

1. SECURITY AND GEOPOLITICS

WHAT IMPLICATIONS THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION'S COMPATRIOT POLICY COULD HAVE FOR THE SECURITY OF BALTIC STATES?

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ABSTRACT

The National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation to 2020 sets the national interests of the country and strategic national priorities, which could affect strategy for the military security of Baltic States. This paper will argue that the threat to the military security of Baltic States has considerably increased since their restoration of independence because the Russian army reforms in recent years have increased the military capabilities near the Baltic States borders and military operations and other military activities have risen around the Baltic region, which have decreased the environment of the security on the entire area. The aim of this paper is to identify the Russian military threats and to analyse their implications to the concepts of the military security of Baltic States, which based on territorial defence and to make further recommendations based on research findings and analysis.

KEY WORDS

Baltic region, national security, national minorities, Russia.

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Introduction

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War at the beginning of the 1990s, the peace lasted in Europe only one and a half decade, when Russia started the war against Georgia. In 2008 Georgian military forces launched an attack on South Ossetia in an attempt to bring the territory fully under Tbilisi political control. Moscow responded with a counter-offensive in South

Ossetia, Abkhazia and in the Georgian territory. As outcome, Russia recognized independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Lannon, 2011, p. 27). Russia followed its military response with recognition of the two breakaway provinces as independent states on the grounds of their further protection against possible invasion by Georgia (Council on Foreign Relations, 2008; ref.

Muzalevsky, 2009, p. 119). It was the first time when the Russian Federation (RF) officially stated the reasons for its activities in Georgia, namely the protection of its citizens. Since that moment, the European security environment started to change significantly. Five years later Russian military exercise "Zapad-2013" took place in the Western Military District and in Belarus, which was combined joint forces exercise. Geographically, it covered the western parts of Russia, western Belarus, the enclave of Kaliningrad and the Baltic Sea (Järvenpää, 2014, p. 79). The purpose of this activity was to be prepared for the war with Ukraine, and in 2014 Russia annexed Crimea and launched military activities in eastern Ukraine to protect its citizens again.

Events in Georgia and Ukraine clearly demonstrated the Kremlin's readiness to use its military power in pursuit of its political goals, as well as highlighted the scope of potential consequences of crossing the "red lines" drawn by Moscow (Romanovs, 2015, p. 45). Crimea annexation was the second time when Russia officially underlined the will to protect its citizens abroad. Russia's actions in Ukraine caused the European security to be more vulnerable when after the Georgia-Russian war in 2008. The security architecture in Europe and the wider Baltic Sea region was shaken by the events in Ukraine, where Russia's interference in its sovereignty, the annexation of Crimea and the bloody conflict in the Donbas region became important "game changers" in regional and global politics (Sprūds, 2015, p. 6). After eastern Ukraine, the next most likely targets for an attempted Russian coercion could be the Baltic Republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania (Shlapak & Johnson, 2016, p. 3). This is the reason why politicians and analysts in the Baltic States are increasingly concerned about the values popularized by Moscow in

the neighbouring countries being irreconcilable with democratic values (Kudors, 2010, p. 4). The topic is very current because RF had constantly stated an importance to protect its citizens abroad in neighbouring countries. So, the Baltic States should take such kind of statement into serious considerations to protect and ensure their security and sovereignty of States.

The aim of this paper is to analyse Russia's doctrines and official documents from the Baltic States' perspective, focusing on the threat related to Russia's policy protection of its citizen abroad, which could directly threaten the security of Baltic States.

A research problem is as follow: Are Russian citizens or compatriots in the Baltic States a threat to the security of the Baltic States? The problem of the research is visualized by the fact that in Estonia and in Latvia lives around 25% of Russian citizens or compatriots or Russians without citizenship in border areas, which could be a trigger for the RF to start citizen protection campaign against the Baltic States. To approach such a research problem, the author has asked the following research questions: what does it mean to the RF to protect its citizens abroad in Russia's policy documents, which could be one of the possible and real threats that could affect the security of the Baltic States? How have the Baltic States covered minority issues in their policy documents and what is the situation of Russian minorities in the Baltic States, according to a threat by the RF? Based on the foregoing, this paper argues that regardless of what the Russia's official documents reflect, its realpolitik activities to protect Russian citizens abroad have become a reality. However, it does not have a real impact on and serious threat to the security of Baltic States, but it could be a useful trigger for Moscow as an excuse to launch military activities.

