

A REPORT OF THE CSIS  
EUROPE PROGRAM

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# CONTENTS

<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>1. Russia-Estonia Relations: Troubled Past and Simmering Tensions</b>	<b>1</b>
Historical Context	1
Diplomatic Relations	2
Tensions in Estonia-Russia Relations	3
Historical Controversies and the Bronze Night Incident	4
Cyber Attacks and Energy Disputes	6
Containing the Bilateral Damage?	7
<b>2. The Persisting Margin: Estonia's Minority Policy and its Russian Speakers</b>	<b>9</b>
Estonia's Citizenship Policy and Statelessness	9
The Language Debate	10
<b>3. Russia's Compatriot Policy: Soft Power or Soft Propaganda?</b>	<b>12</b>
Nongovernmental Organizations	14
Media	16
Political Influence	18
Legal Action	19
The Russian Orthodox Church	22
<b>4. Russians in Estonia: Just How Compatriotic Are They?</b>	<b>24</b>
Survey Methodology	24
Population Profile	25
Estonia Divided, Russian Minority United	27
Conclusions	39
<b>5. Policy Recommendations</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>About the Authors</b>	<b>44</b>



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study examines the current state of relations among Russia, Estonia, and ethnic Russians living in Estonia. The report pays special attention to the Russian Compatriot Policy, which seeks to codify the relationship of the Russian diaspora to its homeland and to evaluate its effectiveness as a soft power foreign policy tool in Estonia. Analysis of this policy, as well as an understanding of Estonian domestic policies toward and relationships with the Russian minority within the country, has been conducted based on the results of a comprehensive survey conducted by CSIS in 2009 and 2010. The survey data were generated through interviews with over 3,000 individuals between the ages of 16 and 29, including equal numbers of Russians living in Russia, native Estonians living in Estonia and ethnic Russians living in Estonia. This research not only helps shed light on the current state of affairs for the Russian minority in Estonia, but also gives clues as to where the situation is heading.

The report includes an overview of historical issues confronting the Estonia/Russia relationship, with a particular focus on major disagreements regarding historical interpretations of World War II and the subsequent Soviet occupation of Estonia. This includes a description of the so-called 2007 Bronze Night incident and the waves of cyber attacks that followed. Estonian citizenship policies, with specific attention to Estonian language requirements, are also examined. This is followed by an in-depth overview of the Russian Compatriot Policy in Estonia, including its reach through nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the media, legal action, and the Russian Orthodox Church.

The discussion of these topics, coupled with the analysis of the survey data, has resulted in a number of policy recommendations for the governments of both Estonia and Russia. The main suggestions and conclusions are as follows:

- The Estonian government must take further action to integrate its Russian minority within Estonian society. This integration can be achieved through more active promotion of friendship networks, efforts to increase diversity at the workplace, and the promotion of nongovernmental organizations that focus on shared social and political interests rather than division along ethnic lines. By encouraging ethnic Estonians to build personal relationships with ethnic Russians, the Estonian government can help improve understanding and reduce tensions.
- The Estonian government should make it a priority to reduce the high unemployment rates among the Russian minority in Estonia by offering Estonian language classes to Russian adults and training courses for workers. Learning Estonian would help not just in removing the barrier to employment faced by many ethnic Russians living in Estonia, but also with wider integration in Estonian society. Higher employment rates among the Russian minority would

improve the outlook of these individuals, strengthening their links to Estonia, and also provide a valuable contribution to the country's growing economy.

- The Russian government should encourage the minority in Estonia to take part politically, economically, and socially in the country. This will serve to alleviate tensions for the population within Estonia and would benefit broader relations between Tallinn and Moscow.
- Both the Russian and Estonian governments should refrain from hostile rhetoric directed at one another. They should acknowledge that this antagonism only heightens ethnic divisions within Estonia, thus making the situation more volatile, and also generates a negative perception of the situation internationally.

Russia and Estonia have a difficult history, and tensions between the two countries will not disappear overnight. These tensions can be particularly acute for the Russian minority living within Estonia. However, as time passes and a new generation of leaders from the post-Soviet era rise to prominence, there is a great opportunity for better integration of the Russian minority in Estonia. This would improve the lives of these individuals, strengthen Estonia, and help alleviate broader tensions between Russia and Estonia.



## INTRODUCTION

*What is soft power? It is the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payment. It arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies. When our policies are seen as legitimate in the eyes of others, our soft power is enhanced... When you can get others to admire your ideals and to want what you want, you do not have to spend as much on sticks and carrots to move them in your direction.—Joseph S. Nye Jr<sup>1</sup>*

Over the past decade, Russia has undertaken a major campaign to revamp its image abroad. The Russian state now funds 24-hour, multilingual television programming around the world; places news supplements in papers of record from the United States and United Kingdom to India and Brazil; and has won bids to host the 2014 Winter Olympics and the 2018 FIFA World Cup.<sup>2</sup> In post-Soviet countries, Russia's outreach and approach is more a focused effort conducted via a range of strategies and policies embodied in Russia's Compatriot Policy—an initiative intended to codify the relationship of the Russian diaspora in Russia's historical sphere of influence to the homeland. Through its Compatriot Policy, the Russian Federation has sought to position itself as a protector of, voice for, and resource to Russian-speaking minorities living in former Soviet states.

Western scholars have argued that Russia is engaging in a major soft power project in an effort to reclaim its preeminent role on the international stage. News supplements and major sporting events are indeed reminiscent of the kind of soft power discussed by Joseph Nye in his assessment of American soft power and its widespread yet often underappreciated influence. But much of Russia's evolving foreign policy, particularly directed toward the Baltic states and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) with significant Russian-speaking minorities, appears more a hybrid mix of classical forms of soft power and Soviet-style propaganda, as embodied in its Compatriot Policy. In an effort to better understand this Russia-specific hybrid soft power—its intentions, its effectiveness amongst Russian-speaking minorities, and its implications for those

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1. Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), p. x.

2. RT International, RT America, RT Arabic, and Actualidad RT are all 24-hour television stations funded by the Russian government; "Where to Watch," RT, <http://rt.com/where-to-watch/>. Papers that offer this Russian news supplement include *The Washington Post* (United States), *The Daily Telegraph* (Great Britain), *Le Figaro* (France), *The Economic Times* (India), *The Times of India* (India), *Дума* (Bulgaria), *Folha de São Paulo* (Brazil), *La Repubblica* (Italy), *Clarín* (Argentina), *El País* (Spain), *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Germany), and *Геополитика* (Serbia); "About," *Russia Now*, <http://russianow.washingtonpost.com/about/>; Sochi 2014, <http://sochi2014.com/en/>; 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia, <http://www.fifa.com/worldcup/russia2018/index.html>.



targeted countries home to these minorities—the case of Estonia, an EU, NATO, and Eurozone member and also home to more than 380,000 Russian speakers will be examined in detail.<sup>3</sup>

In order to understand the scope and assess the impact of Russia's soft power policy techniques toward Estonia and specifically toward Estonia's Russian-speaking minority, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in cooperation with Theodore P. Gerber, professor of sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, conducted a series of interviews with Russian thought leaders, Estonian scholars and government officials, and U.S. scholars and government officials with expertise in the region. In efforts to determine the efficacy of Russia's strategy or whether it had achieved success at "building pro-Russian constituencies in post-Soviet societies," CSIS surveyed over 1,000 ethnic Russians in Estonia, ages 16 to 29, on issues related to their identity, attitudes toward Estonia and Russia, and their views on Soviet history among other issues.<sup>4</sup> Those surveyed were at most nine years old when Estonia declared independence from the Soviet Union, and some were not even born. This cohort therefore may be less prone to see the world through the prism of Soviet-era tensions and conflicts. It is especially instructive to simultaneously compare the views of young ethnic Russians to their peers in the ethnic Estonian population and also in the Russian Federation; accordingly, the same survey was given to these other two groups at approximately the same time. By examining young people's views toward their home country and Russia through this "three-way mirror" (Russians, Estonians, and Russians in Estonia reflecting on themselves and each other), as well as incorporating these findings into analysis of Russia's overarching soft power approach, we hope to shed light on the effectiveness of Russian soft power in Estonia on the next generation of Estonians and Russian-speaking Estonians and identify grounds on which Estonian officials can build a constructive policy for mitigating tensions.

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3. Russian speakers make up 29.7 percent of the 1.28 million people in Estonia. This group is distinguished from ethnic Russians, who make up 25.6 percent of the Estonian population, or roughly 330,000 people. See "Estonia," *World Factbook*, CIA, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/en.html>.

4. Ivan Krastev quoted in Owen Matthews, "Softer Russian Power," *Newsweek*, June 9, 2008, <http://www.newsweek.com/2008/05/31/softer-russian-power.html>.

## 1

# RUSSIA-ESTONIA RELATIONS

## TROUBLED PAST AND SIMMERING TENSIONS

### Historical Context

On August 23, 1939, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, a so-called nonaggression pact that included a secret provision that divided Eastern Europe—from the Baltics to the Black Sea—between the two powers, with the Soviets claiming much of the Baltics as their “sphere of influence.”<sup>1</sup> By the fall of 1939, the Red Army had begun to cross into Estonia, setting up military camps. And on June 17, 1940, Estonia fell to the occupying Soviet forces.<sup>2</sup> The Soviets enacted harsh measures to maintain control over Estonian territory and its people, including arrests, repressions, and mass deportations of entire groups perceived as potential enemies of the Communist regime. For example, more than 10,000 individuals were deported from Estonia to Siberia under very harsh conditions in June 1941. When Germany broke the nonaggression pact by invading Soviet territories in June 1941, it occupied Estonia beginning in July. The Red Army brought Estonia back under Soviet control in September 1944, where it remained until 1991. A new round of even larger deportations of ethnic Estonians ensued in the late 1940s.<sup>3</sup>

Following the war, Estonia was structurally incorporated by force into the Soviet system and culturally Russified. The Soviets created functional domains, including banking, military, and transportation among others, in which Russian was the dominant or only language of use. Several waves of ethnic Russian immigrants entered Estonia in the 1970s to work in Estonia’s growing industrial sector. As a result, the number of ethnic Estonians fell from approximately 90 percent of the country’s population in 1945 to 60 percent in 1989.<sup>4</sup>

After almost 50 years as a Soviet republic, Estonia declared independence on August 20, 1991. At the time, Estonia’s population included numerous ethnic groups—Finns, Tatars, Germans, and Poles to name just a few—but the two most significant groups, Estonians and Russians, made up 65 percent and 28 percent of the population of 1.5 million respectively.<sup>5</sup> For Estonians, this meant the first chance at sovereignty since World War II, but for native Russian speakers living in Estonia, many of whom moved to Estonia during the Soviet era, Estonian independence meant minority status, and often (as discussed in chapter 2) statelessness.

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1. “The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, 1939,” *Modern History Sourcebook*, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1939pact.html>.

2. Clare Thomson, “Lifting the Veil on Estonia’s Past,” *History Today* 39, issue 9 (September 1989), <http://www.historytoday.com/clare-thomson/lifting-veil-estonias-past>.

3. “Soviet deportations from Estonia in the 1940s,” Official Gateway to Estonia, <http://estonia.eu/about-estonia/country/soviet-deportations-from-estonia-in-1940s.html>.

4. European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI), “Minorities and Majorities in Estonia: Problems of Integration at the Threshold of the EU,” March 1999, [http://www.ecmi.de/uploads/tx\\_lfpubdb/report\\_2.pdf](http://www.ecmi.de/uploads/tx_lfpubdb/report_2.pdf).

5. Ibid. Population shifts were already well underway throughout the war years, beginning in 1940. See also Mart Rannut, “Language Policy in Estonia,” *Noves SL, Revista de Sociolingüística* (Spring-Summer 2004), <http://www6.gencat.net/llengcat/noves/hm04primavera-estiu/docs/rannut.pdf>.

## Diplomatic Relations

Diplomatic relations between Estonia and Russia resumed soon after Russia recognized Estonia's independence in 1991, with embassies in each other's capitals and consulate generals in St. Petersburg and Narva respectively.<sup>6</sup>

Estonia has an open dialogue approach to relations with Russia, showing willingness to engage Moscow either bilaterally or within the framework of NATO's and the European Union's partnership relations with Russia. Estonia's foreign policy goal toward Russia is to "promote practical co-operation that is beneficial to the citizens of both countries."<sup>7</sup> Relations between Estonia and Russia are based on the EU-Russia Partnership and Co-operation Agreement (PCA) of 1997, the four common spaces agreed on in May 2005, and the Modernization Partnership adopted in 2010.<sup>8</sup>

Estonia-Russia diplomatic ties were particularly strained following the 2007 Bronze Night incident. The Bronze Night refers to the riots on the streets of the Estonian capital Tallinn following the contentious decision and subsequent relocation of a bronze Soviet monument to fallen World War II Soviet soldiers, from downtown Tallinn to a cemetery 3 kilometers (1.86 miles) outside the city center. Whereas ethnic Estonians perceived the statue as a symbol of Soviet occupation, Estonia's Russian community viewed the monument as representative of both their victory over Nazi Germany during the Great Patriotic War and their claim to equal rights in Estonia. Strains in the Estonia-Russia diplomatic relationship were exacerbated by the prolonged "war of words" between officials from both countries. Calls for a break in diplomatic ties came from both sides, with Foreign Minister Urmas Paet of Estonia urging the European Union to call off an upcoming EU-Russia summit as a sign of solidarity with Estonia.<sup>9</sup>

Tensions were further heightened by a large-scale cyber attack on Estonian government and commercial entities, which was traced to Russian computer servers.<sup>10</sup> This attack was complex, involving three separate waves in April and May 2007 that succeeded in disabling websites for the Estonian presidency, parliament, government ministries, political parties, news organizations, and banks.<sup>11</sup> The cyber attacks were immediately followed by an embargo of Russian oil and coal exports through the port of Tallinn, which deeply affected the Estonian and Russian economies. In August 8, 2008, as conflict broke out between Russia and Georgia, Estonia and the Baltic countries fully supported the Georgian president, which further increased tensions between Moscow and Tallinn. In January 2009, Russia ceased the supply of natural gas to Ukraine, which also affected energy supplies to Estonia and its economy. Despite this particularly tense period of relations between Estonia and Russia in 2007 and 2009, Estonia has not prevented EU negotiations for a new EU-Russia partnership agreement from moving forward.<sup>12</sup>

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6. "Estonia and Russia," Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www.vm.ee/?q=en/node/93>.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Andrew Rettman, "Estonia calls for EU help on Russia embassy siege," *EU Observer*, May 2, 2007, <http://euobserver.com/9/23972/?rk=1>.

10. "Estonia accuses Russia of 'cyberattack,'" *Christian Science Monitor*, May 17, 2007, <http://www.cs-monitor.com/2007/0517/p99s01-duts.html>.

11. "Russia accused of unleashing cyberwar to disable Estonia," *The Guardian*, May 17, 2007, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/may/17/topstories3.russia>.

12. "Estonia and Russia," Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Estonia and Russia have about 30 bilateral agreements currently in effect, including the 2005 treaty on the Estonia-Russia border and agreements on cross-border passage, taxation, transportation and shipping, criminal justice coordination, and culture and mass communication cooperation.<sup>13</sup> After years of attempting to thwart Estonia's accession to NATO and the European Union by not signing a border agreement with Estonia, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov of Russia finally signed the agreement to fix the borders in 2005.<sup>14</sup> Soon afterward, however, the Russian Duma withheld ratification because the Estonian Parliament included a historic reference to the 1920 Tartu Peace Treaty in the border agreement's preamble, which was viewed by Russia as a "territorial pretension by Estonia." To date, an Estonia-Russia border agreement has not been ratified.<sup>15</sup>

## Tensions in Estonia-Russia Relations

In the immediate period after Estonian independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, relations with the Russian Federation were very challenging, as heavy-handed Russian foreign policy toward Estonia was designed to "force other states to friendship." The concept of "forced friendship" included the use of economic sanctions, gas cutoffs, and harsh political rhetoric in an attempt to affect Estonian language and citizenship policies and discourage Estonia's NATO and EU membership aspirations.<sup>16</sup> In recent years, however, Russia has shifted its heavy-handed tactics to a more subtle and nimble approach, focusing away from coercively trying to change Estonian policies to a more nuanced policy of "discrediting" the new republic in the international arena through propaganda tools in order to conjure a negative image of Estonia and other Baltic states and diminish their appeal "as role models for Russia's domestic audience."<sup>17</sup> During this period, Russia has attempted to revitalize and reorganize its Compatriot Policy to exert influence over Estonia through soft power tools such as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), media dissemination, the Russian Orthodox Church, and political and humanitarian support for the Russian minority in Estonia. These approaches have not been welcomed by the Estonian authorities who have grown increasingly concerned about both the hidden agenda behind Russia's revamped approach and its impact on European and American audiences.

Russia has been equally critical of many of Estonia's policies. The Estonian government's language requirement that employees in the public sphere be operational in both the Estonian and Russian languages has created employment obstacles for Russian speakers who never previously had to learn Estonian. Estonia's requirements for citizenship (see chapter 2) and its treatment of the Russian minority in Estonia in general are viewed as discriminatory by Moscow. Major points of friction in Estonia-Russia relations occur due to vastly different interpretations of World War II history, which is symptomatic of the 2007 Bronze Soldier of Tallinn incident. Moreover, Russian political tactics in Estonia, such as the Kremlin's funding of the Center Party (which represents 81

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13. Ibid.

14. "Russia/Estonia: Milestone Border Treaty Signed," Radio Free Europe, May 18, 2005, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1058924.html>.

15. "Border Treaty Put Aside in Estonia-Russia Relations," Estonian Public Broadcasting, June 8, 2011, <http://news.err.ee/Politics/117df141-73cf-4e9e-b702-d4b5e359be89>.

16. "Soft Power? The Means and Ends of Russian Influence," Chatham House, March 31, 2011, 12, <http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/Research/Russia%20and%20Eurasia/310311summary.pdf>.

17. Ibid, 13.

percent of the Russian-speaking vote<sup>18</sup>) immediately prior to the March 6, 2011, national elections, have placed great strains on the Estonia-Russia diplomatic relationship.<sup>19</sup> A U.S. official has described the official Estonia-Russia relationship as “nonexistent,” as the only meetings to take place between Estonia and Russia at the ministerial level in 2010 were between the regional development ministers and the cultural ministers.<sup>20</sup> As one expert put it, “Estonia has been the last to feel the Russian thaw” in its bilateral relations, with recent meetings between the foreign ministers taking place only within the multilateral framework of the Council of the Baltic Sea States.<sup>21</sup>

## Historical Controversies and the Bronze Night Incident

Estonia and Russia have sharply divergent perspectives on Soviet history and promote differing interpretations of World War II history. The majority of Estonians consider the Soviet Union to have been a hostile occupying force, which is hard to square with the Russian view that Soviet troops “liberated” Estonia from Nazi occupation.

