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Political 'Hot'-topics and Latvian Identity Politics: Russian-minority narratives explored
through media

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Abstract

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New Year's is the most celebrated holiday in Russian culture. But why is it that people in Latvia still celebrate New Year's on Moscow time? Media represents the Russian-speaking community in Latvia in a variety of ways. By examining foreign affairs, ideological, ethno-political, and socio-economic topics, several narratives regarding Russian-speakers can be explored. The study of identity through the use of media as a source may help solidify our understanding of how Russian-speakers feel in contemporary Latvia.

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Introduction: 'Hot' Politics in Latvian Media

New Year's [Новый Год], is the most celebrated holiday in Russian culture. It should be no wonder that Father Frost [Дед Мороз] comes to deliver presents to anxious young children, the Kremlin's clock chimes at midnight Moscow time, and everyone crowds around a television as a message is delivered by the Russian President, currently Vladimir Putin. What if I told you the exact same traditions are carried out in Latvia, specifically the city of Daugavpils, 770 kilometers from Moscow—you'll find that here too, fireworks are set off at 11 pm, to match Moscow's midnight, and people tune into President Putin's evening address.

How do we come to understand this confusing dilemma? Why would a country, free from Soviet oppression and rule, and ready to celebrate its 100th anniversary of independence (Latvians will count 2018 as their centenary due to the eventual proclamation of the Republic of Latvia in 1918) still have citizens who look to Russia for this tradition? Despite winning independence from Soviet Russia, the Latvians would again lose their independent status in 1939 due to the Soviet signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and the Soviet occupation of Latvia in 1940. Even after a disastrous five years which saw a change from Soviet—Nazi—Soviet rule, when the war ended in 1945, the Soviets were there to stay. With the Soviet period came a mass influx of ethnic-Russians¹ and citizens of the USSR (accounting for the large Russian-speaking²

¹ Ethnic Russians are people who are from Russia, and culturally identify as Russian (Schmid 2008)

² Russian-speakers include people of different ethnicities who speak Russian as their primary language. This is opposed to speakers of Russian, who are people that speak Russian, but grow up with a first language that is not the Russian language (Schmid 2008). Russian-speakers/the Russian-speaking community in Latvia are interchangeable. They consist of ethnic Russians, Belarussians, Ukrainians, and to some extent Latvians, Poles, Jews, and other groups who speak or have adopted Russian as their spoken language (Schmid 2008). The

population today). By the end of the Soviet occupation in 1991, 54% of Latvia's population were ethnic Latvians, while 46% were part of the Russian-speaking community.³

With such a large Russian-speaking community in Daugavpils, and Latvia as a whole, it may be less of a surprise that the fireworks are set off on Moscow time, considering that Russians were among the beneficiaries of the Soviet occupation. It's important to understand how these Russian-speakers fit into contemporary Latvia, and one of the ways to do this is by utilizing media sources. This paper aims to look at how media today, creates, influences, and distorts perceptions.

Purpose

The primary focus of this work is the exploration of Russian-speaking identity in Latvia. I aim to look at a number of related questions, such as how the Russian-speaking minority fits into Latvian society, how media represents the Russian-speaking minority with respect to 'hot' political issues, and how/why different 'levels of coverage'⁴ exist in reporting on the Russian-speaking minority.

Media at the local, national, regional, and international level, represents the Russian-speaking community in Latvia in a multitude of ways. By examining international, ideological, ethno-political, and socio-economic topics, various narratives regarding Russian-speakers can be explored. Furthermore, the study of identity through

Ukrainian, Polish, and Belarussian minorities in Latvia have over time, integrated with the ethnic Russian minority when it comes to education, language, politics, and culture (Sikk and Bochler 2008).

³ Brown, "Latvia's 'Non-Citizen' Policy Leaves Thousands Feeling Stateless."

⁴ I often refer to local, national, regional, and international media sources; these are 'levels of coverage' as they are media sources which vary in the scope and size of their coverage.

the use of media as a source may help solidify our understanding of how Russian-speakers think and feel not only in Latvia, but in other post-Soviet states. This study's conclusions may provide insight allowing for comparison between Russians in Latvia and other Russian minorities.

Recent research has shown that Russian speakers favor integration (identifying with both Latvian culture and Russian culture) over assimilation, marginalization, or separation.⁵

I hypothesize that while the Russian language community in Latvia feels no closer to Russia than it is does to Latvia, media sources covering Latvia create a polarizing effect which in turn stigmatizes and stereotypes the Russian-speaking and Latvian-speaking communities. With regards to this hypothesis, I assert that local media acts as a representative of its readers, national media reports on both majority and minority group sentiments while slanting coverage to coincide with the majority of its audience's beliefs, and international media looks to present the big picture on important issues in Latvia, bringing attention to various arguments, but focusing on informing a broad spectrum of readers.

The basis for this divide is that at a local level, readership is more homogenous, and as a result, articles can be tailored to appeal to the specific group(s) that makeup the majority of the local population. The larger the media outlet, the larger the reader base, and the more heterogeneous the readership. This creates less of a need to entertain with news and appeal to readers, as the readership is too diverse to tailor articles to.

⁵ Cheskin, "Exploring Russian-Speaking Identity from Below", 289.

Over the course of the past few decades, minority groups have received more attention in scholarly research and literature. A fair amount of work has been done on the study of minority groups, including some studies which look at minorities in relation to media. However, there has been no comprehensive examination of multilingual media in Latvia, ranging from the small scale (local and national news) to the larger scale (regional and international news outlets). By looking at media sources, I aim to explore media's representation of the Russian-speaking community's role in society and sentiments towards Latvia as a living environment—and I hope to validate or invalidate my assertions regarding media coverage of Latvia.

Breaking down Latvia

If you step foot off of a bus or train in Daugavpils, you will still be in Latvia—signs will be in Latvian, streets will have Latvian names, and most of the people around you will be Latvian citizens. The one difference will be the language you hear; the majority of Daugavpils's citizens are ethnically Russian, and even if you are not ethnically Russian, you likely speak better Russian than Latvian in this city.

Latvia is often thought of as homogenous. If you go to the countryside, you are going to hear Latvian and see ethnic-Latvians. Differences start to appear if you were to walk the streets of the Baltic's metropolitan and cosmopolitan hub, Riga. Here, two languages are prevalent—Russian and Latvian, (though more people in Riga speak Russian at home as compared to Latvian).⁶

⁶ eng.lsm.lv, "Riga Speaks More Russian than Latvian"

Within Latvia, there are a number of Russian-speaking enclaves. Russians first arrived in Latvia from Polotsk and Novgorod in the 12th century.⁷ In the early 1700s, Peter the Great went on a conquest of the Baltics and by the mid-1700s, Latvia was totally encompassed by the Russian Empire.⁸ Latvia, in the 18th and 19th century became a place where minorities fled to; Jews arrived due to discrimination and the Pale of Settlement⁹, and Russian Old-Believers [староверы] fled because of the Tsar's persecution.¹⁰ During this time, Latvian peasants were subservient to the Russian Empire and held a lower social status in comparison to primarily German landowners.¹¹ Despite eventual emancipation, Latvia's peasants (which was the class most Russians made up) were unhappy, leading to acts of civil disobedience, unrest, and an eventual national revival that would lead to a growing independence movement.¹² With the Second Russian Revolution, the Russian population in Latvia only increased as people fled civil war.¹³ However, most of the ethnic-Russians in Latvia today settled during the Soviet period, due to massive migratory movements during the 'Russification period' from Soviet Russia to newly incorporated Soviet states.¹⁴ Latvia's population of ethnic-Russians has dropped since its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, as language and citizenship policies have resulted in immigration to other EU countries and Russia.¹⁵

⁷ The Latvian Institute, "Latvian Russians."

⁸ The Latvian Institute, "Latvian Russians."

⁹ Bater and Stranga, "Latvia."

¹⁰ The Latvian Institute, "Latvian Russians."

¹¹ The Latvian Institute, "Latvian Russians."

¹² The Latvian Institute, "Latvian Russians."

¹³ The Latvian Institute, "Latvian Russians."

¹⁴ The Latvian Institute, "Latvian Russians."

¹⁵ The Latvian Institute, "Latvian Russians."

Chart 1: Latvia's Ethnic Breakdown

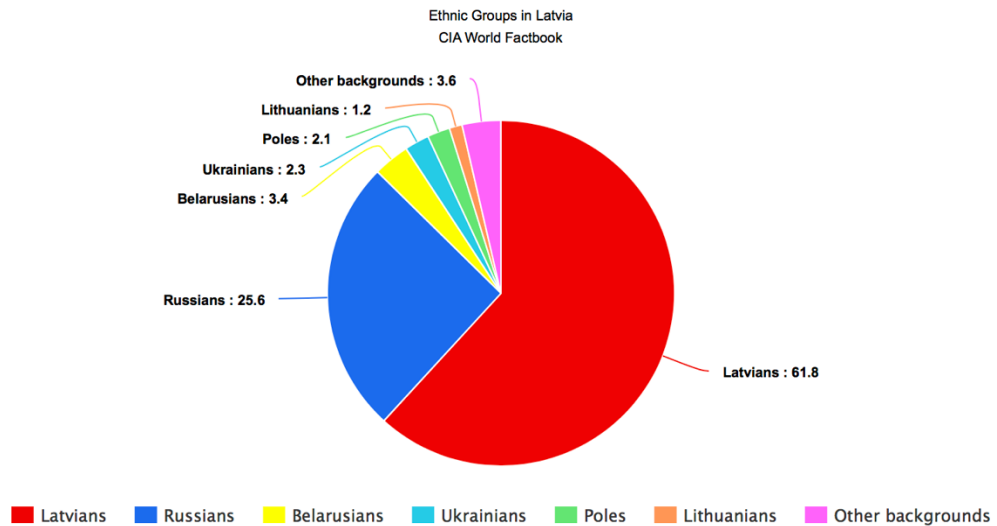
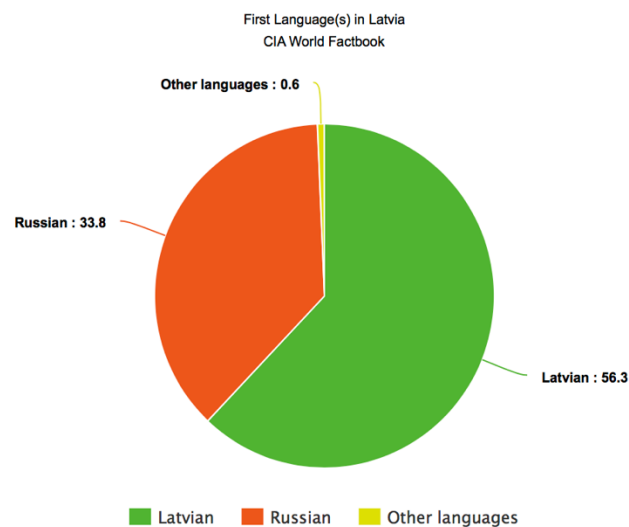


Chart 2: Latvia's Linguistic Breakdown



As mentioned before, Latvia has ethnic-Russians and a larger Russian-speaking community. In looking at the numbers, despite Latvia only consisting of 25.6% ethnic Russians, 33.8% of the population speak Russian at home.¹⁶ This can be explained due to the fact that the Russian community

¹⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, "Country Profile: Latvia."

in Latvia encompasses Slavic brethren (Ukrainians and Belarussians), in addition to Poles, Latvians, and Jews.¹⁷

Statistically speaking, over 650,000 of Latvia's population speak Russian as a first language.¹⁸ Even further, approximately another 900,000 of Latvia's population speak Russian as a second language.¹⁹ All totaled, 1.9 million Latvian residents have some grasp of the Russian language as compared to 1.8 million who have some grasp of the Latvian language.²⁰ Taking into consideration language statistics, a greater percentage of Latvia's population speak Russian as a first or second language as compared to Latvian.²¹ Just looking just at the country's two largest ethnic groups, 67% of ethnic Latvians said they could speak Russian, and 48% of Russians said that they could speak Latvian²², a margin of difference of about 20% between the two groups. Since Independence in 1991, the number of those who speak only Russian at home has decreased—potentially due to the implementation of Latvian language policies.²³

Politically, Latvia is split along ethno-linguistic lines. In order to gain a better understanding of Latvia's political complexities, I will provide a brief overview of its political parties. On the right you have the National Alliance [Nacionālā Apvienība] and For Latvia from the Heart [No sirds Latvijai].²⁴ In the center you have Unity [Vienotība] and the Union of Greens and Farmers [Zaļo un Zemnieku

¹⁷ Pošeiko, "The Latvian Language in the Linguistic Landscape of Daugavpils (the Middle of the 19th Century - Today)", 332.

¹⁸ Dilans, "Russian in Latvia", 11.

¹⁹ "Official Language - Statistiska"

²⁰ "Official Language - Statistiska"

²¹ "Official Language - Statistiska"

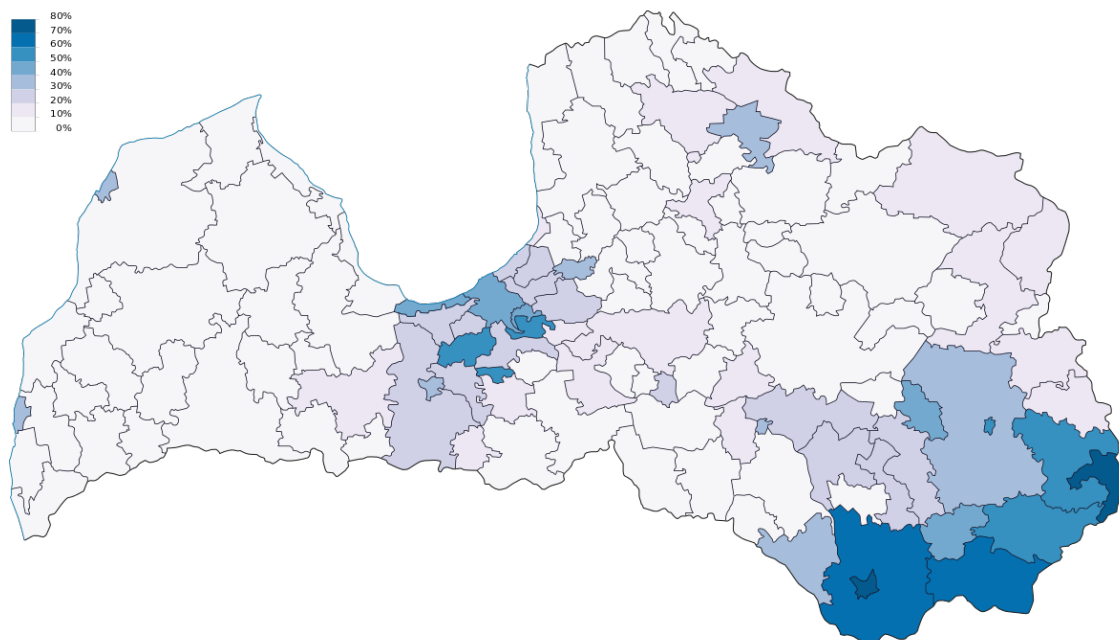
²² "Official Language - Statistiska"

²³ Lazdiņa et al., "Language, Religion and Ethnic Identity" 68-71.

²⁴ "Latvia - Political Parties"

savienība].²⁵ On the left, you have the Social Democratic Party "Harmony" [Sociāldemokrātiskā Partija "Saskaņa"] (along with other local and regional parties which back the Russian minority).²⁶ While these don't fully encompass the entire Latvian political spectrum, especially at the local level, these are the five largest parties with seats in the Latvian Parliament [the Saeima].²⁷ An assumption that generally holds true is that the left-wing parties are representative of the Russian-language minority, the center parties tend to be pro-European Union and socially liberal, and the right-wing parties tend to be nationalistic, conservative, and focused on representing ethnic Latvians.

Map 1: Geographic Dispersion of Latvia's Russian-speakers²⁸



²⁵ "Latvia - Political Parties"

²⁶ "Latvia - Political Parties"

²⁷ Latvian Government, "Members of the 12th Saeima."

²⁸ Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, "2011 Census."

Regionally, Latvia has five official and four cultural regions. Outside of Riga (which is its own region), to the west is Kurzeme, to the south is Zemgale and to the North is Vidzeme. In each of these regions, the majority of the population is ethnically Latvian. In the southeast is Latgale, which is home to a number of minority groups of different languages, religions, and backgrounds. Latgale has historically been, and still is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural hub in Europe.²⁹

Latvia's largest cities (Riga and Daugavpils), are predominantly Russian-speaking cities.³⁰ Geographically, cities like Daugavpils and Riga were centrally located for trade and business, and as a result, became important hubs for exchange. Riga is one of the largest ports on the Baltic Sea and was a historically important port for European sea-trade. Daugavpils too, was a historically important city; it's positioned almost exactly between Moscow and Central Europe, making it an important city for those journeying from Europe to Russia.³¹

²⁹ Ivanovs and Soms, "Origins of Regional Identity of Eastern Latvia (Latgale) and Approaches to Its Investigation" 44.

³⁰ "Official Language - Statistiska"

³¹ Ivanovs and Soms, "Origins of Regional Identity of Eastern Latvia (Latgale) and Approaches to Its Investigation" 45.

Chapter 1: Methods and Sources

This paper will look at Latvia's media landscape, specifically as it relates to 'levels of coverage' in order to examine the identity of Latvia's Russian-language minority. The media sources that I will be utilizing in this paper come from two different sub-sources of media: newspapers and online internet portals. The newspapers publish in both print and electronically, while internet portals publish solely online. Print and internet sources are common ways for Latvians to obtain information and access to various local, national, and international media sources. Further, print and internet media sources are often the most divisive³², which will hopefully provide various points of comparison.

I primarily utilize Russian language keyword searches in order to find relevant online news articles that correspond to topics I intend to discuss. Russian, Latvian, and English language news sites are explored, but only articles in Russian and English will be discussed, as I lack Latvian-language ability.

The work in this paper is qualitative, and the work in this paper was carried out from September—March 2018. I conduct a comparison of press coverages; looking at political leanings, scope of coverage, audience base, source background information, and the language(s) that the source utilizes.

³² Zolotarev, "The Baltic Times and Media Development in the Baltic States"

I evaluate how media outlets report on four different problematic ‘hot’ political topics pertinent to present-day Latvia. I utilize different techniques in working with primary source articles; this include overviews topics, providing an analysis of articles, highlighting potential sources and reasons for biases, and examining article content in light of article context.

Furthermore, this paper utilizes interviews with journalists as primary sources. I conducted formal interviews, and informal conversations (using guidelines outlined in works on oral history)³³ with a number of local journalists in Latvia. Within the context of these interviews, I review journalist and corresponding newspaper backgrounds and leanings, evaluate journalistic preferences (through first-hand accounts), examine each journalist’s respective articles, and survey secondary source literature and information.

The secondary sources, while primarily supplemental to this paper, are examined by the topics they cover, the points they make, and for any potential conflicts of interest or biases that the author(s) may have. Secondary sources, primarily consisting of scholarly accounts and prior research are essential in calling attention to social life in Latvia, media coverage, ethnic polarization or integration, and historical narratives.

1.1 Articles

The specific media sources that will be analyzed in this paper come from a broad spectrum in terms of readership, scope of coverage, ownership, and funding. They

³³ Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*; Samuel, “Local History and Oral History”; Thomson, “Moving Stories”; Yow, *Recording Oral History*.

include local, national, regional, and international news outlets, and encompass reporting in three languages (two of which will be covered in content analysis).

On the local level, there are a total of four major papers that cover Daugavpils, including: *Grani.lv*, *Gorod.lv*, *Nasha.lv*, and *Latgolas Laiks*. The two local papers that are going to be discussed are *Grani* and *Gorod*, the two largest and most popular local newspapers and internet portals in Daugavpils.³⁴ *Grani* was founded in 1998³⁵ while *Gorod* was founded in 2004³⁶, and both papers report in both Russian and Latvian. The two papers have contrasting views when it comes to the local political scene, as *Grani* backed the Latgale party (Латгалес Гайсма) and mayoral candidate Richard Egim, while *Gorod* backed the “Harmony” party (Социал-демократическая парти) and a different mayoral candidate named Andrey Elksninsh (as a note, both parties are left-wing political parties on the Latvian political spectrum).³⁷ The Latgale party is local to the region, and takes certain business specific approaches that are in the best interest of its leader, a local businessman.³⁸ “Harmony” takes the same approach in the local political sphere, but nationally, “Harmony” is the driving force behind left-wing Latvian politics.³⁹ The promotion of political positions by newspapers in Daugavpils isn’t new, including the elections in 2017, prior elections have included *Grani* and *Gorod* sparring when it comes to local politics⁴⁰; the two newspapers are owned and managed by rival businessmen.⁴¹ While the two papers have opposing viewpoints on local politics, they

³⁴ Interview with former Journalist from Gorod.lv

³⁵ Interview with Journalist from Grani.lv

³⁶ Interview with Journalist from Gorod.lv

³⁷ Interview with former Journalist from Gorod.lv

³⁸ Interview with former Journalist from Gorod.lv

³⁹ Interview with former Journalist from Gorod.lv

⁴⁰ Interview with former Journalist from Gorod.lv

⁴¹ Interview with former Journalist from Gorod.lv

have a more linear stance when it comes to national and international topics. Local newspapers often outsource for articles, so in order to get an accurate representation of *Grani* and *Gorod*, I will only be analyzing articles written and published by the newspaper's journalists and staff.

