The Russian minority in Lithuania: to what extent can the minority be affected by soft power and accelerate the Russian – Lithuanian conflict?

Final dissertation

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Executive summary

This research analyses the situation of the Russian minority in Lithuania. Lithuania is a post-soviet country and a neighbour of the Russian Federation that has been feeling threats due to Russia´s actions in Ukraine and its overall policies for its near abroad and compatriots. As a country with a Russian minority, Lithuania could theoretically also be exposed to the threat coming from Russia and expect military actions. In order to analyse if there are any chances for this to happen, a research question has been formed: *The Russian minority in Lithuania: to what extent cant the minority be affected by soft power and accelerate the Russian – Lithuanian conflict?* As a result, this research paper will take a look into a few different segments. It starts with the Lithuanian history of the 20th century, marked with the USSR´s actions in Soviet Lithuania and Russianization policies. In this way the presence of the minority in Lithuania is explained. Then, the current status and the situation of the Russian minority in Lithuania and Lithuania and Russia´s approaches towards the minority are discussed. In order to understand the situation, the concept of soft power is analysed through the cases of Crimea and Visaginas, which is a Russophone city of Lithuania. Finally, the report takes a look into the future and possible outcomes of the current situation.

The Russian minority in Lithuania is an example of well-developed Russia´s foreign policies. Instead of focusing on physical force, Russia is trying to gain more influence in a soft way. This research reveals how media, press, Russia´s compatriot policies and various funds intend to influence the Lithuania´s second biggest minority. The common past is a perfect background for soft power to be applied. On the other hand there is Lithuania, which is tackling the issue by trying to integrate the minority as much as possible and by being openly against Russia. It is shown by Lithuania´s language policies, growing pressure to attend Lithuanian-spoken schools, limiting of the Russian media, statements and actions of Lithuania as a state. However, it should not be forgotten that the Russian minority by some is described as neither Russian, nor Lithuanian. The minority members are lost in between two different backgrounds.

All in all, the research reveals that Lithuania´s fears over the Russian attacks are not completely reasonable. Country has, to some extent, imagined itself as the next Ukraine; however, it´s current political status guarantees it safety. What is more, the research shows that the Russian minority is favourable to Russia because of the emotional ties with the country but it also remains strongly pro-Lithuanian.

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1. Context

Since 1991, after the end of the Cold Ward and dissolution of the Soviet Union, the 14 post-communist countries returned to the world politics. The 15th country, Russia, an official successor of the USSR, lost many strategically important territories in the Eastern and Central Europe, Transcaucasia, as well as its status of a superpower. The not entirely peaceful breakup of all the 15 states brought many changes to the region. However, these countries have remained tied to each other even after 25 years of independence because of the common past. One of the things that the countries have in common is the ethnic Russian population that once had (been) moved to the region as a part of strong Sovietisation and Russification policies.

In 2014, after the Ukrainian revolution and Russia´s annexation of Crimea, the world´s attention shifted to the post-Soviet countries again. The three Baltic States are surrounded by Russia from all sides: Kaliningrad, Russia's enclave in Europe that is situated along the Baltic coast and shares borders with Lithuania and Poland; and the rest of the Russian Federation, that is a neighbour to Estonia and Latvia on their Eastern borders. After reinstating their independence from the Soviet Union at the end of the 20th century, the Baltics felt the threat again. Despite the fact that the countries are integrated into Europe and are perfect examples of democracy, the actions of Russia in Ukraine made them feel insecure and scared of Russia´s aggression.

One of the main reasons why the region is under pressure is the presence of the Russian minority. A great part of the total population of the region is of Russian origin. Latvia has the biggest minority as 27% of the total population considers themselves Russians (Grigas, 2014). The number of the Russian language users is even higher – 34% of Latvian citizens are native speakers (Grigas, 2014). Estonia is in a similar situation as 24% of people in Estonia belong to the Russian minority and 30% of Estonians are Russophone (Grigas, 2014). Lithuania is an exception as it has a relatively small Russian minority. According to the latest data, only around six percent of Lithuania's citizens are ethnic Russians and only eight percent of the population is Russophone (Grigas, 2014). Overall, the number of Russians in the region has been naturally perceived as a possible security threat and one of the main justifications for Russia to intervene.

Despite the fact that Lithuania has the smallest Russian minority in the Baltics, it is demonstrating a lot of concern. Lithuania has started seeing itself as the next Ukraine. The

pressure the country is experiencing can be reflected in increased military spending, reintroduced military conscription, NATO's growing presence in the region, decision to stop importing energy from Russia and decreasing economic cooperation between the countries.

As a consequence, the Russian minority in Lithuania has been receiving more and more attention lately. Meanwhile, in Russia, the growing government and news outlets' concern about the well-being of Russian minorities in the near abroad is expressed. Every action of Russia is not only followed, it is also overthought and weighted by Lithuania. The fact that Lithuania has a small Russian minority is now considered as a threat.

1.2. *Motivation for the Research*

Correspondingly, the current situation prompted the idea for this research. Being a Lithuanian, I have always been familiar with the imbalanced Lithuanian-Russian relations. The events in Ukraine that sparked many discussions and fears in Lithuania were one of the main reasons for choosing this topic. When evaluating the perspective of Lithuania, I have noticed quite some subjectivity. Naturally, the Russian perspective is similar. As a result, I wanted to find out if Lithuania should be as concerned as it is now or if the current situation is actually exaggerated.

1.3. *Research question*

As a consequence, the research question was formed:

The Russian minority in Lithuania: to what extent can the minority be affected by soft power and accelerate the Russian – Lithuanian conflict.

Subsequently, the research will analyse the use of soft power that comes from both sides towards this minority. In order to do that, the research will focus on the following aspects: the history; the concept of soft power; the current situation of the minority; their situation after the crisis in Ukraine; the position of the Russian Federation; and the future.

1.4. *Sub questions*

The following sub questions have been formed in order to answer the research question:

History:

1. *How was the process of Russification applied in Lithuania?*
2. *What was the position of the Russian minority in Lithuania?*

3. *What was the position of Lithuania towards the minority?*

4. *What was the situation in Lithuania like in the last years of USSR's existence?*

Soft power*:*

1. *What kind of soft power, if any, was applied in Ukraine?*

2. *What kind of soft power, if any, is applied in Lithuania?*

Current situation:

1. *How integrated is the minority?*

2. *What are the policies of Lithuania in terms of this minority?*

3. *What are the policies of the Russian Federation in terms of this minority?*

Crimea´s influence:

1. *What kind of relations did Lithuania and Russia have before the conflict in Crimea?*

2. *What kind of relations do Lithuania and Russia have now?*

3. *Is Lithuania treating the minority differently after the conflict in Crimea?*

4. *Are there any differences in the behaviour of the minority after the conflict in Crimea?*

Future:

1. *Can this lead to a possible conflict?*

1.5.   Definitions

Lithuanian–Russian relations: political and economic relations between Lithuania and its neighbour Russia. The relations could be considered controversial because Lithuania is still economically dependent on Russia. Furthermore, Lithuania fears of a possible Russian invasion. Politically, Lithuania is considered pro-EU and pro-Ukraine and as a result the relations between the two countries are not solely peaceful.

Minority: "A population group with ethnic, religious and linguistic characteristics which differs from the rest of the population, is non-dominant, is numerically smaller than the rest of the population and has the wish to hold on to its separate identity" (Henrard – Brun, 2003, p.39).

Soft power: a term that was introduced by Joseph Nye in order to describe the ability of (usually) a state to have an indirect influence on other actors through the means of ideology

or culture (Nye, 2004). The actors that can be influenced can be other political bodies or countries (Nye, 2004). In the context of this research, it is implied that the Russian Federation is indirectly influencing the Russian minority in Lithuania.

Russianization: one of the outcomes of the process of Russification which resulted in the nationals of the Soviet states being very familiar with the Russian culture, lifestyle and had a very good knowledge of the Russian language (Klumbys, n.d.).

Russian minority in Lithuania: the six percent of the total Lithuanian population that consider themselves Russian nationals […] and most likely use Russian as their first language ("Ethnicities in Lithuania: introduction", n.d.).

Russification: the process that was initiated by Tsarist Russia in the 18th century in order to promote and strengthen the use of Russian language, cultural traditions, values and Russian nationality within the Russian empire. The policy had been reintroduced again in the times of the USSR and included the growing use of the Russian language at educational and governmental institutions; indoctrination; displacement of Russian families to the territories of the soviet states; promotion of Russian values and nationality ("Russification", n.d.). In this research russification refers to the processes applied by the USSR in order to change the Lithuanian society and make it as Russian as possible.

Russophones of Lithuania: nationals that are living in Lithuania and state that Russian is their first language. They usually consist of Russian, Belarussian and Ukrainian minorities of Lithuania. ("Ethnicities in Lithuania: introduction", n.d.).

Visaginas: Lithuanian city, located in the north-east of the country. Visaginas is well known for its Russian minority which constitutes half of the city´s population. Visaginas is often referred to as ´the Crimea of Lithuania´.

2. Literature Review

The literature used for this research is relatively broad and diverse due to the fact that the research focuses on a relatively long period of time. As a result, not all the sources consulted are recent. What is more, the dominant languages for the research were Lithuanian and English, with a little use of the Russian language. Moreover, not only the political and historical aspects have been researched. A focus on the sociological factors that can have an influence on the minority is present too. Consequently, the literature used has been divided into four basic parts: the political, the historical, the sociological and the soft power.

2.1. Political aspect

In terms of the policies and laws, bilateral and international treaties were consulted in order to see Lithuania and Russia´s stances on the minority. "Protection of Minority Rights through Bilateral Treaties" by Arie Bloed and Pieter van Dijk with a specific case of the Central and Eastern Europe overviews the policies of the neighbours was consulted. The Russian Federation is portrayed as an active figure when it comes to the protection of its minorities abroad, especially in the near abroad (Bloed, van Dijk, 1999). To add more, the issue of the Kin-State support to minorities in their home-states is discussed in this source. (Bloed, van Dijk, 1999). It is shown that Russia strongly supports the minorities.

Meanwhile Vitkus (2006, p. 171) states, if Russian-Lithuanian relationships were analysed in the broader perspective, the result would be very sad. In other words, Lithuania and Russia have always had imbalanced relations.