A main objective of Russia’s Compatriot Policy is “the fight against the falsifiers of history,” a task that is actively promoted by compatriot organizations, as well as local extreme groups such as the youth NGO Molodoje Slovo.<sup>22</sup> In fact, this “fight” is a thinly veiled campaign against any accounts of twentieth-century history that portray the actions of the Soviet Union—particularly during and following World War II—in a negative light. Despite EU, U.S., and European Council of Human Rights (ECHR) recognition of Soviet occupation of the Baltic countries and encouragement for Russia to admit to illegally annexing the region after World War II, Russia continues to deny those claims and argues that the Soviet troops were deployed with the consent of the Baltic governments of the time.<sup>23</sup> There have been several accusations from Russian officials, condemning Estonia not only of fascism and collaboration with Nazi Germany during World War II, but also glorification of Nazism and support for neo-Nazi groups during recent years.<sup>24</sup> As recently as August 2011, there have been flare-ups in tensions on this point, with Russian member of parliament Maxim Mishchenko calling a gathering of Estonian Waffen SS veterans who had fought the Soviet advance in 1944 “an attempt to reanimate fascism.”<sup>25</sup> The Estonian Foreign Ministry responded by calling the event a “customary, civic-initiative event that corresponds to internationally accepted practice for commemorating those who fell in World War II” and adding that Estonia

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18. “Centre Party is still the most popular political party among non-Estonians,” *Postimees*, August 29, 2010, <http://www.postimees.ee/?id=305551>.

19. “KAPO accuses Savisaar of Russian bias,” *The Baltic Times*, December 21, 2010, <http://www.baltic-times.com/news/articles/27582/>.

20. “Estonia and Russia,” Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www.vm.ee/?q=en/node/93#visits>.

21. “Foreign Minister Paet Met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov,” Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 8, 2011, <http://www.vm.ee/?q=en/node/11810>.

22. Kärt Juhasoo-Lawrence, “A Taboo Topic for Diplomats,” *Diplomaatia*, no. 91, March 2011, [http://www.diplomaatia.ee/index.php?id=242&L=1&tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=1241&tx\\_ttnews\[backPid\]=575&cHash=250614928b](http://www.diplomaatia.ee/index.php?id=242&L=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=1241&tx_ttnews[backPid]=575&cHash=250614928b).

23. “Russia denies Baltic ‘occupation,’” BBC, May 5, 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4517683.stm>.

24. “Russia Begins to Lose Temper as Estonia Continues to Glorify Nazism,” *Pravda*, July 30, 2009, [http://english.pravda.ru/world/ussr/30-07-2009/108506-glorify\\_nazism-0/](http://english.pravda.ru/world/ussr/30-07-2009/108506-glorify_nazism-0/).

25. Alexei Chernichenko, “Nazi Gathering: EU Keeps Silent,” *The Voice of Russia*, August 2, 2011, <http://english.ruvr.ru/2011/08/03/54131301.html>.



“has condemned the crimes of all totalitarian regimes that occupied Estonia and denounces any ideological manipulation of this topic.”<sup>26</sup>

In October 2007, Russian representative Maria Zakharova stated before the UN General Assembly:

We must not let the memories about the people who fought against Fascism and National Socialism sink into oblivion. In this connection, we condemn the emerging trend in many countries to glorify the cronies of Nazis and to destroy statues that have been erected to honor the memory of those who fought during the war in the anti-Hitler coalition.<sup>27</sup>

A controversial monument in Lihula honoring Estonian soldiers who fought the Red Army alongside Nazi forces during World War II has been reported as an “SS monument” and heavily criticized by Russia as evidence of Estonian glorification of Nazism.<sup>28</sup> Education Minister Tõnis Lukas of Estonia responded to these claims by saying: “We do not glorify the Nazis in any way, but Moscow seems very upset that Estonia considers the Nazi era and Stalinism as equally evil and criminal regimes.”<sup>29</sup> Russians have also been critical of Estonian efforts at prosecuting Communist bureaucrats for severe crimes such as mass deportation and genocide, while accusing Estonia of “not pursuing a full account of some of their citizens’ collaborations with the Nazis.”<sup>30</sup>

Tensions between ethnic Estonians and the Russian minority in Estonia came to boil in the April 2007 Bronze Night incident and triggered a strong negative Russian reaction. The incident was provoked by the Estonian Parliament’s decision to relocate the Bronze Soldier of Tallinn monument and the exhumed bodies of 13 Russian soldiers from a square in the center of Tallinn to a military cemetery on the outskirts. The Soviet-era World War II monument symbolizes “liberation and the defeat of Nazism” for the Russian minority, but it is reminiscent of “half a century of brutal Soviet occupation” for the Estonian minority.<sup>31</sup>

The reasons for relocation claimed by the Estonian government were the inappropriate location of the monument at a busy Tallinn intersection and the view that a military cemetery would be a more proper resting place for the Russian soldiers.<sup>32</sup> However, the decision was probably also influenced by its divisive effect on Estonian society, given the fact that the memorial had become a popular destination for the Russian minority—including not only war veterans, but also extremist groups of pro-Soviet demonstrators, and “well-organized groups of Russian-speaking pupils [...] under the firm leadership of their teachers”—to lay flowers, wave Soviet flags, and display Communist insignia.<sup>33</sup>

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26. Juhan Tere, “Russia’s statement does not support development of Estonia-Russia relations,” *The Baltic Course*, August 3, 2011, [http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/baltic\\_states\\_cis/?doc=44208](http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/baltic_states_cis/?doc=44208).

27. Gatis Pelnēns, ed., *The “Humanitarian Dimension” of Russian Foreign Policy toward Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and the Baltic States* (Riga: Centre for East European Policy Studies, 2009), p. 50, [http://www.geopolitika.lt/files/research\\_2009.pdf](http://www.geopolitika.lt/files/research_2009.pdf).

28. “Estonia unveils Nazi war monument,” BBC, August 20, 2004, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/3585272.stm>.

29. “Estonia removes SS monument,” BBC, July 24, 2002, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2148732.stm>.

30. C.J. Chivers, “Estonia Accuses Ex-Official of Genocide,” *New York Times*, August 23, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/23/world/europe/23estonia.html?ref=world>.

31. Adrian Blomfield, “War of words over bronze soldier,” *The Telegraph*, February 5, 2007, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1541641/War-of-words-over-bronze-soldier.html>.

32. Tony Halpin, “Analysis: why the Bronze Soldier is so controversial,” *The Times*, April 27, 2007, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article1715134.ece>.

33. Kadri Liik, “The ‘Bronze Year’ of Estonia-Russia relations,” *Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Yearbook* (2007): 73, [http://www.icds.ee/fileadmin/failid/Kadri\\_Liik\\_Bronze\\_Year.pdf](http://www.icds.ee/fileadmin/failid/Kadri_Liik_Bronze_Year.pdf); Enn Soosaar, “The bronze

The relocation plans were met with opposition by Russian diplomats. Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov condemned the Estonian government's "blasphemous attitude towards the memory of those who struggled against fascism," and the speaker of the Russian parliament's upper house, Sergei Mironov, criticized the law as Estonia's "first step towards legalization of neo-Nazism."<sup>34</sup>

The disagreement over the monument relocation culminated in a night of rioting in Tallinn in which large crowds of Russian speakers protested by waving Russian flags, chanting "Russia, Russia, Russia," looting stores, and throwing petrol bombs on April 26.<sup>35</sup> The following day, the Estonian government decided to immediately dismantle and move the monument due to security concerns. On April 27, a second day of violent clashes ensued between the demonstrators and the police, which resulted in 1 dead protester, 153 injured, and 800 arrested, the worst violence and rioting in Estonia since 1944.<sup>36</sup>

The Russian response to the incident was inflammatory, with parliamentary calls for "the toughest possible measures, including a break in diplomatic relations" with Estonia.<sup>37</sup> These statements added fuel to the tension and incited a siege of the Estonian embassy in Moscow, organized by the pro-Kremlin Russian youth movement, Nashi. Twelve Estonian diplomatic staff were blockaded inside, and the building was vandalized as the Russian police stood idly by.<sup>38</sup>

Estonian foreign minister Urmas Paet accused Russian diplomats of involvement in organizing the Tallinn demonstrations, of funding the extremist group Nashi, and of falsely reporting acts of torture against ethnic Russian prisoners.<sup>39</sup> A 2011 Council of Europe report acknowledged human rights violations during the Tallinn riots, particularly the use of excessive police force, unlawful imprisonment, and inadequate treatment of detainees.<sup>40</sup>

## Cyber Attacks and Energy Disputes

Following the Bronze Night incident, Estonia was subjected to three waves of "massive cyber attacks" that disabled the websites of the Estonian presidency, parliament, and government ministries, political parties, news organizations, and banks.<sup>41</sup> The "unprecedented scale" of this act of cyber warfare created serious disturbances for the Estonian government and economy and caused alarm among NATO officials, who called it an "operational security issue," though not yet classified as a clear military action that would trigger the Article 5 provision of collective defense.<sup>42</sup>

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soldier and its deportation to a military cemetery: The past revisited," *Diplomaatia*, no. 46, June 2007, [http://www.diplomaatia.ee/index.php?id=242&L=1&tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=732&tx\\_ttnews\[backPid\]=311&cHash=3811c97fe2](http://www.diplomaatia.ee/index.php?id=242&L=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=732&tx_ttnews[backPid]=311&cHash=3811c97fe2).

34. Blomfield, "War of words over bronze soldier."

35. "Tallinn tense after deadly riots," BBC, April 28, 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/6602171.stm>.

36. Ibid.

37. "Russia should cut ties with Estonia: Senate," *Forbes*, April 27, 2007, <http://www.forbes.com/feeds/afx/2007/04/27/afx3661239.html>.

38. Andrew Rettman, "Estonia calls for EU help on Russia embassy siege," *EU Observer*, May 2, 2007, <http://euobserver.com/9/23972>.

39. Ibid.

40. "Council of Europe recognizes human rights violations during Bronze Soldier riots," *Russia Today*, April 19, 2011, <http://rt.com/news/council-europe-human-bronze/>.

41. Ian Traynor, "Russia accused of unleashing cyberwar to disable Estonia," *The Guardian*, May 17, 2007, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/may/17/topstories3.russia>.

42. Ibid.

Estonian foreign minister Paet openly accused Russia of being behind the cyber attack, claiming that experts had tracked the attacks to “official IP addresses of Russian authorities.”<sup>43</sup> Russia denied involvement in the attacks, and the subsequent Defense Ministry investigation did not yield substantial evidence to support those claims due to the professional nature of the attacks.<sup>44</sup> The timing of the attacks, however, indicates a clear link to the Bronze Night incident and suggests Russian involvement. The first attack (April 27–May 3) immediately followed the riots, the second (May 8–9) occurred when Russia celebrated Victory Day over Nazi Germany and when then President Vladimir Putin of Russia delivered a hostile speech against Estonia, and the third came a week later on the eve of the EU-Russia summit.<sup>45</sup>

In the aftermath of the Bronze Night incident, Russia also took economic retaliatory measures against Estonia, including a sudden stoppage of exports of oil products and coal through the port of Tallinn.<sup>46</sup> This affected 25 percent of those exports and represented “a significant reduction” of Russia’s export capacity. This stoppage caused losses in export revenues for companies and reduced tax inflows for the state.<sup>47</sup> Since the economic losses were incurred mostly by Russia, the move was seen as a politically motivated snub against Estonia.

## Containing the Bilateral Damage?

The Tallinn riots, the siege of the Estonian embassy, the war of words between Estonian and Russian diplomats, and the cyber attacks against Estonia represented “the worst international crisis Estonia has been involved in since re-establishing its independence in 1991” and most likely the lowest point in Estonia-Russia relations.<sup>48</sup>

Despite these extraordinary challenges to the bilateral relationship, both sides have attempted to contain the damage. As Simmu Tiik, Estonian ambassador to Russia since 2008, has stated, relations between the two countries have been “calmer and more civilized” since the 2007 events.<sup>49</sup> In a June 2011 meeting between Estonian foreign minister Urmas Paet and his counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, the two leaders “noted the positive movement in Estonia-Russia economic relations and acknowledged that Estonia-Russia economic relations have steadily grown closer over the past few years.”<sup>50</sup> The thawing of relations is attributed to the lack of “negative developments,” agreement on gas prices, and increased bilateral trade and tourism.<sup>51</sup>

Immediate tensions may have ebbed for the moment, but ongoing bilateral challenges can quickly ignite. For example, anniversaries of the Bronze Night incident still provoke diplomatic

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43. Arthur Bright, “Estonia accuses Russia of ‘cyberattack,’” *Christian Science Monitor*, May 17, 2007, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/0517/p99s01-duts.html>.

44. “Estonia has no evidence of Kremlin involvement in cyber attacks,” RIA Novosti, September 6, 2007, <http://en.rian.ru/world/20070906/76959190.html>.

45. Traynor, “Russia accused of unleashing cyberwar to disable Estonia.”

46. John Lough, “Russia’s Energy Diplomacy,” briefing paper, Chatham House, May 2011, [http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/19352\\_0511bp\\_lough.pdf](http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/19352_0511bp_lough.pdf).

47. Ibid.

48. Liik, “The ‘Bronze Year’ of Estonia-Russia relations,” 71.

49. Toomas Hõbemägi, “Ambassador: Estonian-Russian relations the best since 1990,” *Baltic Business News*, February 2, 2011, <http://www.balticbusinessnews.com/article/2011/2/2/ambassador-estonian-russian-relations-the-best-since-1990>.

50. “Foreign Minister Paet Met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov,” press release, Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 8, 2011, <http://www.vm.ee/?q=en/node/11810>.

51. Hõbemägi, “Ambassador: Estonian-Russian relations the best since 1990.”



confrontations, such as an inflammatory 2011 statement by the Russian embassy in Estonia that reiterated its accusations toward the Estonian government for conducting a “large-scale smear campaign against the liberators of the Estonian capital from Nazi occupiers,” for breaking the “principles of morality and humanism” by exhuming the remains of the Russian soldiers, and for brutally suppressing the “peaceful protesters” gathered in Tallinn.<sup>52</sup> The statement was in return condemned by the Estonian foreign minister Paet for instigating “new political emotions on the basis of lies” and frustrating Estonia-Russia relations.<sup>53</sup> Heated exchanges like this have taken place repeatedly and can flare up at any moment, as illustrated in the aforementioned August 2011 incident regarding the Erna Raid military contest and the World War II Estonian veteran’s meeting.<sup>54</sup>

Tensions between Estonia and Russia could also flare up in the aftermath of the August 11, 2011 terrorist incident at the Defense Ministry in Tallinn, which was committed by a member of the Russian-speaking community in Estonia. An Armenian-born lawyer, Karen Drambjan, fired shots, detonated smoke bombs, and took two hostages before he was fatally shot by the Estonian security police.<sup>55</sup> The shooter was an active member of the pro-Russian minority “United Left Party,” and had defended a spokeswoman for the primarily Russian-speaking Estonian extremist group Nochnoy Dozor (Night Watch) for her involvement in the 2007 Bronze Nights riots.<sup>56</sup> In 2009, Drambjan wrote a manifesto that called on the “enslaved” Russian minority to rise up against the Estonian government, which he describes as “neofascist” and criticizes for conducting “civil war” against the Russian-speakers and exploiting them.<sup>57</sup> Estonian law-enforcement agencies are investigating whether the gunman was inspired by the recent inflammatory rhetoric from Moscow accusing Estonia of glorifying Nazism.<sup>58</sup>

Nonetheless, diplomatic relations among high-level officials have been slowly improving, and cooperation on the abandoned issue of the border treaty may become open for discussion.<sup>59</sup> Russia’s “positive engagement” with Estonia may be a tactical part of a “broader policy aimed at the constructive cooperation with the West” that conforms to Russian president Dmitry Medvedev’s “modernization” program and the U.S.-Russia reset policy, but it does not supersede Russia’s “strategic tool” of exerting its influence over Estonian affairs.<sup>60</sup> Given Russia’s foreign policy objectives and Estonia’s deep distrust of Russia’s compatriot policy, it is unlikely that the warming of relations will go beyond current levels.

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52. Ott Tammik, “Estonian FM Shuns Russian Embassy Account of Bronze Riots,” Estonian Public Broadcasting, April 27, 2011, <http://news.err.ee/politics/fe0e6b4e-7a52-48c0-86f7-5074f3faf949>.

53. Ibid.

54. Alexei Chernichenko, “Nazi Gathering: EU Keeps Silent,” *The Voice of Russia*, August 3, 2011, <http://english.ruvr.ru/2011/08/03/54131301.html>.

55. “Information Concerning the Security Incident in the Ministry of Defence on 11 August 2011,” Estonian Ministry of Defense, August 12, 2011, <http://www.mod.gov.ee/en/information-concerning-the-security-incident-in-the-ministry-of-defence-on-11-august-2011>.

56. “Estonian gunman echoed Russian propaganda,” *Washington Times*, August 14, 2011, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/aug/14/estonian-gunman-echoed-russian-propaganda/>.

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid.

59. Karmo Tüür, “Russia and Estonia” in *Russian Federation 2011: Short-term Prognosis*, ed. Karmo Tüür (Tartu: Tartu University Press, 2011), 152, <http://www.ut.ee/ABVKeskus/sisu/prognoosid/2011/en/pdf/Rf2011.pdf>.

60. Ibid., 151, 154.

# 2

## THE PERSISTING MARGIN ESTONIA'S MINORITY POLICY AND ITS RUSSIAN SPEAKERS

Twenty years after independence, Estonia has successfully achieved membership in the European Union (2004), NATO (2004), and most recently, the Eurozone (2011). Yet, for all Estonia's transitional success, the country continues to grapple with arguably the most human element of its Soviet past: its relationship with its Russian-speaking minority, which constitutes roughly one-quarter of the population or approximately 380,000 out of a total population of 1.28 million.<sup>1</sup>

### Estonia's Citizenship Policy and Statelessness

Less than a month after Estonia declared its independence in 1991, a special commission on citizenship was formed. This commission proposed a relatively open citizenship policy, which included citizenship for most of the Russian-speaking population, but this proved tremendously controversial.<sup>2</sup> After extensive debate, the Estonian Supreme Council decided in 1992 to reinstate Estonia's pre-Soviet citizenship law of 1938, meaning only Estonian citizens before the first Soviet occupation in 1940 and their descendants were granted automatic citizenship. All other residents, primarily Russian speakers, would have to apply for citizenship through a naturalization process requiring proof of residency, knowledge of Estonia's constitution, and Estonian language proficiency.<sup>3</sup>

As a result of its retroactive citizenship policy, around 32 percent (just under half a million) of Estonia's population, predominantly Russian-speaking, became stateless residents.<sup>4</sup> As such, they were issued grey "alien" passports—distinct from the blue Estonian passports—and allowed to vote only in local elections. The citizenship requirements were demanding for the Russian minority, of which only 15 percent spoke Estonian, a Uralic language far more similar to Finnish than to Russian.<sup>5</sup>

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1. "Estonia," *World Factbook*, CIA, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/en.html>.

