian-speaking

audiences in the EU and its neighbourhood⁴⁷. This issue is currently being considered by the European Commission, and Federica Mogherini, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, is commissioned to present an action plan for strategic communication until June 2015⁴⁸. Such an action plan could possibly include launching an EU channel in Russian language, as well as other instruments designed to counter-act the information disseminated via mainstream media from Moscow⁴⁹.

- *Online public information campaigns and non-institutional communication at grassroots level*

While policy-makers are relatively well-equipped in addressing traditional mass-media sources, new media and social networks present a much bigger challenge; disinformation enters the Baltic states not only through a variety of Russian-language TV programmes but also through strategic trolling of message boards, blogs and tweets⁵⁰. A set of policies designed to respond to the propagation of ethnic animosity, separatism, or hate speech in the online space is still lacking. Moreover, designing such policies appears particularly difficult, due to the need to strike a balance between the effective monitoring of online threats and the dangers posed to freedom of expression by institutional surveillance and censorship. As such, rather than arguing in favour of increased top-down state involvement in combating such threats, we argue instead for horizontal online public information campaigns on Russia’s attempts to instrumentalise minority claims for its own purposes. In addition to institutional dialogue between elite representatives of both minorities and majorities, grassroots



communication initiatives at the level of the communities would also contribute significantly to bridging the distance between groups, as well as circumventing the problem associated with the disillusionment of a large segment of the population (both majority and minority) with the political establishment and its representatives. In both these types of information campaigns, NGOs could play a leading role. Given that the Kremlin is investing considerable funds in its disinformation campaigns, crowd-sourcing could represent, at least initially, a potential alternative to more institutional sources of funding, which would inevitably entail a certain degree of control over the content of such campaigns.

- *Involving other countries in Russia's neighbourhood (like Moldova and Georgia) that have had similar experiences with the Russian 'information war' in policy design*

Following on Pomerantsev and Weiss' similar recommendation⁵¹, we believe the involvement in policy design of other states that were formerly part of the Soviet Union and have been exposed to such instances of instigating minority groups in their countries towards separatism (e.g. Moldova or Georgia) is very important. Benefitting from the past experience of these countries would lead to a more refined, realistic and responsive approach to policy-making. Civil society organizations in these countries already possess considerable know-how that could be put to use in other contexts as well. While the direction of processes of democratization and knowledge transfer is often too one-sided, from West to East and from countries that are members of the European Union to candidate countries, we believe that a two-way exchange in

designing policy would be more effective, particularly when the challenges confronted are similar to some degree.

- *A case for heterogeneity: adapting policy to local realities*

All of the aforementioned recommendations can be seen as applicable to all the three Baltic states under consideration in this issue brief, and indeed beyond them. However, a final element that needs to be considered is that significant differences exist between Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, as well as regionally within each of these countries, despite their relatively small size. As an example, the Latgale region in Latvia is confronted with unemployment rates that are significantly higher than in the rest of the country, as well with considerable migration of youth from the region and consequently an aging population⁵². These problems have been exacerbated by the European sanctions against Russia following the annexation of Crimea, thus adding weight to the Kremlin's appeals to the Russian-speaking population's loyalty, especially in the context of a decline in investment in the region. This is compounded by a feature that is common to all Baltic states, i.e. the negative effects that the passage from a centrally planned economy to capitalism have had in terms of growing inequalities between regions within these countries⁵³. As such, socio-economic considerations should be considered inseparable from concerns about ethnic make-up and constitutive of the population's multiple identities when tackling the problems in different regions of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Just as "the Kremlin applies different approaches to different regions across the world, using local rivalries and resentments to divide and conquer"⁵⁴, a policy meant to respond to this challenge should be equally versatile and



adapted to local realities, despite being fundamentally different in purpose and normative foundations from the Russian one.

Finally, in addition to designing specific strategies for addressing and responding to

the instigations to separatism and ethnic hatred, an essential feature of this project is to continue to monitor and report such cases, in the Baltic states and elsewhere, as this issue brief has sought to do.



Notes and References

¹ Pomerantsev, Peter and Michael Weiss, “The Menace of Unreality: How the Kremlin Weaponizes Information, Culture and Money”, Institute of Modern Russia (New York), 2014, 29, at http://www.interpretermag.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/The_Menace_of_Unreality_Final.pdf (Accessed: May 28, 2015). The report quotes Russian Chief of General Staff Valery Gerasimov, who stated in 2013: “The role of nonmilitary means of achieving political and strategic goals has grown and, in many cases, they have exceeded the power of force of weapons in their effectiveness”.