On the other hand, a common conception that Russia always tends to be the aggressor is denied by Ehin and Berg (2009). The scholars imply that both sides are accusing each other of trying to rewrite the history (2009, p.9). What is more, the fact that the countries share a common past and history which each of them interpret in their own way in the end is "manifested in a range of policy areas" (Ehin, Berg, 2009, p.9).

2.2. Historical aspect

Lithuania and Russia are known to have an unstable political relationship. It is very well described by the historian Teodoras Narbutas who formed the idea of "the balance theory". The theory implies that in times when Russia is weaker, for example at the end of the 20th century, Lithuania is using it as a chance to strengthen itself (Vitkus, 2006, p. 171-172). The author notes that during independence years Lithuania has already tried a few different

foreign affairs´ approaches towards Russia. According to Vitkus (2006, p. 175), Lithuania has already had a categorical approach, a moderate one and a "correct" one. For example, the moderate approach meant that it was easier to cooperate with Russia, sign treaties and discuss the issues in a relatively easy way (Vitkus, 2006, p. 176). However it also resulted in a higher pressure (Vitkus, 2006, p. 176). Thus, it can be seen that the relations used to be quite imbalanced.

In order to evaluate the historical background, Timofey Agarin´s "A cat´s lick. Democratization and minority communities in the post-Soviet Baltic" has been chosen. The Russian author spent some time living in the sovietised Baltic States. As a consequence, his first-hand experience and approach are interesting points to consider. Agarin states: "today, it is not easy to be a "Russian" in the Baltic States" (Agarin, 2010). This book focuses on the problems (linguistics, social acceptance, juridical loops) that contribute to the current state of the minority. Lithuania is contrasted with Estonia and Latvia. The other two Baltic States did not offer the citizenship and the Russians in the region now own Russian passports. Thus, Lithuania is praised for its all-inclusive decision to grant the citizenship to the Russian minority during the Soviet breakup.

The Law on the National Minorities of the 1989 is an example of cooperation between Lithuania and its minorities (Agarin, 2010). However, the all-inclusive approach, that has been a great instance, does not mean that the Russian minority in Lithuania is completely included into the society. The author notes a huge social gap between Lithuanians and native Russians (Agarin, 2010). The Russians are still approached as supporters of communism and traitors of the state (Agarin, 2010). However, Agarin (2010) notes that the data on the minority´s movements against Lithuania's independence is very scarce (p. 75).

2.3.   Sociological aspect

"Minority languages in Europe. Frameworks, status, prospects" researches the Baltic case and puts it in a broader perspective. A special focus is put on the language policies as "since 1989 the region has been rife with nationalist tension, often, but not exclusively linked to language issues" (Hogan-Brun, Wolf, 2003, p.10). As it is argued in the book, the language can cause misunderstandings within the states due to the personal belonging feelings it can create (Hogan-Brun, Wolf, 2003). In other words, one naturally will support the state which language he or she uses. In the case of Lithuania, it could still be implied that the Russian minority is quite easily influenced by Russia and its soft power because of the feeling of belonging to the Russian Federation. Consequently, the minority is portrayed as a potential

reason for the conflict. However, Lithuania itself is considered as a very positive example for including its minorities and granting them the Lithuanian citizenship.

Despite an overall successful integration that is mentioned in the sources consulted, some scholars tend to criticize Lithuanian national policies as they were very demanding and required a speedy integration (Hogan-Brun, Ramoniene, 2002, p.35). However, "political scientists, sociologists and cultural anthropologists have pointed out that the attitude of the Russians towards this process has on the whole been favourable" (Hogan-Brun, Ramoniene, 2002, p. 36).

Generally, not many authors consider Russians to be an actual threat to Lithuania as a state. One of the main arguments is that the minority itself is not big and, more importantly, not well-organized. They "tend to display less in-group cohesiveness" (Hogan-Brun, Ramoniene, 2002, p.39). Thus, their collective awareness is not present. What is more, sociologists also blame it on the general Soviet intentions to create the common Homo Sovieticus race and dis-identify the people with their former "ethnic categories" (Hogan-Brun, Ramoniene, 2002, p.39). It means that the minority might feel neither Russian, nor Lithuanian. However, it is admitted that there is a conflict of identities, which might result in the minority´s support towards the Russian Federation. Ehin and Berg (2009, p.1) use the constructivist approach which claims that the "national identity constructions of states" might be a strong causal power.

One of the most problematic issues that comes across the researches of other scholars is the way the minority is portrayed in the media. Social images have the power of creating the concepts "us" and "them" (Rakauskienė, 2009, p.46). In case of Lithuania, Rakauskienė notices that "scandalous headlines", stereotypical images and the link between the minority representatives and criminal activity are commonly used in order to form the reader´s opinion (2009, p.47). Russians tend to be related to historic crimes, communism, citizenship, loyalty (Rakauskienė, 2009, p.104). Russians also usually are directly associated with the Soviet Union and communism. Thus, there is a solid background for growing Russophobia in the country.

As G. Pelnens claims ("Humanitariniai Rusijos užsienio politikos aspektai Gruzijoje, Moldovoje, Ukrainoje ir Baltijos šalyse", 2009), language is essential while the cultural identity is forming:

> when a person is fluent in a specific language, one starts having a natural interest
> in the language of the country and feel the sympathy for the country; this might

sometimes result in a positive evaluation of the politics (position) of a specific country.

2.4.   Soft power

Nye introduced the term of soft power in the end of the 20th century and it could be claimed that together with the advancing technologies soft power´s importance is increasing. As Nye states:

> a country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries admire its values, emulate its example; aspire to its level of prosperity and openness. This soft power—getting others to want the outcomes that you want—co-opts people rather than coerces them"(Nye, 2004).

The author also highlights that soft power is powerful due to the fact that it manages to "attract" instead of only persuading (Nye, 2004). This means that there is no force involved. Instead, there is a focus on shared values "and the justness and duty of contributing to the achievement of those values" (Nye, 2004).

Another important aspect is that soft power is getting a different form in the 21st century. As Nye (2004) notes, now it is easier to cross national boundaries and appeal to wider audiences, thus, soft power can reach a broader audience than before. It means that soft power is taking a different shape which possibly makes it even stronger.

2.4.1   Russian soft power

Russian news and information are often called propagandist and distorting the reality. However, as diplomat Jon Kyst notes, Russian propaganda is a broad term and it should not be used to describe all of the Russian media (Kyst, 2016). Instead, there are examples of disinformation that come from the Russian media (Kyst, 2016).

The question whether Russia is using soft power in the Baltics and Lithuania has been raised and analysed by some scholars, however, there is no in depth study. It is widely admitted that Russia is keen on using soft power and considers it as an efficient tool, sometimes even more efficient than its military power. According to Malukevičius (Winnerstig, 2014, p. 114), Russia´s political developments directly affect Lithuania. A country like Lithuania is also a very easy target for soft power to be applied. As Tafuro (n.d.) argues, "the presence of large

Russian minorities; a shared history; cultural and linguistic proximity; a larger economy and energy resources" are very favourable conditions for soft power to flourish.

It is often highlighted that compatriots or Russian diaspora are one of the main priorities of Russian foreign policies. As Kivirahk and other scholars admit in their research, the Russian soft power is strongly based on the Russian language, it is considered to be a "major element of Russia´s soft power" (Kivirahk, et al., 2009, p.308). The soft power of Russia is also framed as the "geopolitics of memory" (Kivirahk, et al., 2009, p.197). Samoškaitė (2013) describes Russia as an enthusiast of soft power with a nostalgic focus to its past. In other words, Russia is attempting to rewrite the history and is especially focusing on the WWII. Thus, the compatriots and the Russian language are used as Russia´s main soft power.

Tafuro (2014) describes Russia´s relation with its minorities: "The alleged defence of their interests has often served as an excuse for the Kremlin to meddle in other states' internal affairs in much harder ways". The situation in Crimea is one of the best examples of Russia´s soft power claims. Tafuro (2014) claims that there is an "impression that Russia's soft power is largely Soviet-style propaganda in support of Moscow's foreign policy goals". Moreover, Tafuro (2014) points out that soft power applied by Kremlin is not "attractive" and efficient amongst non-Russians. "Russia's soft power policies are likely to deepen political cleavages within neighbouring societies, mobilising people who are already pro-Russian but generating the opposite effect on those who are not" (Tafuro, 2014).

Panova (2015, p.91) describes the main segments of the Russian power: Russian language coming as first and the most important one. Russia is believed to be investing into the language programs actively. For example, the Federal Target Program for Russian Language during 2011-2015 amounted for around 2.5 billion rubbles (Panova, 2015, p. 92). Another important segment is the establishment of Russian cultural centres, foundations (Panova, 2015, p. 92). The author also highlights the importance of the media. Education is described as "a very important and effective ´soft power´ tool" (Panova, 2015, p. 93). These are the most important aspects of the Russian power excluded by the scholar.

3. Methodology

The academic basis of this research is versatile due to the fact that the research question itself has both, social and political characters, which are connected with the theories on soft power and the historical context. As a consequence, the research itself has been divided into five main parts: the history, the theory on soft power, the current situation, the influence of Crimea and the future.

The research method that has been chosen for this dissertation is qualitative. The qualitative research was chosen due to the nature of the topic.

> It provides information about the "human" side of an issue – that is, the often contradictory behaviors, beliefs, opinions, emotions, and relationships of individuals. Qualitative methods are also effective in identifying intangible factors, such as social norms, socioeconomic status, gender roles, ethnicity, and religion [...] ("Qualitative research methods: a data collector's field guide", p. 1).

Together with the books and journals consulted, both on and offline, conferences attended, many recent (news) articles on the media have been analysed due to the topic´s current nature. It is needed to analyse how media approaches the topic since it forms majority´s opinion. It is important to highlight that qualitative research that had involved desk research also can result in vague and quite broad results. In other words, the fact that there is a lot of information on this topic means that there is a great risk of not being selective enough with the sources and providing a lot of general information instead of specific and focused analysis. Nevertheless, the research intended to remain neutral.

Crimea was chosen as a case study in order to see if anything similar would have any chances to occur in Lithuania. The use of soft power in Crimea was discussed and compared to the case of Lithuania. Lithuanian city Visaginas which has a big Russian population was chosen due to its similarities to Crimea.