2. Lowell W. Barrington, "An Explanation of the Citizenship Policies of Estonia and Lithuania" (paper prepared for delivery at the 1994 annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, New York, NY, September 1–4, 1994), 16.

3. Rannut, "Language Policy in Estonia," 10; "Application of citizenship: Examinations," Police and Border Guard Board (now encompassing the Citizenship and Migration Board), <http://www.politsei.ee/en/teenused/estonian-citizenship/application-of-citizenship/examinations/>.

4. Priit Järve, "Estonian citizenship: Between ethnic preferences and democratic obligations," in *Citizenship Policies in the New Europe*, ed. Rainer Bauböck et al. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 48.

5. Marc Leprêtre, "Language Policies in the Soviet Successor States: A Brief Assessment on Language, Linguistic Rights and National Identity," *Papeles del Este*, no. 3 (2002), <http://www.ucm.es/BUCM/cee/papeles/03/03.PDF>.

Despite the application hurdles, the number of stateless residents in Estonia dropped to 170,000 by 2000 and to under 100,000 as of April 2011.<sup>6</sup> This decline prompted the Estonian government to deem its citizenship policy, effectively a policy of assimilation, an overall success. According to Estonian foreign minister Paet at a June 2011 meeting of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), “reducing the number of people with undetermined citizenship has been an important priority of the government,” and the citizenship requirements are reasonable as “convincingly demonstrated by the tens of thousands of people who have acquired citizenship.”<sup>7</sup>

What Estonia has framed as an achievable benchmark for new citizens, Russia contends is a policy of discrimination. At a meeting of the UN Human Rights Council in February 2011, Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov described the statelessness among the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia as a “shameful phenomenon” that “demands greater attention.”<sup>8</sup> In response, Paet criticized Russia’s policy of waiving the visa requirements for stateless people traveling from Estonia to Russia as “a disservice to the process” of expanding citizenship to the Russian minority.<sup>9</sup> Despite the difficulties in attaining citizenship, Russian speakers in Estonia still remain a large portion of the population as “gray” passport holders who have not fled back to Russia.

## The Language Debate

As a requirement for citizenship, Estonian language requirements have persisted as a divisive issue between Estonia and its Russian-speaking minority since Estonian independence. During much of Estonia’s Soviet period, Estonian was the first state language with Russian the second. However, the use of the Russian language was prioritized over Estonian in interaction with government offices and many sectors such as banking, military, and transportation.

Passed in 1992, Estonia’s Constitution sought to balance the national fervor of independence and minority rights, “guarantee(ing) the preservation of the Estonian nation, language and culture through the ages,” while allowing the use of minority languages (i.e., Russian) on a local scale.<sup>10</sup> However, “persons whose job requires communication with individuals,” such as government officials, police, medical professionals, and journalists among others, have been required since 1989 (as part of perestroika) to be operational in both Russian and Estonian—a greater challenge for Russian-speaking officials who were sent to Estonia by Moscow and had no prior need to learn Estonian.<sup>11</sup> The use of the public sphere as a means for spreading the use of Estonian has been the cornerstone of Estonia’s cultural transition from Soviet republic to sovereign state.

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6. Ott Tammik, “Number of Grey Passport Holders Falls Below 100,000,” Estonian Public Broadcasting, April 25, 2011, <http://news.err.ee/Politics/759a6f74-c555-4f4a-90e4-5f57ad5b921a>.

7. “Paet: Ensuring Protection of National Minorities and Promoting Their Cultures is Government’s Priority,” press release no. 409-E, Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 9, 2011, <http://www.vm.ee/?q=en/node/11822>.

8. Sergei Lavrov, quoted in “Lavrov Blasts Estonia, Latvia on Non-Citizens Issue,” Estonian Public Broadcasting, March 1, 2011, <http://news.err.ee/Politics/22d88774-b7fe-4117-9c4d-6d618704aac2>.

9. “OSCE commissioner urges Estonia to widen citizenship circle,” Estonia Public Broadcasting, June 9, 2011, <http://news.err.ee/politics/90d2c66b-a608-447e-87f4-a51c76c9ba85>.

10. “The Constitution of the Republic of Estonia,” Ministry of Justice, June 28, 1992, <http://www.legal-text.ee/text/en/X0000K1.htm>.

11. Rannut, “Language Policy in Estonia,” 5–6; Language Law of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic, January 18, 1989, Minority Electronic Resources, [http://www.minelres.lv/NationalLegislation/Estonia/Estonia\\_Language1989\\_English.htm](http://www.minelres.lv/NationalLegislation/Estonia/Estonia_Language1989_English.htm).

In addition to citizenship language requirements, Estonian language requirements for both employment and secondary education have undergone intense internal debate, Russian criticism, and international inspection. Enforced by officials from the National Language Inspectorate, within the Ministry of State, both government and private employees who interface with the public are spot-checked for Estonian language proficiency. While the Estonian government asserts that “language requirements for certain positions are justified” and are meant to promote competitiveness among young people in the job market, critics such as Amnesty International have described the system as one under which “Non-Estonian speakers, mainly from the Russian-speaking minority, were denied employment due to official language requirements for various professions in the private sector and almost all professions in the public sector.”<sup>12</sup>

Inspectors also implement spot-checks on teachers to ensure that they have sufficient proficiency in Estonian, even in Russian language schools, whose numbers, moreover, are themselves diminishing under Estonian law. Russian-speaking primary school students, grades 1 through 9, are allowed to attend schools in which Russian is the language of instruction, but they are required to learn Estonian as a second language. However, starting with the 2011/2012 school year, all secondary schools, grades 10 through 12, are required to conduct 60 percent of the curriculum in Estonian. This means that 62 schools in which Russian was the primary language of instruction will have to transition by the coming year.<sup>13</sup> The new law has been viewed as discriminatory by the Russian minority, and a support group for national minorities of the Estonian Parliament has made demands for exemptions.<sup>14</sup> In response, the Ministry of Education decided to grant a five-year extension of the deadline for two Russian-language upper secondary schools for returning adults, while keeping the requirements for the rest of the schools.<sup>15</sup>

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12. Urmas Paet, Estonian Foreign Minister, quoted in “Paet: Ensuring Protection of National Minorities and Promoting Their Cultures is Government’s Priority”; “Estonia Human Rights: Discrimination - linguistic minorities,” Amnesty International, <http://www.amnestyusa.org/our-work/countries/europe/estonia>.

13. “Basic Education,” Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, <http://www.hm.ee/index.php?1510026>; “Studies in Estonian in Russian-medium Schools,” Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, <http://www.hm.ee/index.php?1510030>.

14. “Russian schools transfer to Estonian language discriminatory,” *The Voice of Russia*, June 18, 2011, <http://english.ruvr.ru/2011/06/18/52031135.html>.

15. “Government Grants 3 Schools Extension for Switch to Estonian,” Estonian Public Broadcasting, July 5, 2011, <http://news.err.ee/Education/8d0c6e7c-3c2f-47cf-8cf0-506be9c44b76>.

# 3

## RUSSIA'S COMPATRIOT POLICY SOFT POWER OR SOFT PROPAGANDA?

Russia has maintained an evolving set of policies toward the Russian-speaking minorities in the former Soviet States, all echoes of its imperialist past. From the start of Estonia's independence movement, the Russian minority in Estonia has been vocal in its opposition to succession and has received backing by Moscow. Faced with the discrepancy between the territory of the Russian Federation and the locations of Russian-speaking populations outside its borders, the Russian government began a process in 1999, still in formation, of defining its relationship to the newly independent countries in its so-called Near Abroad and to the Russian speakers within those states.<sup>1</sup>

In 1993 the Russian Federation looked to adopt a policy of dual citizenship for the Russian-speaking populations in the 14 countries of the former Soviet Union, but its attempts to issue passports to residents of former Soviet countries met with strong opposition from the newly independent governments and non-Russian speaking population.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Russia's efforts at a resettlement program, which has sought to encourage Russian-speaking individuals living abroad to relocate to Russia, had been largely unsuccessful given the limited willingness of ethnic Russians living abroad to return to the motherland.<sup>3</sup> Unable to attain legal citizenship for Russians abroad, Russia identified an alternative approach: the creation of a "Russkiy Mir" or "Russian world," whereby Russia would not have to confer citizenship on its far-flung Russian-speaking populations but could construct a virtual Russian supra-state populated with "compatriots."<sup>4</sup>

Under the Russian Federation's State Policy toward Compatriots Living Abroad adopted in 1999, the term "compatriots" includes Russian Federation citizens living abroad; former citizens of the USSR; Russian immigrants from the Soviet Union or the Russian Federation; descendants of compatriots; and foreign citizens who admire Russian culture and language.<sup>5</sup> Russia further refined and refocused its definition of "compatriots" in 2010, requiring that the compatriot identity be "certified by a respective civil society organization or by the person's activities to promote and preserve the Russian language and culture."<sup>6</sup> The Russkiy Mir is estimated to be approximately 35 million individuals in over 90 countries, the majority of which are concentrated in the CIS and

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1. Igor Zevelev, "Russia's Policy toward Compatriots in the Former Soviet Union," *Russia in Global Affairs*, no. 1 (January-March 2008), [http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/n\\_10351](http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/n_10351).

2. Ibid.

3. Opinion polls show that 15 percent of Russians living in Estonia are ready to resettle permanently in Russia. Pelnēns, *The "Humanitarian Dimension" of Russian Foreign Policy toward Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and the Baltic States*, 73.

4. "About Russkiy Mir Foundation," Russkiy Mir Foundation, <http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/en/fund/about>.

5. Tatyana Kiilo and Yelena Vladimirova, "Compatriots," in *Russian Federation 2011: Short-term Prognosis*, ed. Karmo Tüür (Tartu: Tartu University Press, 2011), 181.

6. Ibid.

the Baltic states.<sup>7</sup> This politically reconstructed diaspora community of “compatriots” has been institutionalized through various compatriot organizations, such as the Russkiy Mir Foundation and the Russkiy Dom (Russia House) network. The functions of these institutions have expanded from Russian language and cultural preservation to aid for legal protection and youth work.

Russia’s Compatriot Policy is funded and overseen by several government bodies at the federal level, including the Foreign Ministry; the Federal Agency on the Affairs of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation; the Ministry of Education; the Ministry of Culture; as well as some regional and local administrations such as the Moscow City Council. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs allocates 400 million rubles (approximately \$14 million) annually for the Compatriot Policy through its embassies.<sup>8</sup> The 2011–2015 budget for the Russian Language Program is 2.5 billion rubles (approximately \$88 million).<sup>9</sup> In May 2011, Russian president Medvedev announced the creation of the Compatriot Legal Support and Protection Fund under the auspices of the Foreign Ministry as a “permanent, systemic and effective system to protect the interests of our compatriots.”<sup>10</sup> The Russian Federation has paid greater attention to the human rights situation of compatriots and has been more active in providing legal assistance since the 2007 Estonian Bronze Soldier of Tallinn event and the 2008 August war in Georgia.

As part of the Compatriot Policy’s coordination efforts, every three years Moscow hosts the World Congress of Russian Compatriots, a high-level representative forum for the Russian president and compatriot leaders from post-Soviet countries to gather to discuss major problems facing the diaspora, including voluntary resettlement, protection of minority rights, and preservation of cultural and linguistic ties to Russia. Notwithstanding these efforts, while compatriots are subject to Moscow’s Compatriot Policy, their “direct and ad-hoc participation” in the shaping of Russian policy toward themselves is limited, at best. Reports have cited a decline in compatriot participation at the World Congress meetings in recent years.<sup>11</sup>

While Russia compares its Compatriot Policy with the work of the British Council<sup>12</sup> or the International Organization of La Francophonie, the similarities are limited to the promotion of culture and language. The policies, such as fighting the falsification of history and protecting the rights of compatriots, are of an entirely different dimension and are “not considered the cultural exports of any country.”<sup>13</sup> Even Alexander Tschepurin, head of the Russian Foreign Ministry’s Department for Compatriots Abroad, has admitted that the compatriots represent a tool of Russian

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7. Evgeny Verlin, “An enormous amount of work lies ahead of us...,” *Russkiy Mir Journal*, January 2010; “Russia to help its compatriots with words and deeds,” *The Voice of Russia*, April 21, 2011, <http://english.ruvr.ru/2011/04/21/49267112.html>.

8. Kiilo and Vladimirova, “Compatriots,” 181.

9. “Russia Is Going to Develop Russian Language Actively in the Next 4 Years,” Russkiy Mir Foundation, June 29, 2011, <http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/en/news/common/news3646.html>.

10. “Medvedev approves new fund to protect rights of Russian compatriots,” *Russia Today*, May 25, 2011, <http://rt.com/politics/medvedev-decree-fund-compatriots/>.

11. Kiilo and Vladimirova, “Compatriots,” 180.

12. Despite the fact that the Russian authorities attempted to curb the work of the British Council in Russia in 2008 over a political dispute: “Russia to limit British Council,” BBC, December 12, 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7139959.stm>.

13. Juhasoo-Lawrence, “A Taboo Topic for Diplomats.”



foreign policy: “Russian diaspora abroad provides social and humanitarian support for the implementation of the interests of the Russian Federation in post-Soviet countries.”<sup>14</sup>

As Russia has debated and developed its Compatriot Policy since 1999, it has stumbled on a variation of a soft power policy—a heavy-handed Soviet cultural propaganda model with twenty-first century accoutrements.

## Nongovernmental Organizations

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are the primary and most public soft-power instrument used by the Russian Federation to achieve its Compatriot Policy goals. In order to consolidate compatriot “strongholds” (*opornaja tochka*) in the post-Soviet countries and increase Russian political influence in the region, Russia relies on a global network of compatriot NGOs. Ironically, the Russian authorities have been critical of foreign funded and operated NGOs working within Russia, particularly those engaged in civil society development, and have required extensive documentation and registration procedures as well as imposed steep taxes on foreign supported grant-giving organizations.<sup>15</sup>

A relic of the Soviet era, the Russian Federation created its Russia House network, a system of over 50 Russophone centers promoting Russian language and culture. The Russia House in Tallinn, Estonia, works in partnership with related institutions and cultural organizations to promote projects intended “to preserve and promote cultural values, ethnic identity, the Russian language, and Russian culture; to empower dialogue with their historical motherland Russia, and dialogue among compatriots within Estonia and on the international stage.”<sup>16</sup> The annual budget for the network of Russia Houses has been estimated by informed observers at \$26–\$30 million, a five-fold increase over 2006 due to the growth in the number of foreign representations. The Federal Agency of CIS Affairs’ development plan for the Russia House network includes an expansion to 100 divisions by 2020 and in particular an increase in the number of CIS and the Baltic states divisions.

To better develop, coordinate, and fund Russian cultural and educational centers worldwide and to serve as a compatriot information center and news agency, in 2007 the Foreign Ministry created a multifunctional NGO, the Russkiy Mir Foundation. The Russkiy Mir network has since expanded to 65 centers located in foreign countries. It is estimated that 20 to 30 new centers are planned, of which 4 to 6 are to be opened in the Baltic states. The Russkiy Mir Foundation has an annual budget of 500 million rubles (approximately \$17.5 million), which is funded by both the federal government and private companies.<sup>17</sup>

The shared mission of these Russian centers includes “popularizing Russian language and culture as a crucial element of world civilization, supporting Russian language study programs

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14. Pelnēns, *The “Humanitarian Dimension” of Russian Foreign Policy toward Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and the Baltic States*, 63.

15. Yevgeny Volk, “Russia’s NGO Law: An Attack on Freedom and Civil Society,” Heritage Foundation, May 24, 2006, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2006/05/russias-ngo-law-an-attack-on-freedom-and-civil-society>.

16. “Russia House—Estonia,” Etnoweb, <http://www.etnoweb.ee/ViewUser.aspx?id=1b9e79ae-20ae-41a4-a953-4934e9af34e4&lang=en>.

17. Kiilo and Vladimirova, “Compatriots,” 180.

abroad, [and] developing cross-culture dialogue and strengthening understanding between cultures and peoples.”<sup>18</sup> The Russian center at the Pushkin Institute in Tallinn was established in 2008 and has become Estonia’s largest nongovernmental Russian-language education center.<sup>19</sup> Its recent activities have ranged from discussion on the place of Russian culture in contemporary Estonia to a performance by the St. Petersburg Philharmonic.<sup>20</sup> Recently, the institute has been most actively involved in Russian-language training (especially for children attending Estonian schools), preparation for the Russian state language certificate exam (TORFL), and curriculum training for Russian studies teachers.<sup>21</sup>

Russkiy Mir’s activities, however, are not limited to language and culture promotion. The Estonian Security Police (KAPO) has indicated that members of the “former Soviet intelligence cadre are active within the Estonian chapter” of the Russkiy Mir Foundation, which suggests that the foundation also works to advance Russia’s foreign policy interests in the Baltics.<sup>22</sup> The Legal Information Center for Human Rights (LICHR) is another important Estonian NGO promoting and defending the rights of linguistic minorities in Estonia that covertly receives funding from Moscow and has contact with the Russian special services, according to the 2007 annual report of the Estonian Security Police.<sup>23</sup>

A more recent priority of the compatriot policy has been to focus on promoting Russian youth movements in the compatriot societies, not only through traditional Russian compatriot organizations, but also youth organizations. The Estonian youth NGO Molodoje Slovo (Word of the Young) was created in 2009. A subsection of the local Estonian extremist group Nochnoi Dozor (Night Watch), Molodoje Slovo is based on the model of and closely affiliated with the pro-Kremlin ultra-nationalistic youth organization Nashi. Molodoje Slovo supports youth exchange programs, sporting events, language competitions, and summer camps, and it organizes public demonstrations.<sup>24</sup> In 2011, Molodoje Slovo organized an international summer camp for Russian compatriots at Lake Peipus (which sits on the border of Estonia and Russia), with sponsorship from the Anti-Fascist Committee. Molodoje Slovo used the occasion to promote its battle against the “falsification of Russian history,” in response to demands from Estonia for compensation for the Soviet “occupation” and the country’s perceived glorification of Nazi collaborators. A Molodoje Slovo board member also hosts a radio show in Estonia where he promotes Russian interpretations of history and criticizes the content of Estonian history schoolbooks.

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18. “Russian Centers,” Russkiy Mir Foundation, <http://admin.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/en/rucenter/index.jsp?pager.offset=56&pageIndex=9&pageSize=7>.