On the national level, I survey articles from the most popular Latvian language news portal and the most popular Russian language news site in Latvia. Both *Delfi.lv*—the Latvian language portal, and *Vesti.lv*—the Russian language news site, were founded in 1999.⁴² *Delfi* is the most trafficked internet portal in the Baltics⁴³ and is regarded as Latvia's main media sources.⁴⁴ *Delfi* publishes Russian-language articles which often match their Latvian-language pieces, making the internet portal a good point of reference for this analysis. *Delfi*'s articles are usually sourced from LETA wire releases—LETA is the Latvian Information Agency, equivalent to something such as the Associated Press or Reuters. In addition to *Delfi*, we will look at *Vesti*, an internet news site with the third highest readership in Latvia, and the largest circulation among the Russian-speaking population.⁴⁵ *Vesti*'s hallmark production is its paper *Today* [*Сегодня*], which has a long history, tracing its roots all the way back to the Soviet period.⁴⁶ Furthermore, a number of journalists who have written for *Vesti* have also been prominent left-wing politicians⁴⁷ and not surprisingly, *Vesti*'s views have aligned with left-wing political platforms.

⁴² Vihalemm, *Baltic Media in Transition*; Zelče, Ločmele, and Procevska, "Latvia - Media Landscape | European Journalism Centre (EJC)" 72.

⁴³ Amazon, "Delfi.Lv Traffic Statistics"

⁴⁴ Šūpule, Inese, "The Construction of National and Ethnic Identity in Online Discussions on Referenda Initiatives in Latvia" 126.

⁴⁵ Terzis, *European Media Governance* 271.

⁴⁶ "Segodnya (1999)."

⁴⁷ Cheskin, "Russian-Language Media and Identity Formation" 76-77.

There are two more-globally focused news outlets from which I will be sourcing articles. *The Baltic Times* and *Euronews* are two sites that publish international, regional, and national news to broad audiences. I chose *Euronews* and *The Baltic Times* as the two internationally focused outlets due to their prevalence in or focus on the Baltics. *Euronews* has the largest viewership in continental Europe⁴⁸ and *The Baltic Times* is the only pan-Baltic English-language paper that focuses on regional events.⁴⁹ *The Baltic Times*' readership primarily consists of Americans and Western Europeans.⁵⁰ *The Baltic Times* was formed in 1996 and is the only English language paper specifically covering the Baltic countries.⁵¹ The paper is headquartered in Riga, and is an independent newspaper that was formed through a merger between *The Baltic Independent* and *The Baltic Observer*.⁵² *The Baltic Times* has a regional focus; it predominantly publishes on topics that impact the Baltic countries or the Baltic region. *Euronews* is headquartered in France and was founded in 1993.⁵³ The media outlet publishes in twelve languages, and I'll be analyzing their articles published in Russian in order to see how they tailor their news to Russian-speakers—especially as it pertains to Latvia. The paper is owned by Naguib Sawiris, an Egyptian businessman, and the outlet's focus is on Europe.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ "About Euronews, Corporate Information."

⁴⁹ "About The Baltic Times."

⁵⁰ "The Baltic Times."

⁵¹ "About The Baltic Times."

⁵² "About The Baltic Times."

⁵³ "About Euronews, Corporate Information"

⁵⁴ "About Euronews, Corporate Information"

Table 1: Differences Among the Media Sources

Media Source	Languages reported in	Scope of Coverage	Business Model	Audience	Coverage Slant
Grani.lv	Russian & Latvian	Local politics, society, culture, and national issues ⁵⁵	Privately held LLC ⁵⁶	Local citizens in Daugavpils and Latgale ⁵⁷	Favorable to Russian-speakers ⁵⁸
Gorod.lv	Russian & Latvian	Local politics, society, ⁵⁹ and national issues	Privately held LLC ⁶⁰	Local citizens in Daugavpils and Latgale ⁶¹	Favorable to Russian-speakers ⁶²
Vesti.lv	Russian & Latvian	National societal issues and national political issues	Partnership behind LLC ⁶³	Latvia's Russian-speaking citizens	Favorable to Russian-speakers
Delfi.lv	Russian & Latvian	National societal issues and national political issues	Publically owned company ⁶⁴	Latvian populace (still popular among minorities) ⁶⁵	Favorable to Latvians
The Baltic Times	English	Regional and national, Baltic political, economic, business, and cultural issues ⁶⁶	Privately owned company ⁶⁷	Western readers interested in the Baltics	Pro-West, Pro-Baltic Nationalism/Integrity
Euronews	Russian, English, and 10 other languages (not Latvian) ⁶⁸	Global events and important national issues	Majority privately owned/minority publicly owned ⁶⁹	Predominantly Europeans, but also a global audience ⁷⁰	Bias varies depending on publication's language

Media in Latvia is separated by linguistic divides. In Latvian language media, “Russian-speakers are often discursively excluded from a rightful

⁵⁵ Interview with Journalist from Grani.lv

⁵⁶ Interview with former Journalist from Gorod.lv

⁵⁷ Interview with Journalist from Grani.lv

⁵⁸ Interview with former Journalist from Gorod.lv

⁵⁹ Interview with Journalist from Gorod.lv

⁶⁰ Interview with former Journalist from Gorod.lv

⁶¹ Interview with Journalist from Gorod.lv

⁶² Interview with former Journalist from Gorod.lv

⁶³ Lursoft, “Media Nams Vesti, SIA, 40103976878 - Company Data.”

⁶⁴ Zolotarev, “The Baltic Times and Media Development in the Baltic States.”

⁶⁵ Terzis, *European Media Governance*.

⁶⁶ “About The Baltic Times.”

⁶⁷ “About The Baltic Times.”

⁶⁸ “About Euronews, Corporate Information”

⁶⁹ Euronews, “Euronews Media Presspack.”

⁷⁰ Euronews, “Euronews Media Presspack.”

place within a modern Latvian state”⁷¹ whereas Russian-language media “attempts to create a political and social vehicle to defend the needs of ‘Russian-speakers’”.⁷² Latvian-language media discourse capitalizes on Russian-speakers’ lack of integration into society while Russian-language media highlights societal discrimination. “Latvia’s media provides fertile ground for an examination of the country’s ethnic tensions [...] rather than simply reflecting ethnic tensions, the media must also be held accountable for creating and exaggerating such tensions”.⁷³ These tensions spill over from media into politics, as Russian-language media back ‘Russian-speaking’ parties, who market themselves as “defenders of the rights of Russian-speakers”⁷⁴ while Latvian-language media backs the political positions held by ethnic-Latvians.⁷⁵ Both Latvian-language and Russian-language media politicize topics related to foreign affairs, identity, ethnolinguistics, and socioeconomics—thereby polarizing Russian and Latvian-speakers. This spills over into the country’s politics.

As a result, media coverage and language usage is subjective. The content of the article, video, or other news item will depend on the company, editor’s and owner’s goals, the targeted audience, and a variety of other factors. Sites, whose primary language is Russian, and therefore have a targeted audience/general readership which is made up of Russian-speakers, will tend highlight issues that their readers face in light of the Latvian majority. Media sources whose primary language is Latvian focus on the

⁷¹ Rožukalne, “Editorial Independence in the Latvian News Media”

⁷² Cheskin, “Russian-Language Media and Identity Formation” 69.

⁷³ Cheskin, “The Discursive Construction of ‘Russian-Speakers’”, 23.

⁷⁴ Cheskin, “Russian-Language Media and Identity Formation” 69.

⁷⁵ Cheskin, “Russian-Language Media and Identity Formation” 73.

divisions between Russian-speakers and Latvian speakers when it comes to societal integration. Western media outlets take a step back and focus more on the strategic place that Russian minorities fit, when it comes to larger international or regional issues.

1.2 Interviews

As the majority of this paper is going to be based on primary source analysis, I will also utilize interviews I conducted with three journalists in order to obtain a better understanding of the media dynamic in Latvia. Glasgow University Professor Dr. Ammon Cheskin states that “interviews with Russian speakers in Latvia allow us to observe some of the nuances of identity formation which are missed by analyses of media and political discourses in isolation”⁷⁶; my hope was that interviews with local journalists in Latvia will help to do the same. In order to gain distinctive perspectives, one interview was conducted with a journalist from *Grani*, another interview was conducted with a journalist from *Gorod*, and the final interview was conducted with a former journalist who used to cover politics and local news in Daugavpils and has since become an entrepreneur.

Interviews with the three journalists provided a greater understanding of the local, national, and international news scene in Latvia. The interviews overviewed the types of topics that newspapers cover, the methods journalists in Latvia use, and the reasons behind their paper’s (or former paper’s) coverage of certain topics. The journalists I spoke to clarified certain aspects of how Latvian media functions, by providing insight to

⁷⁶ Cheskin, “Russian-Language Media and Identity Formation” 308.

the local, regional, and national news scenes in the country and abroad. While the interviews were informational, they also provided greater insight into the life of a journalist in Latvia, external factors which impact the news industry, and enable me to further understand certain motivations for journalists in Latvia. It's important to also understand that discussions with journalists are the equivalent of articles and our conversations ideologically subjective. Each journalist has a political position tied to their respective paper (or lack thereof) and may be motivated by external factors in their conversations with me.

The journalist from *Grani* writes articles on politics, social and cultural life, and economics, and the paper backs a certain political party (the Latgale party)⁷⁷ in local elections. Furthermore, the journalist has held political positions, which could relate to the topics he/she cover and the stances he/she take. His/her reporting has maintained consistency with his/her political viewpoints.

The journalist from *Gorod* writes on political, societal, and cultural issues as well, and *Gorod* too, has political ties to a local political party ("Harmony")⁷⁸. This journalist's coverage of events needs to be taken in the context of what his/her editors, owners, and endorsed party have in mind or on their agenda.

The former journalist I interviewed also wrote for *Gorod*. He/she shares how local politics in the region often spilled over to duels among newspapers. While this journalist no longer works for *Gorod*, he/she covered politics and elections, and is not afraid to shed some light into the political-media connections in the region. It is important that we

⁷⁷ Interview with former Journalist from Gorod.lv

⁷⁸ Interview with former Journalist from Gorod.lv

put this journalist's comments in context, as the journalist no longer works for the media outlet, and may have had certain experiences which impact his/her view of the media.

1.3 Secondary Sources

A number of secondary source articles are analyzed, as they provide insight into issues central to Latvia. Some sources cover the study of ethnic-Russians in post-Soviet states. Other works center upon media in the Baltics; a number of articles focus on Latvia, providing a deeper understanding of local, regional, and national press coverage, and how coverage differs between the Latvian language and the Russian language. Much of the scholarly literature looks at identity and language politics, in addition to topics such as history and economics.

Existing research on Latvia has several main political themes: this includes work on foreign relations, identity politics and ethnic sentiments, ethno-political and linguistic issues, and the study of socio-economic concerns. Furthermore, as news articles and journalist's interviews are the foundation for the primary sources in this paper, I will also examine scholarly works on media. Much of the scholarly work on political topics and media have political underpinnings. A number of scholarly pieces present certain topics optimistically, while other works take more skeptical stances on history, contemporary society, and what the future may hold. Both optimistic and skeptical works carry undertones that can fall into these categories:

- Adamantly pro-Russian, overemphasize the Russian-speaking community's status as second-class citizens, or constantly admonish the Latvian government and Latvian population as oppressors.

- Moderately pro-Russian, pro-Putin, draw attention to the societal and political problems Russian-speakers often face, or fail to account for historical narratives.
- Moderately pro-Western/pro-Latvian, portray Russia with a sign of caution, may portray Russian-speakers as societal equals, or don't fully illustrate the complexity of the issues Russian-speakers face.
- Exorbitantly pro-Latvian, either demonize Russia/the Russian-speaking community, or completely fail to address the political, social, and economical difficulties they face (by thinking of Latvia as a utopia where all hypotheticals can easily be enacted).

Some of the papers are quite cynical, on either side. In the middle lies the moderate views of both sides. There is a limited amount of academic work on Latvia prior to Latvia's renewed independence in 1991 due to the tightened constraints under the Soviets. Since 1991, a number of scholarly literature, in addition to news media, has drawn greater attention to Russia, the Baltics, and the Russian-speaking minority found throughout much of the post-Soviet landscape.

The Realm of International Relations

An example of a pro-Russian position in the field of post-Soviet ethnicity studies can be found in Alexander Gaponenko's work on ethnicity. Gaponenko takes a more critical approach in describing the treatment of the Russian minority in the Baltics. His work "Ethnic conflicts in post-Soviet Baltic states: content, form, mechanisms of formation, external influences" suggests that there have been a number of historical as well as current pieces of legislation, prejudices, and nationalistic factors that have

contributed to the plight of the Russian-speaking community in the Baltics and Latvia— thus resulting in a response from Russia designed to protect its people⁷⁹ (which falls in line with the concept of [Русский Народ]). Alexander Gaponenko is an ethnically-Russian scholar, and is known for his work as a “human rights defender”⁸⁰ and community leader of the Russian minority in Latvia.⁸¹ This may explain his critical approach, as he often criticizes the West and the Latvian government’s treatment of minorities in his positions.

On the other side of the spectrum is “Russia's Influence and Presence in Latvia” by Bikovs, Bruge, and Spruds. The work is extremely suspicious of Russia’s actions, connections, and inroads in Latvia. This scholarly report goes into detail describing Russia’s direct and indirect footholds both internal and external to Latvia. The report is narrowly focused and is a reflection of the authors’ skepticism of Russia as a state actor. The paper describes Russia as a major threat to Latvian sovereignty in political, economic, cultural, and historic spheres.⁸² All three of the authors are ethnically-Latvian and they highlight feelings that many ethnic-Latvians share towards Russia.

There are a number of works which also have an international focus but take a less critical approach to the topic they analyze. While some of the works are moderately pro-Russian or moderately pro-Western/Latvian, the biases are harder to see, and they are not on complete opposite ends of the spectrum as previously mentioned works were.

⁷⁹ Gaponenko, “Ethnic Conflicts in Post-Soviet Baltic States: Content, Form, Mechanisms of Formation, External Influences”, 9.

⁸⁰ “Human Rights Defender Alexander Gaponenko Faces a Trial in Latvia.”

⁸¹ “Human Rights Defender Alexander Gaponenko Faces a Trial in Latvia.”

⁸² Bikovs, Bruge, and Spruds, “Russia’s Influence and Presence in Latvia.”

Finnish international relations research fellow, and current advisor to the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Saari Sinikukka's "Russia's Post-Orange Revolution Strategies to Increase its Influence in Former Soviet Republics" argues that Russia's role in global diplomacy has recently grown to include both soft-power moves with the West and more active and manipulative techniques with post-Soviet states.⁸³ The paper argues that post-Soviet states, which are not members of the EU and not totally integrated with Europe politically, socially, culturally, and economically, stand a greater chance of being prone to Russia's "post-Soviet strand of public diplomacy",⁸⁴ as compared to the Baltics.⁸⁵ Sinikukka also shares that Russia's policies are motivated by self-interest, as opposed to minority policies and ideology.⁸⁶ As a result, "Russian policies aim simply to increase Russian influence and decrease the power of other players"⁸⁷, and ethnic-Russian repatriation is only of concern when it benefits Russia economically or politically.⁸⁸ Sinikukka demonstrates caution when describing Russian foreign policy, stating that Russia's motivations in public diplomacy may not be all that meets the eye. However, she shares that while we should be aware of Russia's dangerous Soviet-era tactics, Russia's public diplomacy is nearsighted, and their actions may run into problems in the long term.

Anne Clunan, likewise, takes a moderate viewpoint in her exploration of how Russian national identity has developed. Her book, *The Social Construction of Russia's*

⁸³ Sinikukka, "Russia's Post-Orange Revolution Strategies to Increase Its Influence in Former Soviet Republics" 51.

⁸⁴ Sinikukka, "Russia's Post-Orange Revolution Strategies to Increase Its Influence in Former Soviet Republics" 51.

⁸⁵ Sinikukka, "Russia's Post-Orange Revolution Strategies to Increase Its Influence in Former Soviet Republics" 63.

⁸⁶ Sinikukka, "Russia's Post-Orange Revolution Strategies to Increase Its Influence in Former Soviet Republics" 63.

⁸⁷ Sinikukka, "Russia's Post-Orange Revolution Strategies to Increase Its Influence in Former Soviet Republics" 62.

⁸⁸ Sinikukka, "Russia's Post-Orange Revolution Strategies to Increase Its Influence in Former Soviet Republics" 63.

Resurgence: Aspirations, Identity, and Security Interests asserts that Russia's extensive history has consisted of various national ideologies, eventually going on to conclude that contemporary ideology under Putin has cemented itself as Russia's identity.⁸⁹ Furthermore, Clunan suggests that ideology has been historically shaped by Russia's elite, and that the same holds true today, with the elite being the power broker and driver behind Russian policy.⁹⁰ Clunan's work covers Soviet history, but is primarily concerned with analyzing current ideology in light of Putin's control. Her focus on ideological impact in relation to security and her eventual conclusions on the current Russian state could be due to her background as an academic at the Naval Postgraduate School, but her work is comprehensive and lacks obvious slants or biases.

Other moderate works on global ethno-political topics involving Russia include two books by ethnic-Russians. *Russia's Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity in National Identity* by Andrei Tsgankov and *Russia's Postcolonial Identity: A Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World* by Viatcheslav Morozov provide related perspectives on Russian foreign policy. The difference between the works by Clunan and Sinikukka, and the books by Morozov and Tsygankov is that Clunan and Sinikukka's pieces are moderately pro-Western and slightly critical of Russia whereas Tsygankov and Morozov have either a pro-Russia or pro-Putin slant to their books. Tsygankov's work is a very moderate pro-Russian analysis of how Russia's foreign policy has evolved over time due to internal and external considerations. Tsygankov argues that while domestic

⁸⁹ Clunan, *The Social Construction of Russia's Resurgence*, 92, 169.

⁹⁰ Clunan, *The Social Construction of Russia's Resurgence*, 142.

politics and external forces have greatly influenced decision-making in international relations, national identity has been the driver of foreign policy.⁹¹ The book goes on to describe how Putin's policies benefit Russia in maintaining the country as a great power while balancing Russia's intertwining with the West.⁹²

Morozov takes a slightly different approach, outlining that while Russia is different from the West, it follows after and models itself on Europe and the West in a number of ways. He zeroes in on contemporary Russia, which is experiencing a number of changes at the hands of the West and a changing post-Soviet narrative.⁹³ Morozov seemingly defends Russia's recent diplomatic and military responses as being justified in relation to what it senses as threats posed by the West. However, he also explains that Russia is not opposed the West in all aspects, as much of contemporary and historical Russian civilization is deeply intertwined with Western systems, ideologies, and beliefs.⁹⁴ Morozov reasons that the purpose behind Russia's current foreign policy is due to its historical past and desire to maintain its status as a world power, as opposed to trying to play villain to the West, in a global narrative.⁹⁵

Russian-speakers & Identity Politics

As opposed to the previously mentioned articles on Russia and the West, there are a number of articles which detail research on identity politics and ethnic sentiments internal to Latvia. Dr. Ammon Cheskin focuses on nationalism and identity in the Baltics.

⁹¹ Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy*, 19, 59.

⁹² Tsygankov, *Russia's Foreign Policy*.

⁹³ Morozov, *Russia's Postcolonial Identity*, 105, 128.

⁹⁴ Morozov, *Russia's Postcolonial Identity*, 13.

⁹⁵ Morozov, *Russia's Postcolonial Identity*.

His work “Exploring Russian-Speaking Identity from Below: The Case of Latvia” highlight an identity crisis that Russian-speakers in Latvia ostensibly face. The “lack of belonging to either Russian or Latvian culture [which] is linked to the sense that many of Latvia’s Russian speakers seem to have of lacking a real homeland, or of not feeling completely accepted in Latvia as legitimate citizens”⁹⁶ furthers the idea that Russian-speakers in Latvia are still searching for a national identity. Cheskin’s work could be considered extremely favorable of the Russian speaking minority; his articles detail societal divisions, while highlighting the marginalization of Russia-speakers to an extreme, creating a one-sided discourse on identity politics.