The research also has limitations. To start with, the analysis focuses on two countries: Lithuania and Russia. However, while looking for sources and selecting them, mainly Lithuanian and English languages were used because my knowledge of the Russian language is still limited. As a consequence, the analysis of Lithuanian media may have been better researched. Thus, while analysing and comparing the media, the subjectivity might have occurred. What is more, in some cases there was little if any information provided in English due to topic´s close relation to either Lithuania or Russia. As a result, the research might

show some one-sidedness. On the other hand, it was intended to provide a balanced and objective review of both countries.

What is more, the interviews were chosen not to be added to the research due to the possibility of even bigger subjectivity. The lack of Russian-speaking representatives, providing only Lithuanian point of view might have resulted in one-sidedness. Many of the Russian cultural and political organizations were contacted; however, there was no response. On the other hand some organizations or political subjects refused to participate due to the nature of the topic.

Another limitation is the absence of the quantitative research. In a case like this, it would have been beneficial to examine the Russian minority with the help of surveys and questionnaires in order to have the up to date opinion. What is more, it is also believed to be more objective than the qualitative one ("Differences between qualitative & quantitative research", 2016). However, it was chosen not to carry out a survey due to the difficulties of reaching out to a significant number of Lithuania's Russians.

4. Results: History

In order to understand the current situation of the Russian minority in Lithuania and its reasons for settling there it is needed to go back to the 20th century. Despite the fact that Russification processes started together with the tsarist Russia's oppressions, only after 1945, when Lithuania, again had lost its independence to Russia, the Russification processes became more intense and effective. As a consequence, this chapter will focus on the situation of Lithuania and the growth of its Russian minority between 1945 and 1991.

4.1. *Russification process in Lithuania*

The Russification process was fast and effective due to many various methods that were used. To start with, the land, agricultural and economic reforms were initiated. For instance, the formation of collective farms and forced moving to them destroyed the connection the nationals had with their homeland (Zuburas, n.d.). Same applied to industrialization which encouraged the nationals to settle in different parts of the USSR (Zuburas, n.d.). The Russification process, to some extent, could be compared to Schengen: all the USSR was open to its citizens and one could travel, settle, and work anywhere freely. Common currency language, open borders, easy ways of traveling made the process of Russification natural. On the other hand, as the Lithuanian magazine of that time, "Aidas", published, all these freedoms also were subtle and hidden coercions (Zuburas, n.d.).

Another important aspect of the Russification process was Russianization. It was closely related to the indoctrination process and as a result, it is hard to draw the line between these two. Teaching of Russian language was one of the main focuses. For example, "until the second grade, Russian was taught only orally, but in the second grade, regular classes of the Russian language were required of every pupil" (Puzinas, 1973). The USSR was focusing on the bilingual or only Russian speaking society. As a consequence, a lot of time was devoted to teaching Russian history, literature, traditions. Russians were referred to as "elder brothers" (Puzinas, 1973). Consequently, the number of Russian schools was high. For example, in 1967 there were 113 elementary and secondary schools with the language of instruction being Russian in addition to 64 bilingual schools (Puzinas, 1973).

One of the most well-known examples of the USSR trying to change the society is the massive deportations that started in June, 1940. During the WWII and until the death of Stalin, the exiles contributed to the destruction of Lithuanian society. It was intended to distance Lithuanians from their national identities. For instance, laws on the mixed families were

adapted which let the offspring choose their nationality. Opting for a Lithuanian nationality meant opting for a permanent exile (Salna, 2011). During the Thaw Lithuanians were allowed to return, however they were denied many jobs and were forbidden to leave USSR´s territory (Salna, 2011). Moreover, they were still treated like political criminals (Salna, 2011). The process of exile had long lasting consequences as it helped to destroy the most cultural and educated part of Lithuania's society. Consequently, exiled Lithuanians were replaced with the Russian speakers.

Together with the losses of exiles, the war had taken many lives. Lithuania lost 32% of its pre-war population. Generally, it is estimated that in total, only during 1944-1947 500.000 people ran away from Lithuania; during 1940-1958 Lithuania lost 1.5 million citizens (Augustynaitė, Bačiulis, 2007). Agarin (2010) claims that "these population losses had to be compensated for by immigration of Soviet citizens [...], in order to rebuild industrial facilities and provide the production necessary for the devastated SU" (p.40). For example, the pre-soviet statistics of Russians in Lithuania state that there were only around 2.49% Russians living there (Agarin, 2010, p.8). Meanwhile, in 1959 the population amounted for 8.5% and for 9.4% in 1989 (Agarin, 2010, p.8). Many Russians were sent to Lithuania, or chose to go there because of better working conditions, higher living standards (Agarin, p.8). Naturally, there was an "overrepresentation of members of the non-titular nationalities in both the top and the bottom strata" which was a norm regulated by the Russification policies (Agarin, 2010, p. 54).

4.2. The position of the Russian minority

To begin with, the members of the minority could be divided into two groups according to the reasons for moving: some of them were forced or encouraged by the USSR to move while some chose that voluntarily. As Agarin (2010) states, "during the first post-war years many migrants moved into the Baltic republics in search of labour opportunities on their own initiative" (p.40). However, many forced migrants stayed in Lithuania only until the expiration of their work contracts. All in all, more than one million Soviet migrants were employed in Lithuania (Agarin, 2010, p. 42). However, only around 311.000 migrants decided to stay after the expiration of their working contracts (Agarin, 2010, p.42).

It is needed to discuss the integrational aspect as well. Just as the decision to work in Lithuania, it was a two-sided aspect. According to Agarin (2010), the newcomers settled in the places where the contact with the locals in the local language was very little (p.45). The wide use of Russian language did not encourage the newcomers to learn Lithuanian. What is

more, there was an overrepresentation of members of the non-titular nationalities in both the top and the bottom strata (Agarin, 2010, p.54).

It is important to take a look at the last years of the USSR's existence. Lithuania was the first country to announce its independence and try to leave the USSR. This was met with dissatisfaction by the USSR and by the Russian minority here. To start with, in 1988 the newly formed political movement, Sąjūdis, (The Movement) that encouraged the transformation to independence in a peaceful manner, had only four percent of non-Lithuanian members (Agarin, 2010, p. 68). What is more, organizations to counterpart Sąjūdis were created. The best instances could be the formation of Yedinstvo, Russian Cultural Centre, Russian Society, and Russian Community. Yedinstvo (Unity) was established in 1988 and its purpose was to maintain "the interests and political rights of all citizens regardless of their nationality and religious faith" (Agarin, 2010, p. 74-75). Around 20% of Lithuania's population belonged to Yedinstvo but it was only constituted out of non-Lithuanians (Agarin, 2010, p. 75). What is more, the already mentioned cultural organizations also tried to "resolve the interethnic problems which have accumulated" (Agarin, 2010, p. 74). However, generally, Agarin (2010) notes that the data on the movements against Lithuania's independence are very scarce (p.75). One of known events is the official demand of Lithuania's regions of Vilnius and Šalčininkai, which had big Russian and Polish populations, to have independence from Lithuania and form a part of the USSR. This resulted in the declaration of the regions' autonomies however there were no clear consequences and they remained in Lithuania.

On the other hand, it is needed to mention that even though there was some resistance against the independence there also was support from the Russian minority towards Lithuania's independence. According to Agarin (2010), a significant amount of Lithuania's Russians were pro-independence (p.70-71). However, the so called interfronts "opposed the goals of the popular movements by pursuing the logic of "state-keeping" (Agarin, 2010, p.70-71). Even though the opposition was mainly Russian, it is needed to note that they usually were not integrated into the Baltic societies, could not communicate in Lithuanian, most of them being Soviet militants, various officers, file party members that had understood that by leaving the USSR, they would lose many privileges (Agarin, 2010, p.70-71).

4.3. Lithuania´s position towards the minority

The 20th century in Lithuania is known as a time of resistance and cultural fighting against the Soviet Union. An example of the resistance against the Soviet rule could be the Partisan

movement of 1944-1952. As Vardys (1969) claims, sovietisation and exiles were some of the main reasons for such a resistance to create itself. The decision to fight the Red Army showed that nationalism was strong in Lithuania. Vardys (1969) describes the situation: "it demonstrated the existence of virulent nationalism and showed that nationalist convictions could be translated into a reasonable powerful force".

Another example of resistance to the Russification is the Singing Revolution. The Baltics at the time had only one way to use freedom of speech - singing. Every five years organized festivals became a place for singing national songs (Joseph, 2013). This had grown into a movement and under the Thaw it developed into the Singing revolution, where people were singing independence songs to resist to the rule of the USSR (Joseph, 2013). Even though this was met with aggression from the Soviet Union, the Singing Revolution strengthened the feelings of nationalism and independence in the countries and helped to break the USSR in the end of the 20th century. However, once again it should be mentioned that none sources were found claiming that these actions somehow might have been directed against the Russian minority itself.

4.4.   The last years of the USSR

Despite the fact that Lithuania became independent in 1991, already in 1989 crucial changes for Lithuanians the soviet minorities happened. Firstly, in 1989 Lithuania held a vote on whether the citizens would like to leave the USSR (Agarin, 2010, p. 77-78). More than 90% of total Lithuanian population voted in favour of leaving the Union, while 28% of all people who voted against it were not ethnic Lithuanians (Agarin, 2010, p. 77-78). Subsequently, Lithuania decided to grant citizenship to all the former Soviet nationals if they wanted that. This resulted in most of the Russian nationals officially becoming the citizens of Lithuania.

Lithuania's all-inclusive approach was also shown with the new laws. The law on the Ethnic Minorities adopted in November 1989, defined the minorities of Lithuania (Agarin, 2010, p.85). However, the content of the law caused dissatisfaction of the minority and even encouraged the organizations as Yedinstvo to act (Agarin, 2010, p.85). Important aspects like the preservation of national languages, schooling had been missed out in the law. However, due to the dissatisfaction and growing influence of Yedinstvo, the law was amended in 1991 (Agarin, 2010, p.85). The amended law "included provision for schooling in the native language of the minorities and the right to use languages other than Lithuanian in organisations and state-offices located in areas with substantial numbers on non-Lithuanians" (Agarin, 2010, p.85).