² The doctrine of “The Russian World” (originally “Russkiy mir”) would include not only Russians in Russia or Russian minorities living outside of the Russian Federation but also all those who are not ethnic Russians but capable to speak the Russian language.

³ Population and Housing Census of Latvia (2011), at http://data.csb.gov.lv/pxweb/en/tautassk_11/tautassk_11_tsk2011/TSG11-061.px/table/tableViewLayout1?rxid=992a0682-2c7d-4148-b242-7b48ff9fe0c2 (Accessed: May 29, 2015).

⁴ Population and Housing Census of Estonia (2011), at http://pub.stat.ee/pxweb.2001/Dialog/varval.asp?ma=PC0430&ti=POPULATION+BY+ETHNIC+NATIONALITY%2C+SEX%2C+AGE+GROUP%2C+LABOUR+STATUS+AND+PLACE+OF+RESIDENCE%2C+31+DECEMBER+2011&path=../I_Databas/Population_census/PHC2011/01Demographic_and_ethno_cultural_characteristics/04Ethnic_nationality_Languages_Dialects/&lang=1 (Accessed: May 29, 2015).

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⁷ Aleksėjūnaitė, Asta, “Už provokacijos – byla”, Diena (21 January 2015), at <http://kauno.diena.lt/naujienos/klaipeda/miesto-pulsas/uz-provokacijos-byla-670664#.VXWjEEakDcu> (Accessed: January 22, 2015).

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⁹ Irina Rozova is a member of the political party “Russian Alliance”; however, in 2012 she was elected to the Lithuanian parliament on the list of the Polish minority party “Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania”. From 2009 to 2012 she served as assistant to Waldemar Tomaszewski, who is the leader of the party “Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania” and who was a member of the European Parliament at that time.

¹⁰ Vainalavičiūtė, Indrė, “Tyliausia Seimo narė driokstelėjo per Kremliaus televiziją”, Lietuvos rytas (8 December 2014), at <http://www.lrytas.lt/lietuvos-diena/aktualijos/tyliausia-seimo-nare-driokstelėjo-per-kremliaus-televizija.htm> (Accessed: January 30, 2015).

¹¹ Morozovas, Artūras, “Nacionaldarbininkų lyderis Lietuvoje: imsiu pinigus iš bet ko”, Delfi (15 February 2015), at <http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/nacionaldarbininku-lyderis-lietuvoje-imsiu-pinigus-is-bet-ko.d?id=67182716> (Accessed: February 16, 2015).

¹² Available at <https://ltnacionalistas.wordpress.com/> (Accessed: June 8, 2015).



¹³ “Estoniya: ruskikh prizvali sozdat avtonomiyu”, Delfi (15 September 2008), at <http://rus.delfi.lv/news/daily/abroad/estoniya-ruskikh-prizvali-sozdat-avtonomiyu.d?id=21957748> (Accessed: June 15, 2015).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Available at < <https://www.facebook.com/BalticRussia> > (Accessed: February 9, 2015)

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ According to Andrew Rettman, the images appeared on the Facebook page of Vladimir Linderman, but were quickly taken down by their authors. See: Rettman, Andrew, “Latvia: Facebook separatism prompts alarm, amusement”, EUobserver (30 January 2015), at <<https://euobserver.com/foreign/127438>> (Accessed: March 11, 2015).

¹⁹ Goble, Paul, “Putin and Latvia’s Latgale: Ethnicity as Explanation Vs. Ethnicity as Excuse”, 12(97) *Eurasia Daily Monitor* (2015), at http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=43948&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=27&cHash=b95061f0674c09f631da3b5765e12191#.VWcMQM-qpHx (Accessed: May 28, 2015).

²⁰ Rettman, *ibid.*

²¹ Available at <www.postsovietstates.com> (Accessed: February 18, 2015).

²² The 2012 constitutional referendum in Latvia proposed to include a provision whereby Russian would become the second official language and to prescribe two working languages – Latvian and Russian – for self-government institutions, as well as establishing the rights for everyone to receive information in Latvian and Russian. See: Central Electoral Commission of Latvia, at <<http://www.cvk.lv/pub/public/30287.html>> (Accessed: June 2, 2015).