Brigita Zepa also brings up the concept of national identity in “The changing discourse of minority identities” where she argues that instead of a search for a national identity, Russian-speakers in Latvia have created a new identity, one that makes them “Latvia’s Russians [and differs from] Russia’s Russians in terms of language, behavior and culture”.⁹⁷ She underlines that the identity of these individuals may have evolved into one that is highly individualized—and may form an identity that is composed of a struggle between internal and external factors.⁹⁸ Another one of Zepa’s works (co-authored with Evija Klave) is “Russian-Latvian Language Conflict in Urban Settings in Latvia”, which explores the validity of an identity crisis for Latvia’s Russian-speakers (especially with younger generations). Zepa and Klave reference Skutnabb-Kangas (1994) which conceptualizes the idea of there being a “minorized majority language”⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Cheskin, “Exploring Russian-Speaking Identity from Below”, 304.

⁹⁷ Zepa, “The Changing Discourse of Minority Identities”, 5.

⁹⁸ Zepa, “The Changing Discourse of Minority Identities”, 13.

⁹⁹ Zepa, Klave, and Šūpule, “Russian-Latvian Language Conflict in Urban Settings in Latvia”, 42.

(a language which usually need protection) and a “majorized minority language”.¹⁰⁰

Zepa and Klave state that these concepts help to better develop an understanding and answer to identity questions and further reason that the Latvian language fits the definition of a “minorized majority language”¹⁰¹ while the Russian language fits the definition of a “majorized minority language” in Latvia.¹⁰² Zepa’s points are somewhere between skeptical and moderate on Latvia’s ability to integrate minorities, as she highlights what seem to be divisions in identity in Latvian society, and concludes that identity crises and ethnic divisions are still ever-present and major points of contention in Latvian society.

“The Construction of National and Ethnic Identity in Online Discussions on Referenda Initiatives in Latvia” by Inese Šūpule looks to answer whether “Latvians and Russians—discursively construct each other as two competing and conflicting groups, or [whether there are] other discourses that offer alternatives for discursively constructing the ethnic and national identities?”.¹⁰³ Šūpule’s focus is the “social construction of ethnic and national identity, particularly analyzing how Latvians and Russians construct themselves and others when speaking about ethnic issues in Latvia”.¹⁰⁴ In addition to looking at a similar problem set, Šūpule utilizes the comments section of articles from Latvia’s largest internet portal (*Delfi*), and analyzes comments posted on articles reporting on the initiating of two different referenda: the first regarding

¹⁰⁰ Zepa, Klave, and Šūpule, “Russian-Latvian Language Conflict in Urban Settings in Latvia”, 42.

¹⁰¹ Zepa, Klave, and Šūpule, “Russian-Latvian Language Conflict in Urban Settings in Latvia”, 43.

¹⁰² Zepa, Klave, and Šūpule, “Russian-Latvian Language Conflict in Urban Settings in Latvia”, 43.

¹⁰³ Šūpule, Inese, “The Construction of National and Ethnic Identity in Online Discussions on Referenda Initiatives in Latvia”, 120.

¹⁰⁴ Šūpule, Inese, “The Construction of National and Ethnic Identity in Online Discussions on Referenda Initiatives in Latvia”, 120.

the public education system's only allowing the state language to be taught in school, and the second regarding a request to include Russian as a second state language.¹⁰⁵ The study comes to moderate conclusions, detailing that there are in fact a number of variations in language and "repertoire"¹⁰⁶ among Latvians and Russians in describing Latvia's Russian-speakers and ethnic issues, but that specific narratives among the groups are hard to establish.¹⁰⁷

Another piece that looks specifically at language is Olga Cara's "The Acculturation of Russian-Speaking Adolescents in Latvia", which explores and predicts the potential outcome(s) for the Russian-speaking minority in Latvia. Cara suggests that the choices for the Russian-speaking population in Latvia would include—assimilation into the Latvian culture group, separately maintaining a distinct Russian identity, or integration into Latvian society while "formatting a new identity conglomeration of the Russian and Latvian cultures".¹⁰⁸ She then looks to prior works in order to validate and invalidate theories on Russian-speaking integration. Her outlook is optimistic, but her conclusion is more disbelieving. Cara concludes her paper with a moderate approach in evaluating potential outcomes for Russian-speaking adolescents. She cautions that a future may hold more Latvian, Russian-speaking citizens, but that doesn't necessarily entail belonging to Latvian society and the Latvian state.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Šūpule, Inese, "The Construction of National and Ethnic Identity in Online Discussions on Referenda Initiatives in Latvia", 119.

¹⁰⁶ Šūpule, Inese, "The Construction of National and Ethnic Identity in Online Discussions on Referenda Initiatives in Latvia", 121.

¹⁰⁷ Šūpule, Inese, "The Construction of National and Ethnic Identity in Online Discussions on Referenda Initiatives in Latvia"

¹⁰⁸ Cara, "The Acculturation of Russian-Speaking Adolescents in Latvia", 28.

¹⁰⁹ Cara, "The Acculturation of Russian-Speaking Adolescents in Latvia", 28.

Using different methods to study socioeconomic factors, *Citizenship status and social exclusion in Estonia and Latvia* by Aasland utilizes findings from Norbalt surveys (which study living conditions in the Baltic) to show how complexities in the process of obtaining or granting of Latvian citizenship connect to sentiments of exclusion and isolation¹¹⁰—this ties into the idea that the Russian-speaking population lives in a political, cultural, and economic niche in Latvia as suggested by works from Commercio¹¹¹, Eglitis¹¹², and Vihalemm¹¹³. Aasland’s work is temperate in its deduction; his article states that while societal tensions haven’t resulted in poor relations or violence, there are considerable differences among Russian-speakers and Latvian-speakers in Latvia.¹¹⁴

With a different and more optimistic take on integration, Gatis Dilans discusses ethnic identification and language. Dilans’ conclusions are positive in “Russian in Latvia: An outlook for bilingualism in a post-Soviet transitional society”. In the article, Dilans attempts to evaluate whether or not Latvia could become a bilingual society. Dilans’ work weighs arguments made for Russian language usage in Latvia (specifically referencing political, cultural, and societal marginalization and discrimination), in addition to also illuminating arguments for the usage of Latvian language (specifically the history of Soviet oppression and Russification period).¹¹⁵ However, despite the Latvian government already dismissing the notion of a bilingual state, Dilans attempts to

¹¹⁰ Aasland, “Citizenship Status and Social Exclusion in Estonia and Latvia”

¹¹¹ Commercio, “Exit in the Near Abroad”

¹¹² Eglitis, “Class, Culture, and Consumption”

¹¹³ Vihalemm, *Baltic Media in Transition*

¹¹⁴ Aasland, “Citizenship Status and Social Exclusion in Estonia and Latvia.”

¹¹⁵ Dilans, “Russian in Latvia”, 2.

explain what a bilingual society could mean for the country, furthering the argument that his outlook is sanguine.¹¹⁶

Political issues with Ethno-politics and Linguistics

A number of the works I read deal with ethnolinguistic political issues internal to Latvia. Going back to Cheskin, his other piece, “Russian-Language Media and Identity Formation” is focused on connecting the dots between Russian language media in Latvia and political parties that represent the Russian minority. He delves into the methods that Russian language media employs in order to discursively deconstruct what he calls journalistic “self-marginalization”¹¹⁷ which essentially means that Russian journalists are portraying their target audience constantly as victims, thereby inviting resentment of the ‘other’ and furthering a narrative which constructs Russians as intolerable.¹¹⁸ Like his first paper, Cheskin is again skeptical. However, his points here are far more pro-Western in that his analysis is critical of Russian language media due to the intended one-sided narratives they construct.

Hungarian socio-cultural researcher Adam Németh takes a different approach in studying ethnicity; “Ethnic diversity and its spatial change in Latvia, 1897–2011” looks at “changes in the diversity structure of Latvia while emphasizing the importance of the geographical approach”.¹¹⁹ In looking at more specific geographic and demographic indicators, Németh focuses on local and municipal level demographical studies and

¹¹⁶ Dilans, “Russian in Latvia”

¹¹⁷ Cheskin, “Russian-Language Media and Identity Formation”, 100.

¹¹⁸ Cheskin, “Russian-Language Media and Identity Formation.”

¹¹⁹ Németh, “Ethnic Diversity and Its Spatial Change in Latvia, 1897–2011”, 404-405.

utilizes the Ethnic Diversity Index in order to study “temporal and spatial trends in ethnic diversity in the country”.¹²⁰ While Németh’s work is comprehensive in its integration of geographic and demographic indicators, his conclusion that multi-ethnicity is no longer a feature specific to Riga and Latgale, while true in reference to historical data and trends, takes away from the fact that Riga and Latgale are still the two most multi-ethnically diverse areas of the country.¹²¹ His viewpoint is optimistic and moderately pro-Latvian; Németh identifies what seems to be a trend regarding spatial demographic integration, while choosing not to accentuate how deeply divided Latvian society is linguistically, in terms of geography and specifically in urban settings.

“Granting Local Voting Rights to Non-Citizens in Estonia and Latvia: The Conundrum of Minority Representation in Two Divided Democracies” by Cianetti, looks at how Latvian policymaking has gradually shaped the stance of Russian-speaking citizens and non-citizens in Latvian politics.¹²² In addition, Sikk and Bochsler, in “Impact of ethnic heterogeneity on party nationalisation in the Baltic states”, look at ethnic polarization in the Baltics, and compare and contrast how ethno-political issues vary in the Baltic countries, while also focusing on the question of how minority parties function in the political sphere.¹²³ Both articles are helpful in understanding ethno-political viewpoints regarding news articles and media sources that we’ll cover. At the same time, both articles solely bring a more Western school of thought in analyzing minority

¹²⁰ Németh, “Ethnic Diversity and Its Spatial Change in Latvia, 1897–2011”, 404.

¹²¹ “Resident Population by Ethnicity and by Statistical Region and City at the Beginning of the Year”

¹²² Cianetti, “Granting Local Voting Rights to Non-Citizens in Estonia and Latvia”

¹²³ Sikk and Bochsler, “Impact of Ethnic Heterogeneity on Party Nationalisation in the Baltic States”

dynamics and ethno-political issues in the Baltics, potentially limiting the totality of the conclusions we can draw from the studies.

One of the principal controversies in Latvian ethno-politics, lies in a battle over the educational system. “At the Interface of Language Ideology and Practice: The Public Discourse Surrounding the 2004 Education Reform in Latvia”, by Gabrielle Hogan-Brun describes the ethnolinguistic strife that still exists in Latvia’s education system.¹²⁴ Her work is doubting in its approach to the educational conflict and provides grounds for examination of debate over minority languages in a school setting. Another piece that looks at language reform in Latvia is “Development of the Language Legislation in the Baltic States” by Boris Tsilevich. He focuses on language evolution in post-communist Latvia and discusses the history of language in the country—looking at how languages function in Latvian society in relation to politics.¹²⁵ It’s important to note that Tsilevich is a former left-wing politician in the Saeima, and his piece is extremely interrogative of the Latvian government and clearly in favor of the Russian-speaking minority. Tsilevich’s points suggest that educational policy in Latvia infringes on minority rights and doesn’t fall in line with international norms and standards.¹²⁶

Latvia’s language policies have had various effects on ethnic groups within the country; ethnic group sentiment is Carol Schmid’s focus in “Ethnicity and language tensions in Latvia”. Her findings suggest that while Latvians don’t feel threatened by Russian language, their sentiment is not echoed by the Russian minority who still see

¹²⁴ Hogan-Brun, “At the Interface of Language Ideology and Practice: The Public Discourse Surrounding the 2004 Education Reform in Latvia”, 15-16.

¹²⁵ Tsilevich, “Development of the Language Legislation in the Baltic States”

¹²⁶ Tsilevich, “Development of the Language Legislation in the Baltic States”

Latvian language and cultural initiatives as a threat to their identity.¹²⁷ While ethnic Latvians may not feel threatened by the Russian language, they do hold negative attitudes towards Russian as a second foreign language—in fact, Latvians were more positive towards English as compared to Russian.¹²⁸ Schmid’s work is fairly centered, as she highlights the grievances regarding language from both Russian-speakers and Latvians. Along the same lines, in evaluating ethnic and linguistic polarization, “Reconsidering Nationalism: The Baltic Case of Latvia in 1989” by Mara Lazda works to trace history and describe the driving factors behind ethnic polarization in Latvia. Lazda’s piece references the citizenship and language laws of the 1990s as the primary drivers for current disagreement and societal marginalization in Latvia.¹²⁹ Her work, despite pointing fingers at the reasons for polarization, share glimmers of hope for Latvia’s future. Her analysis hints that ethnic polarization is temporary and part of Latvia’s natural evolution.

Language laws and are also front and center in “The Ethnic Russian Minority: A Problematic Issue in the Baltic States”. In the paper, Marina Best looks at factors which hinder societal integration for Russian-speakers in Estonia and Latvia. She boils the problem down to restrictive language laws and harsh educational reforms which have largely targeted the Russian-speaking minority.¹³⁰ Unlike Schmid, Best is critical of the laws, and holds the perspective that societal integration was severely hindered by

¹²⁷ Schmid, “Ethnicity and Language Tensions in Latvia”, 16.

¹²⁸ Schmid, “Ethnicity and Language Tensions in Latvia”, 12-13.

¹²⁹ Lazda, “Reconsidering Nationalism”

¹³⁰ Best, “The Ethnic Russian Minority”

language. As a result, Best is pessimistic regarding the future for inter-ethnic integration in Latvia.

Solvita Poseiko, author of “The Latvian Language in the linguistic Landscape of Daugavpils (the middle of the 19th century – today)”, provides a number of clues that chart the course of language history and usage in Latvia, specifically Daugavpils.

Poseiko uses two decades of history to highlight the economic, political, social, and cultural factors that tie into the complex language predicament found in modern-day Latvia.

The Politics behind Latvia’s Socio-Economic Conditions

Another ‘hot’ political topic related to the Russian-speaking community Latvia regards socio-economics. While Martin Ehala’s work primarily looks at language as an indicator, “Measuring ethnolinguistic vitality of the largest ethnic groups in the Baltic states” provides a comparison between ethnic Latvians and ethnic Russians in Latvia concerning demographics, economics, politics, geography, education, media, and culture. He comes to the conclusion that the Russian-speaking community, due to its size and power, is still a strong group within Latvia, and is only slightly weaker than the ethnic-Latvian community in terms of politics, economics, media, and culture.¹³¹ Ehala’s work presents Latvia’s Russians in a more positive manner than most; however, the paper fails to address the severe disadvantages Russian-speakers face economically, politically, and educationally.

¹³¹ Ehala, Martin; Zabrodskaja, Anastassia, “Measuring Ethnolinguistic Vitality of the Largest Ethnic Groups in the Baltic States”, 83-85.

Commercio's "Exit in the Near Abroad: The Russian Minorities in Latvia and Kyrgyzstan" is also fairly optimistic about the economic potential of Latvia's Russian-speaking community. Commercio describes important socio-economic differences among the Russian-speaking minority and the respective host country population. He suggests that language policy and ethnic-bias have driven Latvia's Russian-speaking population to develop their own business community and economic niche.¹³² What Commercio doesn't bring up is that despite Russian-speakers fostering an economic niche where they thrive, the Russian-speaking community is still economically disadvantaged, and the economic niche, while ever-present, creates a dual-layered economic system, in turn hurting the country's economy and failing to foster integration.

"Economic reform and ethnic cooperation in post-Soviet Latvia and Ukraine" by Bloom discusses the implication of economic reforms and changes in post-Soviet Latvia. Bloom's main argument is that ethnic Latvians and ethnic Russians can come together under a time of tough economic change.¹³³ While the piece is encouraging, I question whether the availability of opportunity for ethnic Latvians and ethnic Russians is equal, thereby jeopardizing the ease of reconciliation. In his research, Bloom found that as economic reform was enacted, living standards dropped and ethnic mobilization decreased.¹³⁴ This is a telling trend, and Bloom's principal assertion may be an overly optimistic narrative that seems out of tune with what the future holds with regards to societal polarization and ethnic mobility.

¹³² Commercio, "Exit in the Near Abroad", 27; Muiznieks, Rozenvalds, and Birka, "Ethnicity and Social Cohesion in the Post-Soviet Baltic States"

¹³³ Bloom, "Economic reform and ethnic cooperation in post-Soviet Latvia and Ukraine."

¹³⁴ Bloom, "Economic reform and ethnic cooperation in post-Soviet Latvia and Ukraine."

A more skeptical work on socio-economic conditions for Latvia's Russian-speakers is authored by Daina Eglitis. "Class, Culture, and Consumption: Representations of Stratification in Post-communist Latvia" looks at Latvia as a case study, in order to study and demonstrate extreme socioeconomic stratification in the post-Soviet era.¹³⁵ Her historical account provides a lead up to the socioeconomic stratification we find today and may provide a theory for the economic "niche's"¹³⁶ we see in Latvian society today.

A few other works provide further details regarding ethnic minorities in Latvia. Mezs's "The ethnic geography of Latvia" focuses on the history of ethnic minorities in Latvia, and then comes to look at the current geographic distribution of ethnic groups in Latvia. Lazdina too, provides a brief overview of contemporary Latvian history, in addition to providing demographic, geographic, ethnic, religious, and regional (specifically Latgale) details. Another academic who has done work specifically focused on Latgale is Alexander Ivanovs in "Historiography of Latgale within the Context of Political and Ethnic History of the Region" and "Origins of Regional Identity of Eastern Latvia (Latgale) and Approaches to Its Investigation". These works focus on historiography, as well as political, ethnic, and regional identity in Latgale. Like Lazdina, Ivanovs examines the history of Latgale, while also looking at evolution and change in the demographic situation of the region. His work highlights the importance of historiography of the region, as it draws attention to peculiarities regarding identity and ethnicity.

¹³⁵ Eglitis, "Class, Culture, and Consumption"

¹³⁶ Commercio, "Exit in the Near Abroad", 27.

Media in the Baltics

The last section of literature we'll be looking at is concentrated on media in the Baltics. Aukse Balčytiene is one author who has done a lot of work on the mixing of language, ethnicity, and media in the Baltics. He authored "On tripartite identity of the Baltic media and its impact on media performance" in which he comparatively analyzes the news environment in the Baltics.¹³⁷ His analysis also provides a solid foundation of the most popular media sources in Latvia, aiding in my choice of news sources to read and evaluate. However, it is important to consider that his evaluation of media is fairly specific to Baltic-based media and does not highlight the role of foreign media in the region. This is reasonable, since the article is only focused on Baltic media—as the title entails. As a result of the narrow focus, the reader only gets a sense of the domestically/regionally produced, as opposed to an overview of the different domestic and international media sources in the Baltic. The book *Baltic Media in Transition* by Peeter Vihalemm takes a broader focus and contrasts Latvian language and Russian language media in Latvia in one of its chapters. Vihalemm's book also discusses how in a time of change (starting in 1991), media presence in Latvia (as well as the rest of the Baltics) began to play a major role in shaping popular opinion.¹³⁸ Vihalemm's book is balanced and provides a fairly two-sided language specific overview of Latvia's media dynamic. Likewise, Georgios Terzis's book *European Media Governance: National and Regional Dimensions* covers mass media in Latvia, as well as much of Europe. His overview of print, internet, and video media in Latvia is detailed, and provides a plethora

¹³⁷ Balčytienė, "On the Tripartite Identity of the Baltic Media and Its Impact on Media Performance."

¹³⁸ Vihalemm, *Baltic Media in Transition*, 27-28.

of information on contemporary mass media¹³⁹ while drawing adequate attention to both Latvian language and Russian language media just as Peeter Vihalemm does in his book.

While not scholarly literature, Baltic Times Editor, Gene Zolotarev, authored an article titled “*The Baltic Times and media development in the Baltic States*”. News articles need to be read with a degree of skepticism, especially from the editor of the pro-West Baltic Times; at the same time, Zolotarev provides a detailed description of the current media situation and associated media trends in the Baltics. Even though the article may be politically motivated, the content is informational. Zolotarev brings attention to what he perceives are foreign threats, in addition to mentioning what appear to be the major video, online, audio, and paper media outlets in the region.¹⁴⁰ More specific to media content and evaluating objectivity, Anda Rožukalne’s “Editorial independence in the Latvian news media: ownership interests and journalistic compromises” provides an in-depth evaluation of journalistic quality in Latvia. Specifically, she focuses on how private interests, including ownership and editor interests (among other influential biases), factor into the quality and independence of media reporting in Latvia.¹⁴¹ Her article is suspicious of private interests in media; she shares doubts regarding media’s quality when it is at the hand of subjective owners and editors.¹⁴² Her work doesn’t specifically focus on differences between Russian-language and Latvian-language media, but if it had looked at editorial independence among two

¹³⁹ Terzis, *European Media Governance*

¹⁴⁰ Zolotarev, “The Baltic Times and Media Development in the Baltic States”

¹⁴¹ Rožukalne, “Editorial Independence in the Latvian News Media.”