As a consequence, the concept of the minority as such in Lithuania comes into being only around 1988 – 1989, together with Lithuania´s state building (Petrušauskaitė, Saturovič, n.d., p.17). One of the main reasons for acknowledging minorities´ existence is to regulate and avoid the possible political conflict (Petrušauskaitė, Saturovič, n.d., p.17). Especially in the end of the Soviet era and in the beginning of reinstating the independence of Lithuania, the ethnic majority was usually associated with Lithuanians only (Petrušauskaitė, Saturovič, n.d., p.17).

5. Results: Soft power

The literature review has already discussed the main ideas behind soft power. Hence, this part of the chapter will focus on the situations in Ukraine and Lithuania that have features of soft power.

5.1. Soft power in Ukraine

To begin with, Bogomolov and Lytvynenko (2012, p.2), state that Ukraine is believed (by Russia) to have a Russian identity. It is important to note that these ideas were raised even before the start of the conflict which shows that Russia and Ukraine have always been closely connected. One of the examples is the fact that "Ukraine hosts the most valuable symbols constituting the core of Russia's national identity – the mythological birthplace of the Russian nation and the cradle of the Russian Orthodox Church along with its holiest places" (Bogomolov, Lytvynenko, 2012, p. 3). "Cultural and linguistic proximity" are also important reasons for Ukraine to be very similar to the neighbour Russia (Tafuro, 2014, p.2).

Russia's soft power in Ukraine is broader than in the Baltics. One of the main reasons for that is Ukraine's slower integration into the West. The country is described as "rather closed" (Lytvynenko, n.d., p.3). For example, as of 2010 Russian embassy in Ukraine organizes various cultural events, open Russian evenings which were described as "particularly influential" by Lytvynenko (n.d. p.3). There are "about 10 universities that are branches of prominent Russian universities" (Lytvynenko, n.d., p.3). Overall, there are various examples that show how intense Russia's presence in Ukraine is.

However, most of the soft power examples are visible in Crimea. "Due to its distinctive ethnic, historical, and social circumstances, Crimea is rightly considered Ukraine's Achilles' heel, a place where Russia has long had the ability to play the separatism card" (Kononzcuk, 2014). Crimea´s population consists of retired Soviet officials; residents (one third) that were born in the territory of the USSR and later moved to the peninsula; historically anti-Russian Tatars (Kononzcuk, 2014). Thus, in 1991, Ukraine´s independence was supported by only half of the population (Kononzcuk, 2014). Furthermore, 15% of Crimeans in 2014 considered themselves as Soviet nationals while 40% thought that Ukraine is their homeland (Kononzcuk, 2014). This is also reflected in the linguistics: Russian is the dominant language meanwhile Ukrainian is a native language for 18% (Kononzcuk, 2014).

Generally Russia is believed to have been "supporting or creating new pro-Russian organizations, political parties, media outlets, and the like" (Kononzcuk, 2014). To add more,

in order to expand Russia's influence, the agreement to extend Russian Black Sea Fleet stationing in Crimea until 2042 instead of 2017 was signed in 2010 (Kononzcuk, 2014). The fleet also contributes to the revenues of the region (Kononzcuk, 2014).

In terms of general education and media, Crimea is also an example of Russia´s influence. Two thirds of Crimea´s population uses the Russian TV channels as the main source of information (Kononzcuk, 2014). Moreover, there are 555 Russian language schools (Kononzcuk, 2014). For comparison, only six Ukrainian language schools were functioning in the peninsula in 2014 (Kononzcuk, 2014).

5.2.   *Soft power in Lithuania*

Kojala and Zukauskas (2015, p. 184) claim that Lithuania falls under the "near abroad" concept for which Russia tries to support and maintain influence in the cultural, political, economic sectors. Russian minorities are believed to be an essential part of this (Kojala, Zukauskas, 2015, p.185). The authors (2015, p.185) have defined five dimensions of Russian soft-power in Lithuania: "people-to-people, media environment, regional, strategic and business culture".

5.2.1.   *People to people*

It is named as one of the most important aspects of the soft power policy of Russia (Kojala, Zukauskas, 2015, p.185). The main strategies between people-to-people dimension are as follows: activities organized by various NGOs, fostering of Russian language, encouraging compatriot feelings (Kojala, Zukauskas, 2015, p.185). It is intended to maintain an idea of Lithuanians and Russians being brotherly nations (Kojala, Zukauskas, 2015, p.185). Language is the most important part of this level as Russian is still the most spoken foreign language in Lithuania. According to the recent data, 63% of Lithuanians can speak Russian (Kojala, Zukauskas, 2015, p.188).

5.2.2.   *Media*

"The Russian cultural platform consists of a wide array of internet portals, TV stations (PBK, RTR), media outlets (Litovskyi Kurier, Obzor, Komsomolskaya Pravda) as well as pro-Russian media "expert" initiative like "Format-A3" and "Regnum" (Kojala, Zukauskas, 2015, p.189). It is quite typical for the Russian media to discuss sensitive historical topics like WWII, the USSR, January 1991 events (Kojala, Zukauskas, 2015, p.190). To add more, a new tendency

that was noted by the authors (2015, p.190) is that Russia is trying to portray itself as a traditional country with Christian values and create such an image on the media.

5.2.3. Regionalization

The most important aspect of this dimension is the Russian minority, despite the fact that Lithuania´s Russian minority is the smallest and "fastest-shrinking" one (Kojala, Zukauskas, 2015, p.192). As a consequence, this part of soft power is not considered to be dangerous. The only issue described by the authors (Kojala, Zukauskas, 2015, p.192) is the close relations between Russian and Polish minorities on the political level. It was noted that only one political party in Lithuania is being pro-Russian, which is the ¨Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania"(furthermore, LLRA). It is the only party openly expressing its support towards Russia´s policies in Ukraine. In 2012 the party also, by joining forces with the Russian Alliance party, for the first time managed to form a fraction in Lithuanian Parliament (Kojala, Zukauskas, 2015, p.193).

5.2.4. Strategic dimension

The strategic dimension of soft power involves the attitudes of the state towards its course of development (Kojala, Zukauskas, 2015, p.194). In other words, it focuses on the countries stance in the international politics. As the authors (2015, p.194) note, Lithuania should not be too considered about this dimension of soft power because it is a part of the EU, Eurozone and NATO. On the other hand, authors claim that Lithuania´s shift to the West does not mean that the country has completely cut ties with Russia. For example, Lithuanian Peasants Party was known as a sister party to United Russia Party (Kojala, Zukauskas, 2015, p.195). To add more, Lithuanian president, Rolandas Paksas, who was impeached in 2004, was also accused of very close ties with Russia and received financial support from Russia (Kojala, Zukauskas, 2015, p.195-196). Another instance is Algirdas Paleckas, Lithuanian politician openly demonstrating its support towards Russia and denying the historical events like the Soviet Occupation or January 1991 events (Kojala, Zukauskas, 2015, p.196). However, all of these phenomena are described as marginal (Kojala, Zukauskas, 2015, p.196).

5.2.5. Business

Russia is one of the main Lithuania´s economic partners, despite financial support from the EU and Lithuania´s entrance to the Eurozone (Kojala, Zukauskas, 2015, p.197). Lithuania currently is in between two different business dimensions: partnerships with the EU and still

close ties with the Russian businesses (Kojala, Zukauskas, 2015, p. 197). "The post-Soviet example usually involves close links between Lithuanian and Russian business actors [...]" (Kojala, Zukauskas, 2015, p.197). One of the largest businesses like Vikonda, Agrokoncernas, and Arvi are closely related or even based in Russia (Kojala, Zukauskas, 2015, p.197). This means that business sector is interested in keeping good relationships with the big neighbour due to the size of Russian market and financial benefits.

5.2.6.   *Visaginas*

Just like Ukraine, Lithuania has a region which is densely populated with the Russophones. The city of Visaginas is often referred to as "Crimea of Lithuania". 50% of total population is of Russian origin while there are only 18% of Lithuanians (Stašaitytė, 2014). Half of the population, 11.000 citizens, also are Orthodox – contrary to most of the Lithuanians being Catholics (Pancerovas, 2014). The city originally was built solely for the construction of the atomic plant and is often called the Soviet city of Lithuania. However, generally, it is hard to notice any kind of scandalous headlines related to Visaginas.

In terms of politics, the already mentioned LLRA party is the most popular one and in the last presidential elections it was supported by around 50% of citizens from Visaginas (Stašaitytė, 2014). It is publicly admitted that there are pro-Russian radicals in Visaginas (Pancerovas, 2014). However, the author also reminds that pro-Russian citizens could be found in any other Lithuanian city (Pancerovas, 2014). The fact that Visaginas is not pro-Russian is also proved by its public relations. In 2015, Alexandrov Ensemble of Russian Military was not allowed to perform in Visaginas solely because of its support towards Russia´s ideology and actions in Crimea ("Visaginas rėžė – Rusijos kariuomenės ansamblis maršų negros", 2015). Representatives of Visaginas claimed that the ideas of the ensemble did not match with the Lithuanian politics ("Visaginas rėžė – Rusijos kariuomenės ansamblis maršų negros", 2015).

In terms of linguistics, Russian is the dominant language in all the contexts. According to the research by Lichačiova (2012, p.16), 64% of citizens of Visaginas believe that Russian is still more beneficial while trying to establish the business in the area. What is more, 87% believe that Russian language is more suitable in their daily life, 83% also feel while using Russian and to more than 50% this language is the most beautiful and the most useful one (Lichačiova, 2012, p.17).

6. Results: Current situation

This chapter will focus on the situation that the Russian minority in Lithuania is undergoing at the moment. It is needed to present the integration level and discuss the policies that Lithuania is offering to this minority.

6.1.   *The integration of the minority*

To start with, one of the reasons for a relatively high integration level is minority´s demographic features. Russians are widespread throughout the country and they are not concentrated, except in the case of Visaginas' case (Kriaučionytė, 2006). The minority only adds up to around six percent of the general population. Thus, its integration in terms of language, education, politics and national identity will be presented below.

6.1.1.   *Language and secondary education*

Despite the fact that Lithuanian remains the mostly used and the only state language, the extent to which the minority members know the language is questionable. According to the census of 2011 ("Statistika: 84 proc. Lietuvos gyventojų – lietuviai, didžiausia tautinė mažuma – lenkai", 2013), only 0.6% of total population claimed to feel bilingual. 87.2% of total Russian population refer to Russian as their mother tongue ("Statistika: 84 proc. Lietuvos gyventojų – lietuviai, didžiausia tautinė mažuma – lenkai", 2013).