Even the implications of the Russian doctrine are much broader, covering many aspects of security; this paper sets a limitation and analyses only Russian citizen protection abroad and its possible implications to the security of Baltic States. Research mainly focuses more on Estonia and to lesser extent, on Latvia and Lithuania to make comparisons. This paper consists of two major parts. The first part analyses the protection of RF citizens abroad and its impact on the security of Baltic States and the second part analyses the situation of Russian minorities in the Baltic States.

Analysis of Russian Federation policy documents and the protection of citizens abroad as a threat to the security of Baltic States.

This part analyses what it means to the RF to protect its citizens abroad according to policy documents, as it could be one of possible or real threats affecting the security of Baltic States.

Analysis of the protection of Russian citizens abroad in the Russia's policy documents.

In the sphere of international security, Russia will maintain its adherence to the use of political, legal, economic, military and other instruments to defend state sovereignty and national interests (Russian Federation, 2009, p. 4). The Russia's National Security Strategy to 2020 sets one of its responsibilities to defend rights and lawful interests of Russian citizens abroad (Russian Federation, 2009, p. 6). It means to guarantee the right of every Russian citizen to enjoy life, security, work, housing, health and a healthy way of life, accessible education and cultural development (Russian Federation, 2009, p. 4). This is the one of the main directions of the national security strategy to create secure conditions for Russian citizens (Russian Federation, 2009, p. 1). Later in 2013 Russia published its

Foreign Policy Concept, which focuses on equal partnership relations among nations to develop multilateral partnership relations with foreign states, respect independence and sovereignty and the promotion of good-neighbourly relations with neighbouring states (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2013, pp. 1-2). However, the Russian Military Doctrine (2014) sets out that Russia could use and consider it lawful to use Armed Forces and other troops and organizations to ensure protection of citizens living outside the RF (Russian Federation, 2014). In 2016 Russia introduced a new National Security Strategy document, which is fundamentally the same as previous: the protection of Russia's citizens abroad is one of the main interests to the RF.

What does it all mean? According to the Russia's policy setting documents, Russia acted absolutely the same way as it states in its political documents to use military instruments outside the RF. The declared policy to protect Russians and Russian-speaking citizens in other nations, well beyond Crimea and eastern Ukraine, led to an increasing understanding of the threats perceived by Russia's western neighbours (Voigt, 2015, p. 75). The Kremlin justified Crimea's annexation declaring protection of local Russian population and reinforced the view that Russia's compatriot policy was just a pretext for Moscow's land grabbing – as had been the case in 2008 in Georgia's South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Grigas, 2014a, p. 4). Moscow is also willing to use every tool to protect not only citizens, but also any ethnic Russian whose rights or interests are considered to be threatened, because Russian society's sensibility about this issue is quite important and it exacerbates the chances of conflict with neighbouring countries (González, 2013, p. 7). However, the Foreign Policy Concept

has stated that Russia respects independence and sovereignty and good-neighbourly relations with other states. Despite what Russia stated in the formal document, the foreign policy should also focus on ensuring the comprehensive protection of rights and legitimate interests of Russian citizens and compatriots residing abroad. (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2013, p. 2)

Russia's compatriot policies are officially meant to protect ethnic Russians living in nearby countries (Grigas, 2014a, p. 4). It means protecting the rights and legitimate interests of compatriots living abroad on the basis of international laws and treaties concluded by the RF while considering the numerous Russian diaspora as a partner, including expanding and strengthening the space of the Russian language and culture (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2013, p. 11). Furthermore, Article 61 of the Russian Constitution states that the RF shall guarantee its citizens defence and patronage beyond its boundaries (Grigas, 2014a, p. 5). At the end of the 2015 Russia renewed its policy document "National Security Strategy to 2020" and named it "The Strategy of National Security in the Russian Federation", where major changes did not take place. So, the protection of Russian citizens or compatriots is still valid. More troubling and potentially with more challenges has been Putin's policy of venturing into foreign territories with the goal of protecting Russian compatriots, even by using a military instrument of power (Grigas, 2014a, p. 4). What Russia demands is well known: respect for the Russian nation, its values and its history, the recognition of its legitimate sphere of interest in the post-Soviet space and its right to defend its citizens even outside Russia's borders (Forss, 2010, p. 3). To sum up, Vladimir Putin recently gave an interview to

Bild magazine (Bild Magazine, 2016) where he said that for him, it is not borders and state territories that matter, but people's fortunes. Also, it is clearly and openly stated in official documents by purpose. This could mean that Moscow does not care if a state belongs to EU or NATO, and such kind of thinking makes Russia more dangerous to the neighbouring countries.