¹⁴² Rožukalne, “Editorial Independence in the Latvian News Media.”

different media languages in Latvia, the results could be quite telling—since much of the local Russian-language media is privately held, predominantly by Russian and pro-Russian businessmen.¹⁴³

Vita Zelce's works on media landscape have provided ample and up to date synopses of Latvia's media landscape. Her works cover both Latvian and Russian language news sources in Latvia, in addition to examining specific news agencies, news broadcasters, and news portals. Zelce's works include her overview of Latvian media for the European Journalism Center, in addition to coauthoring "The Latvian media in the new millennium: Trends in development, content and usage and the emergence of a community of media users" with Inta Brikse. Brikse and Zelce demonstrate how Latvian mass media has developed and changed in terms of content and usage, since 2000.¹⁴⁴ The authors theorize that "the potential of media consumers in Latvia is very limited both because the country's population is small and because the audience is divided on the basis of the Latvian and Russian languages".¹⁴⁵ Consequently, in order to achieve maximum readership, stereotype-based single-minded strategies are utilized in the media.¹⁴⁶ Both of Zelce's works provide a broad, but detailed overview of Latvian mass media.

"Interference Phenomenon in Latvia: The Latvian Language Influence Over Russian" spotlights the relationship between linguistics and media and explores the impact of word choice in both Latvian language and Russian language media.¹⁴⁷ Natalia

¹⁴³ Interview with former Journalist from Gorod.lv

¹⁴⁴ Brikše and Zelče, "The Latvian Media in the New Millennium"

¹⁴⁵ Brikše and Zelče, "The Latvian Media in the New Millennium", 92.

¹⁴⁶ Brikše and Zelče, "The Latvian Media in the New Millennium", 92.

¹⁴⁷ Malashenok, "Interference Phenomenon in Latvia."

Malashenok demonstrates that there are a number of cases where Russian language media in Latvia uses Latvian phrases and words, and incorporates this vocabulary into the newspaper's stylistics in order to achieve certain political aims.¹⁴⁸ Her work exemplifies an interesting trend which would suggest that there is media overlap either due to societal integration or a desire to appeal to a larger audience base with the use of more colloquial language.¹⁴⁹ Vladislav Volkov also looks at the connection between language and media in "Ethnic Identities and Integration of the Society". As a major component of his work, he conducts surveys in order to look at inter-ethnic dialogue in Eastern Latvia. Based on his research, Volkov concludes that ethnic groups in Latvia have a tendency to favor media if the media source language matches their ethnicity¹⁵⁰—an interesting concept that may help to explain journalistic tendencies of the various media sources we'll analyze in this paper.

1.4 Areas of Focus

In this paper, I aim to evaluate how intra-country and multinational media assess four different aspects of Latvian politics that were in the news while I was in Latvia in the fall of 2017. The 'hot' political topics include NATO, athletics, educational reform, and the European Union. This paper utilizes media as a source in the study of identity politics. I analyze the aforementioned 'hot' topics in conjunction with Latvia's Russian minority. Specifically, this analysis will encompass an exploration of newspaper and

¹⁴⁸ Malashenok, "Interference Phenomenon in Latvia."

¹⁴⁹ Malashenok, "Interference Phenomenon in Latvia."

¹⁵⁰ Volkov, "Ethnic Identities and Integration of the Society"

internet portal articles covering NATO's 'Dragoon Ride II', the 2018 Winter Olympics, Educational Reform, and Latvia's Accession to the European Union.

I first focus on how media covers a controversial foreign policy issue for Russian-speakers in Latvia, specifically NATO, and the related 'Dragoon Ride II' through Latvia. The 'Dragoon Ride'¹⁵¹ evoked a number of reactions from Europeans and Latvians alike. Some responded with resounding assurance that NATO would be there in case of an emergency, while others felt NATO's presence was imperialistic and concerning. I look to examine how different 'levels of coverage' of this event can communicate the Russian-speaking community's sentiments with regards to NATO and pro-Western foreign policy.

As a whole, the Olympics are regarded as international games which evoke nationalistic sentiments. The 2018 Olympics provide a glimpse of (Latvia's) Russian-speakers' feelings with regards to [Народ] or the concept of people or nation. Because the Olympics often channel the notion of identity politics, they provide fertile ground for evaluation. By looking at media narratives regarding the International Olympic Committee's banning of Russian athletes for the 2018 Winter Olympics, we can obtain a greater understanding of ethnic sentiments within Latvia concerning the Russian and Latvian Olympic teams.

Educational reform is a major domestic issue which hits on the politics of ethnolinguistic issues. First instituted after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1994, educational reform has been one of the most divisive factors between Russian-

¹⁵¹ 'Dragoon' is the nickname of the 3rd Squadron of the US Army's 2nd Cavalry Regiment, who rode through Europe in Stryker vehicles (Lendon, 2015)

speakers and Latvian-speakers. Observing news reporting on recent educational reform in Latvia provides insight as to why and how various media outlets cover the reform differently, and how the reform impacts the Russian-minority's response.

The last topic I draw attention to is the European Union (EU) and the Eurozone. Latvia's decision to join the EU is considered by some to be Latvia's greatest achievement in the last 20 years, due to the enhanced integration, support structures, and institutions that the EU provides. To others, joining the EU and entering the Eurozone may have been Latvia's biggest political and economic mistakes. Accession to the EU was remarkably popular among the Latvian-speaking population.¹⁵² However, Russian-speakers were less optimistic about future prospects in the EU as referendum results show.¹⁵³ Focusing on the EU and the Eurozone should provide for a contrast between local media in Latvia, national media, and international media's coverage of a major socio-economic decision.

In the next four chapters, I will discuss how foreign policy, identity politics, ethnolinguistic policies, and socio-economic issues overlap with Latvia's Russian-speaking minority in media narratives.

¹⁵² Pridham, "Latvia's EU Accession Referendum."

¹⁵³ Pridham, "Latvia's EU Accession Referendum."

Chapter 2: Connotations of NATO's Dragoon Ride

NATO's 'Dragoon Ride' provides evidence of how the media reports on citizens' thoughts concerning international affairs and foreign relations. 'Dragoon Ride' II was the second time a 'Dragoon Ride' was held (the first 'Dragoon Ride' was a part of Operation Atlantic Resolve).¹⁵⁴ In June 2016 the NATO led mission, Operation Saber Strike, sent a US Army brigade from Germany to Estonia for the second Dragoon Ride. Among the convoy's stops was the City of Daugavpils. This stop, like others, was aimed to engage the local population and familiarize them with the American military. On one hand, the 'Dragoon Ride' can be seen as Western propaganda, aimed at reassuring Eastern Europeans that 'the West has their back.' On the other hand, the 'Dragoon Ride' was a strategic military exercise designed as an important deterrent against Russia.

The media's coverage of foreign policy and defense issues in Latvia when looked at in light of the 'Dragoon Ride' provides insight as to the general attitudes and sentiments towards NATO, the military, America, and the West. The 'Dragoon Ride' was covered thoroughly by the media in Daugavpils, national media based out of Riga, and international news sources reporting on NATO activities in the Baltic region. The 'Dragoon Ride' was part of a military operation consisting of thirteen countries that involved the transfer of military equipment across Central and Eastern Europe to demonstrate NATO's strength, interoperability, and assurance of US/NATO commitment to Eastern Europe at a time of Russian aggression in Ukraine.¹⁵⁵ NATO is often seen as

¹⁵⁴ Lyman, "An American Military Convoy in Europe Aims to Reassure Allies."

¹⁵⁵ Lamothe, "In Show of Force, the Army's Operation Dragoon Ride Rolls through Europe."

a controversial topic to the Russian-speaking minority in Latvia, and my hope is that that media coverage of NATO, specifically the ‘Dragoon Ride’ will demonstrate noticeable trends that tie into the newspaper’s target audience and language.

2.1 Local News and NATO

When the brigade arrived in Daugavpils, *Grani* covered the visit, reporting on the setting of the event, the crowd in attendance, the persons hosting and taking part in the event, and the implications of the march. The article was titled “NATO in Daugavpils: American Strykers and enthusiastic children”. The article began by highlighting the mesmerizing effect that the military vehicles had on children and adults, who braved poor weather for the event. *Grani*’s analysis of the ‘Dragoon Ride’ focused on the high profile visitors to Daugavpils—including American soldiers who only spoke English¹⁵⁶, the Mayor of Daugavpils who reassured citizens of their safety, and Latvia’s Defense Minister who dispelled questions and comments about “the patriotism of Latgilians”¹⁵⁷ and shared his view of the strategic importance the military exercise served , when set against the recent escalation of Russian military activities.¹⁵⁸

A subtle focus of the article—one which questions the visit by high profile visitors, created a sense of doubt as to the intentions and reasons behind the exercise. Through his focus on cultural nuances, such as highlighting the lack of language ability and patriotism in the region, the author gives off the tone that the ‘Dragoon Ride’, despite the curious crowd, was a seemingly undesirable visit for much of the population. The

¹⁵⁶ Фадеева, “НАТО в Даугавпилсе.”

¹⁵⁷ Фадеева, “НАТО в Даугавпилсе.”

¹⁵⁸ Фадеева, “НАТО в Даугавпилсе”

author doesn't openly mention his distaste but infers it, as he portrays the march as amusing to naïve children on one hand, while being completely out of the ordinary for the general population. The journalist further demonstrates a clear disconnect among the soldiers, politicians, and the local population by focusing on their differences and reinforcing predisposed biases by bringing up concepts such as patriotism. He states that "rain did not prevent children and adults from posing [for photos] with the famous American armored Stryker vehicles, [where citizens could...] feel like members of the team".¹⁵⁹ In addition, he emphasizes the cultural difference in describing the "servicemen standing near each combat vehicle were ready to answer any given question, though only in English, so most viewers preferred to watch rather than talk."¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, the author purposefully brings up what the 'big wigs', such as the Defense Minister, share as a major reason behind the exercise—Russian aggression—the topic of Russia is something that does not concern or spell fear for the citizens of Daugavpils, and sows further doubt among the reader base who may already question the brigade's visit.

Gorod also covered the brigade's visit to Daugavpils. The article, "On Facebook we have a parallel: 1941 – 2016" regards the 'Dragoon Ride' stop in Daugavpils, and the cover photo is a shot of the street with Nazi vehicles parked in 1941, next to a photo in 2016 of the same street, where the brigade was parked.¹⁶¹ The location of these vehicles was next to the theatre, right at the central square in Daugavpils. The article

¹⁵⁹ Фадеева, "НАТО в Даугавпилсе"

¹⁶⁰ Фадеева, "НАТО в Даугавпилсе"

¹⁶¹ Gorod.lv, "В Фейсбуке провели параллели"

also mentions a number of VIPs in attendance—including the US Ambassador, Latvian Minister of Defense, and the Mayor of Daugavpils. What the article also does, is draw attention to the prior day’s article, and references the comments section where the brigade is referred to as “invaders”¹⁶² with further suggestions as to whether the parking location of the brigade is a coincidence (with the commenter suggesting that it isn’t).¹⁶³ The article also quickly mentions a protest against the brigade—a sign on the side of the road calling for the Americans to go home. Two other articles from *Gorod* highlight two components of the brigade visit. One article discusses the road sign telling Americans to go home (utilizing the language on the sign: “NATO - you are murderers! Yankees - go home!”).¹⁶⁴ The other article focuses on the Mayor’s response to questions and comments regarding NATO activities (with a seemingly positive tone) in Latgale, and also questions the Mayor as to whether people should fear for their safety based off of NATO activity in the region.

The undertone of the first article was more of an overtone—the photo matching the title was unnerving, especially given that 1941 was the year in which the Nazi’s invaded Daugavpils. The “parallel”¹⁶⁵ referred to in the title creates a direct reference that the photo of the Nazi invasion parallels the American invasion in 2016. Most Russians express distaste and hatred for Nazi Germany and its associated acts in World War II; the Soviet Union suffered the highest number of casualties during World

¹⁶² Gorod.lv, “В Фейсбуке провели параллели”

¹⁶³ Gorod.lv, “В Фейсбуке провели параллели”

¹⁶⁴ Gorod.lv, “Фотофакт”

¹⁶⁵ Gorod.lv, “В Фейсбуке провели параллели”

War II,¹⁶⁶ almost exclusively attributed to Nazi Germany. With the article title and photo, it isn't hard to understand or gain a good sense of what the article is suggesting. The American military and NATO should be viewed with distaste; the disapproval expressed in the article draws question as to whether the distaste parallels that of 1941.

2.2 National News and NATO

On the national level, popular internet portal *Delfi* published an article titled "Dragoon Ride from the inside: How the US Army travels around Latgale". The article, published on June 11th, 2016, details a *Delfi* journalist and photographer's journey with the 'Dragoons', for a portion of the trip through Latvia. The *Delfi* staff were embedded in a Stryker vehicle and described their interactions with the US Army Sergeant commanding the vehicle, in addition to drawing attention to the other soldiers on board. The article details what the Sergeant perceives to be the purpose of the ride, as well as chronicling the lives of the soldiers in the vehicle, including two American immigrants (one, a Russian speaker from Ukraine and the other, from Lithuania), sharing how they came to join the US Army.¹⁶⁷ The article concludes with the Sergeant mentioning what he believes are the value and importance of the mission, while recognizing that no matter where they go, there is always a possibility of disapproval and protest.¹⁶⁸ The other *Delfi* article on the 'Dragoon Ride', published on June 7th, 2016, focused specifically on the Daugavpils section of the journey. "On The Streets Of Daugavpils Rode 200 Heavy Vehicles of the US Army", demonstrated the interaction between the

¹⁶⁶ Lutz, Darsky, and Kharkova, "Population Dynamics: Consequences of Regular and Irregular Changes", Chapter 23

¹⁶⁷ Delfi.lv, "Как армия США путешествует по Латгалии. Dragoon Ride изнутри."

¹⁶⁸ Delfi.lv, "Как армия США путешествует по Латгалии. Dragoon Ride изнутри."

brigade and the people of Daugavpils. While referencing the protest sign that the brigade was met with (upon entering the city), the article also shares the enjoyment of the citizens of Daugavpils in getting to interact with the soldiers, the vehicles and weaponry.

The above articles highlight how *Delfi* articles tend to portray NATO, sharing the importance and value that NATO provides to the region. The first article is a fairytale-esque narrative in which the *Delfi* staff is paired with a friendly crew, consisting of the Russian-speaking immigrant and Lithuanian immigrant, both of whom have pursued the American dream and chosen to protect their adopted country. Ukrainian and Lithuanian emigrants typically hold anti-Russian sentiments, so the choice to mention them in the article is not innocent; the author includes this information because many Latvians would identify with the aforementioned emigrants. In addition, the photo choices in both articles highlight the large armored vehicle presence, friendly and cheerful American soldiers, the corresponding enjoyment of the children, bodybuilders from the local fitness center, and the keen interest of a curious crowd of all ages. *Delfi* made a telling choice to not focus on the disparaging sign that the brigade encountered when entering Daugavpils and instead chose to focus on the highlights of the visit itself, content soldiers, and the crowd who participated.

Vesti, also covered the visit in its article “Latgians do not think about NATO, but how to feed their families” on June 6th, 2017. The article covers the ‘Dragoon Ride’ through Daugavpils and refers to local news coverage by local paper *Latgolas Laiks* in capturing local sentiment as it applied to the visit. The central point of the *Vesti* article

was that the interest from the local population in Daugavpils was insignificant. The *Vesti* reporter asserted that the march, while large and centrally located in the city, did not impact the citizens of Daugavpils, as they have more important tasks to grapple with.¹⁶⁹ The reporter went on to state “people are far from politics, they care how to earn money, how to feed their families, find a job, that is, all thoughts about some kind of everyday things, not about big politics. NATO, the EU, people are not interested in politics”.¹⁷⁰ The journalist suggests that there is a gap in reality between politicians in both Riga and Daugavpils and the citizens of Daugavpils. People have more pressing concerns regarding economic opportunity, and avoiding poverty, than worries about NATO and Riga based politics. The author also dismisses the idea that Latgale is a high-risk “guerilla”¹⁷¹ region with the potential to revolt against Latvia. The article concludes by voicing the words of Latvia’s Defense Minister who states that the US is a strategic partner who will strengthen Latvia and Eastern Europe —furthering the article’s point that there is a disconnect between Riga and the citizens of Latvia.

The *Vesti* article highlights this disconnect between Riga’s politicians and the general population. By utilizing the local reporter in the article, *Vesti* is able to get a closer look at how locals in Daugavpils feel regarding the military march and highlighting how Latgalians are often thought of as almost foreign, or at least different inside of Latvia. Looking at the title, it becomes clear that the author believes Latgalians have other more pressing issues, which do not involve NATO, the US military and political

¹⁶⁹ Андреева, “Латгальцы Думают Не о НАТО, а Как Прокормить Семью”

¹⁷⁰ Андреева, “Латгальцы Думают Не о НАТО, а Как Прокормить Семью”

¹⁷¹ Андреева, “Латгальцы Думают Не о НАТО, а Как Прокормить Семью”

decisions from Riga. The article quotes a local journalist who states the issue is “our politicians’ isolation from reality. They, as it seems to me, think, that in Daugavpils there is “Latgalian guerrilla movement””.¹⁷² This quote shares a common political storyline, painting Latgilians as potential guerillas—this is a politically-driven narrative which is purposefully mentioned so as to invigorate political irritation from readers. The journalist emphasizes that there is a lack of social assistance in Latgale, and while the ‘Dragoon Ride’ event was in the city’s center, it was not central to the minds of those in Daugavpils.

2.3 International News and NATO

International news site *Euronews* published “NATO exercises in Europe and the “sovereign right” of Russia” on June 6th, 2016. The article described what the ‘Dragoon Ride’ was, described its purpose, and shared that it was a part of a larger exercise. It further referenced the Latvian Defense Minister’s comment that the ‘Dragoon Ride’ demonstrated America’s commitment to the safety of the region. The article then shares the view of a local citizen, who states “we must live safely in the world [as NATO goes here and the Russians go there] with a few missiles—what will remain of the Baltic states?”.¹⁷³ The local who does not fully understand the rationale behind the military exercise and solely shares his desire for peace. Other ongoing NATO exercises are further described in the article, detailing what has recently been going on with NATO in Europe. *Euronews* contrasts its detailing of NATO exercises by describing the Russian Foreign Minister’s feelings and response to the currently ongoing NATO training

¹⁷² Андреева, “Латгальцы Думают Не о НАТО, а Как Прокормить Семью”

¹⁷³ Sheludkova, “Учения НАТО в Европе и ‘суверенное право’ России”

missions. The article quotes Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov and Finland's Foreign Minister, both of whom had just participated in bilateral talks. The response from Foreign Minister Lavrov demonstrated the defensive nature and passive stance that Russia has taken, with Lavrov stressing that Russia will attack no one and that Russia's concern is America's desire to militarize the region and to "keep an eye on the whole world".¹⁷⁴ The response from Finland's Foreign Minister (note: Finland was participating in the NATO exercises but is not a NATO member) highlighted Finland's commitment to international cooperation and its hope to improve its national defense through joint-training exercises.¹⁷⁵ The article concludes by highlighting Russia's plans for a new motorized infantry base in its south, suggesting that bases being constructed are a response to NATO exercises and perceived aggression.

The reporting from *Euronews* takes a back and forth approach—at one end it highlights NATO's and Finland's perspectives regarding the military exercises ongoing in Europe, and on the other side, it shares the Russia's perspective regarding the exercises and associated response. The article uses the bilateral talks between Russia and Finland as a backdrop to highlight the military-related tensions between Russia and NATO. While it is not a NATO member, the article looks at how Finland's interoperability with NATO affects Russia and causes Russia concern. The article accentuates that Latvia's Defense Minister believes that Russia is a threat and that US exercises increase the security of Latvia. It is also important to note the article's inclusion of one local interviewee's perspective, echoing what seems to be the point of contrast in what

¹⁷⁴ Sheludkova, "Учения НАТО в Европе и 'суверенное право' России"

¹⁷⁵ Sheludkova, "Учения НАТО в Европе и 'суверенное право' России"

is a fairly balanced article—while there are clearly two very different perspectives on the exercises from the Russian and European perspectives—peace may be the only thing on the mind of the local population.