However, despite the Russian language preference, more Russians are studying at Lithuanian schools. During 2001–2011, the number of students attending schools in Russian dropped by almost 60% (Petrušauskaitė, Saturovič, n.d., p.23). As a result, in the period of 2010–2011, only around four percent of the students were studying in Russian (Petrušauskaitė, Saturovič, n.d., p.24). The language policies of Lithuania also contribute to such a drastic change. As a consequence of the radical decline of the students, many Russian schools were closed. According to Petrušauskaitė and Saturovič (n.d.), the number of the Russian schools was reduced by nearly 50% in a decade (p.24). Seemingly, this led to the dissatisfaction from the minority. According to the research, 65.5% of the respondents that attend the Russian schools agreed that the schools were being closed purposefully (Petrušauskaitė, Saturovič, n.d., p.24).

6.1.2. Politics

The political mobilization of Lithuania's Russians is not very strong. At the moment, there are two active political parties: Lietuvos rusų sąjunga, (The Union of Lithuania's Russians, furthermore, LRS) established in 1995, and Rusų aljansas (The Russian Alliance), formed in 2002 (Petrušauskaitė, Saturovič, n.d., p.30). Even though they participate in both, regional and national, elections, they do not receive a lot of support from the electorate (Petrušauskaitė, Saturovič, n.d., p.30). As a result, it is more regular that they form coalitions with the other parties (Petrušauskaitė, Saturovič, n.d., p.30). Nonetheless, the Russian minority is usually as active as or even more active than the Lithuanian majority: in the parliamentary elections of 2008, 54.2% of total Russian population voted and outmatched Lithuanians by six percent (Petrušauskaitė, Saturovič, n.d., p.30).

To add more, Russians tend to vote for the Lithuanian-based left wing parties as the right wing parties used to be known for quite strong anti-communist and ant-Russian policies back in the first years of the Lithuanian independence (Petrušauskaitė, Saturovič, n.d., p.31). Moreover, despite the fact that the leftist parties are considered "Lithuanian", they still include members of non-Lithuanian origins (Petrušauskaitė, Saturovič, n.d., p.32). However, the Parliament cadence of 2008–2012 did not include any parliamentarians of Russian origin (Petrušauskaitė, Saturovič, n.d., p.32). These results can also be the consequence of the possibility of not stating ones nationality.

6.1.3. National identity

The political relations that Lithuania and Russia have might put the minorities in the uncomfortable position. According to Petrušauskaitė and Saturovič (n.d.), this might make the daily life of the Russian minority challenging as they can feel pressured to integrate in both, Lithuanian and Russian cultures (p.34). The necessity to blend with the majority and to still remain "Russian" can be seen in the instances of various celebrations, for example, the 9th of May, also known as the Victory day of the WWII. However, these celebrations are usually condemned by the Lithuanian society and perceived as communist. One of the examples is the Victory day's celebration in 2010. A few hundred people, mainly of Russian origin, commemorated the Veterans' day in one of the main squares of the Lithuanian capital (Černiauskas, Galisanskis, 2010). Despite the peaceful origin of the procession, there was a clear presence of the opposition. The minority was referred as to "Ivans" or "occupants" (Černiauskas, Galisanskis, 2010). The opposition also met the participants with the posters depicting the massacre of Katyn, exiles, resistance movements (Cerniauskis, Galisanksis,

2010). This reaction could be explained by the fact that the Victory day is also a symbol of the beginning of USSR´s occupation in Lithuania. As a consequence, the society is divided.

6.2. The policies of Lithuania in terms of the minority

Lithuania is trying to become as minority friendly as possible in terms of the legal matters. As a consequence, the country is a part of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (Hogan-Brun, Ramonienė, 2003, p.40). However, it is important to analyse the specific actions that Lithuania has taken in terms of the Russian minority. They consist of the legal basis, language policies, labour market and mass media.

6.2.1. Legal basis

The constitution of Lithuania is an example of how the minority is approached legally. According to the articles 37 and 45, a minority has a right to foster its language, customs (Lietuvos Respublikos Konstitucija, 1992). More importantly, the article 29 ensures the equality of rights of individuals (Lietuvos Respublikos Konstitucija, 1992). Another accomplishment is the decision of the Constitutional Court of Lithuania of 2006, which claims that despite the fact that Lithuania was forming on the basis of its ethnical group (Lithuanians), the Lithuanian nation itself consists of the citizens of Lithuania who may originally come from the minorities (Petrušauskaitė, Saturovič, n.d., p.20). On the other hand, there are certain measures concerning the minorities that are not taken. The law on the National Minorities adapted in 1989 expired in 2010 and since then no juridical equivalent has been introduced (Petrušauskaitė, Saturovič, n.d.).

The law of Equal Opportunities of 2003 is the only official law that is targeting Lithuania's minorities. The article 2 of the law defines the equal opportunities as: "[…] implementation of human rights despite the age, sexual orientation, disability, race or ethnical belonging, religion, beliefs […]" (Lietuvos Respublikos lygių galimybių įstatymas, 2003). Thus, even though the law itself is not specifically called the law on the national minorities, it includes them as one of the target groups as it is focused on all the citizens of Lithuania. However, it is expected that during 2016 – 2022 a new program on the minorities focusing on their integration and on preserving their cultural identities will be launched ("Kultūros ministerija aiškinsis, kuo gyvena tautinės mažumos", 2015).

6.2.2. Language

During 2005–2010, most of the funds for the minority integration were spent on the language teaching (Petrušauskaitė, Saturovič, n.d., p.18). The language policies have been getting stricter. One of the most controversial instances is the amendment of the Law on Education in 2011 (Petrušauskaitė, Saturovič n.d., p.19). According to the new changes, the minority schools had to switch to bilingual basic and secondary education instead of the schooling in their own language (Petrušauskaitė, Saturovič, n.d., p.19). Also, the number of Lithuanian language classes was increased (Petrušauskaitė, Saturovič, n.d., p.19). Despite the fact that these changes resulted in the dissatisfaction of the minorities and even escalated to the protests, the requirements for the final state examinations were also changed (Petrušauskaitė, Saturovič, n.d., and p.19). As a result, since 2013 minority students have been expected to take the same Lithuanian language exam as the native Lithuanians (Petrušauskaitė, Saturovič, n.d., p.19).

6.2.3. Labour market

One of the examples proving that the ethnic minorities are not receiving enough attention from the Lithuanian government is the labour market. Since 2004, the department of Statistics of Lithuania has stopped publishing any data on unemployment of the minorities (Petrušauskaitė, Saturovič, n.d., p.25).

6.2.4. Public opinion

The Russian minority in Lithuania is often directly linked not only to the Russian Federation but to the communism. As the historic Tamošaitis asserts, despite the fact that Russia is the heir of the USSR, it is important to understand that any of the actions in the past were taken by other people (Savickas, 2015). Pravda.ru claims that Lithuania is still executing the "communist witch-hunt" and is basing its politics on the historical revenge against the Russian Federation ("Lithuania persistently advocates Russophobia and nationalism", 2011).

Any kind of communist symbolic (as well as nazi) has been officially banned in Lithuania since 2008 ("Baltic fascists still enjoy their happily ever after", 2011). On the other hand, Russia perceives it as an insult to the common victory of the WWII and to the war veterans that are still living in Lithuania. As a result, the dilemma by the Russian media is raised: is Lithuania actually fighting against the communism or is it simply disrespecting the Russians? As Pravda.ru ("Baltic fascists still enjoy their happily ever after", 2011) writes: "The ban of Soviet symbols is a humiliation for hundreds of war veterans, who live in the Baltic States".

6.2.5. Mass media and press

The Russian minority can access a variety of mass media publications in their native language. There are 25 newspapers and five magazines that are published in different periods (Hogan-Brun, Ramoniene, 2003, p. 42). The national broadcaster, LRT, also makes sure that there is a daily 30-minute programme on the radio (Hogan-Brun, Ramonienė, 2003, p. 42). What is more, a private Russian radio, Russkoje Radio (Russian Radio), exists and is quite popular not only among the Russians but also Lithuanians who speak Russian (Hogan-Brun, Ramonienė, 2003, p. 42). Finally, there are at least three television programmes for Russians (Hogan-Brun, Ramonienė, 2003, p. 42). However, generally, many of the Lithuania's TV broadcasters re-broadcast various TV programs, shows, series that are originally made in the Russian Federation.

According to the research carried by Human Rights Centre in Lithuania, Russia or Russians-linked news are the second most popular when comparing the focus on the minorities (Rutkauskienė, 2015, p. 43). In 2015, there were 107 articles on the Russian minority in Lithuania (Rutkauskienė, 2015, p.43). Basically, the main topics discussed were as follow: soft power used by the Russian Federation, soviet times and their linkage to nowadays, the loyalty of the Russian minority, possibility of Lithuania becoming the next Crimea, information wars, Russian celebrations in Lithuania (Rutkauskienė, 2015, p.43). Rutkauskienė (2015) also notes that the articles tend to be quite one-sided and usually do not give too much voice to the Russian minority (p.45). As it can be seen, most of the topics discussed still have a sense of negativity, which can form a popular opinion about this minority. Moreover, the same research revealed that the Russian topic is very polemic in Lithuania (Rutkauskienė, 2015, p.48). The Russians have been often portrayed as an inside threat controlled by the Russian Federation (Rutkauskienė, 2015, p.48-49). As the author (2015) claims Russians of Lithuania can become "a pretext for a Russian invasion and war actions" (p.49).

At this moment, there are at least five Russian TV channels available, the most popular ones being RTR Planeta (RTR Planet), NTV Mir Lithuania ("LRTK: rusiški kanalai linkę tartis", 2015). However, these and other channels sometimes are suspended from broadcasting due to the inappropriate content. To be more specific, in 2015, VGRTK (National TV and Radio Broadcaster in Russia) was informed by the Commission of Lithuania´s National Broadcaster (LRT) that it is breaching laws ("LRTK: rusiški kanalai linkę tartis", 2015). It was advised to provide neutral opinion and follow the laws accepted by Lithuania and the EU ("LRTK: rusiški kanalai linkę tartis", 2015). According to the LRT Commission, the TV channels RTR Planeta

and NTV Mir Lithuania were trying to provoke the war, spreading false information, used offensive statements ("LRTK: rusiški kanalai linkę tartis", 2015). Another case could be the suspension of the PBK channel in 2013. Then PBK showed a video denying the occupational events of Lithuania of January 1991 (Noreika, 2016). As a consequence, the channel was closed for a while. However, it is also needed to mention that after the discussions regarding the ethics of the channels, Russian broadcaster agreed to revise its policies ("LRTK: rusiški kanalai linkę tartis", 2015).