19. “Russian Center in Tallinn Joins Campaign,” Russkiy Mir Foundation, February 8, 2011, <http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/en/news/rucenter/news0134.html>.

20. “Annual Meeting of Russian Intelligentsia Held in Parnu, Estonia,” Russkiy Mir Foundation, December 14, 2010, <http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/en/news/grants/news0063.html>; “Journey of the Northern Flowers’ to Russia, Estonia, Finland and Norway,” Russkiy Mir Foundation, April 5, 2010, <http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/en/news/common/news0192.html>.

21. “Russian Center in Tallinn Joins Campaign,” Russkiy Mir Foundation, February 8, 2011.

22. Laas Leivat, “Soft Power, Russkii Mir, Centre Party, Russian voters—is there a connection?” *EESTI Elu*, March 13, 2010, <http://www.eesti.ca/?op=article&articleid=27501>.

23. Pelnēns, *The “Humanitarian Dimension” of Russian Foreign Policy toward Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and the Baltic States*, 73.

24. Laas Leivat, “Security police: local Russian extremist ‘helping’ Finnish and Latvian Russians politically,” *Eesti Elu*, April 30, 2010, <http://www.eesti.ca/index.php?op=article&articleid=28004&lang>.



The work of Russia House, the Russkiy Mir Foundation, and Molodoje Slovo encompasses a broad range of sectors, yet the core of their work is based on pushing the Russian agenda rather than allowing a more organic attraction based on respect for Russian language, culture, and worldview to develop.

## Media

Russian-language media is an important and widely used compatriot policy instrument through which the Russian Federation reaches out to its compatriot community and disseminates Russian propaganda.

The media reinforces the divisions between Estonians and ethnic Russians, who live in “different information spaces.” The information that both groups receive comes from “different sources, different languages, and through different media channels.”<sup>25</sup> Opinion polls bear this out: the Russian-language population has very low confidence in Estonian-language media (according to a 2007 study 18 percent trusted it, while 49 percent distrusted it) with an even greater lack of confidence among ethnic Estonians in Russian-language media.<sup>26</sup>

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation has maintained a strong media presence and network in CIS and Baltic countries. In Estonia, there are around 30 periodicals in the Russian language, among which are four major national newspapers: *Den za Dnjom* (Day By Day), *Molodjzh Estonii* (Young Estonia), *Delovye Vedomosti* (Business Gazette), and *Estonija* (Estonia), as well as several local Russian newspapers.<sup>27</sup> Popular local Russian-language newspapers include the freely distributed papers *Linnaleht* in Tallinn and *Gorod* in Narva, where Russian speakers make up 93 percent of the population.<sup>28</sup> There are also several compatriot publications, such as the magazine *Šire Krug*, and the *Compatriot* supplement to *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (Komsomol Truth). None of the Russian-language newspapers receive governmental support from Estonia.<sup>29</sup>

The Estonian Security Police (KAPO) have criticized *Komsomolskaya Pravda* journalist Galina Sapozhnikova, who admitted being an undercover member of the extremist group Night Watch. An official report denounced her, citing the “extremely emotional and demagogic undercurrent” in her articles as aiming to discredit Estonian authorities and manipulate Russian-speaking readers.<sup>30</sup>

As print media has fallen into decline, many Russian-language papers have folded, including one financed by the Centre Party, *Vesti Dnja* (Daily News), which was closed down in April 2009

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25. Pelnēns, *The “Humanitarian Dimension” of Russian Foreign Policy toward Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and the Baltic States*, 88.

26. *Ibid.*, 92.

27. Aurika Meimre, “Post-Soviet Russian Language Media in Estonia” (paper presented at Conference on the Mass Media in Post-Soviet Russia, University of Surrey, Guildford, April 6–8, 2006), 2; “Russian Newspapers in Estonia,” *Newspapers 24*, <http://www.newspapers24.com/languages/russian-newspapers-in-estonia/index.html>.

28. Pelnēns, *The “Humanitarian Dimension” of Russian Foreign Policy toward Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and the Baltic States*, 90; “Narva in Figures: 2008,” Narva City Government, [http://web.narva.ee/files/Narva\\_arvudes\\_2008.pdf](http://web.narva.ee/files/Narva_arvudes_2008.pdf).

29. Meimre, “Post-Soviet Russian Language Media in Estonia,” 2.

30. Estonian Security Police, “2007 Annual Review,” 15, [http://www.kapo.ee/cms-data/\\_text/138/124/files/aastaraamat-2007-eng.pdf](http://www.kapo.ee/cms-data/_text/138/124/files/aastaraamat-2007-eng.pdf).

due to financial difficulties.<sup>31</sup> However, Russian-owned Russian-language television and radio have quickly filled the void. The appeal of Russian television is quite high among ethnic Russians, who in 2009 spent an average of 3 hours and 46 minutes watching TV per day, 52 minutes more than ethnic Estonians.<sup>32</sup>

There are five TV channels in the Russian language: the Russian state-funded global network Russia Today; the private Russian channels Pervyi Baltiiskii Kanal (PBK), RTR Planeta, and Orsent TV; the local Russian-language TV channel TV 3+; and the Russian music channel Muz-TV.<sup>33</sup>

KAPO have condemned Russian TV media for “painting a picture of post-Soviet Estonia as an economically, socially and culturally degenerate country on Europe’s periphery where neo-Nazism has taken ground and the Russian-speaking population is glaringly discriminated against.”<sup>34</sup> The KAPO have also accused journalists from the RTR Planeta TV channel, particularly Jekaterina Zorina, of “disseminating lies and propaganda,” and agitating demonstrations in collaboration with the Night Watch and the Nashi extremist groups.<sup>35</sup> KAPO has recently singled out the globally popular Russia Today TV channel for being capable of undermining Estonia’s global public image and proposed to forbid its film crews and reporters from working in Estonia.<sup>36</sup>

Russian radio enjoys more popularity than Russian TV in Estonia, with four Russian music radio channels and two very popular Russian-language channels, Radio 4 and Russkoye Radio, which air educational, cultural, and news programs.<sup>37</sup> Radio St. Petersburg is also popular among the Russian-speaking population, and serves as another example where Russian speakers obtain their news from Russia rather than Estonia. Internet journalism is also prevalent in Estonia, with the Estonian- and Russian-language news portal Delfi and the Russian news portal Regnum. Regnum is discussed in the 2010 Estonian Security Police annual report as a supporter of hardline Russian foreign policy toward the Baltics.<sup>38</sup>

The Russian media in Estonia also mixes traditional tools of soft power—radio broadcasting popular Russian music—with overt propaganda. Russian propaganda dissemination is also coordinated through the Russkyi Mir Foundation, which this year plans to spend over \$2 million on 74 broadcasts and advertisements targeting the compatriot community to air on Russian channels.

Another compatriot media organization in Estonia is the media club Impressum, founded by journalists from the newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda* in Northern Europe in 2008.<sup>39</sup> The media club is active in fighting the “rewriting of the history” with documentaries, books, information campaigns, and commemorative events.<sup>40</sup>

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31. “Newspaper Vesti Dnja is closed down in Estonia,” *The Baltic Course*, April 21, 2009, [http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/baltic\\_news/?doc=3016](http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/baltic_news/?doc=3016).

32. Pelnēns, *The “Humanitarian Dimension” of Russian Foreign Policy toward Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and the Baltic States*, 89.

33. Meimre, “Post-Soviet Russian Language Media in Estonia,” 4–5.

34. Estonian Security Police, “2010 Annual Review,” 10, [http://www.kapo.ee/cms-data/\\_text/138/124/files/kapo-aastaraamat-2010-eng.pdf](http://www.kapo.ee/cms-data/_text/138/124/files/kapo-aastaraamat-2010-eng.pdf).

35. Estonian Security Police, “2007 Annual Review,” 15.

36. “Estonian special services have pointed Russia Today TV-channel out as the chief enemy,” World Investigation Net, May 23, 2011, <http://win.ru/en/win/7256.phtml>.

37. Meimre, “Post-Soviet Russian Language Media in Estonia,” 5.

38. Estonian Security Police, “2010 Annual Review,” 8.

39. Pelnēns, *The “Humanitarian Dimension” of Russian Foreign Policy toward Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and the Baltic States*, 74.

40. Ibid.

According to Kärt Juhasoo-Lawrence, director of the First Division of the Policy Planning Department in the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the compatriot concept and its “permanent reinforcement by the Russian media, often subtly combined with allusions to the grim future of Estonia as an independent state and to its rightful place—from the historical perspective—in the bosom of the Russian empire” create identity confusion among its target group.<sup>41</sup> The policy consequently “acts against the efforts of the Estonian government to integrate our culturally diverse society and to safeguard the state’s reputation.”<sup>42</sup>

The Russian media in Estonia thus goes beyond the promotion of Russian language and culture, and uses its influence to consolidate the compatriot community and to influence the global perception of Estonia. It thus becomes a very effective instrument in Russia’s compatriot policy arsenal.

## Political Influence

Russia’s soft power strategy toward the compatriots in the Baltic states is not limited, however, to the use of NGOs and Russian media dissemination. The Russian Federation aims to overtly influence the political environment in Estonia by funding political parties and leaders that represent the interests of the Russian minority.

According to a 2010 declassified report by KAPO, Tallinn city mayor Edgar Savisaar had accepted €1.5 million from Russian Railways president Vladimir Yakunin to support his political party, the Center Party, in Estonia’s March 2011 parliamentary elections.<sup>43</sup> Although Savisaar dismissed the allegations and claimed that the funds were intended for the building of a church, the incident was deemed “loathsome” and “undemocratic” by the Estonian prime minister and EU commentators, respectively.<sup>44</sup>

Edgar Savisaar is a very influential political figure, and the Center Party is the most popular party among the Russian minority in Estonia as “the means to young Russians’ political self-realization.”<sup>45</sup> In a February 2010 speech to a private Russian-language university, Savisaar encouraged Russian students who were still stateless to apply for Estonian citizenship and “become politically active.”<sup>46</sup>

Russian politicians share the view that the Center Party is the more “viable means” through which Russians can exercise political influence within Estonia, and they have, in the past, recommended that voters not “waste votes on Russian political parties,” whose chances of gaining seats in the Estonian Parliament are fairly limited, given their typical electoral gains of under 1 percent.<sup>47</sup> In comparison, the Center Party is the second-largest party in Estonia. The Center Party accounted for 23.3 percent of the votes in the 2011 parliamentary elections and came in first in the 2009 European Parliament elections winning 2 of the 6 seats with 26 percent of the vote.<sup>48</sup>

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41. Juhasoo-Lawrence, “A Taboo Topic for Diplomats.”

42. *Ibid.*

43. “KAPO accuses Savisaar of Russian bias,” *The Baltic Times*, December 21, 2010, <http://www.baltic-times.com/news/articles/27582/>.

44. *Ibid.*

45. Laas Leviat, “Soft Power, Russkii Mir, Centre Party, Russian voters – is there a connection?” EESTI Elu, March 13, 2010, <http://www.eesti.ca/?op=article&articleid=27501>.

46. *Ibid.*

47. *Ibid.*

48. “Estonia,” European Election Database, [http://www.nsd.uib.no/european\\_election\\_database/country/estonia/](http://www.nsd.uib.no/european_election_database/country/estonia/).

It is possible that the Center Party's long-standing policy of actively recruiting non-Estonians has diminished or prevented the electoral success of other Russian political parties in Estonia with extreme positions. There are many Russian nationalist political organizations that speak for the Russian minority, but they have not yet achieved any electoral gains or gained momentum within the Russian community, including the Constitution Party,<sup>49</sup> the Russian Party of Estonia (VEE), the Union of Russian Citizens, the Union of Associations of Russia Compatriots in Estonia (SARSE), and Russian Nationalist Movement of Estonia.

Russia has been accused by the Estonian Security Police of having "overtly promoted" favored candidates "to leading positions in local Russian organizations and parties."<sup>50</sup> Of the aforementioned Russian political groups, the Constitution Party in particular is considered a "puppet party" covertly funded and controlled by Moscow, although it has failed in its mission to achieve representation in the parliament thus far.<sup>51</sup> The 2007 KAPO report also revealed secret meetings between Russian embassy diplomats and the leftist extremists of the Constitution Party and the extremist group Night Watch "right before the April riots."<sup>52</sup>

Russia's policy of financially and politically supporting political parties that represent the Russian minority is motivated by the desire to "influence political and economic processes in Estonia more efficiently and from inside."<sup>53</sup> This policy has been less successful in the case of the Constitution Party but has the potential to yield results through the politically powerful Center Party and its amenable leader Edgar Savisaar. The pre-election political scandal that ensued following the Estonian Security Police reports is, at least, evidence of the role that Russia plays in the Estonian political public debate. In this case, the revelation of these overtly heavy-handed tactics backfired.

## Legal Action

Within the last five years, Russia, as a member of the Council of Europe and the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), has leveled accusations against Estonia at international organizations and has launched a series of claims at the ECHR on behalf of its Russian minority. Russia's use of human rights language and Western institutions illustrates the emergence of a more sophisticated strategy: relying on the Western legal system to argue ethnic Russians are mistreated by Estonian language and citizenship policies. Ironically, Russia has the worst human rights record of the 47 members of the council. In 2009 alone, 23 percent of all new petitions to the ECHR emanated from Russia, which means that many Russians rely on the ECHR as their legal system of choice.<sup>54</sup> Russia has the third-highest number of cases brought against it at the ECHR of all European members, behind only Italy and Turkey. The ECHR found the Russian Federation in violation of human rights in 1,019 of the 1,079 applications filed against it (94 percent of the cases).<sup>55</sup> The majority of

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49. Known as the United People's Party before 2006, merged with Estonian Left Party to form the Estonian United Left Party in 2008.

50. Estonian Security Police, "2007 Annual Review," 16.

51. *Ibid.*, 8.

52. *Ibid.*, 17.

53. *Ibid.*

54. Eric Sliva, "Challenging Europe's Authority: Draft Legislation Reflects a Widening Gulf between Russian Authorities and the European Court of Human Rights," Russia Profile, July 7, 2011, [http://russiaprofile.org/politics/40337/print\\_edition/](http://russiaprofile.org/politics/40337/print_edition/).

55. "Violations by Article and by Country," European Court of Human Rights, 1-2, <http://www.echr.coe.int/NR/rdonlyres/B21D260B-3559-4FB2-A629-881C66DC3B2F/0/CountryStatistics01012009.pdf>.

violations were in regard to violations of the right to a fair trial (530), protection of property (430), and right to liberty and security (354), but also more egregious human rights violations such as inhuman or degrading treatment (295) and the right to life/deprivation of life (149).<sup>56</sup>

Despite its record, this does not prevent Russia from plying its human rights statecraft. In a 2006 statement before the UN Human Rights Council, Russian deputy foreign minister Alexander Yakovenko admitted that Russia:

intend[s] actively to use further the podium of the main U.N. rights body for drawing the attention of the international community to the negative humanitarian situation in Latvia and Estonia, in particular to the policy being pursued by these states' authorities of open discrimination against the non-titular population.<sup>57</sup>

Neither the ECHR nor the UN Human Rights Council has found evidence of systematic abuse of human rights or ethnic discrimination in Estonia.<sup>58</sup> However, organizations such as Amnesty International have raised concerns over discrimination against the Russian minority in Estonia, particularly in the fields of employment and education due to the official language requirements, whereas complaints regarding the statelessness problem have subsided in recent years.<sup>59</sup>

Since Estonia declared its independence in 1991, the ECHR has passed 23 judgments concerning Estonia's alleged violations of human rights and found at least 1 violation in 19 of these (82 percent of the cases).<sup>60</sup> The majority of these judgments concerned reports of violations of the right to liberty and security (8), whereas the rest dealt with the right to fair trial (4), length of proceedings (4), no punishment without law (4), and the right to an effective remedy (3).<sup>61</sup> Several of the complaints were filed in 2008 by ethnic Russians in Estonia on the grounds that they had been "unlawfully arrested, detained, and subjected to inhuman and degrading treatment by the police" during the Bronze Night riots.<sup>62</sup> The ECHR has found 98 percent of the applications against Estonia inadmissible, including complaints about Estonia's refusal to grant residence permits to Russian individuals who had served as Soviet military officers.<sup>63</sup>

Applications filed by Russia on behalf of its Russian minorities in Estonia regarding mass statelessness, liquidation of Russian-language secondary education, and ethnic discrimination in the labor market have so far been deemed inadmissible by the ECHR. However, Russia has acted

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56. Ibid.

57. Pelnēns, *The "Humanitarian Dimension" of Russian Foreign Policy toward Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and the Baltic States*, 51.

58. Frederic Miller, Agnes Vandome, and John McBrewster, *Human Rights in Estonia* (Mauritius: VDM Publishing House Ltd., 2010).

59. Amnesty International, "Annual Report 2010," <http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/estonia/report-2010#>; Amnesty International, "Annual Report 2007," <http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/estonia/report-2007>.

60. "Violations by Article and by Country," 1–2.

61. Ibid.

62. Pelnēns, *The "Humanitarian Dimension" of Russian Foreign Policy toward Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and the Baltic States*, 59.

63. European Court of Human Rights, "Country Statistics," 39, <http://www.echr.coe.int/NR/ronlyres/B21D260B-3559-4FB2-A629-881C66DC3B2F/0/CountryStatistics01012009.pdf>; Mart Susi, "Recent Judgments and Decisions of the European Court of Human Rights towards Estonia," *Juridica International* no. 11 (2006), 95, [http://www.juridicainternational.eu/public/pdf/ji\\_2006\\_1\\_93.pdf](http://www.juridicainternational.eu/public/pdf/ji_2006_1_93.pdf).



as a third party in other cases regarding Russian individuals residing in Estonia, such as in the 2009 case *Mikolenko v. Estonia*, where the ECHR found Estonia in violation of Article 5, having protracted the length of detention of the applicant in an expulsion center.<sup>64</sup>

Russia claims that its complaints to the ECHR regarding Estonia's treatment of the Russian minority are motivated by the need to "protect the legitimate rights and interests of Russian compatriots in the Baltic region."<sup>65</sup> The establishment of ethnic Russian minorities in post-Soviet countries as "compatriots" has enabled Russia to treat problems facing the Russian diaspora as Russia's "internal matter."<sup>66</sup> However, this view has been challenged by other governments, who consider the protection of ethnic minorities the responsibility of their country of residence. Estonian foreign minister Paet declared in 2009 that "no nation has the right to exercise authority over people living in another state, and it is essential that we clarify this principle."<sup>67</sup> However, beyond the stated goal of monitoring the human rights situation of compatriots and helping protect their rights, these claims serve the purpose of "minimize[ing] Estonia's effectiveness and credibility as a member of Western organizations."<sup>68</sup> These claims also represent both a jab at the West and a claim over the Russian diaspora in Estonia: if Estonia cannot protect its native Russian speakers, Russia must step in as caretaker.