The Baltic Times published two articles related to the ‘Dragoon Ride’ and Operation Saber Strike. The first article, published on June 7th, 2016 was titled “Latvian president calls appearance of anti-NATO placard an individual case”, and the second article, published on June 8th, was entitled “US units to reach Estonia on Wednesday for Saber Strike exercise”. The first article highlights the previously mentioned anti-NATO sign which was posted on the outskirts of Daugavpils. The writer begins by sharing a statement from the Latvian President that the anti-NATO placard was not representative of the public’s sentiment towards NATO and the US. The President posits that much of Europe finds military spending to be unnecessary and too costly—potentially falling in line with the person who put up the sign.¹⁷⁶ The article also highlights that the President saw the sign as someone’s desire to share his or her opinion, and that according to Latvian police, the sign placement is being treated as a unauthorized object rather than a hate crime.¹⁷⁷ The second article provides a more general overview of the ‘Dragoon Ride’, mentioning the military operation it was part of and outlining the importance of the march as a strategic military maneuver.¹⁷⁸ The author focuses on the military perspective of the ‘Dragoon Ride,’ demonstrating the ability to rapidly move a regiment of some 400 vehicles along two routes and through six countries”.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ The Baltic Times Staff, “Latvian President Calls Appearance of Anti-NATO Placard an Individual Case.”

¹⁷⁷ The Baltic Times Staff, “Latvian President Calls Appearance of Anti-NATO Placard an Individual Case.”

¹⁷⁸ The Baltic Times Staff, “US Units to Reach Estonia on Wednesday for Saber Strike Exercise.”

¹⁷⁹ The Baltic Times Staff, “US Units to Reach Estonia on Wednesday for Saber Strike Exercise.”

The Baltic Times articles do not address local sentiments regarding the ‘Dragoon Ride’, other than to briefly highlight and dismiss the placard in opposition along the route. The first article minimizes the significance of the anti-NATO placard by saying that there are “people everywhere in Europe who are not happy about money being spent on military purposes”¹⁸⁰ and by highlighting the President’s comment that the sign “does not reflect the general public sentiment”.¹⁸¹ While the first article dismisses a view of the exercise as a failure, the second article focuses on the successes and the military strategic importance of the NATO exercise to a readership that is predominantly Americans and Western Europeans. As a result, the article’s Western focused breakdown sidelines local issues in order to highlight the military exercise and Russia’s potential security threat to the region. By dismissing local arguments and concerns, *The Baltic Times* demonstrates its position as a more strategically focused publication. *The Baltic Times*’ failure to go further than merely mentioning local opposition could be due to the paper’s pro-Western standpoint, and its desire to overemphasize an issue that will resonate with its audience.

2.4 Summary of Media’s Coverage of NATO

There seems to be a trend through the articles discussing the ‘Dragoon Ride’. Smaller newspapers focus on the local population, their feelings and sentiments, the questions surrounding Latgalian patriotism, the imagery of Nazi occupation, “invaders”¹⁸² and “murderers”.¹⁸³ *Grani* and *Gorod*’s analysis differ when it comes to the

¹⁸⁰ The Baltic Times Staff, “Latvian President Calls Appearance of Anti-NATO Placard an Individual Case.”

¹⁸¹ The Baltic Times Staff, “Latvian President Calls Appearance of Anti-NATO Placard an Individual Case.”

¹⁸² Gorod.lv, “В Фейсбуке провели параллели”

¹⁸³ Gorod.lv, “Фотофакт”

military convoy's time in Daugavpils. *Grani* shares that some of the population seemingly welcomed the 'Dragoons' (despite the article taking a distrustful tone), while *Gorod's* articles are far harsher, as they compare the 'Dragoons' to Nazis. National media vacillates between a celebrity status of the soldiers and their toys, marking the ride as a publicity stunt while also highlighting that the exercise is unimportant when people have a greater concern with societal and economic issues. *Delfi* takes the approach of highlighting the 'Dragoons' as heroic and make the soldiers relatable to. On the other hand, *Vesti* uses the military's visit in order to highlight the disconnect between Russian-speakers and decision-makers. *Euronews* and *The Baltic Times* give more of a general overview of the exercise while focusing on diplomatic dialogue, and the strategic reasons for the exercise. *Euronews* brings up the gap between the little person (or local) and the strategic reasoning behind NATO's 'Dragoon Ride'. By highlighting the sentiment of the locals, *Euronews* effectively appeals to its readers while later presenting the bigger picture. *The Baltic Times* tries to present a strategic level description of military exercises in the Baltics, while minimizing the weight of anti-NATO sentiment from locals, thus focusing on its consumers.

Chapter 3: Russian Athletes and the 2018 Winter Olympics

Looking at media coverage of the Russian Athletes and the Olympic Games, I aim to explore the identities and cultural ties of Russian-speakers in Latvia by looking at sentiments towards the Olympics and the ‘Olympic Athletes from Russia’, or Russian National Team in light of the 2018 Winter Games. The Olympic Games provide fertile ground which evoke nationalistic sentiments and feelings. Quite often, people from around the world rally around their flag or home country, in support of their country’s athletes. While numerous studies have stated that Latvia’s ethnic-Russians are different from Russia’s ethnic-Russians¹⁸⁴, many of the same studies have also concluded that Latvia’s Russians still share nostalgia or positive sentiments towards the country where their ethnicity lies.¹⁸⁵ Furthermore, much of Latvia’s population consists of former Soviet citizens, and with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, many citizens may be emotionally tied to Russia as the USSR’s successor.¹⁸⁶ In looking at articles on the Olympics, I will utilize news articles to evaluate perceived emotional ties, or distances to Russia, in addition to looking at how each article frames attitudes towards the Russian participation in the Olympics, and the reasons behind this.

3.1 Local News and the Olympics

Due to the scale of the Olympics, even local papers in Daugavpils brought attention to the Winter Games in their reporting. *Grani’s* article, titled “Daugavpils will be rooting for Russian athletes”, provides a local perspective on why citizens of Daugavpils

¹⁸⁴ Zepa, “The Changing Discourse of Minority Identities”

¹⁸⁵ Zepa, “The Changing Discourse of Minority Identities”, 5-9.

¹⁸⁶ Соколов, “Опрос Gorod.lv”

will be watching, and focuses on the team that they will cheer for. *Grani* launched an opinion poll regarding intended viewership of the 2018 Olympic Games; the results reflect whether people in Daugavpils will watch and who citizens of Daugavpils will be supporting. Seventy-two percent of the respondents answered that they plan to watch, and of that seventy-two percent, thirty-seven percent plan to root for Russia, thirty percent plan to root for Latvia, and five percent of respondents state that they just want to enjoy watching the competition.¹⁸⁷ The article then introduces the fact that there will be Latvians, including a figure skater from Daugavpils competing.¹⁸⁸ Finally, the author details the OAR's (Russian Olympic Team) status for the 2018 Winter Olympics—highlighting certain aspects such as the neutral flag, the team's name change, and the doping scandal that resulted in specific parameters the Russian delegation will have to abide by for the Olympic Games.¹⁸⁹

At first glance, one might think that the article was written in order to highlight the local Latvian athletes participating in the 2018 Winter Games. However, this highlight is simply a minor point as the author says “we remind you that 35 sportsmen in nine sports (speed-skating, biathlon, bobsleigh, figure skating, skiing, luge, skeleton, short track) will represent Latvia at the current Olympics, including a talented figure skater from Daugavpils Denis Vasiliev”¹⁹⁰ and then going on to compare the 2018 Latvian delegation to previous years' delegations. This diminishes the aforesaid quote by pointing out that this year's delegation is “much more modest in terms of numbers”.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ Серов, “Даугавпилчане Будут Болеть За Российских Спортсменов.”

¹⁸⁸ Серов, “Даугавпилчане Будут Болеть За Российских Спортсменов.”

¹⁸⁹ Серов, “Даугавпилчане Будут Болеть За Российских Спортсменов.”

¹⁹⁰ Серов, “Даугавпилчане Будут Болеть За Российских Спортсменов.”

¹⁹¹ Серов, “Даугавпилчане Будут Болеть За Российских Спортсменов.”

This is because the article has a different focus, sharing that of the citizens of Daugavpils who will watch the Olympics, the largest percentage will be rooting for Russia. This poll provides unique insight into the 2018 Olympic Games, sharing that the ‘Olympic Athletes from Russia’ may be the driving factor spurring viewership in Daugavpils. More than half of the people who planned to watch the Olympics were going to root for the Russian team. This is both a reflection of identity and attributed to the fact that the Russian team is far stronger and more interesting to watch than its Latvian counterpart. Even further, the article looks at the penalties that the Russian team will face, including a previously mentioned name and flag change due to doping; however, the article seems to suggest that the scandal and resulting punishment has anti-Russian political overtones. The newspaper is not only demonstrating that the largest percentage of its readers will be rooting for Russia, but also shedding some light into the assumption that most of its readership would agree with the idea that the Russian Team’s punishment was unfair and political in nature.

Gorod also ran a poll on the 2018 Olympics, titled “Gorod.lv poll: readers do not want to watch Olympics”; this poll differed from *Grani’s* poll in terms of results, but also brought up another interesting perspective on the Olympic Games. According to the poll, the majority of respondents—fifty-seven percent, did not plan to watch while twenty-six percent planned to watch the Olympic Games.¹⁹² The article brought attention to the comments section of the poll—where readers commented that the Olympics were unfair and politicized and that there were clear political undertones

¹⁹² Соколов, “Опрос Gorod.lv.”

behind the 2018 Winter Olympic Games which interfere with what could be considered “good competition”.¹⁹³ *Gorod*’s other article on the 2018 Olympics first draws attention to the previously discussed readership poll regarding the Olympics. The article then highlights the lack of participation by the Russian athletes as result of the punishment induced by the national level doping scandal. The *Gorod* article also adds that North Korean-American tensions in the region could pose a potential threat to the Winter Games as relations have recently heated up.¹⁹⁴

Gorod’s two articles on the Olympics bring up interesting points regarding the local population’s view of the Olympics, highlight what the journalist perceives could be potential reasons for people’s lack of desire to watch, and emphasize that there are large-scale international issues that are tied to the game. The first poll is a tell-tale sign of what the journalist’s further assumptions will be; the poll suggests that Russia’s lack of participation had an overwhelming impact on the people in Daugavpils’s decision to watch the Olympics, potentially due to the fact that a majority of the city’s population is ethnically Russian. The poll is a clear statement from *Gorod*’s readership that the Olympics are less important when the Russian Team is not participating; this is most likely due to the fact that the readers are ethnically-Russian and root for the Russian Olympic Team. This is further enforced in the author’s decision to include a reader’s comment in the article, to which the author describes as a response to “the politicization of sports”.¹⁹⁵ The commenter shares “after what happened with sports, when big politics

¹⁹³ Соколов, “Опрос Gorod.lv.”

¹⁹⁴ Gorod.lv, “Внимание.”

¹⁹⁵ Соколов, “Опрос Gorod.lv.”

interfered in all processes, I'm disgusted to watch the competition of any competitions of athletes. My subjective opinion is that it's a dirty and dishonest game".¹⁹⁶ While harsh, the inclusion of this statement is meant to resonate with readers, who also don't plan to watch the Olympics, potentially for similar reasons. In referencing the poll in the second article, and then going on to elaborate on the Russian doping scandal and America's feud with North Korea, the author is indirectly attempting to link these international issues to the reasoning behind why people may not be keen to watch the games. The second article highlights the lack of Russia's full participation in the Olympics, using the term [как известно] "as you know"¹⁹⁷, in order to subtly and sarcastically comment against the punishment of the Russian Olympic Team. Furthermore, by bringing up North Korean-American tensions, the author attempts to suggest that there are larger issues on the world scale regarding the Olympics, including America's feud with North Korea which has the possibility of reaching a breaking point.¹⁹⁸ The author intentionally brings up North Korean-American relations in order to take the focus off of the Russian team and suggest that there is a larger issue that the readers should focus on. This could be seen as an attempt to diminish the controversy surrounding the Russian doping scandal and misdirect the reader's attention.

Delfi also covered the Olympics—specifically the lead up, controversy, and drama regarding the doping scandal. The first article on the doping scandal published by *Delfi* was "IOC did not approve participation in the Olympics 111 Russian athletes".

¹⁹⁶ Соколов, "Опрос Gorod.lv."

¹⁹⁷ Gorod.lv, "Внимание."

¹⁹⁸ Gorod.lv, "Внимание."

The article discusses how the initial list of possible participants to the 2018 Olympic Games from Russia was reduced from 500 to 389 participants.¹⁹⁹ The journalistic report provides statistics concerning the Russian athletes that were cleared to participate and discusses the next steps that the Russian Olympic Committee will have to take with regard to sending its athletes to South Korea. The article concludes by stating the IOC's established terms and conditions for Russian athletes' participation in the 2018 Winter Olympic Games. In a second article titled "Dukurs: Russia has proved that doping is stronger than the Olympic Charter and the WADA Code", attention is drawn to a comment made by Latvian skeleton coach, Dainis Dukurs. Dukurs asserts that with the decision made by the Arbitration Court, the Russian team proved that "the state doping system is stronger than the Olympic Charter and the WADA Code".²⁰⁰ The article highlights the decision to ban the athletes who tested positive for doping, in addition to illuminating what would have been the benefit had the Arbitration Court not overthrown the decision—Dukurs's son would have been awarded gold in skeleton from the Sochi Olympics.²⁰¹ The article then went on to highlight the number of Russians and Latvians who will be competing in the 2018 Olympics, providing a brief overview of the entire competition.

3.2 National News and the Olympics

The *Delfi* articles on the 2018 Olympics are fairly straightforward, with the first article, published on January 19th, 2018, sharing what the doping scandal will do to the

¹⁹⁹ rus.DELFI.lv, "МОК не одобрил участие в Олимпиаде 111 российских спортсменов."

²⁰⁰ rus.DELFI.lv, "Дукурс"

²⁰¹ rus.DELFI.lv, "Дукурс"

Russian team in terms of athlete numbers and discussing what Russian participation will look like for the 2018 Games. The article doesn't give much of a hint to the journalist's or paper's internal feelings, however, the article doesn't suggest that the Russian team has been treated unfairly in the aftermath of the doping scandal, potentially shedding light on the readership base of *Delfi*. Due to the internet portal being most popular among Latvian-speakers, the audience may not be as sympathetic to the woes of the Russian athletes as a Russian-speaking audience would be. The second article, published about a week and a half later, brings attention to the statements made by Latvia's skeleton coach Dainis Dukurs—who clearly states his views that the Russia's doping scandal didn't result in adequate punishment, impacting what should be his son's world championship.²⁰² The article offers Dukurs's beliefs in order to resonate with readers, and to portray a viewpoint showing Russia's athletes as being above the law, as the Arbitration Court's decision demonstrates. *Delfi*'s first article focusing on the doping scandal, and second article spotlighting the Latvian skeleton coach's view, tie into each other. While the first article introduces the 2018 Winter Olympics controversy to readers, the second article then makes a statement in portraying a certain narrative which shapes how the doping controversy may be viewed.

Vesti also published a piece regarding the 2018 Olympics. Titled "Russian athletes will suffer humiliation at the Olympics", the *Vesti* article discusses the IOC's parameters for Russian participation at the 2018 Olympics in the context of Russia's doping scandal. The article brings up that the parameters seem like a humiliating

²⁰² rus.DELFI.lv, "Дукурс"

punishment to many people against the Russian athletes who are participating, while others, such as the International Olympic Committee see the parameters as a justified punishment. The article mentions the IOC's reasoning behind its decision to first name the team Authorized Neutral Athletes at the World Championships, and then name the team the Olympic Athletes from Russia for the 2018 Winter Olympics.²⁰³ The article quotes the IOC chair, and provides his reasoning behind the decision—there being a need for collective punishment in naming the Russian team the 'Olympic Athletes from Russia' and banning the flag and state symbols.²⁰⁴

The author clearly states his views on the impending fate of the Russian Olympic Team (or Olympic Athletes from Russia as they will be called). The journalist clearly disagrees with the decision from IOC Chair Thomas Bach regarding the forced changing of the Russian team name. The author states “collective punishment to some extent has spread to invited clean Russian athletes, and they are forced to endure it”,²⁰⁵ thereby humiliating them. The author suggests that the decision is flawed, since everyone knows the athletes in participation will be Russian Athletes, despite being called Neutral Athletes or Olympic Athletes from Russia. Furthermore, the article gives off the idea that the tone of Thomas Bach, the IOC chair, is extremely firm and harsh. The writer consistently comes back to Bach's viewpoints, statements, and reasoning, seemingly rendering a narrative that Bach was out to get the Russian team or that Bach has some sort of tunnel vision regarding the doping scandal and the resulting

²⁰³ Тарасов, “Vesti.Lv: Атлеты России Будут Терпеть Унижения На Олимпиаде.”

²⁰⁴ Тарасов, “Vesti.Lv: Атлеты России Будут Терпеть Унижения На Олимпиаде.”

²⁰⁵ Тарасов, “Vesti.Lv: Атлеты России Будут Терпеть Унижения На Олимпиаде.”

punishment. The author insinuates that taking the name away from the team plainly disrespects the athletes. It seems clear that the journalist is trying to lay out the IOC's argument in order to demonstrate what he deems as clear flaws in its decision.

3.3 International News and the Olympics

The banning of the Russian athletes also made international headlines, as can be seen in the *Euronews* article “169 athletes from Russia will go to the Olympic Games”, published on January 28th, 2018. This article lays out that there were initially 500 athletes in consideration for attendance, but in the end, only 169 Russian athletes will make the trip to the Games.²⁰⁶ The author highlights the IOC's decision to not include a number of top Russian athletes who would have likely been in medal contention.²⁰⁷ The article lists a number of the high-profile athletes who won't be attendance, and then goes on to describe the procedure for the athletes who were approved and invited to the games. The author also lays out the specific framework for the 'Olympic Athletes from Russia' team, highlighting the specified parameters for the Russian athletes, regarding the team name and the condition that they compete under a neutral flag. The article concludes by mentioning the timeframe for the 2018 Winter Olympics.

The *Euronews* article is generally objective in its coverage of the Russian athletes who will attend the Olympics. The article begins by highlighting the fact that the IOC banned a number of athletes who could have made an impact in their respective sports, potentially appealing to the sentiment of the article's readers, who are most likely

²⁰⁶ Euronews, “На Олимпийские игры поедут 169 спортсменов от России.”

²⁰⁷ Euronews, “На Олимпийские игры поедут 169 спортсменов от России.”

going to be Russian-speakers. The article includes the Vice President of the Russian Olympic Committee's announcement that 169 athletes were approved, and that only certain athletes received a special invitation to the games in light of the doping scandal.²⁰⁸ This could be the author's attempt to highlight the special conditions laid out by the IOC and the resulting lack of athletes from the Russian delegation. By ending the article focusing on the specific parameters which could be seen as hindering the Russian athletes who will be in attendance at the Olympic Games, the *Euronews* article brings attention to specific facets of the Olympics that the Russian-speaking reader may connect to, while trying to maintain a balanced viewpoint. The article consistently focuses on facts and statements related to the Russian athletes and the Winters Olympics, but by specifically ordering the content of the article, *Euronews* attempts to appeal to its Russian-speaking base in a diplomatic and attractive manner.

The Baltic Times did not specifically publish any articles surrounding or related to the IOC's decision to ban Russian athletes, nor did it publish much on the 2018 Winter Olympics at all. Two articles drawing reference to the Olympic Games are: "Estonian president, PM, culture minister to attend Winter Olympics" and "Swedes find Sigulda track suitable for holding Olympic events". Both articles mention the 2018 Olympics, but do not have anything to do with the controversy surrounding the Russian athletes. The first article brings attention to a trip that the Estonian Prime Minister, President, and Cultural Minister will make at the beginning of the Olympics, sharing that the trip will consist of a meeting with Estonian athletes, in addition to the opening of an Estonian

²⁰⁸ Euronews, "На Олимпийские игры поедут 169 спортсменов от России."

backed “digital ID center”²⁰⁹ for the residents of Seoul.²¹⁰ The second article shares information regarding Sweden’s bid to hold the 2026 Winter Olympics. The article states that the Latvian Olympic Committee has been requested to provide information on Sigulda’s ability to hold luge, bobsled and skeleton events for the Swedish Olympic Committee. The article goes on to say that the Swedes are evaluating a potential partnership with the Latvians regarding these events for the 2026 Olympic Games.²¹¹

The Baltic Times’ lack of coverage on Russian athletes and the 2018 Winter Olympics is likely due to the paper’s coverage of primarily regional issues that directly affect Baltic states. In general, *The Baltic Times’* coverage of sports is often limited. The IOC’s decision to ban Russian athletes doesn’t directly, and for the most part, doesn’t indirectly impact the Baltics. The two articles that are reported on draw attention to what readers of *The Baltic Times* more likely care about—the Baltic’s potential to play host to future Winter Olympic Games, and the connotations of Estonian politicians’ visit to South Korea during the Olympics. While much of the paper’s reader base may care about Russian foreign policy, due to Russia’s Olympic scandal not impacting the Baltics, the paper likely saw the topic as a nonissue.