It is important to take a look at the nature of at least one of the Russian channels, RTR Planeta. As it states in its official web site, "RTR-Planeta is a unique international infotainment TV channel in Russian, which was launched in 2002 by the largest media holding in Russia - Russian Television and Radio (RTR)" ("Information for partners", n.d.). The channel itself also admits its ties with the audiences out of Russia, by stating that "the considerable part of our regular audience is Russians living abroad" ("Information for partners", n.d.). However, in Lithuania it is closed from time to dime due to the content. TV Channels like NTV Mir, PBK, Ren TV Baltic have already been turned off at least for a while (Jakilaitis, 2015). The president of the Cable TV Association in Lithuania, Vaiva Žukienė, also stated that usually the viewers do understand the reasons why the channels are blocked and do not complain about it (Jakilaitis, 2015).

Another interesting aspect is the origin of these channels. Some of these channels are actually registered as European broadcasters. To be more specific, the PBK channel is claimed to be Latvian despite the fact that it is providing Russian news (Maliukevičius, 2016). The same applies to NTV Mir Baltic which is officially a channel from United Kingdom and Rossiya-RTR which is supposed to be Swedish (Maliukevičius, 2016). However, overall these channels are quite popular. For example, in January, 2016, 12.9% of Lithuanian viewers watched PBK; NTV was watched by around 11.9% (Noreika, 2016). The number is not influenced by the fact that from time to time the channels receive criticism from Lithuania.

Talking about press, a few specific examples could be excluded. There are a few newspapers that have quite numerous editions. For example, Литовский Курьер (Lithuanian Courier) and Обзор (Overview) each had an edition of approximately 20,000 copies ("Lietuvos tautinių mažumų spauda: tematika, tendencijos, aktualijos", n.d., p.2). The most well-known printed publication is Экспресс-неделя (Week's express) which releases around 51.000 copies ("Lietuvos tautinių mažumų spauda: tematika, tendencijos, aktualijos", n.d., p.2). However, overall it is estimated that during the independence period of Lithuania, the number of the

press in Russian has decreased more than twice ("Lietuvos tautinių mažumų spauda: tematika, tendencijos, aktualijos", n.d., p.5). Overall, it is possible to subscribe to at least 40 newspapers and at least 130 magazines that are translated or originally written in Russian ("Lietuvos tautinių mažumų spauda: tematika, tendencijos, aktualijos", n.d., p.5). It contributes to around 15% of total printed press in Lithuania ("Lietuvos tautinių mažumų spauda: tematika, tendencijos, aktualijos", n.d., p.6). The most popular Lithuanian news outlets online can also be accessed in Russian.

6.3. The policies of Russia towards the minority

The humanitarian help for the Russians or any Russophone people living outside the Russian Federation is strongly inherent in the general foreign policies of the country. The three main aspects of the humanitarian help are defined as religion, language and the historical values ("Humanitariniai Rusijos užsienio politikos aspektai Gruzijoje, Moldovoje, Ukrainoje ir Baltijos šalyse", 2009). Thus, this part will take a look at the language policies, media situation and the Russian World concept.

6.3.1. Language

Russian professor V. Smirnov (2012) notes that the minority's relation with Russian language is not as good as before. However, there are no specific policies of Lithuania or Russia to blame for. Naturally, the younger generations of Russians, who were born in Lithuania are also better in communicating in Lithuanian than Russian (Смирнов, 2012). Meanwhile, there is a part of the minority, notably the older generations that are fluent only in Russian (Смирнов, 2012). However, nine out of ten Lithuanians claim that they can understand Russian language and even two thirds of them can speak it (Digrytė, 2009). This could be considered as one of the main reasons why Russia is keen on supporting various cultural funds in Lithuania. There is a growing "need" to promote Russian as it is often exchanged to Lithuanian.

The fund Rossotrudnichestvo is currently the only fund working on the "support and promotion of the Russian language, literature and culture" ("Promotion of the Russian language in the world", 2014). These type of Russian language courses are also offered for Russian compatriots in 33 countries, Lithuania being one of them ("Promotion of the Russian language in the world", 2014). What is more, in 2015 Concept for State Support and Promotion of the Russian Language Abroad was approved by V. Putin ("Concept for state support and promotion of the Russian language abroad", 2015). "The Concept stresses that

work to support and promote the Russian language abroad is an important part of Russia's foreign policy" ("Concept for state support and promotion of the Russian language abroad", 2015).

6.3.2. Cultural development

Moreover, the Russian Federation is investing into the fostering of the Russian culture in Lithuania. The existence of a fund Russkiy Mir is an example. The fund has established several Russian culture and language centres; it is financially supporting the non-governmental Russian organizations (Petrušauskaitė, Saturovič, n.d., p.36). According to the official Russkiy Mir website, these funds and cultural centres are of great importance because "serious steps need to be taken to both preserve and promote Russian language and culture in today's world" ("About Russkiy Mir foundation", n.d). According to the research done by the Baltic Centre for Investigative Journalism (furthermore, re:Baltica) in 2012, many of the non-governmental Russian organizations in Lithuania refuse to provide the data about the funds received (Motruzaitė, 2012). Out of 20 organisations that were "investigated", only a few agreed that they are receiving a partial financial help from the Russkiy Mir fund (Motruzaitė, 2012). However, re:Baltica was not provided with any actual data, documents or justifications in terms of the help received from the Russian Federation (Motruzaitė, 2012).

The indoctrination and propaganda, encouraged by the Russkiy Mir fund, was also observed during the period of 2008–2010. Every month, for two years, a newspaper "Compatriot's herald" was published in Lithuania (Motruzaitė, 2012). The newspaper itself was presented as a cultural publishing, however, it also had many motives of portraying Russia as the winner of the WWII, the liberator from fascism (Motruzaitė, 2012). Because of the examples like this the activities of Russkiy Mir are not necessarily perceived as positive or only cultural. It is approached quite negatively due to the fact that no actual information, or not enough of information, is provided in order to explain how the fund is helping the minority. There are also claims, that because of support like this, the Russian minorities cannot fully integrate into the Lithuanian society (Motruzaitė, 2012). As the research of Petrušauskaitė and Saturovič (n.d.) claims, more and more often instead of investing into strengthening the political or economic power in the region, Russia chooses supporting the development and fostering of Russian culture in the Baltic region (p.36).

Together with the great support comes the great demand for the Russian culture. To many people, especially the ones who were born in the USSR, Russian culture is also seen as a part

of their memories and can cause nostalgia. Thus, it is very common that many Russian musicians, artists are very well-known in Lithuania, and many of them tour in Lithuania. However, from time to time these concerts receive criticism. Together with the Russian music, the artists might bring propagandist messages. One of the best instances could be a concert in October 2015 of a Russian music group "Vladimir". The group presented their song, which had been created after Crimean annexation and was called "Our Crimea" (Vainalavičiūtė, 2015). Political scientist N. Maliukevičius described this event as a "purposeful act" (Vainalavičiūtė, 2015).

6.3.3.   *Media and broadcasting*

It is important to take a look at the Information Security Doctrine of the Russian Federation, 2000. The doctrine has some main foundations, specifically to "protect strategically important information, to protect against deleterious foreign information, and to inculcate in the people patriotism and Russian values" (Veebel, 2015). The doctrine also claims that in order to assure the development and protection of the Russian media there need to be "methods for raising the effectiveness of state participation in shaping the information policy of state television and radio broadcasting organizations and other state-run mass media" (Information security doctrine of the Russian Federation, 2008).

When directly analysing the Russian press available in Lithuania, it is needed to mention "Комсомольская правда в Литве" (Komsomolskaya truth in Lithuania). The Lithuanian government report on the national minorities ("Lietuvos tautinių mažumų spauda: tematika, tendencijos, aktualijos", n.d., p.6) describes this newspaper as "a clone of Soviet ideology and propaganda". The newspaper is not sold anymore however it still has an active website. A headline from the website is presented in order to understand the focus and perspective of the publication. "Путешествие по стареющей странее: Литовский путь в светлое никуда" ("Journey through an aging country: Lithuanian way to the bright nowhere") is an article written by a Russian journalist Sergey Ponomarev. The article focuses on the fact that Lithuania´s foreign policies are very "aggressive" and "absurd" and simply do not take into account that Russians are the second biggest minority in Lithuania (Ponomarev, n.d.). The author also refers quite numerous times to Lithuania under the USSR and compares the goods and the financial state of the country now and then (Ponomarev, n.d.). Overall, the idea of Lithuania, trying to be independent, however unsuccessfully is created which results in author stressing the fact that under the Soviet rule Lithuania was stronger (Ponomarev, n.d.).

State security department of the Republic of Lithuania (furthermore, VSD) announced the official list of the media sources with propagandist nature in 2014. The main ones were as follows: "Литовский курьер" ("Lithuanian courier"), "Обзор" ("Overview"), "Экспресс Неделя" ("Week´s express"), "Первый Балтийский канал" ("First Baltic channel) ("VSD įvardijo Rusijos propagandos įrankius Lietuvoje: „Litovskij kurjer", „Obzor", „Ekspress nedelia" ir „Pervyj Baltijskij kanal", 2014). According to the research done by VSD, in 2014 most of these media channels were criticizing the fact that Lithuania held the EU presidency ("VSD įvardijo Rusijos propagandos įrankius Lietuvoje: „Litovskij kurjer", „Obzor", „Ekspress nedelia" ir „Pervyj Baltijskij kanal", 2014). Another aspect that VSD focused on is the politics of the memory applied by the Russian Federation. The historical facts are being manipulated, there is a lot of attention to the national resistance in Lithuania, the division of Europe of 1939 and USSR´s occupation of Lithuania in the end of the WWII ("VSD įvardijo Rusijos propagandos įrankius Lietuvoje: „Litovskij kurjer", „Obzor", „Ekspress nedelia" ir „Pervyj Baltijskij kanal", 2014). These cases are feared to increase the gap between the Russians of Lithuania and Lithuanians.