The protection of Russian citizens abroad as a threat to the security of Baltic States

Over the past decades Russia has intensified efforts to maintain political, economic, and social ties with the Baltic's Russians and Russian speakers (Grigas, 2014a, p. 6). According to the Russia's National Security Strategy to 2020, as expressed in paragraph III "National interests of the Russian Federation and Strategic National Priorities", it does not reflect any such interest or priorities which imply or threaten the security of Baltic States. However, it sets one of its responsibilities to defend compatriots abroad. In practice, though, the policy includes not only Russian citizens, but also ethnic Russians, Russian speakers, and sometimes even simply Russia sympathizers (Grigas, 2014a, p. 5).

Russia's use of minorities in the "near abroad" as a coercive tool against unfriendly regimes suggests that the Moscow World concept is developed against all those who do not want to be part of a Russia-backed Eurasia (Laruelle, 2015, p. 18). In fact, before Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014, a territorial assault on the Baltic States seemed implausible, although Moscow's efforts to maintain influence in the Baltic region left no doubt. Such perception existed in spite of the fact that in the Baltic States there are large Russian minorities, influenced by anti-Western propaganda spread by the RF (Corum, 2013, p. 1).

President Putin has quietly used several different levers to help to increase Russian influence in the Baltic countries, exploiting ethnic and social discontent, and discrediting governments via political influence and penetrating intelligence services (Ciziunas, 2008, p. 296). Such the insistence on protecting Russian compatriots abroad is a legitimate red flag for the Balts and their allies to target not only Russian citizens or Russians, but a much broader group that has any cultural or linguistic affinity towards Russia (Grigas, 2014a, pp. 3, 6). Russia's Foreign Ministry stated that the Baltic States have substantial ethnic Russian populations whose rights, as Moscow repeatedly claimed, are violated, for example by making it difficult to obtain citizenship, and by requirements to speak the local language (Dolgov, 2014). Moscow has also actively criticized Baltic minority policies, particularly the decision in the early 1990s by Tallinn and Riga not to grant automatic citizenship to Soviet-era Russian migrants in Estonia and Latvia (Grigas, 2014a, p. 6). Russia recently declared its readiness to issue RF citizenships to Russian minorities in the former Soviet republics; it is another option for Russia to manipulate minorities in Baltic countries and use them as the impetus for military aggression (Nikers, 2015).

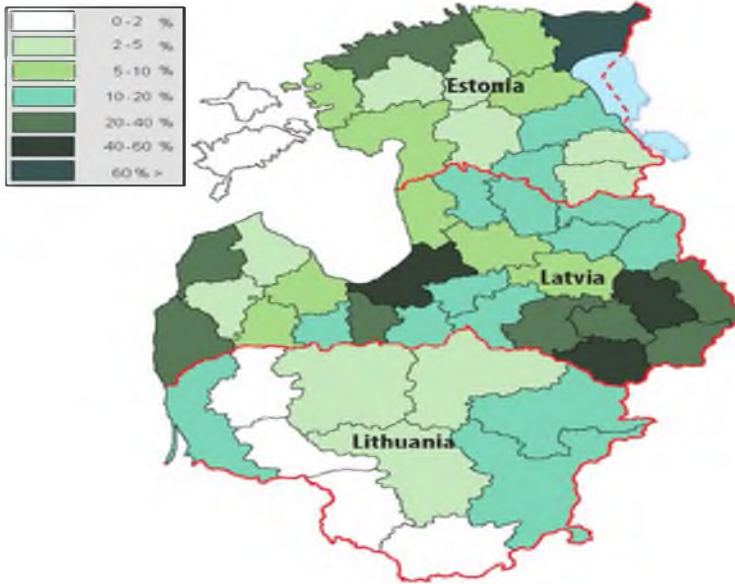
Even then Moscow states in its official documents the protection of "Russian citizens" (in a legal aspect, a person who holds a RF passport), this does not mean that Russia is not interested in persons who are for example Russians with grey passport (stateless), Russian speaking or Russian sympathizers. Moscow's aim is to influence everyone who even is a little bit related with Russia.

The situation of Russian minorities in the Baltic States

This part analyses how the Baltic States have covered minorities issues in their policy documents and what the situation of Russian minorities in the Baltic States is.