3.4 Summary of Media’s Coverage of the Olympics

The 2018 Winter Olympic Games bring an interesting contrast among the smaller and larger newspapers. At the local level, *Grani* and *Gorod* draw attention to the lack of enthusiasm their audience has for the Latvian National Team for the former, and the

²⁰⁹ The Baltic Times Staff, “Estonian President, PM, Culture Minister to Attend Winter Olympics”

²¹⁰ The Baltic Times Staff, “Estonian President, PM, Culture Minister to Attend Winter Olympics”

²¹¹ The Baltic Times Staff, “Swedes Find Sigulda Track Suitable for Holding Olympic Events.”

lack of enthusiasm for the Olympic games for the latter. The papers seem to be representative of the local Russian-speaking community's sentiment towards the Olympic Games, as they take surveys, compile fairly basic data, and publish the collected results for readers. This is local news' way of representing its readers and reinforcing Russian-speaking ideological narratives through what may appear to the average person as telling and sound data. *Vesti* and *Delfi* also cover the Olympics—but while *Delfi* covers the general IOC ban and the ensuing criticism from the Latvian skeleton coach, *Vesti* highlights the distasteful decision by the IOC to humiliate the Russians. *Vesti* describes the decision as humiliating and limiting to the athletes who will be in attendance, by forcing them to perform under a neutral flag. *Euronews's* presentation of the IOC's decision to ban the athletes highlights the nature and reason for the ban, describes notable people who will be banned, and finishes by mentioning what Russian participation will look like in the 2018 Olympics. While the article is tailored to a Russian-speaking audience, the information is not opinion based and does not carry a particular slant. *The Baltic Times* articles are comprehensive in their overview of the topics they cover, but they don't focus on the IOC and Russian participation in the 2018 Olympics. *The Baltic Times* aims to be informative on the Olympics, presenting two Olympic-related topics by collecting and disseminating relevant information while not delving into political debate or straying from the paper's focus by covering sports.

Chapter 4: Educational Reform in Latvia

Language politics is, across the entire post-Soviet sphere, one of the hottest political issues. Recent reforms to the Latvian Educational system involves the consideration of a divisive internal ethno-political and linguistic battle. Education reform began in the 1990's, where it was proposed to have a minimum number of subjects taught in the state language, and restrictions were created when it came to educating in a minority language.²¹² Then, in 2004, it was proposed that 60% of teaching be carried out in the state language.²¹³ More recently , there have been proposals to change educational instruction in state institutions and ethnic minority schools to the Latvian language only, in what would be an amendment to both Latvia's Education Law and the Law on General Education.²¹⁴ Latvia's Education Law and the Law on General Education specify how instruction in Latvian schools should be carried out. There are two types of schools in Latvia, public and private (minority schools are private). The educational reform takes aim at changing educational requirements for both public and private institutions. For public schools, all educational subjects will be shifted into the Latvian language, and for private schools, Latvian language will consist of 50% of the curriculum for grades 1-6, 80% in grades 7-9, and 100% of the curriculum in grades 10-12 by 2022 ("while children of ethnic minorities will continue learning their native language, literature and subjects related to culture and history in the respective

²¹² Hogan-Brun, "At the Interface of Language Ideology and Practice: The Public Discourse Surrounding the 2004 Education Reform in Latvia", 3-5.

²¹³ Hogan-Brun, "At the Interface of Language Ideology and Practice: The Public Discourse Surrounding the 2004 Education Reform in Latvia", 6.

²¹⁴ Tetarenko, "Latvian Government Agrees to Start Transition to Latvian as Sole Language of Instruction at Schools in 2019"

minority language)".²¹⁵ In Daugavpils, it would be interesting to imagine further educational reform. While working at a Vidusskola in Daugavpils, language partialities were clear. Having been a teacher's assistant in English classes for 10th and 11th year students in Daugavpils, it was evident that Russian was the language of preference for students and teachers—including the ethnic-Latvians. Journalists too, all made clear that their Russian language skills were better than their Latvian, and despite speaking both languages, their readership base is predominantly Russian-speaking. The struggle against the use of the Russian language is viewed as a decolonization effort, while promotion of it is a means of exhibiting both a pro-Russian and anti-nationalist position. Right-wing parties have been the largest proponents of language reform laws, which they believe will enhance societal integration, nationalism, and create a positive trajectory for Latvia's future.²¹⁶ Left-wing parties and Russian speakers have more mixed outlooks regarding educational reform, with some seeing the potential benefits and others seeing it as an infringement on their rights. By looking at educational reform, I aim to assess how media captures reactions to a controversial domestic political policy that has triggered numerous Russian-speakers.

4.1 Local News and Educational Reform

Both *Grani* and *Gorod* chronicle the proposed educational reform's impact on Daugavpils. I'll examine two articles that *Grani* published on the educational reform, one before the reform was passed and one after it was passed. "We need signatures for saving bilingual education!", published on December 1st, 2017, and "An example for the

²¹⁵ Saeima, "Amendments to the Education Law"; Saeima, "Amendments to the Law on General Education."

²¹⁶ Sorokin, "Latvian government endorses reform of Russian-language schools."

whole of Latvia”, published on February 2nd, 2018, display the controversy regarding the reform and contrast the content/discontent with the Saeima’s decision to amend the General Education Law. The first article, written before the law's passage, keys in on a petition to block the law. It highlights an online initiative to collect signatures against the amendments and explains that the petition collected more than 10,000 signatures, thus meeting the threshold for the Saeima's consideration.²¹⁷ The article also references that over two thousand of the collected signatures were rejected, as the signatures were from non-citizens who “have no right to express their attitude to what is happening”.²¹⁸ Due to the non-citizen signatures, the Saeima petition was suspended. The author suggests that this refocused people away from the initiative yet is still hopeful that the activists’ opinions would be heard by the Saeima before signing off on the reform.

The second article discusses local reactions to the new law, most of which are positive. After passage of the reform, *Grani* published “An example for the whole of Latvia”, reporting that while many politicians opposed the law, schoolchildren embraced the law. The article begins by interviewing the director of a secondary school in Daugavpils which had already implemented language reforms by primarily utilizing Latvian in class with young students and solely teaching in Latvian to older students.²¹⁹ The article's interviews with two upper level students showed virtually no concern with the educational reform law, as the students expressed that they had been brought up in a bilingual environment.²²⁰ Other students from other institutions expressed that while it

²¹⁷ Grani.lv, “Нужны Подписи За Сохранение Билингвального Образования!”

²¹⁸ Grani.lv, “Нужны Подписи За Сохранение Билингвального Образования!”

²¹⁹ Петкевич, “Пример Для Всей Латвии.”

²²⁰ Петкевич, “Пример Для Всей Латвии.”

is more difficult for them to learn and speak Latvian in a school environment, the language reform provides them with more opportunities post-graduation.²²¹ One student shares that he has no problem in studying Latvian; “I consider myself Russian, I’m from a Russian family. But I went to a Latvian kindergarten, [and a] Latvian school. Therefore, it is easy for me”.²²² Other students share related thoughts, “We feel Russian, we think in Russian. We speak Russian at home, but Latvian is not a problem either, [however] the role of the Latvian language needs to be strengthened” from early on in school.²²³ The overall message from the second *Grani* article is that while the Latvian language may be more difficult for some, it may be understood as necessary in furthering one’s work and educational options.

The articles provide insight between what was once a reluctance to have the educational reform, and the acceptance once passage occurred. The first article, which brought attention to a petition against the reform, was specifically written in order to gain attention and to shed light on some of the ways to counter the proposed amendments. The author, despite the failure of the petition still portrays the activists’ work in a positive light, sharing the massive popularity of the newly redone petition, and spreading hope and optimism that the Saeima would consider the will of the people before approving the reform. *Grani’s* article was designed for its reader base, who are Russian-speaking citizens of Daugavpils who value the teaching of their native language in an educational setting. The second article seems to be *Grani’s* way of embracing defeat regarding the

²²¹ Петкевич, “Пример Для Всей Латвии.”

²²² Петкевич, “Пример Для Всей Латвии.”

²²³ Петкевич, “Пример Для Всей Латвии.”

eventual passage of the educational amendments. The author puts a spotlight on how educators and students have embraced the reform as it opens more doors for people. *Grani's* reversal of course in its viewpoint does not attempt to criticize the law's passage, but instead seeks to demonstrate that students have adapted to the reform.

The point the author is trying to bring up is the same point that students keep reiterating: Latvian language learning and teaching is not initiated early enough. This is the author's way of sharing skepticism of the amendment to the Education Law but does not address the age at which students start learning Latvian. The slight disconnects in viewpoints between the first and second articles is difficult to interpret, but could stem from the fact that educational reform could have been influenced prior to the passage of the reform, which is why the article took an anti-reform stance. On the other hand, the second article was written after the Saeima's decision to pass the reform, and so the article provides a way for readers to understand how students view the new system, thereby lightening the reform's ideological impact.

Gorod also covered the educational reform legislation in the article "Daugavpils schools will prepare for the transition to the state language". The *Gorod* article reports that new amendments to the education law will require that all state schools gradually begin to teach in the state language.²²⁴ The article specifies the types of schools that this reform will most directly affect, and also suggests that the change in the curriculum will affect the students in Daugavpils.²²⁵ For the article, *Gorod's* journalist interviewed the head of Daugavpils's Department of Education in order to obtain her thoughts and

²²⁴ Соколов, "Даугавпилские школы подготовят к переходу на госязык."

²²⁵ Соколов, "Даугавпилские школы подготовят к переходу на госязык."

insight on the transition. In the interview, she expresses that the reform would impact almost every school in Daugavpils and that school-specialized transitional programs will need to be adopted in order to meet the new requirements.²²⁶ She also shares that among the larger obstacles with the large-scale reform is figuring out how to take a population comprised of parents and children with various levels of bilingual education and transition them into the mindset of embracing the Latvian language, while also ensuring that schools receive adequate amounts of funding.²²⁷

The journalist in the *Gorod* article tries to articulate a view that the amendments will require large scale changes once they are ratified. The author's use of certain phrases, such as how the reform "will inevitably affect the students of Daugavpils"²²⁸ is intended to exaggerate the effects of the reform. He does the same when highlighting statements by government officials, as he quotes Daugavpils's Department of Education Chair who says that the Department of Education "will need to prepare for the change[s]"²²⁹ brought on by the law. Despite following this comment with another expert's more optimistic analysis, the tone and language choice in the article suggest that the educational law is going to spur a sweeping reform with large-scale, unknown consequences. In addition, by sharing what the leader of the Department of Education believes is the need to transition parents into accepting the reform, the article casts doubt on the willingness of parents to actually embrace change in the educational system, suggesting that this reform is unpopular. Finally, by focusing on the budget, the

²²⁶ Соколов, "Даугавпилские школы готовят к переходу на госязык."

²²⁷ Соколов, "Даугавпилские школы готовят к переходу на госязык."

²²⁸ Соколов, "Даугавпилские школы готовят к переходу на госязык."

²²⁹ Соколов, "Даугавпилские школы готовят к переходу на госязык."

author questions the costs that will be required in order to transform the educational system into one that is fully based in the Latvian language.

4.2 National News and Educational Reform

Delfi also covered the educational reform in

“The government approved the transfer of all schools to state language: from grade 10 onwards, only in Latvian”. The article discusses the Latvian Cabinet’s approval of the educational reform amendments and describes what the amendments will mean in terms of the future trajectory of the Latvian educational system. The author references Latvia’s Minister of Education and Science, Karlis Shadurskis, who promises “that his department will responsibly abide by international obligations to ensure the development of education for national minorities, including by providing the necessary funding”.²³⁰ The journalist further details the specific conditions in the reform law relating to both private and state institutions, in addition to describing the timetable during which the reform will take place. The piece then brings attention to Riga’s Mayor, Nils Ushakovs, who suggests that the reform is “a huge mistake [... and] a political provocation that harms the quality of education and stability of the country”.²³¹ The article concludes by stating the reform will move on to the Saeima before it is enacted.

Delfi is straightforward in explaining the processes behind the proposed educational reform and the projected future for Latvia’s educational system if the reform is to pass. The article states that the reform will apply different standards to state institutions and private minority institutions—meaning that the transition and

²³⁰ rus.DELFI.lv, “Правительство одобрило перевод всех школ на госязык”

²³¹ rus.DELFI.lv, “Правительство одобрило перевод всех школ на госязык”

implementation of the reform will have a larger and more immediate impact on state institutions as compared to minority schools.²³² Despite what will be a more immediate impact on state schools, the *Delfi* article depicts the reform as a gradual change over the course of a few years; the reform's main goal will be to further the transition of classes to the Latvian language. However, the article does bring attention to controversy regarding the proposed amendments, as it highlights the facets of the reform expressed by Riga's Mayor that clearly cast a shadow of disapproval on the reform as he questions the benefit of the amendments and whether they will increase educational quality. The article finishes up by leaving the passage of the reform as an open-ended question, as it suggests the reform will be sent to the Saeima before anything permanent takes place. The *Delfi* article's approach to the education reform may intentionally aim to be neutral. By intending to inform readers about the reform, while also mentioning the opposition the reform has from a high-profile figure, the author seems to tactfully engage his audience. At the time of this article, it was extremely likely that the reform would be passed. By avoiding the marginalization of any specific groups, the author most effectively informs the portal's readership base by highlighting the components of the reform law, while inputting dialogue of proponents and opponents sharing their reasons for or against the amendments.

"New reform of Latvia – madness", shares *Vesti's* perspective on the proposed educational reform. The newspaper article begins by immediately introducing Russian-speakers protesting the proposed reform, and highlighting concerns. The protestors

²³² rus.DELFI.lv, "Правительство одобрило перевод всех школ на госязык"

assert that the previous “decision of the Constitutional Court on May 13, 2005 [has already ruled on and determined] the proportions of the languages of instruction”, thereby rendering these amendments illegal.²³³ The article mentions three different initiatives against the proposed educational reforms: one from the headquarters of Russian schools, another from a human rights activist, and the third from the leader of the Russian community in Latvia. Each initiative is explained in the article; the author overviews the basis for each initiative, the goals of the initiative, and the reasons why the reform should be questioned and not passed. The first initiative argues that the basis for the reform comes from legislation in 1919, and directly contradicts the Latvian Constitution.²³⁴ This initiative aims to stop dissolution of national minority schools, to preserve the teaching system in these schools, and to ensure national minorities have a say in educational policy.²³⁵ The second initiative focuses on upholding the ruling by the Constitutional Court in 2005 regarding bilingual education in the school system.²³⁶ The advocate for this initiative sees the new educational reform as counterintuitive, as it does not build off of previous reforms (such as the educational reforms of 2004).²³⁷ She highlights a segment from the 2005 court ruling, which determined that “it is necessary to create a new mechanism for assessing the quality of school education, and without this mechanism, the introduction of any changes in the educational process leads to the fact that this process becomes meaningless”.²³⁸ The second initiative highlights that

²³³ Тарасов, “Новая Реформа Латвии – Безумие.”

²³⁴ Тарасов, “Новая Реформа Латвии – Безумие.”

²³⁵ Тарасов, “Новая Реформа Латвии – Безумие.”

²³⁶ Тарасов, “Новая Реформа Латвии – Безумие.”

²³⁷ Тарасов, “Новая Реформа Латвии – Безумие.”

²³⁸ Тарасов, “Новая Реформа Латвии – Безумие.”

further educational reforms fail to address the current shortfalls in establishing standards for evaluating educational institutions; the conclusion being that due to these preconditions, the reform should not pass.²³⁹ The third initiative, launched by the head of Russian-speaking community, focuses on a letter to Latvia's President, requesting third party oversight and review (by the Venice Commission, or the European Commission for Democracy through Law at the Council of Europe) over the impending educational reform.²⁴⁰ Sokolov, the Russian-speaking community's leader, states that the reform essentially deprives Latvians of quality secondary education and does not meet international standards on education or the Latvian Constitution. Sokolov questions the President of Latvia, probing whether he represents the "will of the whole people [...] and [that] the people of Latvia, also includes Russians".²⁴¹ The article concludes by sharing a warning from Sokolov regarding educational reform, suggesting that people should take notice and be concerned with the current proposal.

The *Vesti* article comes off strong, focusing on Russian-speakers who are fighting against the reform. The article describes that some refer to Karlis Shadurskis, the Minister for Education, as "Black Karlis"²⁴², which carries an extremely negative connotation. The title of the article also suggests what the author thinks about the reform, suggesting that the proposed amendments could be considered sheer idiocy or "madness" [безумие].²⁴³ Furthermore, the article completely tailors its focus to covering three lines of protest against the reform, giving zero weight or opportunity to the

²³⁹ Тарасов, "Новая Реформа Латвии – Безумие."

²⁴⁰ Тарасов, "Новая Реформа Латвии – Безумие."

²⁴¹ Тарасов, "Новая Реформа Латвии – Безумие."

²⁴² Тарасов, "Новая Реформа Латвии – Безумие."

²⁴³ Тарасов, "Новая Реформа Латвии – Безумие."

opposing viewpoints. The author of the article is tailoring his viewpoint to his reader base, as *Vesti's* articles have an audience primarily consisting of Russian-speakers who oppose the reform. The journalist's one-sided perspective engages the paper's audience by constructing a specific narrative which describes a historical point of tension between Russian and Latvian-speakers over the language that should be taught in school, harkening back to the Soviet period. As Best and Cheskin mention in their works, educational reform significantly contributed and continues to contribute to the ethnic polarization of the country and the belief of Russian-speakers that they are marginalized.²⁴⁴ As a result, by solely focusing on the negatives to the reform, *Vesti* appeals to its reader base, and further sows doubt regarding the government motives in the conscience of those who will not question the article's content.

4.3 International News and Educational Reform

Coverage of the school reform was also found in *Euronews's* "Protest action in Riga against school reform". The article gives a general overview of what the reform will consist if passed, in addition to describing the main feature of the reform: "starting from the academic year 2020/2021, general subjects in Latvian schools will be studied only in Latvian".²⁴⁵ The article goes on to describe a large protest in front of the Ministry of Science and Education, emphasizing the number of participants, the keynote speakers, and the implications of the reform, as described in the protest. The journalist reports on statements made by the rally's leaders which stress that national minorities will only be able to learn in their ethnic or native language in specific literature, culture, and history

²⁴⁴ Best, "The Ethnic Russian Minority"; Cheskin, "Exploring Russian-Speaking Identity from Below"

²⁴⁵ Smirnov, "Акция протеста в Риге против школьной реформы"

classes if the reform passes.²⁴⁶ The article provides general statistics about the linguistic makeup of Latvia, discussing what the author views as the prevalence of the Russian language in Latvian society. The article also shares what supporters of the reform view as the benefits of reform, in addition to what opponents view as the negatives of the reform. Supporters believe that the reform will increase the participation of national minorities in the labor market and bring about cohesion in Latvian society.²⁴⁷ Those who oppose the reform fear forced assimilation and the erasure of the non-Latvian minority's identity.²⁴⁸ The journalistic piece then delves into the political situation in Latvia, providing a general and factual overview of the political landscape—highlighting that politics in Latvia are defined by ethno-linguistic ties and that the left is supportive of the Russian-speaking minority while the right is made up of predominantly Latvian nationalists. The article concludes by highlighting the passage of similar legislation in Ukraine and sharing the international community's dismay at and disapproval of that law.

Euronews's article on Latvia's educational reform law features both the arguments for and against educational reform. The author grabs the reader's attention through the title and first paragraph, placing a spotlight on protests to the reform, sharing the change intended by the reform and then refocusing on the outcry and disapproval to the reform. The article then provides an overview of Latvia's demographics, reinforcing the large presence of a Russian-speaking community in

²⁴⁶ Smirnov, "Акция протеста в Риге против школьной реформы"

²⁴⁷ Smirnov, "Акция протеста в Риге против школьной реформы"

²⁴⁸ Smirnov, "Акция протеста в Риге против школьной реформы"

Latvia, and provides the reader with reasons for and against language reform. As the article is published in Russian and is most likely read by Russian-speakers, the article begins by focusing on protest to the reform—a decision by the author to bring up a topic that most likely resonates with the readers. However, the author doesn't fail to bring attention to both sides of the argument, possibly trying to open the typical reader up by providing a contrasting viewpoint later on in the article. The journalist compares and contrasts the pros and cons of the reform, giving both sides of the argument equal weight. By ending the article with reference to the Ukrainian law, the author leaves open the question as to whether or not the reform will be enacted in Latvia and its implications.