Another interesting aspect to research is the existence of the Russian journalist club "Format A-3". As they describe themselves on their official website, this journalist club was created in 2009 in order to communicate among the journalists in Russia, Commonwealth of Independent States (furthermore CIS) and Baltic countries ("Наша миссия", n.d.). The founders of this club are RTR TV channel and "Комсомольская правда" ("Komsolskoya truth") newspaper which are infamous in Lithuania and have been accused of disinformation ("Наша миссия", n.d.). The club is stating that it is keen on spreading and sharing the information with the rest ("Наша миссия", n.d.). However, according to the VSD, Format A-3 is a source that is trying to spread political and ideological views from Russia ("VSD įvardijo Rusijos propagandos įrankius Lietuvoje: „Litovskij kurjer", „Obzor", „Ekspress nedelia" ir „Pervyj Baltijskij kanal", 2014). For example, in 2013 there were 11 events organized by Format A-3 where "pro-Russian academics, economists, writers and cultural representatives" were present ("VSD įvardijo Rusijos propagandos įrankius Lietuvoje: „Litovskij kurjer", „Obzor", „Ekspress nedelia" ir „Pervyj Baltijskij kanal", 2014).

The claims of Russian newspapers, for example Pravda.ru, provide various legal instances for Russia's intervention in the region. In spring 2015, Pravda.ru ("Lithuania and Russia: incompatible, yet intertwined for good", 2015) published that:

> The Russian parliament has never ratified the 1997 border treaty with
> Lithuania. The Russian Federation, as the successor to the Soviet Union, retains

sovereign rights over Klaipeda and has full legal grounds to address Lithuania with a question about the procedure to return the Klaipeda region.

In terms of the media, the most important aspects have already been discussed earlier in the chapter. However, it is needed to mention that Russia is trying to maintain as much presence as possible in the Lithuanian media. One of the best examples is the case of 2009. The already bankrupt, Russian-owned bank Snoras in 2009 "increased its stake to 34% in the largest Lithuanian media group Lietuvos Rytas, which consists of the main national daily newspaper, a television station, a news portal and several publications" (Grigas, 2012, p. 10).

6.3.4. *Russian world*

While analysing Russia's policies towards the minority it is necessary to mention the Russian world. Generally, the term stands for the preservation of a close cultural bond with the homeland and an open possibility to easily come back and settle again in Russia ("Humanitariniai Rusijos užsienio politikos aspektai Gruzijoje, Moldovoje, Ukrainoje ir Baltijos šalyse", 2009). The concept focuses on the Russian diasporas (Laruelle, 2015, p.14). Russia´s minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergey Lavrov, defines this concept: "the Russian world is about culture, language, values, and religious orientations. One can draw an analogy [...] with Francophonie, the Ibero-American community, and Confucius, Goethe, or Cervantes institutes" (Laruelle, 2015, p.15). The Russian World organized events are funded by the state and "embody the civil society" (Laruelle, 2015, p.14). Laruelle (2015, p.18) stresses that focusing on the civil society shows that the Russian world is also a soft power project because it mostly targets the society and not the elites. Furthermore, the author also notes that Russian World is more active in the countries of Russia´s near abroad that are neither integrated nor planning to integrate into the Eurasian Union (Laruelle, 2015, p.18).

Russian Federation focuses on the Russian Compatriots living in the near abroad. Compatriots are actually supervised and "controlled" by Russia as their activities are coordinated by the Russian Foreign Ministry and its established Coordination Councils; heads of the Russian organizations in the near abroad are supervised by the later (State Security Department of the Republic of Lithuania, 2015, p.13). This results in the establishment of various organizations or centres. For example, in Lithuania, "Independent Human Rights Centre" and "Centre for Research and Protection of Human Rights" are functioning as a part of Coordination Councils (State Security Department of the Republic of Lithuania, 2015, p.1). These centres have accused Lithuania of such violations: "the violation of ethnic communities' rights; demolition

of their education system; falsification of history; restriction of the freedom of speech; tolerance towards the (neo-)Nazism (State Security Department of the Republic of Lithuania, 2015, p.13). As the VSD claims in their report, it is feared that these accusations can create a "hostile image of the Baltic States in the eyes of the Russian society" (State Security Department of the Republic of Lithuania, 2015, p.13). It is expected that later on, these accusations could be used as justification of aggression (State Security Department of the Republic of Lithuania, 2015, p.13).

Another important aspect is the education of the Russian speakers in the near abroad. For example, Russian schools´ students are offered various courses, trainings, camps, contests funded by the Russian Federation; students have also been offered free Bachelor studies in Russia (State Security Department of the Republic of Lithuania, 2015, p. 14). When it comes to the perspective of Lithuania it is noted that there is no pre-caution from its part and as a consequence it is feared that the threat might be growing (State Security Department of the Republic of Lithuania, 2015, p.14). Another example of Russia's influence in the education is the case of its organized camps. In summer 2015, students from Visaginas participated in a scout camp in Saint Petersburg. These types of camps are known for their promotion of Orthodox beliefs, Russian culture, history, geography as well as the general surviving in the nature (Pancerovas, 2015). The activities in the camp included role plays of the Red Army, fights with the fascists, celebration of the victory of the WWII (Pancerovas, 2015).

Russian Federation is paying special attention to the compatriots. To start with, automatic citizenships are offered to people of Russian descent "regardless of their domicile and other citizenship status" (Grigas, 2012, p.11). To add more, in 2010 Russia's National Security Strategy to 2020 was approved (Grigas, 2012, p. 11). The doctrine "declares the intent to protect the rights and interests of Russian citizens and 'compatriots' abroad through political, economic and other means" (Grigas, 2012, p.11). To add more, cultural celebrations are used in order to encourage the feeling of belonging to Russia. One of the most-well known celebrations is the day of Russian culture which is celebrated every June, for already 14 years. The celebration usually attracts the attention of the media due to its controversial nature; however it is also supported by Lithuanian government and municipality of Vilnius. There has been some dissatisfaction expressed because of the name of the celebration. As the Russia´s ambassador in Lithuania, Aleksandr Udalcov noted, the celebration should be called Russia´s culture day due to the diversity of the Federation (Vainalavičiūtė, 2016). However, it is feared that in Lithuania this change would have different associations. Overall, Russian symbolic as flags, banners, Russia-related souvenirs are usually allowed to be sold and exposed during the

event. Generally, no significant dissatisfactions or complaints have been noted while researching this particular celebration due to its peaceful focus.

7. Results: Crimea: before and after

This part focuses on the changes that occurred after the annexation of Crimea. It intends to reflect on the relations between the analysed states prior and after the conflict as well as the change of approach to the minority, if any occurred.

7.1. The relations between Lithuania and Russia before the Crimean conflict

Due to their common past, marked with wars, resistance, occupations, economic and political dependency, the relationships between the two neighbours have never been completely positive or negative. As Lithuanians tend to refer to Russia, "the big brother" or "the Russian bear" has always been one of the main economic partners, energy provider.

What is more, it is important to analyse the fact that Russia was seen as a threat and a possible enemy already before the conflict in Ukraine however it was also a crucial economic partner. To start with, the political elite in Lithuania, around 98% of it, considered Russia as a possible threat already in 2012 (Смирнов, 2012). However, it was also one of the most important economic partners of the country and the main energy provider (Смирнов, 2012). For example, back in 2006, one quarter of total Lithuania´s imports came from the Russian Federation (Vitkus, 2006, p.13). In 2013 Russia still remained the biggest economic partner of Lithuania (Ivanauskas, 2014). Grigas (2012, p.11) also notes that some of the businesses directly depend on Russia: "In the Baltic business world, many of the elites are former members of the Soviet nomenklatura who remain loyal to the Kremlin out of economic interest". Until establishing its own natural gas terminal Lithuania was directly dependent on Russia. As a consequence, Lithuania was paying the highest price for the gas in all Europe (Rapoza, 2015). However, the prices dropped dramatically immediately after announcing the establishment of "Independence" liquefied gas terminal. "In the first quarter of 2014 it was the equivalent of 32.9 euros per megawatt hour. [...] By March 2015, it's fallen to around 25 euros" (Rapoza, 2015).

Secondly, Lithuania and Russia still have some unresolved historical issues. In 2007 Lithuania intended to seek for the compensations for the damages during the Soviet rule ("Lithuania – Russia relations", n.d.). It was not the first intention as in 1997 Lithuanian government already asked for the compensation, stating that "the Soviet Union inflicted $667.7 billion worth of damage on Lithuania between 1940 and 1990" (Tracevskis, 2000). The compensation was asked for the following damage: "wrongful death of citizens, slave labour in concentration camps, destruction of art treasure, ruined economy and lost revenues"

(Tracevskis, 2000). However, this intention of Lithuania had been named as "unrealistic" ("Lithuania–Russia relations", n.d.). Lithuania has also already asked for the compensations for the January 1991 events when Russia intended occupying Lithuania again ("Lithuania seeks compensation from Russia", 2011). On the contrary, in 2004, Russia itself asked for the compensations from the Baltic States for the assets left in the territory after dissolution of the USSR (Socor, 2004). Both sides disagreed to pay back by claiming that there was no legal basis for that (Socor, 2004). The fact that Lithuania and Russia still have not solved the historical issues also results in Lithuanian presidents boycotting various ceremonies in Russia, especially the Victory Day (May 9th) and as of 2008 banning any kind of public display of Soviet (also Nazi) symbols (Rutten, et. all, 2013, p.257).

Lithuania also was one of the biggest Russia´s critics during its intervention in Georgia in 2008. When the war started, Lithuania organized series of events in order to support Georgia and became one of the most pro-Georgian countries in Europe (Jančys, 2012). Lithuanian president of the time, Valdas Adamkus, together with the heads of Estonia, Poland, Latvia and Ukraine visited Georgia during the conflict in order to show the support to the country (Jančys, 2012). This also resulted in Lithuania being the first country to legally admit that Russia occupied Georgian territories, carried out ethnic cleansing (Jančys, 2012). However, generally, during its independence Lithuania has been trying to avoid direct attacks towards Russia and managed to stay away from the conflicts, support to Georgia being one of a few exceptions (Vaičiūnaitė, 2013). This position of Lithuania affected the international relations between the countries too. As of 2005, Russia has been carrying out public surveys on which countries are the main enemies of the Federation and Lithuania has been in the top five ever since (Jakniūnaitė, 2013, p. 22).