In addition to the ECHR claims, the Russian Federation has publicly chastised Estonia over its alleged human rights violations within other international forums, such as the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), the OSCE, and the Council of Europe. In a March 2011 address to the UNHRC, Russian foreign minister Lavrov deplored "the shameful phenomenon of the chronic problem of statelessness" in Estonia and Latvia.<sup>69</sup> A few months later, the Russian Foreign Ministry issued a statement regarding the UNHRC recommendations to Estonia under the Universal Periodic Review, in which it criticized Estonia's refusal to adopt "four Russian recommendations, concerning discrimination of ethnic minorities and non-citizenship, the most acute Estonian problems of human rights."<sup>70</sup>

Estonia has repeatedly rejected these claims, and contends that the "integration of peoples bearing different culture and tradition into Estonian society remains one of the priorities of the Estonian authorities."<sup>71</sup> Ambassador Triin Parts, permanent representative of Estonia to the OSCE

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64. "Mikolenko v Estonia," Estonian Human Rights Center, <http://www.humanrights.ee/eng/news.php?uudis=238&type=2>.

65. "Government Commission on the Affairs of Compatriots Abroad," International Council of Russian Compatriots, <http://www.msrs.ru/publications/2549.html> percent3Fyear percent3D2009 percent26month percent3D10&usg=ALkJrhgx508bZkVyk\_cvDcHWBgIJPh-hw.

66. Zevelev, "Russia's Policy toward Compatriots in the Former Soviet Union."

67. "Paet: Protection of Ethnic Minorities and Advancement of Their Cultures Inherent in Estonia," Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, March 4, 2009, <http://www.vm.ee/?q=en/node/6212>.

68. Pelnēns, *The "Humanitarian Dimension" of Russian Foreign Policy toward Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and the Baltic States*, 50.

69. "Lavrov Blasts Estonia, Latvia on Non-Citizens Issue," Estonia Public Broadcasting, March 1, 2011, <http://news.err.ee/Politics/22d88774-b7fe-4117-9c4d-6d618704aac2>.

70. "Russia urges Estonia to respect ethnic minorities—Foreign ministry," RIA Novosti, June 11, 2011, <http://en.rian.ru/world/20110611/164574969.html>.

71. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), "Statement by Ambassador Triin Parts, Permanent Representative of Estonia to the OSCE in response to the statement delivered by the Russian Federation," February 25, 2010, 2. <http://www.osce.org/pc/41680>.

made assurances that the Estonian government was “willing to continue the constructive dialogue with all international Human Rights mechanisms.”<sup>72</sup>

Russia has also made statements before the OSCE accusing Estonia of “desecration” of the Bronze Soldier monument and “unlawful and inhumane actions by Estonian authorities” in response to the 2007 Tallinn riots, as well as “manifestations of neo-Nazism in Estonia” in 2008.<sup>73</sup> Russia also has used the platform of the General Assembly of the Council of Europe for similar statements, but it could not find support from the other member states, which viewed the removal of the Bronze Soldier as “an internal matter in Estonia” and did not consider the rights of national minorities had been violated.<sup>74</sup>

## The Russian Orthodox Church

The Russian Orthodox Church has reclaimed the historical concept of *Svjataja Rus* (Holy Russia) in an attempt to revive the “spiritual unity of Russian compatriots” and to strengthen the compatriots’ cultural ties with their homeland.<sup>75</sup> The Russian Federal Assembly adopted in 2010 amendments to the Law on Compatriots providing state support for the founding of compatriot religious organizations abroad and for “their socially significant initiatives.”<sup>76</sup> Through this legislative initiative, “religion has been clearly given a place alongside the Russian language and culture as a foundation of Russkiy Mir.”<sup>77</sup> President Medvedev also has acknowledged that “shared spiritual values” are “an effective rallying point for the entire Orthodox world, and churches are the centers of gravity for our diaspora, helping to maintain its spiritual and cultural ties with the homeland.”<sup>78</sup>

The Orthodox community in Soviet-occupied Estonia was subordinated to the Russian Orthodox Church and persecuted by Communist authorities, including such acts as the closing, destruction, and expropriation of churches.<sup>79</sup> After Estonian independence, the church split into two branches, with local congregations divided over their allegiances to either the Moscow or the Constantinople Patriarchates. These divisions over jurisdiction mirror the tensions between the country’s Russian minority and the ethnic Estonians.<sup>80</sup> Roughly 150,000 faithful, mostly ethnic Russians, have remained in 31 congregations of the Estonian Orthodox Church of Moscow

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72. Ibid., 2.

73. Pelnēns, *The “Humanitarian Dimension” of Russian Foreign Policy toward Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and the Baltic States*, 53–54.

74. Ibid., 56.

75. “Resolution of the Third World Congress of Compatriots,” International Council of Russian Compatriots, December 1, 2009, <http://www.msrs.ru/publications/2622.html> percent3Fyear percent3D2009 percent26month percent3D12&usg=ALkJrh5MPO6zUKd2r4avT5smJ\_odzRQdQ;

“The Russian Orthodox Church’s emerging role,” *Russia Now*, October 7, 2009, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sponsored/russianow/6269877/The-Russian-Orthodox-Churchs-emerging-role.html>.

76. “Round Table on Compatriots and Russian Orthodox Church,” Russkiy Mir Foundation, August 24, 2010, <http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/en/fund/press/press0008.html>.

77. Kiilo and Vladimirova, “Compatriots,” 182.

78. “President Medvedev Stresses Role of Orthodox Church in Uniting the Global Russian Community,” Russkiy Mir Foundation, February 3, 2011, <http://www.russkiymir.ru/russkiymir/en/news/common/news2295.html>.

79. “Historical Background,” Estonian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate, <http://www.orthodox.ee/indexeng.php?d=history/history>.

80. “Estonia: Two Branches of Orthodox Church Seeking To Live In One Country,” *Religioscope*, May 10, 2002, [http://www.religioscope.com/info/notes/2002\\_049\\_ortho\\_estonia.htm](http://www.religioscope.com/info/notes/2002_049_ortho_estonia.htm).

Patriarchate, a semiautonomous diocese under canonical subordination of the Russian Orthodox Church.<sup>81</sup> Around 20,000 to 25,000 believers, mostly ethnic Estonians, have chosen to be part of the 60 parishes of the Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church, an autonomous Orthodox church subordinated to the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople.<sup>82</sup>

Orthodoxy is one of the cornerstones of the national identity of the Russian-speaking population, which devotes considerable time and money to religious activities. The popularity of the Estonian Orthodox Church is demonstrated by the fact that there are twice as many religious people among Russians than among Estonians.<sup>83</sup> The Russian community has become more closely knit as the faithful routinely congregate in their parishes, including the Cathedral of St. Alexander Nevsky in Tallinn; preserve their culture and traditions as its members celebrate religious holidays, particularly Orthodox Easter; and regularly fund the Orthodox Church through donations or payments to priests to bless their apartments or new cars.

Estonian diplomat and historian Eerik Niiles Kross, however, does not share the view of the Orthodox Church's role in Estonia as innocuous. Instead, he claims that the Russian Church is "an instrument of politics" helping the Kremlin "to keep and enlarge its sphere of influence."<sup>84</sup> The Russian Orthodox Church's contribution to the consolidation of the compatriot community is considered to be highly effective. President Medvedev has even admitted that the Russian state is "not very good at working with the diaspora" and "counts on the help of the Russian Orthodox Church in order to enhance numerous contacts with the Russian community around the world."<sup>85</sup>

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81. "Church Today," Estonian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate, <http://www.orthodox.ee/indexeng.php?d=history/today>; "Estonian Orthodox Church," Orthodoxy in America, July 15, 2011, <http://www.pravoslavie.us/EstoniaRus.htm>.

82. "Brief History," Orthodox Church of Estonia, [http://www.orthodoxa.org/GB/estonia/documentsEOC/a percent20brief percent20history.htm](http://www.orthodoxa.org/GB/estonia/documentsEOC/a%20percent20brief%20history.htm).

83. Pelnēns, *The "Humanitarian Dimension" of Russian Foreign Policy toward Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and the Baltic States*, 82.

84. "About the Russian Church in Estonia," Orthodox Church of Estonia, [http://www.orthodoxa.org/GB/estonia/documentsEOC/russian\\_church.htm](http://www.orthodoxa.org/GB/estonia/documentsEOC/russian_church.htm).

85. "President Medvedev Stresses Role of Orthodox Church in Uniting the Global Russian Community," Russkyi Mir Foundation.



# 4

## RUSSIANS IN ESTONIA JUST HOW COMPATRIOTIC ARE THEY?

Russia has clearly undertaken a significant and multifaceted effort to unify and envelope its compatriots into a greater “Russia world.” To be successful, however, the projection and efficacy of Russia’s soft power through the implementation of its Compatriot Policy must reach beyond its former Soviet citizens to the next generation of Russian speakers: young people who were too small to remember or not yet born when the Soviet Union fell. Should this be the case, Estonia’s long-term political and economic stability could be called into question. As a contributing member to NATO and the European Union, an unstable domestic situation would neither bode well for the vibrancy of either organization nor for the greater stability of the Baltic region, with significant political implications for neighboring Latvia, which has an even greater Russian-speaking minority (37.5 percent) than does Estonia (roughly 29.7 percent).<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to quantify the efficacy of Russian soft power in Estonia. Professor Viacheslav Morozov, a Russian political scientist and associate professor at Tartu University has observed that Russians in Estonia have heard of the “Russia World” concept, but they do not pay it much heed because it has nothing concrete to offer them.<sup>2</sup> In efforts to better understand and assess the impact and implications of Russia’s Compatriot Policy in Estonia, we examined the attitudes and opinions of young Russians now living in Estonia. In January 2010, CSIS conducted a survey of young Russians ages 16 to 29 living in Estonia on issues related to their identity, attitudes toward Estonia and Russia, and their views on Soviet history, and we then compared their answers to their peer Estonians as well as their peers in Russia. Through an assessment of the commonalities and discrepancies between Russians in Estonia and their respective peer groups, we hope to shed light on the degree to which Russians in Estonia look East or look West for their future direction and shared vision.

### Survey Methodology

With a focus on the next generation, CSIS conducted a survey of 16- to 29-year olds in Russia and in Estonia. The survey in Russia, conducted by the Levada Analytic Center from November 25 to December 8, 2009, is nationally representative of Russia’s population of this age: it contained 928 ethnic Russians (91.3 percent) and 88 nonethnic Russians (8.7 percent). The survey in Estonia, conducted by Saar Poll from December 3, 2009, to January 7, 2010, was designed to obtain a sufficient number of Russians in Estonia in order to compare them to the Estonian population of the same ages and also to the Russian population of those ages. Moreover, the survey also expressly

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1. “Ethnic Minorities in Latvia,” Latvian Institute, [http://www.li.lv/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=77&Itemid=1112](http://www.li.lv/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=77&Itemid=1112); “Estonia,” *World Factbook*, CIA, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/en.html>.

2. Interview with Viacheslav Morozov by Ted Gerber, Moscow, March 23, 2011.

sought to include enough noncitizens (gray passport holders) among the Estonian-Russian subsample. The initial goal was to achieve a roughly equal balance of blue and gray passport holders, but it proved quite difficult for the Saar poll interviewers to find gray passport holders in this age range to participate in the survey. A screening question was used to make sure that only Estonians or Russians who were full-time residents of Estonia (and not citizens of Russia) were included in the sample. In the end the Estonian-Russian sample consisted of 338 gray passport holders (33.6 percent) and 667 blue passport holders (66.4 percent). Overall, the Estonia survey sample was about equally balanced between Estonians (1,003) and Russians in Estonia (1,005).<sup>3</sup>

The survey included questions on a range of topics, including perceptions of the Russian minority in Estonia. The survey questionnaire was pretested in both Russia and in Estonia on 20 respondents in the appropriate age range. Based on the results from both countries, a number of questions were revised and some eliminated. In particular, many pretest respondents in Russia complained that they do not follow affairs in Estonia at all and were angry and frustrated at being asked so many questions about the situation of Russians in Estonia. Therefore, a filter question ascertaining the respondent's level of interest in Estonia was added at the start of the large bloc of questions about Russians in Estonia in the Russian survey. Respondents who said they do not follow the situation of Russian Estonians at all skipped this bloc entirely. Although the filter question reduces the Russia Federation sample size for questions pertaining to the situation of Russians in Estonia, had Russians who were completely unaware of and uninterested in that topic provided answers the information could have been misleading.

## Population Profile

Altogether, the CSIS survey includes five groups: Estonians, Russian citizens of Estonia (blue passport holders), Russian noncitizens in Estonia (gray passport holders), Russians in Russia, and

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3. Given the purposive sampling applied in the Estonia survey and our overall motive of comparing the Russians in Estonia to their counterparts among Estonians and in the Russian Federation, the best use of these data is precisely to make such comparisons across groups (as opposed to, say, estimating some kind of "national average" of opinions in Estonia, which would require the use of data weights). Therefore, in this report we focus solely on comparing across groups. There are potentially five distinct groups: Russian Federation ethnic Russians, Russian Federation nonethnic Russians, Russians in Estonia with blue passports (citizens of Estonia), Russians in Estonia with gray passports (stateless, noncitizens of Estonia), and Estonians. For all the results in this report, we initially tested for significant differences across all five of these groups. However, in many cases we found no statistically significant differences across particular comparisons: specifically, we seldom found any differences between the Russian Federation Russians and Russian Federation non-Russians, and in most cases we found that the blue and gray passport holders did not differ statistically in the Estonian-Russian sample (in fact, the lack of such differences by passport or citizenship status among young Russians in Estonia is one of the most striking and important findings of our study). To avoid presenting the possible misleading impressions that these groups differ with respect to outcome variables where we find no statistical evidence of difference, in most cases we merge the statistically similar groups in the charts we report. In those rare cases where we show differences that are not statistically significant, we indicate the nonsignificance on the chart. Thus, the reader should bear in mind that when a single distribution of responses is reported for the "Russian Federation" that means that the differences between ethnic Russians and nonethnic Russians in the Russian Federation sample with respect to that variable were not statistically significant. Likewise, when we report a single distribution of responses for "Russians in Estonia," it means that the differences by passport type (citizen status) for that variable were not statistically significant. Where we report separate distributions for ethnic vs. nonethnic Russians and/or for "blue" vs. "gray" passport holders, the reader should infer that these differences are statistically significant.

non-Russians in Russia. Table 1 provides the basic descriptive characteristics of these five groups, including country of birth, education, language, unemployment, and income. Large majorities of all five groups were born within the countries where they currently reside. Slightly higher proportions of those in the Russian Federation sample groups have received higher education. Within Estonia, the gray passport holders stand out as having especially low probability of being university educated.

**Table 1. Survey Characteristics**

	Number surveyed	Born in current country (in percent)	University educated (in percent)	Fluent Estonian speaker (in percent)	Un-employed (in percent)	Top household earnings quintile (in percent)	Bottom household earnings quintile (in percent)
<b>Estonia</b>							
Estonians	1,003	99.2	22.0	100.0	10.6	15.0	27.1
Russian citizens of Estonia	667	96.3	26.5	24.7	13.0	6.8	36.5
Russian noncitizens in Estonia	338	96.2	12.1	6.5	22.8	4.2	41.0
<b>Russian Federation</b>							
Ethnic Russians	928	95.4	29.9	NA	9.4	24.3	14.9
Non-Russians	88	86.4	33.0	NA	19.3	19.4	23.9

Based on self-reporting, about one-quarter (24.7 percent) of the blue passport holders are fluent in the Estonian language. Although this figure dwarfs the 6.5 percent of gray passport holders who are fluent Russian speakers, it is nonetheless lower than one might expect given the use of Estonian-language fluency as a key criterion for obtaining Estonian citizenship as well as many public and private jobs. All the Russians in Estonia respondents are fluent speakers of Russian, while, not surprisingly, a mere 4.3 percent of Estonian respondents are fluent in Russian. These differences in language capabilities provide some initial evidence regarding the difficulty of and, perhaps the lack of interest in, communication, across ethnic lines in Estonia.

With only 6.5 percent of gray passport holders reporting fluency in Estonian, it is not so surprising that among cohorts surveyed in Estonia, they also had the highest unemployment at 22.8 percent. Blue passport holders have much lower chances of being unemployed than their gray passport counterparts, but still somewhat higher chances than Estonians. However, when it comes to household income, the blue and gray passport holders are more similar, with only modest advantages to the former: they are both much less likely than their Estonian neighbors to live in households with incomes in the top fifth of the overall income distribution, and substantially more likely to live in households with incomes in the bottom fifth.

Overall, these descriptive data confirm that young Russians in Estonia differ socioeconomically in important ways from young Estonians, with gray passport holders being particularly disadvantaged in terms of access to higher education and to jobs. In Russia, nonethnic Russians also exhibit some distinctions from the ethnic majority population: they have higher unemployment and lower income. But these differences tend to be less pronounced than the differences between Russians and Estonians within Estonia.

## Estonia Divided, Russian Minority United

Our survey asked respondents about a range of issues including history, the Russian Federation, the Estonian state, and their daily experiences as or in regards to Estonia's Russian minority. On many issues, Estonian answers differed significantly from those of their Russian counterparts.

Citizenship status, with some important exceptions, has no impact on the attitudes of young Russians in Estonia: on issue after issue we saw no significant differences by passport type. This is a surprising and a discouraging finding, as it suggests that Estonia's citizenship policy—designed to integrate the Russian-speaking minority into the Estonian state—will accomplish little on its own in terms of overcoming the political distance between young Estonians and Russians. Although the citizenship issue has been particularly salient in both internal and external discussions of the situation on Estonia's Russian population, one implication of our survey is that in fact the divide between the Russian minority and the Estonian majority goes far deeper than those controversial issues related to citizenship.