Baltic States have two types of policy documents which are regulating the security and defence environment of countries, the concepts of national security and military strategies or concepts of defence. The Baltic States Foreign policy concepts are reflected, to some extent, in national security concepts and minorities or the integration of different social groups into the society is covered in national security concepts. Baltic States have Russian and Russian speaking minorities, which tend to be concentrated close to Russia's borders (Grigas, 2014a, p. 14) including about 25% of the population (Pifer, 2015, p. 120).

Figure 1. Percentage of Russians in the Baltic States by Country
(NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, 2015, p. 36)



Latvia and Estonia have significant Russian ethnic minorities that are not well assimilated into the national population and are seen as a security threat, albeit a declining one (Corum, 2013, p. 24). Estonia and Latvia have particularly large ethnic Russian minorities, with about 24 percent and 27 percent respectively of the general population, while the Russian population of Lithuania falls just under 6 percent (Grigas, 2014a, p. 5). If the Baltic States are unable to fully integrate their Russian speaking populations or lose the soft power war with Russia for their loyalty, then these minorities could become a target of Russia's pressure or influence (Grigas, 2014a, p. 15). Figure 1 shows percentage of Russians in the Baltic States by country.

The situation of the Russian minorities in Estonia

Russia used several levers simultaneously to influence Estonia, including diplomatic pressure, economic and energy controls,

exploiting ethnic and social discontent, and propaganda and disinformation campaigns (Ciziunas, 2008, p. 301). Among them, the sizable population of Russian citizens is a security concern for Estonia, since Moscow's policy on protecting them is even more explicit than protecting ethnic Russians or simply Russian speakers (Grigas, 2014a, p. 8). Moscow has already tried to use them in Estonia (e.g. Bronze Soldier in 2007) to pressure the government to move closer to Russia's point of view (Ciziunas, 2008, p. 302).

Dr Dmitry Lanko from Saint Petersburg State University of Russia argues that Russia's protection of the rights of compatriots in Estonia is according to the European standards – Russia's position on the issue is much stricter than might be expected (Lanko, 2013, p. 38). Lanko claims that Russia is such an important factor in Estonian foreign policy that any actions of the Russian leadership in the field of both foreign and domestic policies are carefully

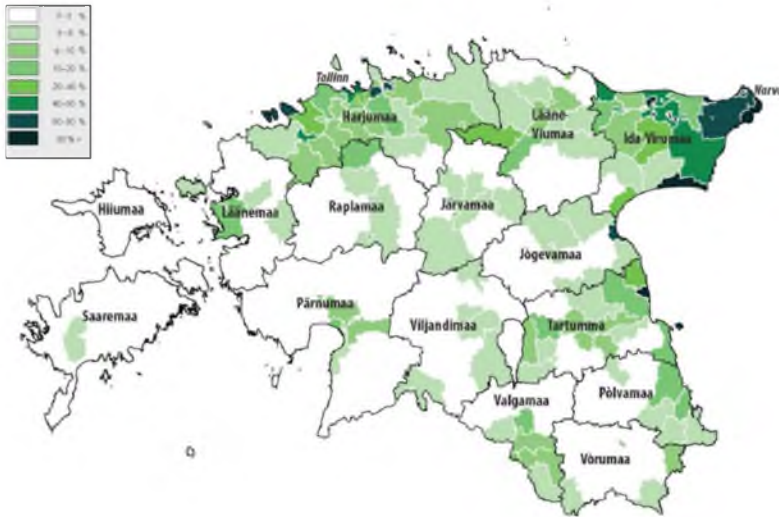
assessed and mostly criticised by Tallinn, regardless of the events taking place in other countries, including the post-Soviet space (Lanko, 2013, p. 44). However, Riina Kaljurand, a researcher from the Centre for Defence and Security, estimates that Estonia has a tendency to politicize everything that is connected to Russia, adding that the connection of Russian-speakers in Estonia to Russia is more cultural (Eesti Rahvusringhääling, 2015).

The Estonian National Security Concept (2010) has stated that the integration of minorities is supported by regional development, the availability of education, the endorsement of official language studies and the consistent implementation of the integration process (Riigikogu, 2010). All that is written in policy document is vital, but if it remains only words on paper, the implementations could be complicated or difficult. It is the status Putin referred to when he refused to put up with the fact that Russian population did not fully enjoy the rights granted to everyone residing on the European continent (Lanko, 2013, p. 43). It is always possible that a minority of Estonia's Russian population, particularly those with Russian citizenship and residing close to the border with Russia, can always be exploited by Moscow in times of political tensions (Grigas, 2014a, p. 9). In the case

of the protection of the rights of compatriots in Estonia, certain pressure is exerted by the general context of Kremlin policy towards Europe, because today, the Russian leaders consider Estonia and the other Baltic States as European states rather than countries of the post-Soviet space (Lanko, 2013, p. 43).