²³ The referendum was not successful. Results at <<http://www.tn2012.cvk.lv/report-results.html>> (Accessed: June 2, 2015).

²⁴ Available at <<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Wileńska-Republika-Ludowa>> (Accessed: February 9, 2015).

²⁵ It should be noted that the party “Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania” includes some prominent supporters of Vladimir Putin’s regime, such as Waldemar Tomaszewski, who is the leader of this Polish minority party and MEP on its behalf; for example, he wore the St. Gregory Ribbon after the annexation of Crimea last year. See: Trybulski, Łukasz, at <<http://natemat.pl/101621,wpadka-kandydata-do-pe-waldemar-tomaszewski-z-symbolem-rosyjskiej-armii>> (Accessed: June 3, 2015).

²⁶ Černiauskas, Šarūnas and Rūta Pukenė, “Išpuolis ar nevykęs pokštas? Agituoja už ‘Vilniaus liaudies respubliką’”, Delfi (January 29, 2015), at <<http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/ispuolis-ar-nevykes-pokstas-agituoja-uz-vilniaus-liaudies-respublika.d?id=67034814>> (Accessed: January 29, 2015).

²⁷ Available at: <www.Xportal.pl> (Accessed: February 18, 2015).



²⁸ Baltic News Service, “Prorusiškos grupuotės Lietuvoje su karine parama gali tapti pavojingos” (30 March 2015), at <<http://www.delfi.lt/archive/print.php?id=67570476>> (Accessed: March 30, 2015).

²⁹ Melianas, Imantas, “Mūsų laukia Vilnijos, Klaipėdos ir Ignalinos ‘liaudies respublikų’ įkūrimas?”, Delfi (24 March 2015), at <<http://www.delfi.lt/news/ringas/abroad/i-melianas-musu-laukia-vilnijos-klaipedos-ir-ignalinos-liaudies-respubliku-ikurimas.d?id=67468716>> (Accessed: March 25, 2015). Melianas is a member of the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party. From 2010 to 2012 he served as an advisor to the Lithuanian minister of culture on ethnic minority issues, and from 1995 to 2007 he was an officer of the Lithuanian State Security Department.

³⁰ The most recent such attempt (mid-March 2015) was to instigate ethnic separatism in Transcarpathia “Long live Ruthenia. The Russian press cooks up ethnic separatism in Transcarpathia”, *The Economist* (3 April 2015), at <<http://www.economist.com/node/21647828>> (Accessed: April 6, 2015).

³¹ Sergei Karaganov, one of President Yeltsin's advisors, in 1992 "argued that Russian meddling in other countries within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is justified in the human rights of Russian compatriots are believed to be at stake. Soon afterwards his ideas were labelled the 'Karaganov doctrine'". Vemeulen, Marijke, “Dusting off the Karaganov doctrine”, *European Geostrategy* (17 April 2014), at <http://www.europeangeostrategy.org/2014/04/dusting-karaganov-doctrine/> (Accessed: June 12, 2015).

³² Petsinis, Vassilis, “Eurasianism and the Far Right in Central and South East Europe”, *8 Central and Eastern European Review* (2014), at 2.

³³ Jilge, Wilfried, “Analyse: Die Ukraine aus Sicht der "Russkij Mir"”, *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung* (17 June 2014), at <http://www.bpb.de/internationales/europa/russland/186517/analyse-die-ukraine-aus-sicht-der-russkij-mir> (Accessed: June 14, 2015).

³⁴ Shekhovtsov, Anton, “Putin’s Brain?”, 4(13) *New Eastern Europe*, (2014), 72-79, at 75.

³⁵ Umland, Andreas, “Post-Soviet Uncivil Society and the Rise of Aleksandr Dugin. A Case Study of the Extraparliamentary Radical Right in Contemporary Russia”, PhD Dissertation on file at the University of Cambridge (2007), 146-159.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 145.

³⁷ Shekhovtsov, Anton, “Aleksandr Dugin and the SYRIZA connection”, Anton Shekhovtsov’s blog (28 January 2015), at <<http://anton-shekhovtsov.blogspot.de/2015/01/aleksandr-dugin-and-syriza-connection.html>> (Accessed: May 29, 2015).