### The Soviet Past

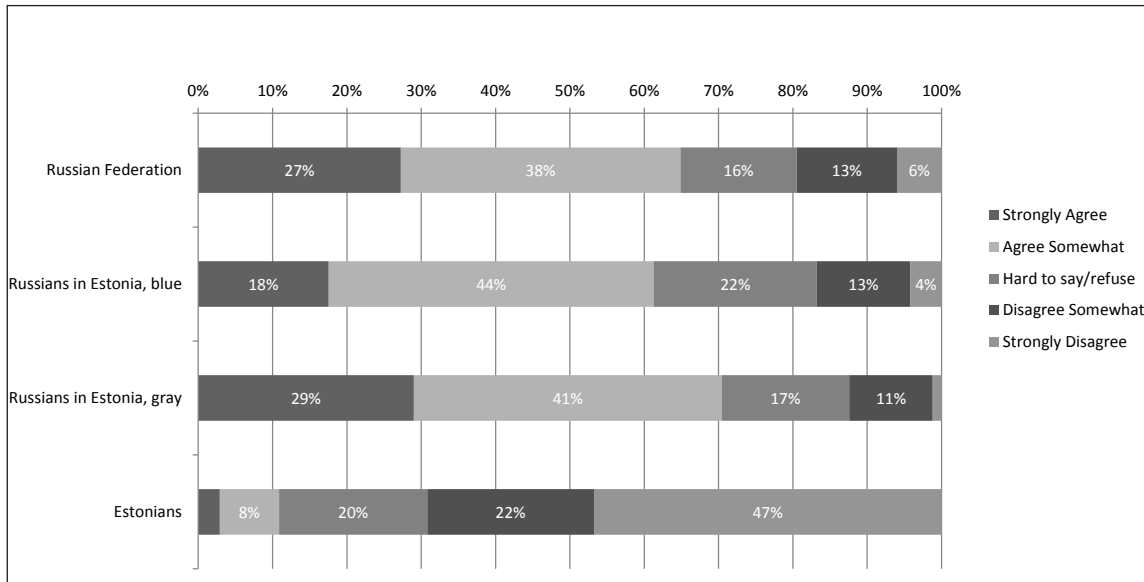
Estonians and Russians in Estonia have diametrically opposed views on a wide range of political and historical questions, particularly regarding the Soviet experience. The Russians in Estonia are consistently more pro-Soviet, and they adhere to the standard Russian government perspectives on World War II or the Great Patriotic War and the Soviet experience. In some cases the Russians in Estonia are more “Soviet” in their views than Russian Federation residents themselves.

As illustrated in Figure 1, over 60 percent of Russians in Estonia tend to agree with most Russian Federation residents (and with Russian prime minister Putin) that the Soviet collapse was the greatest geopolitical tragedy of the twentieth century, while the vast majority of Estonians disagrees. Gray passport holders are especially likely to lament the collapse of the Soviet Union. The strength of this sentiment seems surprising in light of the fact that few respondents in this survey could have had much direct personal experience with the Soviet collapse. It may, however, suggest that Russia's campaign to impose its interpretation of twentieth-century history through its patriot NGOs and media outlets is resonating with the Russian minority in Estonia.

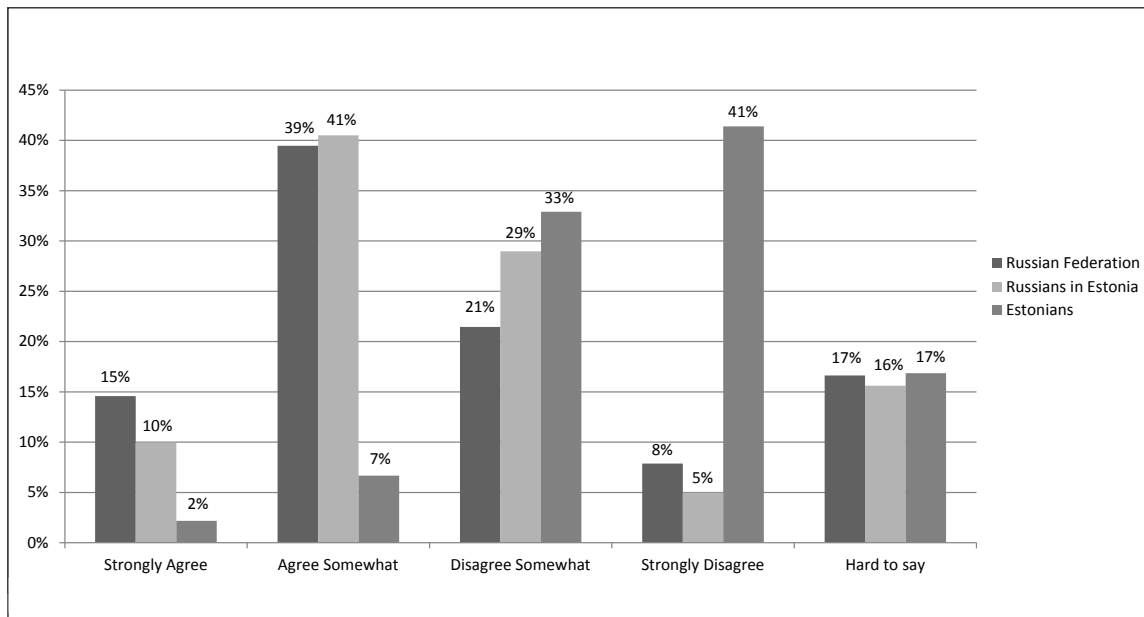
Figure 2 shows that about half of Russian Federation residents and Russians in Estonia agree that Stalin did more good than bad, while Estonians overwhelmingly reject this statement. This discrepancy is illustrative of the overarching division between Estonian and Russian minority views regarding the Soviet occupation of Estonia at the end of World War II and the legacy of Stalinism. Such deeply ingrained contradictory beliefs about the country's history are discouraging for the future state of ethnic relations in Estonia.

Furthermore, 85 percent of Estonians think that Russia should apologize for the Soviet occupation of their country, whereas only 8 percent of Russians in Estonia agree with that statement. Russians in Estonia have a tougher stance on this issue than Russian citizens: 80 percent of them disagree with the need for an apology (and the implication that the Baltics were occupied by the

**Figure 1. “The collapse of the USSR was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th Century.”**



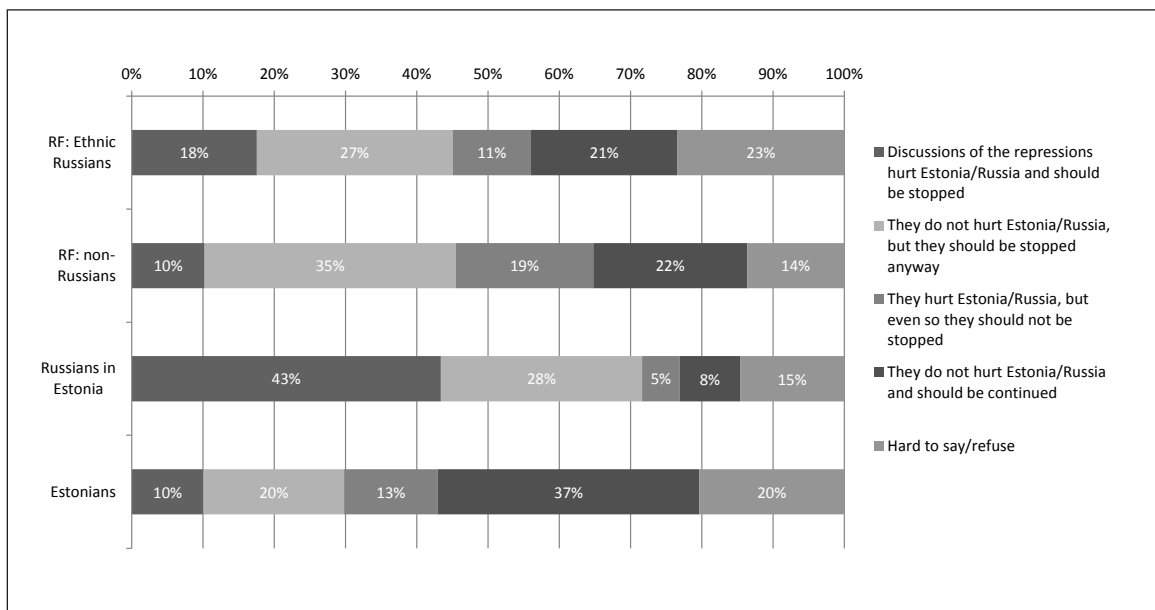
**Figure 2. “Stalin may have made some mistakes, but overall he did more good than bad.”**



Soviet Union), compared to 64 percent of Russian citizens. These findings highlight a major rift in the historical memory of Estonians and Russians in Estonia and suggest that such alternative interpretations of history have implications for the state and future of Estonia-Russia relations.

Figure 3 illustrates that most Russians in Estonia (71 percent) want to end discussions of the repressions of the Soviet era. Estonians are the most likely to advocate continuing these discussions. What is surprising is that the Russian minority in Estonia is more adamant about terminating the Soviet-era debate over repressions than Russian Federation residents are (45 percent). This stronger stance may be explained by either the group’s wariness of such discussions because they are made in the context of Russian occupation of Estonia, as opposed to a domestic issue pertaining to the country’s past. Or, it could also be related to the effectiveness of an active information campaign meant to restore the positive image of Stalinism among compatriots in Estonia.

**Figure 3. Views on whether discussions of repressions of the Soviet era in the press, on TV, and in private conversations hurt Estonia/Russia and whether they should be stopped.**



# Russian Intervention in Estonia

The CSIS survey also asked a series of questions related to the more direct-intervention aspect of Russia’s Compatriot Policy. Among Russians in Estonia there is considerable, though far from universal, support for Russian government intervention on behalf of the rights and interests of Russians in Estonia, while Estonians overwhelmingly find these efforts objectionable.

Figure 4 illustrates that a large majority (70 percent) of Russians in Estonia say that the Russian government should intervene on behalf of Russians in Estonia whose rights are violated in Estonia. Within Russia, this question was not asked of the 75 percent of respondents who said they know “nothing at all” about the situation of ethnic Russians in Estonia; that is, it was only asked of the 25 percent of the sample who said they know either “a little” or “a great deal” about the topic. Among this select group, 85 percent agree with Russian involvement in human rights violations against compatriots, suggesting that the compatriot policy is met with strong domestic approval by the one-quarter of young Russian citizens who pay any attention at all to the situation of Russians in Estonia. These views are diametrically opposed among Estonians, who overwhelmingly oppose Russian intervention (and most likely disagree with the allegations of human rights violations).

In comparison, over 60 percent of Russians in Estonia say that the Estonian government should intervene on behalf of Estonians whose rights are violated in Russia, more so than Estonians do. This finding suggests that Russians in Estonia broadly support protection of rights based more on ethnicity than on citizenship or state or residence—a premise on which Russia’s Compatriot Policy rests.

**Figure 4. Should the Russian government intervene to protect Russians living in Estonia (regardless of their citizenship) if their rights are violated?**

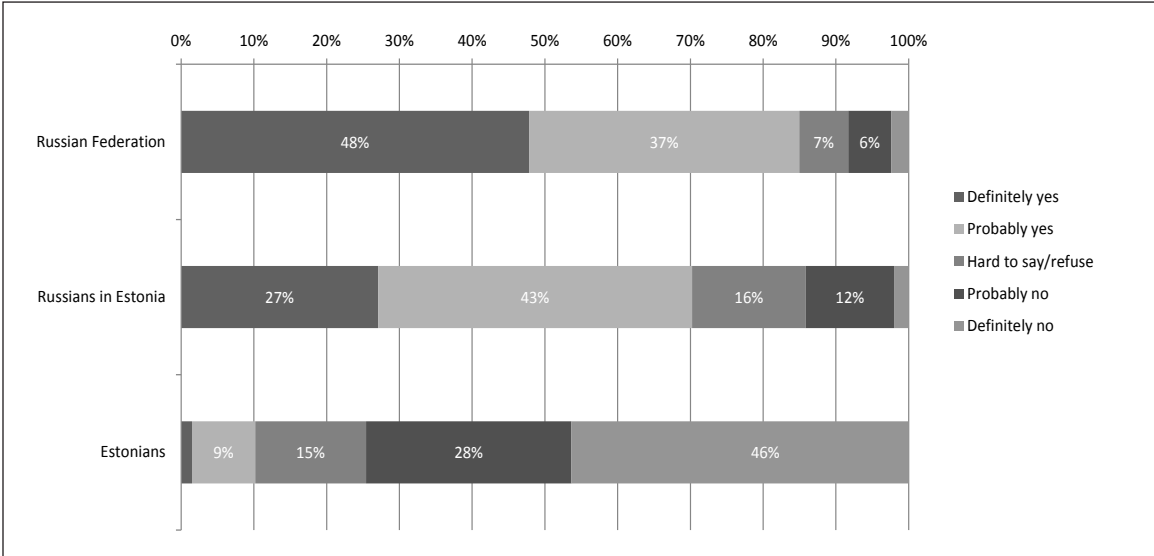


Figure 5 illustrates that Russians in Estonia are fairly evenly divided as to whether the Russian government already does enough to help them or should do more, though they show some tendency to want more Russian government intervention. It is hard to conclude whether this reflects a positive or negative assessment of Russia’s compatriot policy to date, but we can surmise that the 46 percent of respondents who would like to see more intervention are not fully satisfied with Russian government efforts.

Most Estonians think the Russian government already does enough, and only one in five thinks it should do more on this score. This is not surprising given the fairly negative view of Russian intervention in Estonian affairs and the distrust of the intentions of the Russian Compatriot Policy.

**Figure 5. Does the Russian government do enough to protect Russians living in Estonia (regardless of their citizenship) if their rights are violated?**

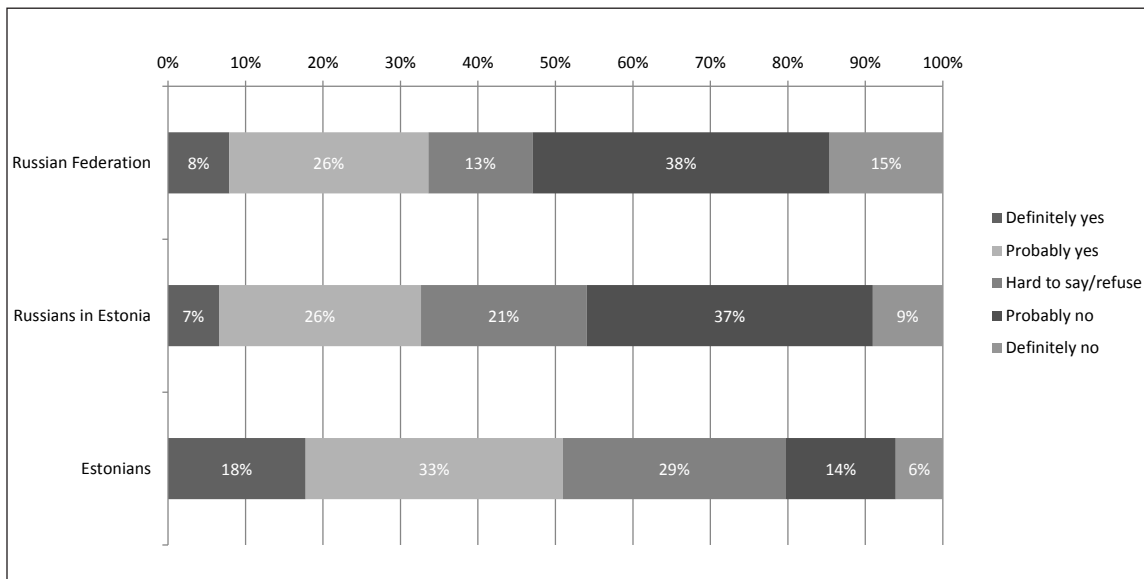
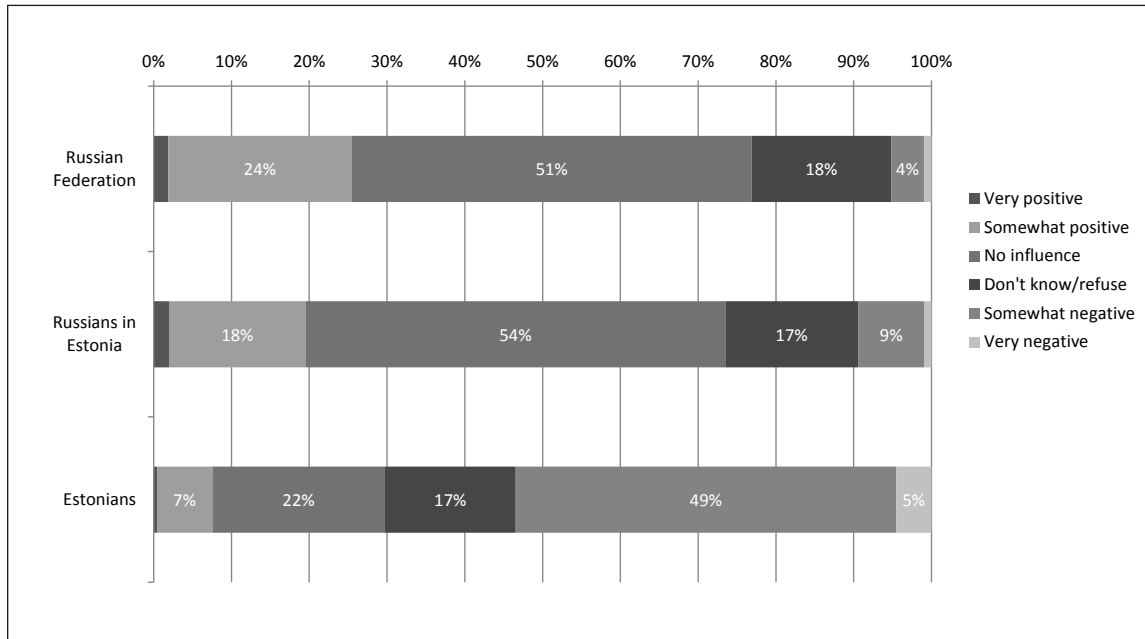


Figure 6 shows that about half of Russians in Estonia say that Russian government efforts on their behalf have had no influence on their situation, while only about one in five say they have had a positive influence. This assessment of the efficacy of the Russian Compatriot Policy in affecting change in the lives of Russians in Estonia should be troubling for Moscow. This could indicate that future support of Russia’s policies may wane if tangible benefits cannot be ascertained, necessitating a significant policy recalibration by Moscow. Conversely, Estonians tend to say that the Russian government’s efforts have actually had a negative impact on the situation of Russians in Estonia.