The Baltic Times covered the Latvian Cabinet's decision to reform the Latvian education system in "Education law amendments dismay Latvia's Russians". The article explains that the newly proposed reform will transition the educational system to Latvian as the sole language of instruction in schools. It further details that the Latvian Cabinet has agreed on a timetable during which educational reform will take place. The author draws attention to the impact that the proposed reform has already had—including having "angered Latvia's large Russian-speaking minority and ethnic Russians"²⁴⁹ and brings up Mayor Nils Ushakovs' perspective. Ushakovs, who is ethnically Russian, believes that the reform risks the stability and security of Latvia.²⁵⁰ The article contrasts Ushakovs' points by highlighting the goal of the Ministry of Science and Education, which is to create an environment where there is equal opportunity for quality education

²⁴⁹ Mustillo, "Education Law Amendments Dismay Latvia's Russians"

²⁵⁰ Mustillo, "Education Law Amendments Dismay Latvia's Russians"

in order to expand the “opportunities for youth and competitiveness in the labor market”²⁵¹ through study of the Latvian language. The Ministry insists that the reform will not eliminate bilingual education, but rather refocus educational initiatives.²⁵² The article then goes into specific details regarding how the reform will apply using statistics on Latvian demographics and Latvian schools. The author reports that the Ministry is planning to completely overhaul the entire high school system, potentially closing some schools and reorganizing others that specifically service minorities.²⁵³ The author returns to the counter-reform perspective and shares the viewpoint of the Head of the Latvian Human Rights Committee, who believes that the new reform will effectively abolish bilingual education in secondary and high schools.²⁵⁴

The article transitions into a more historical evaluation of language in Latvia, underscoring that reform proponents believe the Latvian language has sentimental value due to educational policies during the Russian occupation of the 20th century. The article states that the Soviet occupation and period of Russification had a profound impact on language usage and policy, in addition to decreasing the population of ethnic Latvians while increasing the population of other nationalities.²⁵⁵ A testimony is then brought up from the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, who insists that learning the Latvian language in Latvia is essential, so long as it doesn't hamper the study of minority languages.²⁵⁶ The author returns back to the arguments

²⁵¹ Mustillo, “Education Law Amendments Dismay Latvia’s Russians”

²⁵² Mustillo, “Education Law Amendments Dismay Latvia’s Russians”

²⁵³ Mustillo, “Education Law Amendments Dismay Latvia’s Russians”

²⁵⁴ Mustillo, “Education Law Amendments Dismay Latvia’s Russians”

²⁵⁵ Mustillo, “Education Law Amendments Dismay Latvia’s Russians”

²⁵⁶ Mustillo, “Education Law Amendments Dismay Latvia’s Russians”

made by Riga Mayor Ushakovs, who suggests that the current language laws already foster a positive education system—and that Riga already has plans in place for furthering minority education.²⁵⁷ The article concludes by bringing attention to further disagreement to the reform, and ends by refocusing on what the Science Education Minister states will be a positive follow-up to the 2004 educational reform.

Over the course of the article, the author gives weight to those who advocate for and against the reform. *The Baltic Times*' piece attempts to carefully and thoroughly explain the reasoning and justification behind both positions. The author sensibly parallels and contrasts opposing viewpoints, one at a time, in his attempt to construct a fair and balanced report on the reform. He begins the article by highlighting some officials' qualms with the reform, and then highlighting how the reformers respond to concerns raised. He then provides ample support in breaking down reasons why the reform is popular with some and hated by others. The journalist comes full circle in his analysis by examining statements made by three vocal and powerful political figures and institutions. Mayor Ushakovs brings a less optimistic, and effectively negative perspective on the reform, while the Ministry of Science and Education shares optimism and positive hopes for the outcome of the educational reform. With both a positive and negative viewpoint, the author doesn't cede to provide an intermediary; the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe's statements are neutral, highlighting the necessity of studying Latvian without hampering the study of minority languages. *The Baltic Times* coverage of Latvia's educational reform tries to provide

²⁵⁷ Mustillo, "Education Law Amendments Dismay Latvia's Russians"

various perspectives in evaluating the reform, while still trying to appeal to a specific audience, one which may not totally and completely understand the complexities of the law. However, the article does conclude by sharing the Minister of Science and Education's belief that reform will be beneficial, potentially ceding what may be *The Baltic Times'* stance on the controversial political topic.

4.4 Summary of Media's Coverage of Educational Reform

Articles from the newspapers and internet portals covered above exhibit that there is controversy over the educational reform amendments. *Grani* and *Gorod* focus on the idea that educational reform will clearly affect students. *Grani's* article suggests that students are willing to adapt to reform but implies that the educational reform may not solve the issues that interviewees highlighted. *Gorod* suggests that there should be hesitation despite passage of the reform, as the reform comes with a lot of large and unknown changes. *Delfi* and *Vesti* also chronicle the language reform law—explaining the proposed amendments and drawing attention to what seem to be far more negatives than positives regarding the amendments. The *Delfi* article avoids taking sides, and merely lays out the reform (which it likely infers will be passed). This strategy is beneficial due to *Delfi's* place as the most popular internet portal in Latvia, since it avoids infuriating either nationality on what is a truly polarizing subject, thus maintaining audience levels. *Delfi* is often supportive of policy that enables Latvian nationalism, but in this case, its article brings attention to a number of criticisms of the educational reform. This is not to the same extent as the *Vesti* article, which highlights three specific outlets which are highly critical of the proposed amendments. The *Vesti* article is

outwardly hostile, highlighting multiple ways the reform is misguided, unnecessary, and unconstitutional. *Euronews* maintains a balance in introducing the reform, while also highlighting the pros and cons to the proposed amendments. While the article highlights the grievances shared by the Russian-speaking minority, and is attentive to those arguments, it also shares the reasoning behind those who support the proposed reform. *Euronews's* coverage ensures that both of the viewpoints are covered, while appeasing the paper's Russian-speaking audience by highlighting support behind protest of the reform and by connecting the reform law to Ukraine's recent educational reform, which attracted the wrath of the international community. *The Baltic Times* also looks at the proposed reform, highlights the disapproval of Russian-speakers with regards to it, and then provides a comprehensive breakdown of the two educational amendments. The article may hold a hidden message, one that can be seen in the last two paragraphs and potentially demonstrates the paper's view (as it's regarded as pro-Latvian and pro-Western), however the article's content doesn't fully back this conclusion. Due to the complexities of educational reform, and its lasting impact on ethno-politics, it is difficult to see clear divisions between media sources, as we see in previous topics. Local media, representative of Russian-speakers is skeptical of the reform, as are both *Delfi* and *Vesti* (though to different extents). International and regional outlets like *The Baltic Times* and *Euronews* are harder to decipher due to their macro-evaluation of the changes to the language reform law.

Chapter 5: The Curious Case of the European Union

The final topic discussed in this paper is media coverage of Latvia's accession into the European Union (EU) in order to understand how the Russian-speaking community is characterized with regards to this socio-economic issue. For a country that has craved its independence, the Latvian referendum to join the EU in 2004 was a historical yet difficult decision for many Latvians. In the short term, Latvia would face a financial crisis, but long term, EU membership benefited Latvia by increasing the country's level of human development (HDI) and gross domestic product (GDP).²⁵⁸ While the vote was about 66% in favor to 33% against, 44% of Latvia's Russian-speakers voted against joining the EU.²⁵⁹ Further evidence of Russian speaking dissent can be linked to two areas with some of the largest opposition to the EU, including Riga, and the region of Latgale.²⁶⁰ In fact, the majority of voters in Daugavpils rejected joining the EU. Accession into the EU was a point of tension between the Russian language minority and Latvian language majority. A review of articles reporting on Latvia's EU membership ten years after the fact may provide greater perspective into whether sentiments rested along ethnic lines, whether the sentiments have historical ties and whether socio-economic conditions were a factor. For media outlets that did not specifically cover Latvia's 10th anniversary of EU membership, we will instead focus on articles that provided coverage on the country's decision to enter into the euro area which is an economic and monetary union, also known as the Eurozone. in 2014. The

²⁵⁸ UNDP, "Human Development Report 2013: Latvia."

²⁵⁹ Pridham, "Latvia's EU Accession Referendum."

²⁶⁰ Pridham, "Latvia's EU Accession Referendum."

Eurozone and the EU were both seen as pro-Western initiatives, opening the country to a more Eurocentric way of life. Strong proponents of the EU tended to also to be supporters of Eurozone entrance (despite the fact that joining the Eurozone was less popular with only 60% of the population in favor).²⁶¹ Just as Latvia's Russian speakers were fairly split regarding the EU (while Latvia's ethnic-Latvians were not), Latvia's ethnic-Latvians were split on whether the euro would be beneficial to the economy.²⁶² As a result, I drew a parallel to media coverage in cases where coverage on the 10th anniversary of the EU was lacking.

5.1 Local Media's Coverage of the EU

Grani's "YES! We are ten years in the EU!" provides a look at how life has changed in Latvia in the last ten years as an EU member. The article discusses the tenth anniversary of EU accession and mentions while once a controversial decision for Russian-speakers, this population have since come to embrace EU membership. Despite having 66% of voters supporting EU accession, there was still societal unease at the time of the referendum. The article references that one third of Latvia voted against membership for various political and individual reasons. *Grani* briefly gave an overview of the history behind the drive for EU membership and its then perceived, controversial platform. The journalist posed three questions to fifty residents of Latgale, tallied their responses, and spotlighted their opinions. The first question asked residents how they would vote now—with sixteen for EU membership, twenty-one against, and

²⁶¹ "Latvia Becomes 18th Eurozone State."

²⁶² Ellyatt, "Why Latvia Wants to Join the Euro Zone.;" eng.lsm.lv, "Support for EU and NATO Membership High among Latvian Speakers."

thirteen undecided.²⁶³ The journalist shares two responses, one in which a woman justifies her vote against due to the fact that Russian non-citizens still face inequality, and another in which a local citizen shares what he believes to be the benefits of EU membership in Latvia today.²⁶⁴ The second question asks whether attitudes towards the EU would be more positive if not for the global financial crisis.²⁶⁵ The responses to this question were less divided—twenty-seven would be more positive while 10 would not be more positive towards EU membership, with fourteen who were undecided²⁶⁶. The journalist then shares one respondent’s commentary in which the commenter states that “the [financial] crisis would have come sooner or later”, with or without the EU.²⁶⁷

Before going on to the third question, the author highlights what respondents list as the two consistently positive benefits of EU membership—open borders and EU development projects.²⁶⁸ The author shares information regarding the injection of funding into the Latvian economy from EU projects but notes that that development projects have shown a lessening interest to Latvia’s residents over time. The final question that the journalist asks is open ended; what do you see for the future of the EU ...?”.²⁶⁹ Most respondents, (thirty-two out of fifty) shared that they have a negative outlook regarding the future of the EU, while twelve answered that they foresee the current norm will continue, and six answered that they don’t believe Latvia will continue to be in the EU for the long haul.²⁷⁰ With a wide range of outlooks, the article takes one

²⁶³ Рубе, “YES! Мы Десять Лет в ЕС!”

²⁶⁴ Рубе, “YES! Мы Десять Лет в ЕС!”

²⁶⁵ Рубе, “YES! Мы Десять Лет в ЕС!”

²⁶⁶ Рубе, “YES! Мы Десять Лет в ЕС!”

²⁶⁷ Рубе, “YES! Мы Десять Лет в ЕС!”

²⁶⁸ Рубе, “YES! Мы Десять Лет в ЕС!”

²⁶⁹ Рубе, “YES! Мы Десять Лет в ЕС!”

²⁷⁰ Рубе, “YES! Мы Десять Лет в ЕС!”

respondent's comment to further examine the perception of how the EU is viewed. This individual respondent suggests that while Latvia is in the EU, the government is lethargic and only works to conform to EU norms and regulations.²⁷¹ The respondent believes that arguments for joining the EU were centered on what the European Union could do for Latvia, but now, since the EU has undertaken a number of initiatives for Latvia, the respondent argues that people have failed to consider what Latvia has done since entry.²⁷² The article concludes with some surprising responses to questions such as people questioning whether Latvia is in fact a part of Europe (regarding the economy and jobs), and the 10 year anniversary is a fad that Latgalian's do not care about and hardly relate to. The author highlights the next European initiatives for Latvia—such as entry into the Eurozone. The article ends by concluding that “everything is too calm, because the EU will do everything for us”,²⁷³ providing a way to sum up the various perspectives brought up in the article.

The *Grani* article title seems to be a sarcastic statement which will grab readers' attention. In his first paragraph, the author follows this sarcasm with a quizzical tone, calling the decision to vote yes in the EU referendum “an ambitious choice”²⁷⁴. His probing strategy continues as he brings up the need to “pay tribute, [as] a third of the residents of Latvia had [...a differing] opinion. For some it was an opportunity to express disagreement with the policy at the time”.²⁷⁵ The journalist ensures that past arguments are highlighted, so as to bring up a controversy that was only ten years prior. He adds

²⁷¹ Рубе, “YES! Мы Десять Лет в ЕС!”

²⁷² Рубе, “YES! Мы Десять Лет в ЕС!”

²⁷³ Рубе, “YES! Мы Десять Лет в ЕС!”

²⁷⁴ Рубе, “YES! Мы Десять Лет в ЕС!”

²⁷⁵ Рубе, “YES! Мы Десять Лет в ЕС!”

humor to the article by going even further into the past, giving a shout out to the pioneer of the pro-EU movement “Forward in the EU”²⁷⁶, and then playfully suggesting that we should wait to form opinions. The author utilizes statistics and responses in order to stress that the EU may not be as virtually accepted as it may seem. Several comments from local’s backup statistics from the reporter’s poll that the EU may not be universally accepted, similar to how people viewed it ten years ago. By focusing on the Latvia’s progress, or lack thereof, since entering the EU, the author probes the pros and cons of the European Union. He suggests that EU funds and projects have benefitted Latvia, but “the boom”²⁷⁷ of these projects has worn off. The journalist furthers this point by inserting some of the most outrageous responses his interviewees gave, including a statement from one who did “not feel that Latvia is part of Europe.”²⁷⁸ He concludes by stating that to some, “10 years in the EU” is something of a bloated bubble and nothing more²⁷⁹ demonstrating how a number of locals view the EU today. The last sentence again goes back to the journalist’s sense of humor, in saying that the “EU will do everything for us”²⁸⁰, suggesting that for Latgalian, EU membership hasn’t provided much. *Grani’s* author seems to personally believe that the EU’s positives outweigh its negatives, but his highlighting the overwhelmingly negative responses to his questions appeal to his audience, which is likely made up of Russian-speaking Eurosceptics. As a result, *Grani’s* position may reflect a lethargy towards the benefits of the European Union.

²⁷⁶ Рубе, “YES! Мы Десять Лет в ЕС!”

²⁷⁷ Рубе, “YES! Мы Десять Лет в ЕС!”

²⁷⁸ Рубе, “YES! Мы Десять Лет в ЕС!”

²⁷⁹ Рубе, “YES! Мы Десять Лет в ЕС!”

²⁸⁰ Рубе, “YES! Мы Десять Лет в ЕС!”

Gorod published an article “Latgale lost ten years of EU membership in Daugavpils”, highlighting Saeima members’ visit to Daugavpils, and the discussion that members of Parliament had with local politicians regarding citizenship, migration, and social cohesion. The article begins by sharing comments from former Preiļi Mayor and Council for the Development of Latgale Chair, Aldis Adamovich, who stated that EU membership has triggered over eighty-thousand Latgalian workers to go abroad in search of higher paying jobs and better quality of life.²⁸¹ The author then mentions that despite outward migration due to employment opportunities, recent trends have shown that birthrates are up and more people are now returning home.²⁸² However, the article returns back to Adamovich’s concern, stating “Nevertheless, as before, the number of those who decided to return home is immeasurably small compared to the number of those who still remain abroad.”²⁸³ Adamovich attributes this to low wages and poor jobs, and the article shares Adamovich’s concern that the current situation makes sustaining economic development implausible.²⁸⁴ The article then shares a more optimistic assertion by Daugavpils’ Mayor that “the developed economy of the region will be able to stimulate Latgale residents”²⁸⁵ in terms of job opportunities and overall economic growth. The article concludes with a comment from a member of the Saeima, who states if she knew how to attract workers back to Latvia, she would win the Nobel prize. *Gorod* also ran a poll asking “For 10 years of your stay in the EU, have you experienced

²⁸¹ Gorod.lv, “Латгалия потеряла за десять лет членства в ЕС целый Даугавпилс.”

²⁸² Gorod.lv, “Латгалия потеряла за десять лет членства в ЕС целый Даугавпилс.”

²⁸³ Gorod.lv, “Латгалия потеряла за десять лет членства в ЕС целый Даугавпилс.”

²⁸⁴ Gorod.lv, “Латгалия потеряла за десять лет членства в ЕС целый Даугавпилс.”

²⁸⁵ Gorod.lv, “Латгалия потеряла за десять лет членства в ЕС целый Даугавпилс.”

the benefits of joining Latvia to this union?”²⁸⁶ The results were astonishing—only 12% of respondents had experienced positive benefits, while 85% stated that they had not experienced positive benefits, as wages have stayed low while prices have increased.²⁸⁷

Gorod's article and poll highlight the reasons behind Latgalian's discontent with EU membership. The journalist features the political meeting held in Daugavpils in order to show how national politicians lack a cohesive plan to fix the economy and migration issues, and are out of touch with the local population (as the Nobel-prize comment at the end of the article suggests). The writer delves into the overarching negatives of EU membership—including negative migration trends, low wages, and the lack of economic development as the drivers of the local population's grievances. While the author makes a valid point in stating that migration trends are harming Daugavpils's economy and contributing to a net-loss in population²⁸⁸, he may be overemphasizing this theme in order to deliver the narrative that EU membership has harmed Latgale, as the second *Gorod* article's opinion statistics affirm. The *Gorod* article appeals to its viewership by highlighting the ever-present conditions still found in Latgale, and provides reasons justifying the population's discontent.

5.2 National Media's Coverage of the EU & Eurozone

Delfi's “10 years ago, citizens of Latvia voted in favor of joining the EU in a referendum” explains the referendum that was held on EU accession, the Saeima's ratification of the referendum, and recalls the day that Latvia officially joined the EU

²⁸⁶ Gorod.lv, “Опрос.”

²⁸⁷ Gorod.lv, “Опрос.”

²⁸⁸ Gorod.lv, “Латгалия потеряла за десять лет членства в ЕС целый Даугавпилс.”

(which according to the article, was one of Latvia's chief foreign policy priorities upon gaining independence). The author also emphasizes the sentimental value that EU membership had for Latvia's then President and Prime Minister, who at the time, highlighted the magnitude of the achievement by calling the decision "historic"²⁸⁹ and by fulfilling a long-time goal through the "implement[ation] [of] so many reforms in such a short period of time".²⁹⁰ The article draws attention to the reforms, sharing the former President's view that Latvia was able to quickly and efficiently create a democratic, rule-based state with a market economy that would hold up to the high hopes and standards of other European countries.²⁹¹ The conclusion continues the optimistic reflective narrative, highlighting the then President's comments that "there are no big or small, significant or insignificant states in this [European] union, all countries are equally important in it"²⁹² and that EU membership provides the opportunity to shape Latvia and greater Europe into a desired mold.²⁹³

The author of this article brings up what he and the internet portal view as a positive flashback on Latvia's decision to join the EU. The writer evokes emotion by tying Latvia's accession into the EU by describing the positive feelings of figureheads at the time of accession, using language that suggests the decision was one of grand proportions and would be a hallmark in the country's history. Furthermore, the author tries to portray Latvia's entry into the EU as overcoming an impossible; Latvia underwent changes of grand proportions, politically and economically, in order to meet

²⁸⁹ rus.DELFI.lv, "10 лет назад граждане Латвии на референдуме проголосовали за вступление в ЕС"

²⁹⁰ rus.DELFI.lv, "10 лет назад граждане Латвии на референдуме проголосовали за вступление в ЕС"

²⁹¹ rus.DELFI.lv, "10 лет назад граждане Латвии на референдуме проголосовали за вступление в ЕС"

²⁹² rus.DELFI.lv, "10 лет назад граждане Латвии на референдуме проголосовали за вступление в ЕС"

²⁹³ rus.DELFI.lv, "10 лет назад граждане Латвии на референдуме проголосовали за вступление в ЕС"

the standards for entry to an exclusive group of countries.²⁹⁴ The journalist concludes by reiterating the idea of the EU being an elite group, stating that within the EU, there is equality among countries, and furthering the idea that the EU establishment had ‘taken Latvia under its wing’ and has allowed for positive development in Latvia and Europe.²⁹⁵ *Delfi*’s place as Latvia’s most popular internet portal gives it the ability to appeal to a large audience. Statistically speaking, Latvia is made up of predominantly ethnic-Latvians, and the majority of these citizens are pro-EU²⁹⁶, which could be the reason behind the extremely positive and one-sided piece.

Vesti presents a different take in two articles that were published around the time of the 10th Anniversary. Both “President on the anniversary of the EU: Latvia returned to the historical space” and “Udre: No one wanted to return to the USSR” provide coverage regarding Latvia’s first ten years in the EU. The first article discusses the Latvian President’s comments on the 10th Anniversary. In his address, Andres Berzins stated “the expansion of the [EU] alliance was the largest in its history, and it was then [when the Baltics decided to join the EU] that” the Iron Curtain finally collapsed.²⁹⁷ Berzins expresses confidence that “everyone benefited from the EU enlargement [...and] for Latvia, according to the president, joining the EU was a symbolic return to the former space to which it belonged for centuries”.²⁹⁸ The article further highlights the points that Berzins championed in his speech—including freedom, upholding morals,

²⁹⁴ rus.DELFI.lv, “10 лет назад граждане Латвии на референдуме проголосовали за вступление в ЕС”

²⁹⁵ rus.DELFI.lv, “10 лет назад граждане Латвии на референдуме проголосовали за вступление в ЕС”

²⁹⁶ eng.lsm.lv, “Support for EU and NATO Membership High among Latvian Speakers.”