³⁸ Shekhovtsov, Anton, “What does the fascist conference in St Petersburg tell us about contemporary Russia”, Anton Shekhovtsov’s blog (1 April 2015), at <<http://anton-shekhovtsov.blogspot.de/2015/04/what-does-fascist-conference-in-st.html#more>> (Accessed: May 29, 2015). While aware of the problematic use of the term ‘moderate’ when referring to far right parties such as *Front National* or *Jobbik*, this appears justified when comparing such parliamentary parties with the extreme right participants in the St Petersburg conference.

³⁹ Bigg, Claire, “French Far-Right Party Took Loan From Russian Bank”, *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty* (24 November 2014), at <<http://www.rferl.org/content/russia-france-national-front-loan-le-pen/26707339.html>> (Accessed: May 29, 2015). Shekhovtsov, Anton, “The French far right secure a €9mln loan from a Russian bank close to Putin”, Anton Shekhovtsov’s blog (24 November 2014) at <<http://anton-shekhovtsov.blogspot.de/2014/11/the-french-far-right-secure-9m-loan.html>> (Accessed: May 29, 2015).



⁴⁰ “In the Kremlin’s pocket. Who backs Putin, and why”, The Economist (12 February 2015), at <<http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21643222-who-backs-putin-and-why-kremlins-pocket>> (Accessed: May 29, 2015).

⁴¹ Petsinis, Vassilis, “Press-clipping the Tsipras-Putin meeting: the early impressions”, openDemocracy (15 April 2015), at <<https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/vassilis-petsinis/pressclipping-tsiprasputin-meeting-early-impressions>> (Accessed: June 18, 2015).

⁴² Mudde, Cas, “Russia’s Trojan Horse”, openDemocracy (8 December 2014), at <<https://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/cas-mudde/russia%27s-trojan-horse>> (Accessed: May 29, 2015).

⁴³ “In the Kremlin’s pocket. Who backs Putin, and why”.

⁴⁴ The police arrived and searched the schools during the lessons time – instead of choosing another time for search. See: Girnius, Kęstutis, “Kratos rusų mokyklose: gal persistengiamo?”, Delfi (17 December 2015) at <<http://www.delfi.lt/news/ringas/lit/k-girnius-kratos-rusu-mokyklose-gal-persistengiamo.d?id=66696658>> (Accessed: January 30, 2015).

⁴⁵ This action is not only counter-productive in terms of relations between ethnic communities in Lithuania, but also in technical terms, since this sanction can easily be evaded by watching the forbidden Russian TV programs on the internet.

⁴⁶ Pomerantsev and Weiss, *ibid*, 24.

⁴⁷ “Propaganda gegen Propaganda. EU bereitet sich auf Informationskrieg mit Russland vor“, Der Tagesspiegel (19 March 2015) at <<http://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/propaganda-gegen-propaganda-eu-bereitet-sich-auf-informationskrieg-mit-russland-vor/11529612.html>> (Accessed: April 7, 2015).

⁴⁸ “Die EU zieht in den Propagandakampf“, Die Zeit (20 March 2015), at <<http://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2015-03/russland-propaganda-eu-strategie-informationskrieg>> (Accessed: April 7, 2015).

⁴⁹ Strengthening and facilitating the investigative journalism in the Baltic states is also to be taken into account. The capacity building of Baltic journalists – including training of Russian-speaking journalists – needs further support. See: McCarthy, Deborah A., “Defending the Tower in the Age of Twitter: Lithuanian Lessons on Russian Disinformation”, Council of American Ambassadors (spring 2015), at <<https://www.americanambassadors.org/publications/ambassadors-review/spring-2015/defending-the-tower-in-the-age-of-twitter-lithuanian-lessons-on-russian-disinformation>> (Accessed: May 29, 2015).

⁵⁰ McCarthy, Deborah A., *ibid*.

⁵¹ Pomerantsev and Weiss, *ibid*, 43.

⁵² Goble, *ibid*.

⁵³ Norkus, Zenonas, “Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian post-communist development in the comparative perspective”, in *Estonian Human Development Report 2010/2011* (Tallinn: Eesti Koostöö Kogu, 2011), 22-30.

⁵⁴ Pomerantsev and Weiss, *ibid*, 43.



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