In reality, the integration of Russians in Estonia is not very well managed, if we look, for example, at one of the statistics, where Russian-speaking non-Estonians live and make up the majority of the population in two geographic locations. Tallinn has a Russian population that numbers more than 150,000 and constitutes about 37 percent of the capital's population. The second location that has even more implications for the Russian-Estonian relations is Ida-Viru County, located in the east near the border with Russia. Russians account for nearly 73 percent of the population (Grigas, 2014a, p. 7). It means that Russian-speaking non-Estonians make up the majority of the population in Ida-Viru County (Statistikaamet, 2015, p. 29) and what is important, the unemployment rate (18%), according to statistics, is almost twice higher there than average (Rosenblad, 2011, p.117). Next figure below shows the percentage of ethnic Russians in Estonia.

Figure 2. Percentage of ethnic Russians in Estonia (NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, 2015, p. 37)



The high level of unemployment can be a trigger to protect Russian minorities and their rights in Estonia and to interfere in the internal affairs of Estonia. A serious problem could also be the bigger concentration of Russian minorities in the Estonian border areas, where Russia could easily influence minorities more than in capital of Tallinn. For example, the city of Narva, which is Estonia's third largest city, has 82 percent of people speaking Russian (Grigas, 2014a, p. 8). However, Estonian government officials and commentators generally hold the view that Estonia's Russian minority is not receptive to Kremlin's protectionism, because Narva's population prefers to live in Estonia due to its higher standards of living, especially when compared to neighbouring Russian cities, such as Ivangorod. (Grigas, 2014a, p. 8) Despite this, Estonian government should observe that unemployment in eastern Estonia will not increase where lives majority of population of Russian speakers, because it causes resentment among minorities, which is a trigger for the RF to activate measures to protect its citizens.

The situation of Russian minorities in Latvia

Like in Estonia, Latvia also covers its minorities issue in the National Security Concept (2011). It stated that government must provide support for minority culture associations and non-governmental organizations, offering opportunity for minorities to develop their cultural traditions and ethnical identity (Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, 2011). In that context, it is important to mention that Russia tried to use Russian minorities in Latvia to pressure the governments to move closer to Russia's point of view (Ciziunas, 2008, pp. 300, 302).

Latvia's situation concerning Russian minorities is similar to Estonia but Russian population is even more numerous and is also concentrated in two primary locations. Approximately 34 percent of the population can be classified as Russian compatriots and it is concentrated in the capital of Riga and the eastern region of Latgale, whose major cities are Rezekne and Daugavpils (NATO Strategic Communications

Centre of Excellence, 2015, p. 36). In Riga, ethnic Russians account for 40 percent of the population, while Russian speakers total nearly 50 percent (Grigas, 2014a, p. 9). In addition to Riga, the region of Latgale has also a high concentration of Russians and Russian speakers and it has borders with Russia, Belarus, and Lithuania. Russians number there more than 100,000 and make up nearly 39 percent of the total region's population. The region's largest city, Daugavpils, has nearly 35 percent of Russians (Grigas, 2014a, p. 10). The percentage of Russians is shown in Figure 1. The success of Russian minorities in local politics, the low number of Russian citizenship holders and the seeming integration into Latvian society suggest that Russian minorities would not be highly receptive to Russia's protectionism and compatriot policies. Nonetheless, the large and concentrated numbers of Russian speakers in Latvia's eastern regions that border Russia do suggest that Riga may have reasons for concern regarding Moscow's compatriot policies (Grigas, 2014a, p. 11).

The language problems in Latvia are caused by the restrictive language laws, and are ultimately causing major integration issues (Best, 2013). Latvia's biggest problem is a view of Russian speaking people as others making them feel alienated and unwanted. Another problem is that Latvia might give citizenship to Russian-speaking people, but they can never be called Latvians because Latvia strictly differentiates between citizenship and nationality. (Grigas, 2014b) Latvia still has major problems accepting the ethnic Russian minority into its population and as long as it remains so difficult to become a citizen in this country, the minority group will fail to gain acceptance into the larger society (Best, 2013). Latvia faces the same problem as Estonia: a lot of Russian speaking people living in

border areas, strict requirements to obtain citizenship and etc., which are triggers for the RF to launch activities to protect its citizens. Dealing with Russians minorities is crucial to prevent the undermining of the security by the RF.