**Figure 6. What influence, if any, have Russian government statements and actions had on the actual situation of Russians in Estonia (asked of those who have heard of such statements/actions)?**



## Daily Divisions

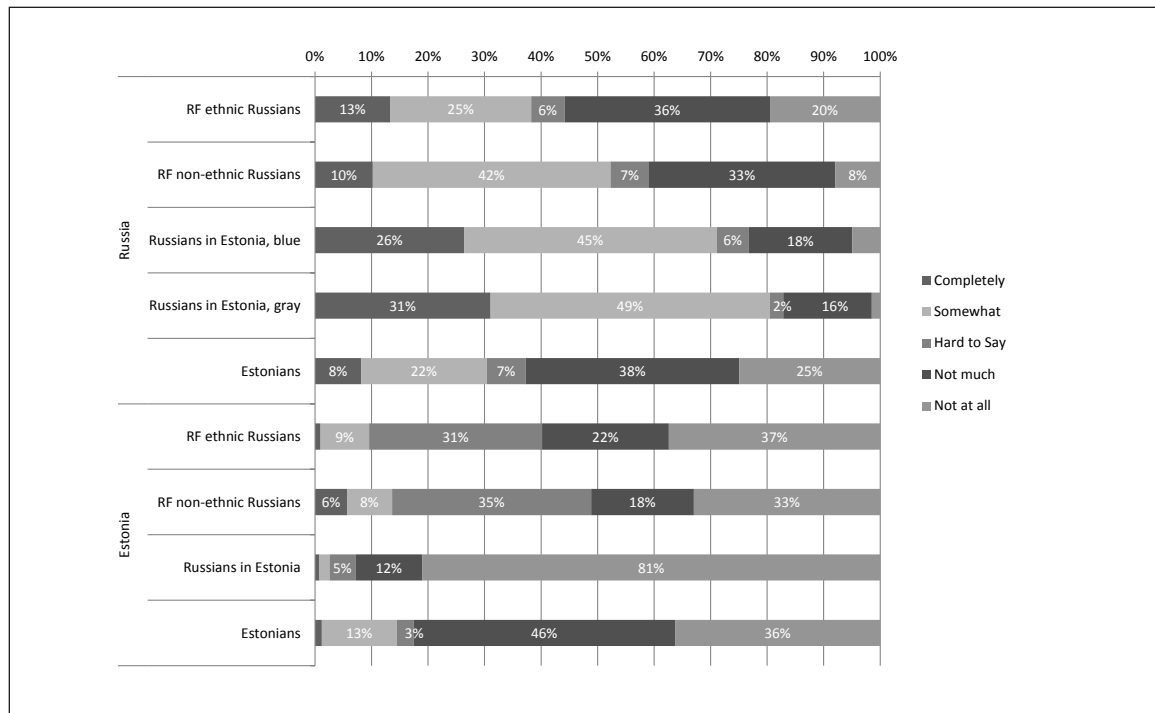
Admittedly, it is to be expected that issues such as the Soviet past or the relationship between Russia and Russians abroad would elicit polarized answers from Estonians and Russians respectively. But how do Estonians, Russians in Estonia, and those in the Russian Federation compare on more day-to-day issues?

Youth in the Russian Federation, ethnic Estonian youth, and ethnic Russian youth in Estonia have similar concerns: unemployment, price increases, and poverty are the most widespread fears. Russians in Estonia, however, have distinctly high levels of concern about growing nationalism and ethnic tensions; and gray passport holding Russians are more concerned about citizenship issues and loss of rights than any other group, befitting their status within the Estonian state. Ethnic Russians in Estonia, regardless of passport, are more concerned about tensions between Russia and Estonia: virtually no one is concerned by that in the Russian Federation.

With economic issues of primary concern, it is interesting to examine how each group sees the economic situation of Russia and Estonia. As illustrated in Figure 7, young Russians in Estonia have a higher opinion of the Russian economy than do youth in Russia. Ethnic Russians in the Russian Federation tend to disagree that Russia has a strong economy (56 percent disagree vs. 38 percent agree). Russians in Estonia, especially those with gray passports, are significantly more likely than Russian Federation residents to agree that Russia has a strong economy.

Russians in Estonia take the most skeptical view of the Estonian economy: 93 percent disagree that it is strong. It should be noted here that real GDP growth in Estonia in 2009 dropped

**Figure 7. How accurately does “a strong economy” describe Russia/Estonia?**



to -13.9 percent, and at the start of 2010 unemployment had reached 19 percent.<sup>4</sup> The impact of the global recession could be one reason why Estonians and Estonian Russians were downbeat on the economy. In 2011, Estonia entered the eurozone, witnessed a 35 percent increase in exports, and is expected to have an economic growth rate of roughly 4.9 percent, although unemployment remains high at 13.6 percent.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, over 70 percent of all comparison groups agree that Russia is a “corrupt country.” Estonians are far less likely to say their own country is corrupt. Large minorities of Russians in Estonia—especially noncitizens—see Estonia as a corrupt country. However, all of the national/ethnic groups are much more likely to see Russia than Estonia as corrupt.

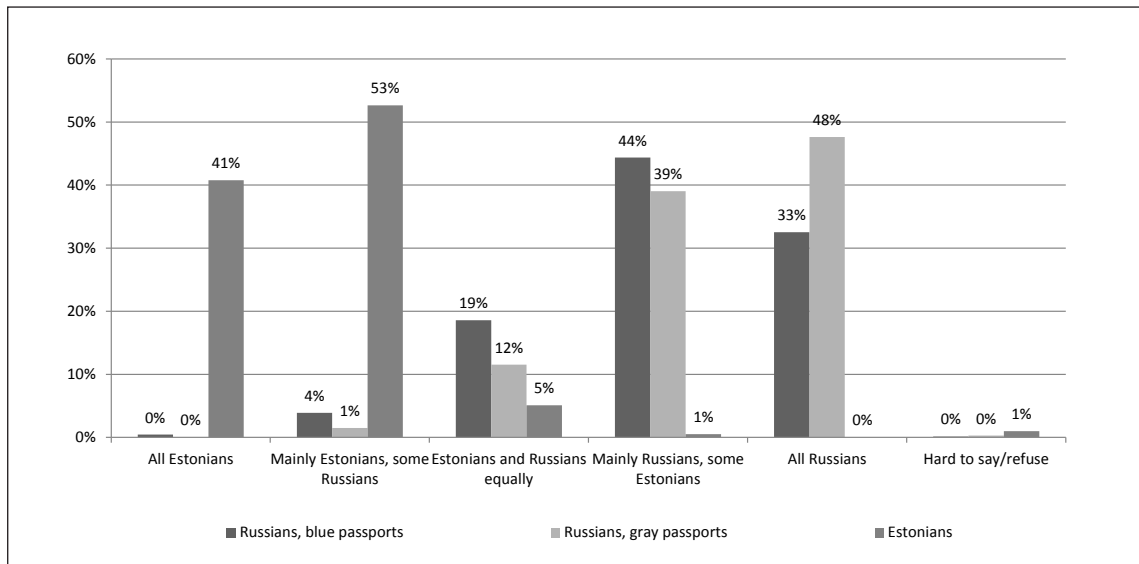
We also examined the degree of social interaction across ethnic lines and found that there is little contact between Estonians and Russians in Estonia through friendship and social networks or at the workplace.

4. “Real GDP growth rate,” Eurostat, July 20, 2011, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=tsieb020>; “Harmonised unemployment rate by gender,” Eurostat, July 20, 2011, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=teilm020>.

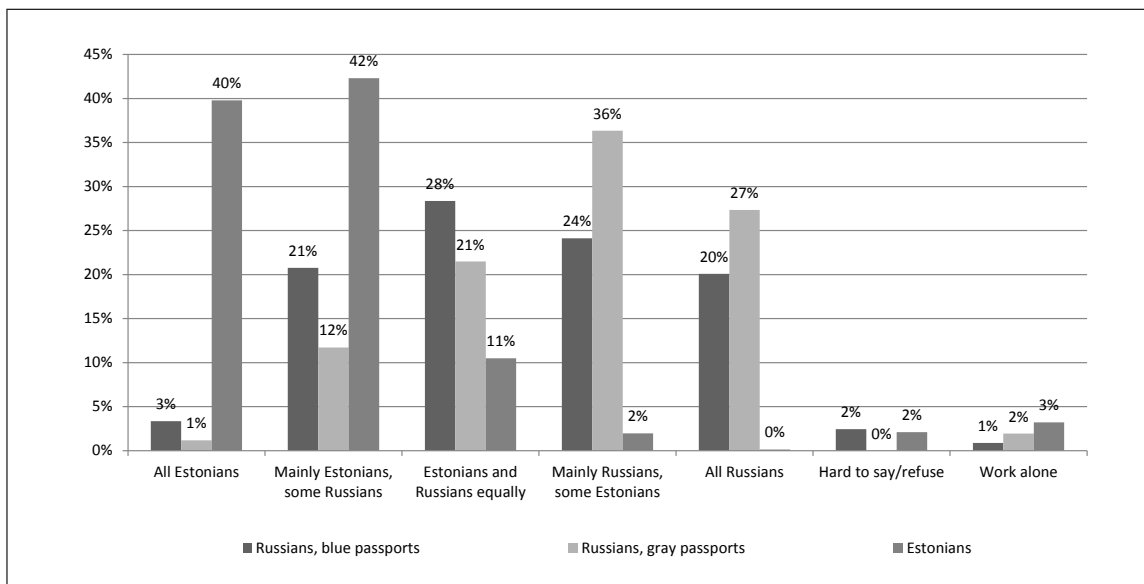
5. “Estonia’s exports up 35% in 2010, imports gain 27%,” *Baltic Business News*, February 25, 2011, <http://www.balticbusinessnews.com/article/2011/2/25/estonia-s-exports-up-35-in-2010-imports-gain-27>; “Real GDP growth rate,” Statistics Estonia, <http://www.stat.ee/29958>; “Estonian unemployment rate falls to 13.6%,” *Baltic Business News*, February 14, 2011, <http://www.balticbusinessnews.com/article/2011/2/14/estonian-unemployment-rate-falls-to-13-6>.

As illustrated in Figure 8, the social segregation of the two ethnic groups is pronounced. There is very little mixing of ethnic Russian and Estonian populations through friendship networks. There is, however, a somewhat greater tendency for blue passport Russians to report having Estonians make up half their friends (19 percent vs. 12 percent of gray passport Russians). There is, however, more interaction at the workplace as illustrated in Figure 9. About half of working blue passport Russians and about a third of working gray passport Russians have 50 percent or more Estonian colleagues at work.

**Figure 8. What proportion of your friends/acquaintances are Estonian and what proportion are Russians?**

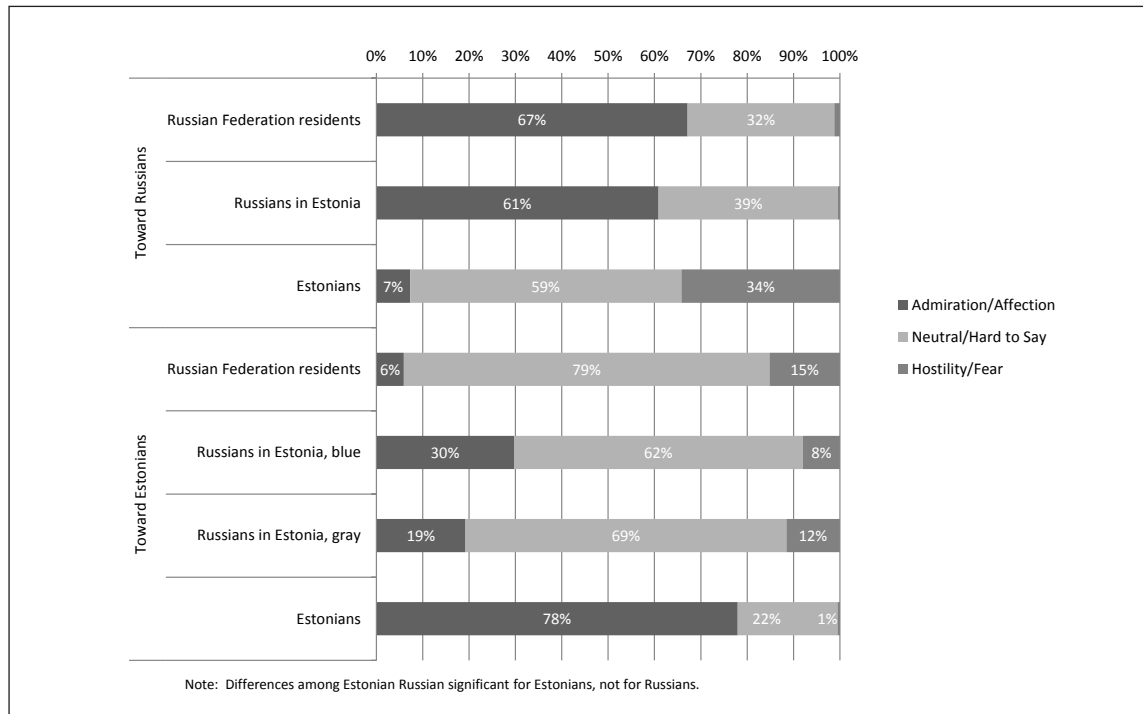


**Figure 9. What proportion of your coworkers are Estonian and what proportion are Russians?**



The CSIS survey also examined how different groups viewed one another. Figure 10 illustrates the results from a battery of questions asking respondents to choose which of six words or expressions best describes how they feel about nine different ethnic, national, and religious groups. By this measure, animosities between ethnic Russians and Estonians do not appear to be as strong, compared to the results for their views of one another's countries. Russians in Estonia with gray passports are more likely than blue passport holders to have negative views of Estonians, but in both groups of Russians in Estonia positive views are more common than negative, and neutrality is the prevalent attitude.

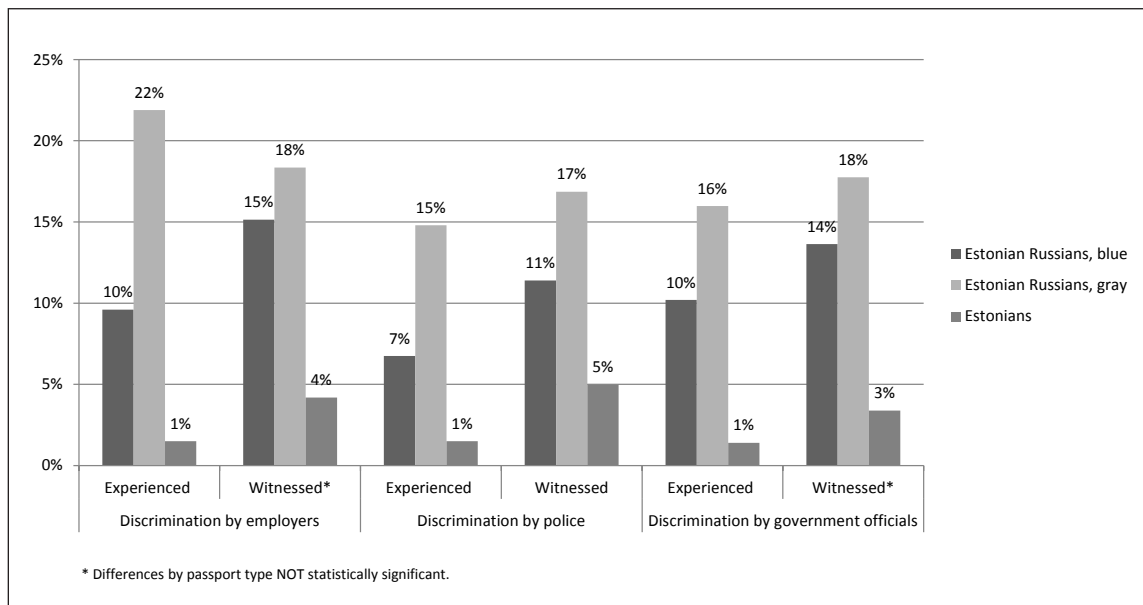
**Figure 10. What is your main feeling toward Russians/Estonians?**



In addition to general perceptions of other ethnicities, we asked individuals in Estonia about their experience, if any, with overt discrimination, and we found that Russians report that they experience discrimination and mistreatment in relatively large numbers. About one-fifth of Russians in Estonia regardless of citizenship have heard statements such as “get out” or “go back where you came from,” and two in five report having heard about such incidents from family members. We asked respondents if they had personally experienced or witnessed discrimination against Russians in Estonia by Estonian employers, police officers, or government officials. Although self-reports of discrimination are subjective, they nonetheless lend some insight into perceptions of mistreatment. While these findings support Russian claims of discrimination against the Russian minority in Estonia, they imply that such instances are less widespread than the Russian authorities allege.

As illustrated in Figure 11, gray passport holders consistently report more personal experiences of discrimination: 22 percent of them say they have been discriminated against by employers (versus 10 percent of blue passport holders). There are somewhat fewer reports of discrimination by police and government officials, but still nearly one in five Russians have witnessed these forms. Very few Estonians say they have witnessed these types of discrimination, pointing again to a wide gap in perceptions of discrimination across ethnic lines in Estonia.

**Figure 11. In the last three years have you personally experienced or witnessed the violation of rights or unfair treatment of Russian-speakers by an Estonian employer, police, officer, or government official?**



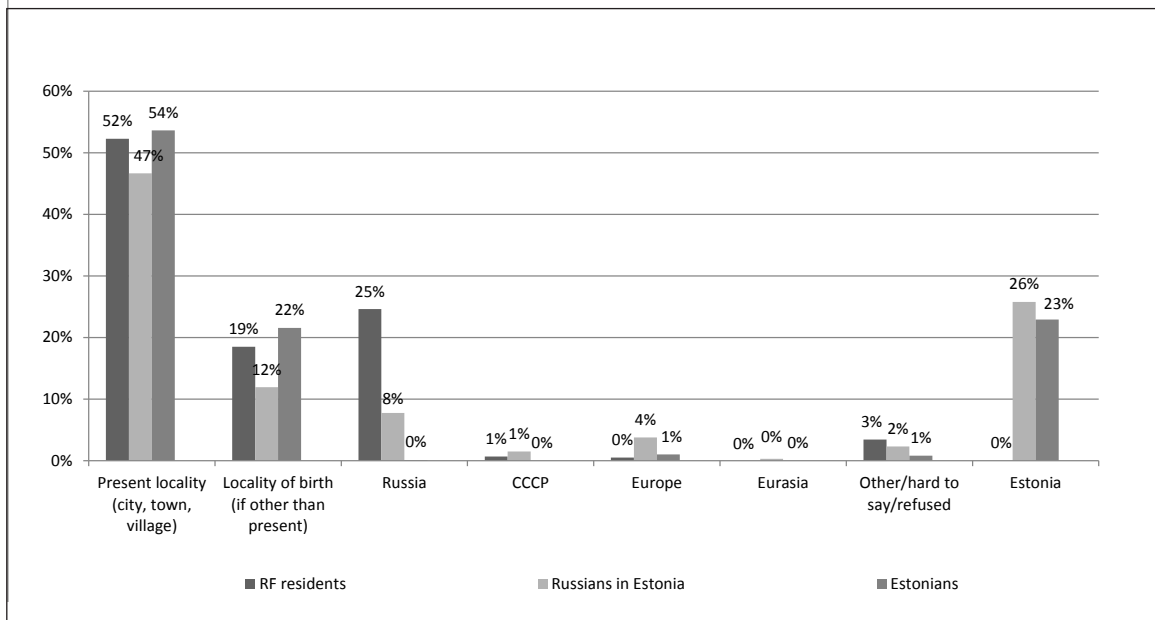
## Identity and Desired Location

While many Russians in Estonia appear to be removed from Estonian society, and some have experienced overt discrimination, we also found that many have no intention of leaving Estonia and returning to Russia.