²⁹⁷ Vesti.lv: Президент о Юбилее в ЕС: Латвия Вернулась в Историческое Пространство”

²⁹⁸ Vesti.lv: Президент о Юбилее в ЕС: Латвия Вернулась в Историческое Пространство”

and respecting diversity while achieving common goals, not to mention economic and infrastructure growth and improvements.²⁹⁹

The second article, *Udre: No one wanted to return to the USSR*, was less focused on the President Berzins' comments, and more focused on a certain hypothetical: "On May 1, 2014, exactly ten years will pass since Latvia joined the European Union. Portal Vesti.lv wondered: How would we live if Latvia were not admitted to the EU ten years ago?"³⁰⁰ *Vesti* asked this question to the former Saeima Chairwoman at the time of EU accession. Former Chairwoman, Ingrida Udre, responded that it would be difficult to assess this question due to the number of variables in play, however, in the interview, she goes on to provide both advantages and disadvantages. She says that there were negatives of EU membership that were discussed, but they were not highlighted by the government so as to quell doubt.³⁰¹ These potential negatives included having to eventually abandon the Latvian Lat (Latvia's former currency), the need to fully adapt to the tax policy of the EU, and the potential loss of industry and persons due to better economic opportunities.³⁰² The former Chairwoman then went on to highlight the positives—including greater opportunity for education or work abroad, and access to the benefits of being an EU member, under the EU's umbrella.³⁰³ The author concludes the articles by focusing on how former Chairwoman Udre reflects on Latvia's decision. "Nobody wanted to return to

²⁹⁹ Vesti.lv: Президент о Юбилее в ЕС: Латвия Вернулась в Историческое Пространство"

³⁰⁰ Vesti.lv, "Удре: Никто Не Хотел Возвращаться в СССР"

³⁰¹ Vesti.lv, "Удре: Никто Не Хотел Возвращаться в СССР"

³⁰² Vesti.lv, "Удре: Никто Не Хотел Возвращаться в СССР"

³⁰³ Vesti.lv, "Удре: Никто Не Хотел Возвращаться в СССР"

the USSR. And we did not seek our own way, as did Iceland or Norway.”³⁰⁴ Udre follows on by stating that by now, we should understand that Latvia, despite being small, can make a difference and influence the world around it.³⁰⁵

It may seem surprising that the *Vesti* articles did not have overwhelmingly negative connotations surrounding Latvia’s tenth anniversary of EU membership. The first article was meant to be informative, and its intended purpose was to regurgitate the Latvian President’s remarks on the second anniversary. On the other hand, the second article focused on assessing the historical reasons for joining the EU, as described by Latvia’s former Parliamentary Chair. The second article is provocative to a Russian-speaking audience who were split at the time of publication³⁰⁶ and still are not totally positive on the EU.³⁰⁷ The journalist invokes a notion that the Saeima purposely forwarded its agenda in pushing for EU accession by focusing solely on the benefits membership would bring. The author highlights what the government’s aim was post-USSR, suggesting that the EU may have been Latvia’s best fit. *Vesti’s* articles posit a common post-Soviet identity narrative for the Baltic countries. While far from perfect, the Baltic countries were likely better off finding a new organization to take part in, which allowed for identity formation and ensured that these countries would no longer be under an authoritarian power. To play devil’s advocate, the title “Udre: No one wanted to return to the USSR” could be an attention grabbing headline meant to incense the Russian-speaking community by focusing on how a Latvian politician could make an

³⁰⁴ Vesti.lv, “Удре: Никто Не Хотел Возвращаться в СССР”

³⁰⁵ Vesti.lv, “Удре: Никто Не Хотел Возвращаться в СССР”

³⁰⁶ Pridham, “Latvia’s EU Accession Referendum.”

³⁰⁷ eng.ism.lv, “Support for EU and NATO Membership High among Latvian Speakers.”

overarching generalization regarding post-Soviet sentiments. This however is unlikely, as the article's content doesn't support this theory. The two articles address both sides of the historical debate (to join or not to join the EU) and provide readers with an understanding of the government's position ten years ago. It is possible that the author of the second article intended to start a fire with *Vesti's* readership, based on the fact that the government admittedly only shared the positives of membership, (which could have been a decisive factor in how people voted at the time), but the true motive of the author's position is unclear.

5.3 International Media's Coverage of the EU and Eurozone

There was no *Euronews* article specifically covering Latvia's 10th anniversary as an EU member, so I chose the Eurozone as a related topic that was reported on during the same timeframe as the other articles discussed. *Euronews* published "Latvians do not want euro, but they aren't asked for their opinions" which describes Latvia's quick decision to join the Eurozone and highlights the government's willingness to adopt the euro despite overwhelming opposition. The article additionally details the consequences and benefits that came with the decision.³⁰⁸ The article describes the Eurozone predicament, suggesting that the government still has time to change its position, and that the European Commission will not give an official response to the request to join for a few months (despite the assumption that the European Commission will accept Latvia's request).³⁰⁹ Further, the author states that Latvia has hit all of the thresholds for membership in the Eurozone, and if it goes through with its request, it will be the second

³⁰⁸ Euronews, "Латыши не хотят евро, но их мнения не спрашивают."

³⁰⁹ Euronews, "Латыши не хотят евро, но их мнения не спрашивают."

Baltic nation to adopt the Euro as its currency and join the economic union.³¹⁰ The article does bring up two points of concern: the first is that the Lat (formerly Latvia's national currency) is an important symbol of national identity, and the second is that the financial crisis of 2008 proved that the euro is not indestructible.³¹¹ Even with the concerns, the article goes on to state that Latvia's Central Bank believes that a switch to the euro will bring economic prosperity.

Euronews article title "Latvians do not want euro, but they aren't asked for their opinions" accurately describes the situation that Latvia faced when it decided to adopt the euro. While the European Union was not specifically discussed in the *Euronews* piece, EU membership is an aspect of further European integration just as joining the Eurozone further incorporates Latvia with the European economic community. The author focuses on the disconnect between the population and the government and brings up that the decision is not yet final. The journalist doesn't fully embrace the euro, he merely paints the predicament Latvia was facing at the time of the article's publication. While the author shares that joining the Eurozone would be unpopular and justifies the reasoning behind this, he also highlights the government's perspective, which foresees the Eurozone as boosting the country economically. *Euronews's* readership most likely opposed entering the Eurozone (as opinion polls in Latvia showed that only 20% of the country were in favor of adoption)³¹², but the article's aim is to highlight that while the government's announcement may be unpopular, there are

³¹⁰ Euronews, "Латыши не хотят евро, но их мнения не спрашивают."

³¹¹ Euronews, "Латыши не хотят евро, но их мнения не спрашивают."

³¹² Euronews, "Латыши не хотят евро, но их мнения не спрашивают."

opposing viewpoints between big government and ordinary people as to what the euro will do for the Latvian economy.

The Baltic Times published an article regarding Latvia's accession to the EU titled "Latvia celebrates 'Europe Day'". The article, while brief, highlights a number of events to commemorate the historic day. According to the article, the tenth anniversary will include debates "about the benefits that European Union membership has brought Latvia"³¹³, broadcasts about the European Union and its institutions, concerts and, discussion forums to envision the future for Latvia and Europe.³¹⁴ The article underlines the early idea behind the EU, which was French Foreign Minister Schuman's proposal for a "supranational" Europe in 1950.³¹⁵ *The Baltic Times* also published another article, titled "Here Comes the Euro – Ready or Not" within a similar timeframe, discussing Latvia's controversial adoption of the euro. While published a few months earlier than Latvia's 10th anniversary, this article emphasizes the disappointment of the population in Latvia's decision to change currency. The article underscores that while many Latvians are concerned by the Eurozone, the government believes that the currency change will provide "an opportunity for Latvia to attract more investment in order to strengthen economic development and benefit the society in other ways".³¹⁶ The author considers how business leaders view the impending impact of the euro, and also brings up how the euro will impact a huge portion of the population who are pensioners.³¹⁷ The author surmises that while unpopular now, the euro will be introduced and eventually be

³¹³ The Baltic Times Staff, "Latvia Celebrates 'Europe Day'"

³¹⁴ The Baltic Times Staff, "Latvia Celebrates 'Europe Day'"

³¹⁵ The Baltic Times Staff, "Latvia Celebrates 'Europe Day'"

³¹⁶ Traylor, "Here Comes the Euro - Ready or Not."

³¹⁷ Traylor, "Here Comes the Euro - Ready or Not."

embraced, just as the Louvre's pyramid was.³¹⁸ The author then looks at a few ways that international media have covered Latvia's transition to the euro; these news articles have shared suspicion that Latvia's place in the Eurozone will enable a 'smoke and mirrors' type of scenario for shady business dealings.³¹⁹ In response to these criminal-like assertions, the author provides the Latvian government's rebuttal which focuses on the positives of the euro, and dismisses criminal negatives as hearsay. The article concludes by stating that even with adoption and integration of the euro, "the hard work isn't over".³²⁰

The articles on Latvia's accession into the EU and the euro provide a basis for how *The Baltic Times* tends to cover EU related reports. *The Baltic Times* is known to be have a fairly pro-European Union slant, and both of its articles have an optimistic outlook regarding both the EU and the euro. The first article makes a point at highlighting all of the celebrations and events held in commemoration of the tenth anniversary, utilizing terms such as "historic"³²¹ in order to emphasize the importance of Latvia's decision. Furthermore, the article specifically focuses on the celebrations which are all positive, constructive, and look to further Latvia's future in the EU. The second article is more balanced, but in the end, it offers a cautiously optimistic outlook regarding the euro. The article shares the controversy regarding euro adoption with regards to socio-economics, and then underscores the government's positive position on joining the Eurozone. While the article does return to Euroscepticism in relation to

³¹⁸ Traylor, "Here Comes the Euro - Ready or Not."

³¹⁹ Traylor, "Here Comes the Euro - Ready or Not."

³²⁰ Traylor, "Here Comes the Euro - Ready or Not."

³²¹ Traylor, "Here Comes the Euro - Ready or Not."

criminal networks, the author ends on a high note by sharing his view that the benefits will outweigh the consequences with the adoption of the new currency and upon entrance and economic union. He caveats this point by suggesting that more work is still to be done when he shares “the hard work isn’t over” in the last line.³²² *The Baltic Times* articles fall in line with the general stance that the paper takes—positive on the EU, Eurozone, and NATO.

5.4 Summary of Media’s Coverage on the EU and Eurozone

Looking at media’s coverage of Latvia’s 10 years since EU accession, there is more variance among the articles than anticipated. This could be due to the lack of specific articles reporting on the first decade of Latvia’s EU membership (and the need to parallel articles on the EU with articles on the Eurozone). Another reason could be because Latvia’s membership in the European Union is no longer a focal point in the political world. Furthermore, Latvia’s population might have already adjusted and gotten used to life within the EU and may no longer care to question the institution. Local newspapers *Grani* and *Gorod* highlight issues with European Union membership, with *Grani* doing so in a humorous and sarcastic way, and *Gorod* doing so by focusing on the dialogue and disconnect between national politicians and the local population. *Delfi* shares a predominantly positive take on EU accession, as this fits in with the pro-Latvian slant of the website, since EU accession was popular with most Latvians. *Vesti*’s article give off a mixed message regarding EU membership. The first article draws attention to the benefits of EU membership, while the second article brings up an

³²² Traylor, “Here Comes the Euro - Ready or Not.”

unfair, one-sided government backed initiative that led Latvia to join the EU in the first place. *Vesti's* articles seem to highlight injustice in the Latvian government's decision, while also accepting that EU membership may have been the most reasonable decision at the time. *Vesti* represents its audience by popularly criticizing the government, while also suggesting that the EU hold some benefits for Latvia's Russian-speakers.

Euronews features Latvia's decision to join the Eurozone and shares both positives and negatives that could be induced with the euro's adoption. The articles paint a hazy picture of Latvia's economic future, demonstrating that the news outlet doesn't want to jump to conclusions on what is still an unknown (the euro had not been officially adopted at time of publication). By framing the intended adoption of the euro as hazy, *Euronews* can present information to its broad audience-base, without taking sides and risking a loss of trust. The other internationally read source we discussed, *The Baltic Times*, provided coverage on both the decision to join the EU as well as the Eurozone. The first article, which is on the tenth anniversary of EU membership, implicitly indicates that EU accession was a positive event in Latvian history. The article covering Latvia's decision to join the Eurozone is not as positive but concludes with an encouraging tone for the long-term. The *Baltic Times's* pro-Western slant is likely the reason behind its upbeat coverage of the tenth anniversary and long-term optimism on the Eurozone. On this polarizing topic, we see that socio-economic outcomes and conditions are often the driving factors behind divisions. Local papers in Latgale are more willing to criticize aspects of the decision to join the EU, as their readers have not all felt the benefits of EU membership. National sources *Delfi* and *Vesti* more or less

embrace Latvia's place within the EU, but do so differently, so as to consider their specific audience. It seems like internationally focused sources, in the case of coverage on the EU and the euro, focus on how their audience may react to their articles, and how this may impact their paper. *Euronews* doesn't take a stance, maintaining a neutral footing with its vast array of Russian-speaking readers while *The Baltic Times* and its predominantly English-speaking audience clearly shares what it believes to be the positives of European integration. It is also interesting to consider whether the 'tug of war' between the pros/cons of the EU, found in various articles, falls in line with the Russian-speaking identity crisis in Latvia. On one hand, Russian-speakers often adopt some European tendencies, viewpoints, and interests, and in other aspects, Russian-speakers maintain traditional culture and language. This could be a reason we find so many articles which compare and contrast two opposing viewpoints.

Conclusion

Identity politics and memory war in the realm of the Latvian-Russian divide is based on two differing twentieth century historical interpretations.³²³

To Latvians, the Soviets systematically deconstructed Latvian society in order to impose a policy of Russification and merciless rule.³²⁴ Based on this narrative many Latvians distrust and question Russian-speakers and perceive Russia, and Russian-speakers as threats to the integrity of Latvia and its contemporary society.³²⁵

On the other side, Russian historical narratives construct the Soviet Union as a liberator from fascism and focus on contemporary discrimination in light of what the Soviets accomplished in Nazi Germany's defeat.³²⁶ This narrative propagates the Latvian government and the Latvian people as ungrateful, unrecognizing of the Soviet victory, and prejudiced against Russian-speakers.

The purpose of this paper is to explore Russian-speakers' identity in Latvia, by positioning Russian-language media in Daugavpils against the background of national, regional, and international media. This work comprehensively examines different media sources as they report on ethnically polarizing topics in Latvia today.

In exploring identity politics in present-day Latvia, I utilize 'hot' political topics as points of reference and comparison between 'levels of coverage'. By comparing, contrasting, and analyzing these media sources, I am able to evaluate political issues and their effect on Russian-speakers in Latvia.

³²³ Cheskin, "Exploring Russian-Speaking Identity from Below", 289.

³²⁴ Cheskin, "Exploring Russian-Speaking Identity from Below", 288

³²⁵ Cheskin, "Exploring Russian-Speaking Identity from Below", 288.

³²⁶ Cheskin, "Exploring Russian-Speaking Identity from Below", 295.

Trends I found consisted of the following:

- Media sources, whose readers' primary language is Russian, highlight issues that their readers face, and cast their articles to resonate with reader sentiments. The same holds for media whose readership has a primary language of Latvian.
- International media outlets focus on general aspects of issues in Latvian society; with regard to the Russian minority, they highlight how the Russian minority views issues, and often provide arguments both for and against the Russian-speaking minority's perspective.
- Foreign Policy and Ideological topics are most the divisive topics among Russian-speakers and Latvians.

Differences in Latvia's media scene, by level of coverage:

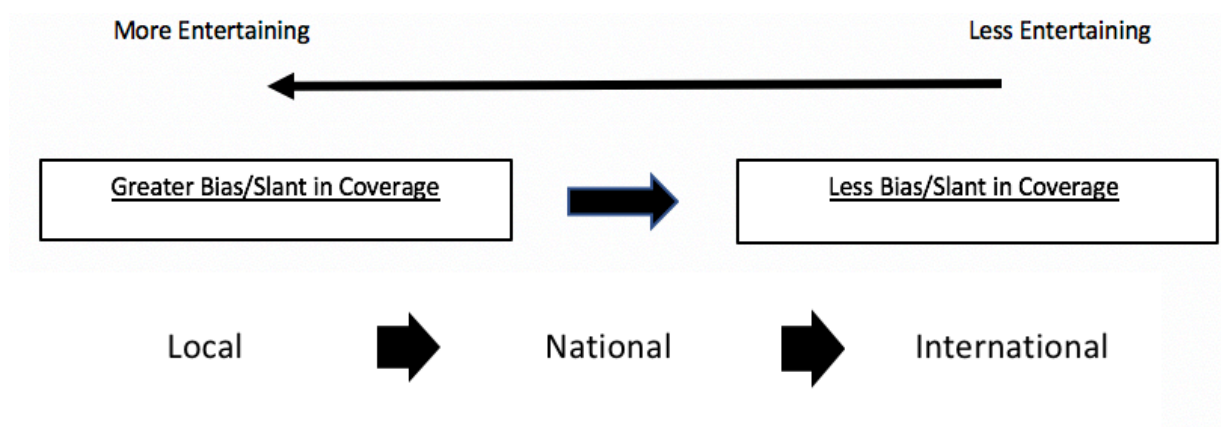
The media in Daugavpils acts as a representative of the local population's view, as can be seen in *Grani* and *Gorod's* coverage of the Olympics, 'Dragoon Ride', and educational reform. This not only appeases its current readers, it may attract added readership and greater revenue.

National media provides an overview of the topic being discussed in the article, while slanting its coverage to represent the sentiments of its audience. *Delfi* articles often are written to fall in line with what the Latvian-speaking majority would feel, just as *Vesti* articles tailor their coverage to what Russian-speakers want to hear.

International media is often more established financially and can therefore afford to present the big picture of issues in Latvia in line with what seem to be prevailing feelings among both Latvians and Russians. When it comes to international media,

information tends to represent a broader spectrum of positions than local and national news sources. *Euronews* articles are often tailored to appeal to a Russian-speaking audience, but the articles are general enough that it is more difficult to find outright biases. *The Baltic Times* focuses on issues that are specific to the Baltics, and while the articles often favor a western viewpoint, the articles appear balanced with an outline of various arguments on controversial issues.

Chart 3: A visual explanation of media biases



Revisiting the hypothesis:

In this paper, identity politics are examined through a number of spheres. My hypothesis is that the Russian-speaking community in Latvia is no more pro-Russian than it is pro-Latvian, and that the media's coverage of Latvian political issues contribute to ethnic polarization and stereotyping of the Russian-speaking community.

From this work, these are the conclusions that can be drawn:

- Issues of international affairs are less important to Russian-speakers in Daugavpils, and potentially Latvia as a whole. Due to the plethora of domestic issues, the local population does not emphasize the importance of larger international

concerns. This could also be due to the fact that the Russian-speaking population is less fearful of Russia as compared to ethnic-Latvians thereby seeing Western militaries as a potential intruder or threat, while Latvians may view NATO with a feeling of safety.

- When it comes to ethnic identification, Latvia's Russian-speakers predominantly root for Russian athletes as these athletes resonate with Russian-speakers' ethnic background. Latvia's Russian-speakers tend to side with the ethnicity that their language is tied to. In addition, joining the bandwagon is a proven concept; it is no surprise that those who have outlets or connections to Russia also choose to root for victors—and Russian athletes frequently outperform Latvian athletes.

- With regards to educational ethno-politics, students and teachers alike understand that reform in the school system may benefit them economically and educationally in the long term, despite early resistance to change.

- On socio-economic issues, people look to policy changes in order to explain positive and negative results. As a result of recent exposure to the European Union and the Eurozone, both Russian and Latvian-speakers attribute their socio-economic grievances to these institutions.

Final Thoughts:

This work establishes that the Russian-speaking community in Latvia is not completely pro-Russian, nor is it completely integrated into Latvian society.

The Russian speaking community is portrayed by the media as more Russian than Latvian. This portrayal is influenced by the media's slanted coverage of identity politics in Latvia.

Local and national media outlets create a polarizing effect among Latvians due to the pandering to reader bases which cause singling out of an opposing group or party. Media tilts its coverage to appeal to its audience, thereby further reinforcing that audience's identity narrative.

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