The situation of Russian minorities in Lithuania

Lithuania is the most successful among the Baltic States in terms of integrating an ethnic Russian minority (Zakem, et al., 2015, p. 10). The Lithuania National Security Strategy establishes: the vital and primary national security interests; key risks, dangers and threats linked with these interests; priorities, as well as long- and medium-term objectives of the national security system development; foreign, defence and domestic policies (Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, 2012). What is important, the Lithuanian National Security Strategy does not cover minority issues.

An important consideration regarding Russian social and political influence in Lithuania is the Polish minority. There are approximately 177,000 Russians in Lithuania but approximately 200,000 Poles, both residing in concentrations in Vilnius, Vilnius county, Klaipeda, and Visaginas (NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, 2015, p. 40). Russia could influence Polish minorities to use them against the governments of Lithuania, which may cause trouble with Poland. Lithuania has considerably lower percentages of ethnic Russians and Russian speakers than Latvia and Estonia. Still there are three regions with sizable populations. Like Tallinn and Riga, Lithuania's capital also has a higher proportion of Russian speakers than the rest of the country. The population of Vilnius is 12 percent Russian, while nearly 27 percent are Russian speakers. The city of Klaipeda, which is located close

to the Russian territory of Kaliningrad, also has a higher concentration of Russian minorities than the Lithuanian average. Here Russians make up nearly 20 percent of the population, while Russian speakers total 28 percent. Lithuania's third concentration of Russian speakers is found in the eastern small city of Visaginas, where the total population is approximately 20,000. It is the only Lithuanian city which has a Russian population of over 50 percent, while Russian speakers number 77 percent of the population. Lithuania does not have any problems with Russian minority, as its number is very small (Grigas, 2014a, pp. 11-12).

Lithuania has clearly emerged as the forerunner in dealing with its ethnic Russian population, and because of this, it has fewer problems in that area today (Best, 2013). In Lithuania, there are two main levers used by Russia to influence its security and foreign policies: economic leverage and energy controls, and discrediting governments via political influence and penetration of intelligence services (Ciziunas, 2008, p. 296). Today it is unlikely that Lithuania's Russian minority poses a significant reason for concern for the Lithuanian state (Grigas, 2014a, p. 14). Lithuania has the fewest problems of Russian minorities in the Baltic countries, but it struggles more with Polish minorities, which Moscow could use to create conflict between Poland and Lithuania.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to analyse Russia's policy documents covering specific area, which was Russia's protection of its citizen abroad, which could threaten the security of Baltic States. This paper argued that regardless of what the Russia's official documents reflect, its *realpolitik* activities to protect Russian citizens abroad has become a reality. However, the research

proved that it does not have a real impact and serious threat to the security of Baltic States, but it could be a useful trigger for the RF as an excuse to launch military activities. To achieve the aim of the paper and to defend the statement, two research questions were asked, which were trying to find answers during the analyses.

The analysis showed that the RF in its policy documents and other research materials considers it very important to protect its citizens abroad and not only them, but also compatriots, Russian speakers and others who like Russia. Citizen protection abroad occurred in 2008 when Georgia-Russia war started and in 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea and started military activities in eastern Ukraine. Also, it was recognised that to use military means to protect its citizens is written in Russian policy documents. Vladimir Putins' statement which was previously mentioned was a clear message to the West and other countries bordering with Russia such as Baltic States, especially Latvia and Estonia, where a considerable size of Russia's minorities (approximately 25%) lives, should be taken into serious consideration, even if the Baltic States belong to NATO and the European Union.

Estonia and Latvia have similar issues with Russian minorities like Lithuania where approximately 6% of Russian speakers live and integration is well established. The biggest problem and even a threat to security of countries, especially in Estonia and Latvia, is the concentration of Russian speakers who live in border areas in Estonia and Latvia are mostly Russian speaking and stateless persons. It results automatically in higher unemployment in such areas. This is a good position to Russia to start influence them to be against government of State. The biggest problem in Estonia and in Latvia is the integration of Russian

minorities into society, which could be a trigger to Moscow to start protecting its citizens. Baltic States see it unlikely that a Russian minority poses a significant reason for concern. However, Baltic States government should carry out a survey to find out how big the actual number of Russian minorities who really pose a threat is or how many could be influenced by Russia. The existence of such a survey will provide a better understanding of the potential hazard to the countries.

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