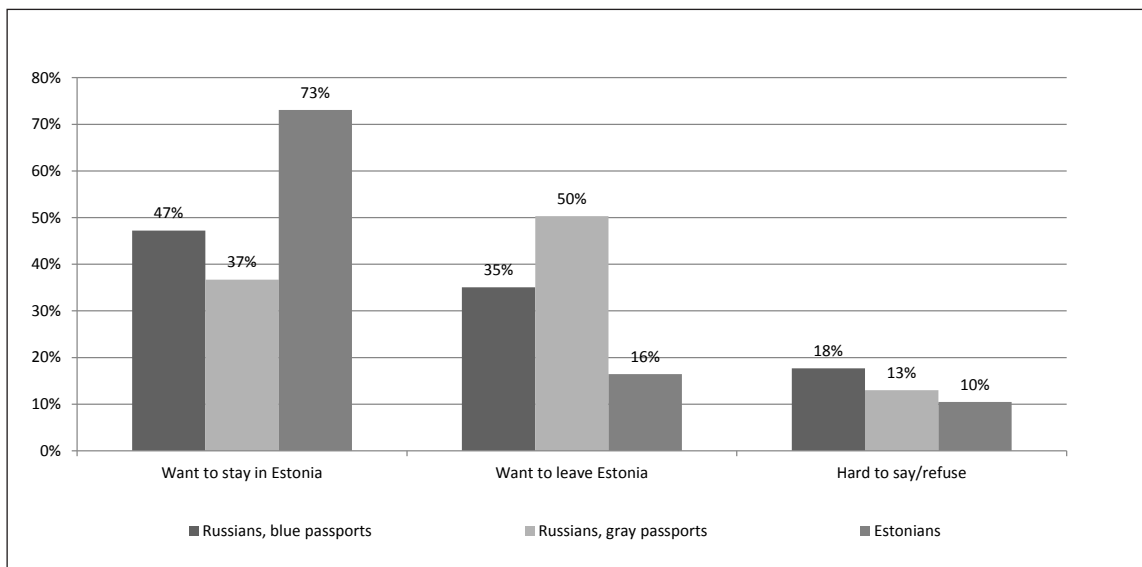
As illustrated in Figure 12, when asked to identify the place to which those surveyed felt the strongest connection, Russians in Estonia and Estonians alike identify primarily with their present locality of residence. Russians in Estonia are actually more likely to express a stronger identification with Estonia than Estonians are, and they are much more likely to identify strongly with Estonia than with Russia. This suggests that the Russian minority in Estonia have feelings of belonging to Estonia despite deep historical and political misgivings.

Survey findings also suggest that the Russian minority in Estonia is there to stay. Only about half of gray passport Russians in Estonia, and a third of blue passport holders, say they would like to leave Estonia, as illustrated in Figure 13; and few of those who would like to leave Estonia would like to move to Russia. The more popular destinations for relocation include other EU countries, particularly those in Scandinavia. The main reason cited by Russians in Estonia for not wanting to

**Figure 12. With which of the following places do you feel the strongest connection?**



**Figure 13. Do you want to stay in Estonia permanently or would you prefer to leave the country?**



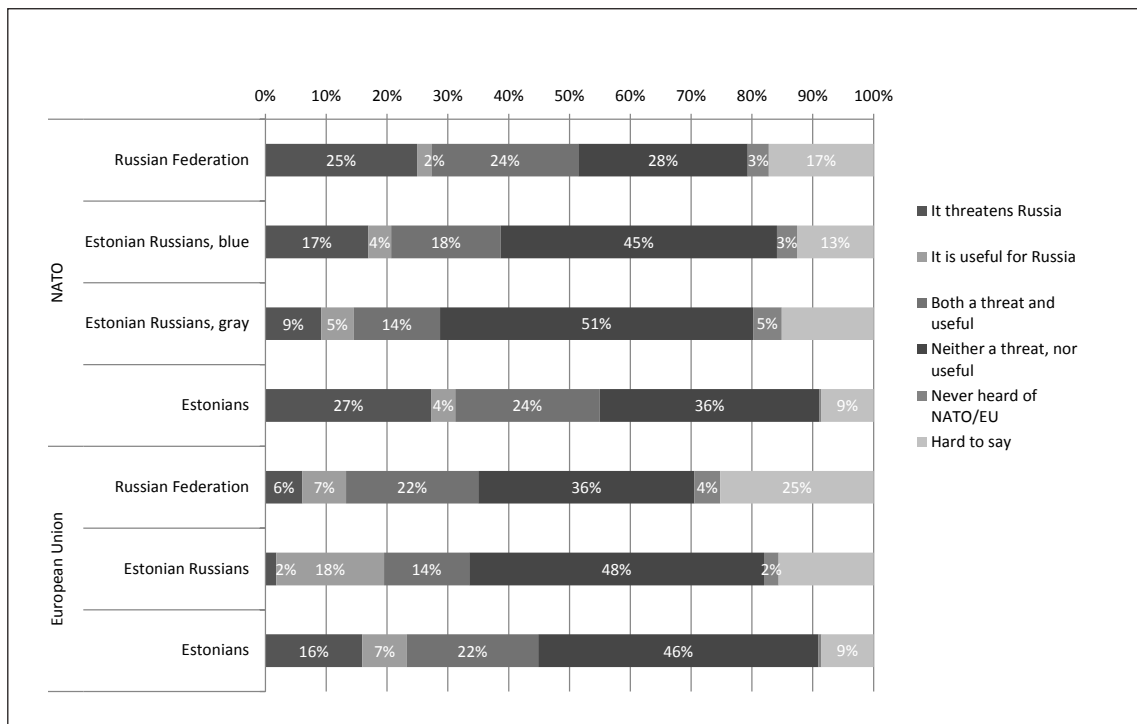


move to Russia is that Estonia, and not Russia, is their homeland. Other common reasons are the better economic situation in Estonia and its identification with the West. This may help to explain the failures of the Russian compatriot resettlement program. Among those who say they would like to move back to Russia, the most typical reasons for this desire are love for Russian culture, mistreatment in Estonia, and better economic opportunities in Russia. However, very few are sufficiently motivated by these factors to act.

## Views of the West

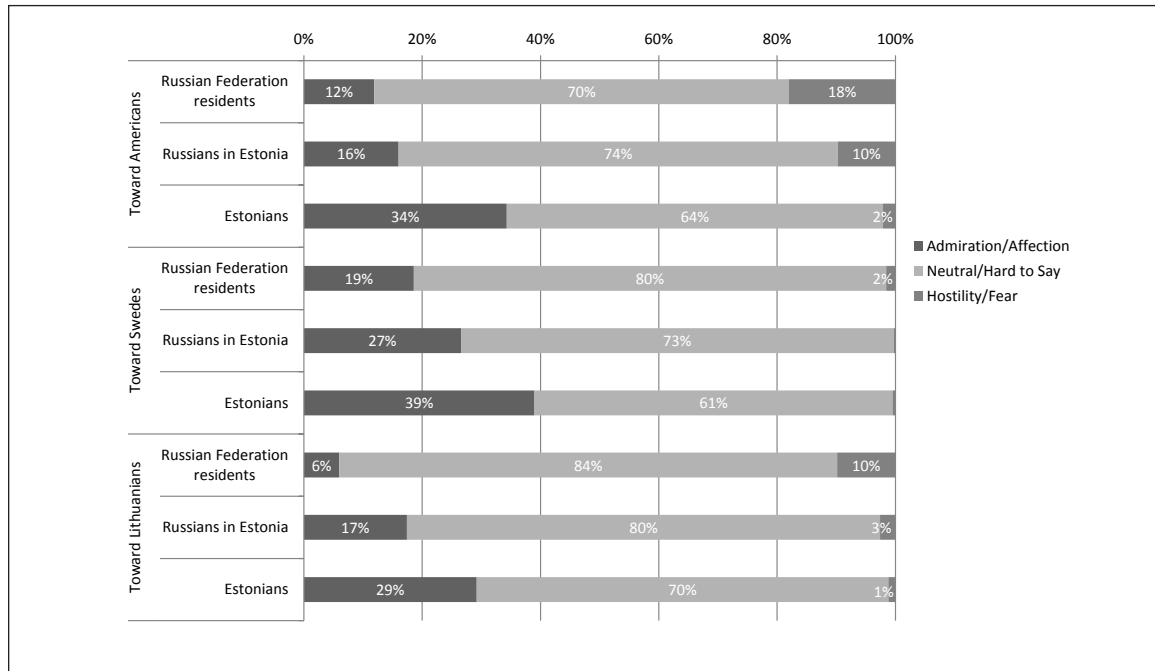
Estonians feel Western countries are their allies; they believe NATO will protect them from Russian attack, and they also feel positively toward other former Soviet countries that lean westward. Russians in Estonia do not differ much from Estonians on these counts, although they are more skeptical that NATO would defend Estonia. The predominant view of all comparison groups toward the other nationalities/religions we asked about is neutrality. However, Estonians tend toward more positive views of Americans and Europeans, Russians toward more negative views, and Russians in Estonia are somewhere in between.

**Figure 14. Does Estonia joining NATO/EU threaten Russia, or is it useful for Russia?**



We asked whether Estonia joining NATO and the European Union posed a threat to Russia, was useful for Russia, both or neither. As illustrated in Figure 14, Estonians were the most likely to say that joining these organizations posed a threat to Russia. Russians in Estonia were the least likely to see Estonia’s membership in NATO and the European Union as threatening to Russia. But in all groups the modal responses were that Estonia’s memberships neither posed a threat nor were useful to Russia.

**Figure 15. What is your main feeling toward Americans/Swedes/Lithuanians?**



As illustrated in Figure 15, Estonians have the most positive/least negative feelings toward Anglo-European nationalities (Americans, Swedes, Lithuanians); Russian Federation residents the least positive/most negative; and Russians in Estonia are in between in their views. This is further evidence that Estonians are more oriented toward the West than Russian Federation residents are, while Russians in Estonia are somewhere between the two extremes. Still, the predominant views in all comparison groups are neutrality toward Americans, Swedes, and Lithuanians, so it is important not to overstate the differences.

## Conclusions

Taken as a whole, the findings from the CSIS survey, which was an attempt to quantify the efficacy of Russian soft power through the implementation of its Compatriot Policy, paint a mixed picture. On the positive side, Russia excels in its dissemination of “soft propaganda,” which helps inform the views of compatriots on issues such as history and politics. This is demonstrated by the divergent deep-seated beliefs between Russians and Estonians and by the compatriots’ positive views toward Russia. Russians in Estonia have a more positive view of Russia—they are more likely to say that Russia is a superpower and that it has a strong economy—than do ethnic Russians within Russia.

There is also overwhelming support among those Russian citizens who pay some attention to the situation of Russians in Estonia for their governments’ intervention to protect the human rights situation of their compatriots. This suggests that the compatriot policy resonates domestically and politically in some circles within Russia. However, the fact that only one-quarter of the Russian respondents say they know anything at all about the situation of Russians in Estonia suggests that the Russian government’s narrative of the plight of compatriots in Estonia has not

reached many ears in the domestic audience. The survey does reveal reasons to be concerned over the situation of the Russian minority in Estonia however. The social segregation of the two ethnic groups, the deep-seated divisions about historical memory, and the Russians' perception of discrimination are all serious integration problems that have flowed to the next generation of Russians in Estonia and need to be addressed immediately. This problem will not fade away with the passing of the older generation.

Yet, there is little evidence that Russians in Estonia identify with Russia as their homeland, and very few say they want to return to Russia or actually do. The image that the survey conjures is that of a divided Estonia but with a Russian minority eager to stay and find its place in Estonian society. Their views about Russian government efforts on their behalf are divided: many of them see ulterior motives behind Russian government statements and fail to notice any impact on their daily lives. The Compatriot Policy also is less effective where it counts the most—affecting change in the lives of the Russian minority—and has major limitations given the Russian minority's westward outlook and attachment to Estonia as country of residence. This could be perceived as a principal failure of the Compatriot Policy.

Keeping the mixed nature of these accomplishments and setbacks in mind, Russian soft power with a focus on consolidating the compatriot network is a more sophisticated and effective tool for use in Estonia than overt hard power tactics and hardline approaches. Russian soft power is a clumsy attempt to mirror a variety of Western diplomatic (implemented through NGOs) and cultural efforts, most of which the Russian government has strongly protested against in some form but has adapted to its own use in Estonia.

Russia's use of cultural, linguistic, and religious soft power is a more subtle policy approach that attracts less criticism in Estonia but is clearly viewed as a potential menace by Estonian authorities. Russia's use of sympathetic political parties, such as the Center Party, and youth networks that support Moscow's views may be a more high-risk strategy and in the short term prone to backfire, but these tactics could have the greatest long-term potential in achieving Russian aims of conjuring an image of Estonia as a seemingly off-balanced member of NATO and the European Union that must seek political support from Russian-backed political parties, while concurrently receiving international criticism for discriminatory and inept minority policies.

A truly effective Russian soft power policy in Estonia is in fact a duality: it is a policy that attracts Russian speakers abroad to a Russian narrative of national savior (Nazi liberator) and historically and organizationally superior, yet at the same time repels Western-oriented governments in the eyes of its population and in Western capitals alike. If the host government responds strongly to Russian soft power and acts precipitously (such as the movement of the Bronze Soldier monument by Estonian authorities in 2007), international condemnation against the host government commonly ensues, feeding Moscow's desired perception of Russian discrimination and victimization abroad and ensuring strong domestic support in Russia. For it to be successful, Russian soft power must operate below the international political radar screen so as not to incur condemnation of its actions, while simultaneously driving the host government to the brink of irrationality by using a variety of domestic provocations and international human rights forum. If Russian soft power is overt, such as in the March 6, 2011, Estonian national elections with the Kremlin-supported Center Party, it can be perceived internationally as Russian interference in another country's domestic affairs. This reaction by the international community can result in a backlash against Russian policy interests. It will be interesting to see if the Compatriot Policy and protection of Russian minorities in the post-Soviet space will be promoted to spur domestic support during

the upcoming Russian parliamentary elections on December 4, 2011. What is clear is that, election cycle and precipitous acts notwithstanding, any issue deeply rooted in contested World War II history or related to integration, can ignite very quickly for both sides. As one Russian official was reported to have noted, “Estonia is a small potato, but it is a hot potato.”

For Estonia, integrating its Russian-speaking population remains its most sensitive subject. Twenty years after independence, Estonia continues to struggle emotionally and administratively with how to build its future—which is promising and bright—*with* its Russian population and not around it.

# 5

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

From this comprehensive analysis and survey findings, we offer the following reflections:

- The Estonian government should be concerned about the survey findings regarding the depth of ethnic divisions and be aware of the successes and limitations of the Russian Compatriot Policy toward Russians in Estonia.
- Estonian policy should not be crafted with the intention to thwart the activities of compatriot organizations or lament their hidden intentions. The Estonian government should develop its own initiatives to more actively promote integration of the Russian minority into Estonian society, particularly within friendship networks and in the workplace. Integration will never be successful without an appropriate level of interaction between the two ethnic groups.
- The Estonian government should support and promote nongovernmental organizations that are not ethnically based and focus on other social and political interests that could appeal to Estonians regardless of ethnic background. Not only would such organizations help create more ethnically diverse civil society networks that bring together Estonians and Russians, but they would also help de-homogenize the Russian minority. By offering alternatives to the compatriot organizations, increased contact with the Estonian population will foster better understanding and friendship opportunities.
- Reports of Russians' perceived discrimination by employers should be taken seriously by the Estonian government. The Estonian government should consider measures to reduce unemployment among Russians in Estonia, which is disproportionately higher than for ethnic Estonians. These policies must address the main cause of unemployment for this group, particularly the lack of Estonian-language skills. Besides the current efforts to improve Estonian-language training in secondary schools, the Estonian government should also consider providing Estonian-language courses to Russian adults. Not only would such programs better improve their labor participation opportunities, they would also encourage mixing of ethnic Russian and Estonian populations in the workplace and help counter discrimination complaints over the language requirements for various public- or private-sector professions.
- Other training programs tailored to the needs of Russian workers could help them gain skills required in higher-growth sectors of the Estonian economy. It is important to ensure that Russians are productive members of society to diminish the motivation for conflict (either from discontented Russians or from Estonians opposed to them receiving welfare). Furthermore, since the better economic opportunities in Estonia are a main factor for Russians not returning to their motherland, having a stable job and good job prospects will encourage them to contribute to Estonia's growing economic prosperity.

- Another discouraging finding was the divergence in views about history between Estonians and the Russian minority. While it is difficult to alter the views of adults, it is important Russian students receive adequate education in history. The Estonian government should ensure that the new school curriculum in Russian secondary schools is both accessible and tailored to the Russian minority. For example, the content of classes on Estonian and European history should be accurate, but mindful toward sensitive issues such as the Soviet occupation of Estonia and the legacy of the Soviet Union. Instead of trying to impose the Estonian perspective, professors should acknowledge competing interpretations and provoke a debate and dialogue that helps students understand the evidence and arguments against the Russian perspective.
- The political participation of Russians in Estonia should also be a high priority. The Estonian government should make further efforts to promote and facilitate naturalization efforts for the remaining 100,000 stateless Russians (i.e., offer incentives and provide tools to Russians so that they can meet the citizenship requirements). Citizenship is necessary to ensure that they have access to the democratic political process to voice their concerns, rather than resort to street demonstrations or violent protests.
- Lastly, the Estonian government should pay attention to the public debate surrounding the Russian minority in Estonia. Public officials should refrain from anti-Russian rhetoric as it further antagonizes the Russian minority and creates ethnic tensions. Instead, the Estonian government should try to cooperate with Russia (even if on lower-level issues such as cultural events) to show a willingness to normalize relations.
- There are also steps that Estonian civil society can take to bring the Russian minority into their fold. For example, NGOs and other organizations could target some of their activities to the Russian minority and try to garner support and participation from this group. Furthermore, the national media could make an effort to appeal to the Russian community, through either Russian-language programs or unbiased coverage of topics of interest to Russians. The use of social media targeting the next generation of Estonians and the Russian minority would be welcome. This would help diminish the impact of antagonistic Russian-language media and support integration efforts.
- Instead of intervention in Estonia's affairs on behalf of its compatriots, the Russian government should help ensure that the Russian minority is politically, economically, and socially active within Estonia and not separate from Estonians. The Russian government should encourage stateless Russians to naturalize so that they can obtain voting rights and have a voice in Estonian politics.
- Russia should continue its policy of rapprochement with Estonia and the West. Russia should acknowledge that antagonism between Estonia and Russia generates negative international reaction and creates further ethnic divisions between the Russian minority and Estonians. This hurts Russia's image in the international arena and their compatriots' day-to-day situation.





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