In terms of military, Lithuania and Russia could not have been called as partners. The countries did not sign any bilateral military defense or cooperation treaty ("Bendradarbiavimas su valstybėmis partnerėmis, ne NATO ir ne ES valstybėmis", 2016). Contrary, Lithuania has signed various agreements with others Eastern Bloc countries ("Bendradarbiavimas su valstybėmis partnerėmis, ne NATO ir ne ES valstybėmis", 2016). To add more, as of 2007 Russia stopped informing Lithuania about its military condition and plans and breached the agreement countries had signed in 2001 ("Bendradarbiavimas su valstybėmis partnerėmis, ne NATO ir ne ES valstybėmis", 2016).

On the other hand, scholars note that Lithuania and Russia can have stability in their relations if needed. To be more specific, the stability comes across in issues like border crossing,

transits to Kaliningrad, rail tariffs, cargo insurance (Lithuania–Russia relations, n.d.). As Mite (2009) claims, the only reason for Lithuania and Russia to actually have bad relations is their ambitions. As author claims, Russia might still feel like it lost its territories and its imperialist past, Lithuania being one of the causes of this loss (Mite, 2009).

Overall, there were not too many conflicts or escalations noticed before the Ukrainian conflict.

7.2.   The relations between Lithuania and Russia after the Crimean conflict

Despite keeping up with the diplomatic relations between two countries, quite some changes could be noticed in the Lithuanian-Russian relations. The crisis in Ukraine and different stands the countries took had an influence on the international cooperation at many different levels.

To start with, Russia believes that Lithuania and Russia do not have friendly relations. According to the recent Russian society survey, even 58% of the respondents claimed that Lithuania and Russia do not have good relations while only 12% believed that they are actually good ("Dauguma rusų mano, kad Lietuvos ir Rusijos santykiai nedraugiški", 2016). This is quite a big change compared to the data released five years ago – then 49% of the respondents believed that Lithuania and Russia do not have a good political relation ("Dauguma rusų mano, kad Lietuvos ir Rusijos santykiai nedraugiški", 2016). A similar survey was carried out in Lithuania in 2014, with a focus on Lithuanian-Russian relations and Russia´s actions in Ukraine. When evaluating the relationship between the countries (multiple answers were possible), 46.3% thought that Russia is economically manipulating Lithuania and that it is harming the relations between the countries ("Dauguma rusų mano, kad Lietuvos ir Rusijos santykiai nedraugiški", 2016). However, Lithuanian politicians were also blamed for the worsening situation between the neighbours as more than 40% of the respondents stated that Lithuanian politicians make unthoughtful statements ("Dauguma rusų mano, kad Lietuvos ir Rusijos santykiai nedraugiški", 2016). Aggressive statements coming from the Russian Federation (38%), historical crimes (32%) and Russia´s military actions against Georgia and Ukraine (28%) were also mentioned as negative influences ("Dauguma rusų mano, kad Lietuvos ir Rusijos santykiai nedraugiški", 2016). One third of the citizens also noted that Lithuania is too small to criticize Russia openly ("Dauguma rusų mano, kad Lietuvos ir Rusijos santykiai nedraugiški", 2016). Overall, it is interesting that Lithuanians do note that both sides should be responsible for the political relations: almost 40% claimed that in order to have better terms the countries Russia should stop blackmailing Lithuania and Lithuania should be more "obedient" while dealing with its big neighbour ("Dauguma

rusų mano, kad Lietuvos ir Rusijos santykiai nedraugiški", 2016). Finally, 41.3% of the respondents, when asked how would they evaluate Russia´s actions in Ukraine agreed that the current situation is "the typical military aggression against another state" while 36.7% thought that "it is a pressure used in order to threaten or overthrow the current government" in Ukraine ("Šalies gyventojų tyrimas dėl Lietuvos santykių su Rusija", 2014). Only 7.1% believed that these actions are legitimate due to the fact that Russia needs to defend its minority ("Šalies gyventojų tyrimas dėl Lietuvos santykiai su Rusija", 2014).

These views are also reflected in the statements coming from Lithuania. For example, Lithuanian president, D. Grybauskaitė, has not been avoiding quite direct and harsh comments to the Russian Federation. According to New York Post (Sanderson, 2014), Grybauskaitė compared Russia's intervention in Ukraine to an intervention in all Europe and that, to some extent, means that Lithuania is at war with Russia. As a consequence, Lithuania has made public announcements about its preparation for war. A manual on how to deal with the foreign invasion was prepared (Kuncina, Sindelar, 2016). Vilnius claims that after what happened in Ukraine and earlier in Georgia, Lithuania must be prepared as it could be the next victim of Russian aggression (Kuncina, Sindelar, 2016). The manual also includes the explanations of "hybrid war" (Kuncina, Sindelar, 2016). Re-introduced conscription and increased military spending (in 2016 Lithuania´s GDP spent on military has been 1.1% and it is planned to grow to at least 2% by 2020) also reveal that Lithuania is not considering Russia as a peaceful neighbour (Kuncina, Sindelar, 2016).

To continue, Lithuania is considered to be one of the biggest open supporters of Ukraine. As a result, it is very concerned about the sanctions against Russia. One of the biggest focuses definitely is the Minsk agreement, signed by Russia itself. As the Prime Minister of Lithuania, A. Butkevičius, claimed: "should Russia fail to implement the Minsk Agreement by the end of 2015, European and United States' sanctions against the Kremlin should be automatically extended" ("Lithuania warns Russia over extended sanctions", 2015). This shows how interested in maintaining Russia out of Ukraine Lithuania is. What is more, the Baltics keep on highlighting that the case of Ukraine is not being paid as much attention as it should be paid to. As a consequence, the heads of the governments of the Baltics refuse to cooperate with Russia by any means. It was described as "not a partner" (Gotev, 2015). As the president D. Grybauskaitė recently stated, Russia "still occupies the territory of another country and is carrying out military actions in two countries. That is, in Ukraine and Georgia" (Seputyte, 2015).

Despite the fact that military exercise in Kaliningrad has always been a relatively regular event, after the events in Crimea and Lithuania's taken stance the military exercises have intensified. Just after entering Crimea, the Russian Federation also launched an unexpected military training in Kaliningrad (Černiauskas, 2014). This encouraged the government of Lithuania to ask for more support from NATO (Černiauskas, 2014). As a consequence, ever since NATO and Russia started performing more military trainings than usual, as well as deploying more NATO troops to the Baltics. It is estimated than in two years (2013-2015) Russia launched six military trainings where between 65.000 to 165.000 soldiers were participating (Saldžiūnas, 2015). It is feared that these trainings might escalate to real military actions taken by the Russian Federation.

On the other hand, there is no direct or clear response coming from the Russian Federation. Generally, as Sputniknews ("Russia-Lithuania political, economic relations stalled – ambassador", 2016) claimed

> Moscow's relations with the West, including Lithuania, deteriorated in 2014 over the Ukrainian crisis, when the European Union along with the United States as well as several other countries imposed several rounds of sanctions against Russia, accusing it of meddling in Ukrainian internal affairs.

The relations generally are described as "stalled" ("Russia-Lithuania political, economic relations stalled – ambassador", 2016).

7.3.   The approach of Lithuania towards the minority

The Russian minority in Lithuania has experienced a few changes, especially when it comes to media. However, overall, there are more cases when there are actions taken against Russia than against the minority itself.

Lithuania is trying to limit the influence of the Russian broadcasters and reduce the broadcasting in Russian to the lowest level possible. Lithuania's president Dalia Grybauskaitė claimed in October, 2014, that "she would push to limit Russian television broadcasts inside the country" ("Baltic states concerned about large Russian minority", 2014). As Stratford ("Baltic states concerned about large Russian minority", 2014) claims, "Lithuania, like the rest of the Baltic states, fears that Russia will repeat its strategy of citing threats to ethnic Russians in the country as a pretext for intervening". In April, 2015 the national broadcaster of Lithuania cancelled the broadcasting of one of RTR Planet for three months ("Uždraudėme rusiško kanalo transliaciją, o kas po to?", 2015). The decision was directly linked with the conflict in Ukraine and Russia's intervention. As it is published in lrytas.lt ("Uždraudėme

rusiško kanalo transliaciją, o kas po to?" 2015): "it was done because Russian politicians and other propagandists were inciting the war with the West and Ukraine, promoting the hatred of Ukrainian people".

Another very important Soviet history and culture aspect that received a lot of attention in summer of 2015 was the demolishing of four Soviet sculptures, depicting Soviet and communist ideals, from one of the busiest bridges of Lithuanian capital. The decision of the mayor R. Šimašius, divided the society. A lot of Lithuanians were not fond of demolishing the sculptures and agreed with the Russian minority that they only represent the historical period of Lithuania, despite the communist ideology behind them. The actions were condemned by many historians and politicians as well. The demolishing of the statues was compared with the destroying of the sculpture of Lenin in one of the main squares of Vilnius back in 1991. However, differently than in the fall of the USSR, the actions did not receive a huge wave of support. As the historian Aleksandravičius (Jackevičius, 2015) proposed, these soviet symbols were taken off too late. As a result, it led to many different interpretations of the reasons why the government had decided to do so (Jackevičius, 2015).

The wish to have as little influence as possible reflects in the actions of the society as well. One of the recent "attacks" against Russia focused on the Russian products in the supermarkets. "Stickers depicting the colours of the Colorado potato beetle" appeared on various products ("In Lithuania, Russian products marked with stickers of Colorado potato beetles", 2015). The Colorado potato beetle was chosen because of its resemblance to "the stripes of St. George's Ribbon, which is a [...] patriotic symbol in the Russian Federation" ("In Lithuania, Russian products marked with stickers of Colorado potato beetles", 2015). Even though these measures were taken by a small group of activists, the anti-Russian message was sent. It is also important to note that the Russian media also published about this incident.

However, according to the research carried out in 2014, the public opinion regarding Russian nationals have not been influenced by the events in Ukraine. Even though 75% of Lithuanians stated that Russia is the least friendly country to Lithuania, around 66% also stated that their opinion about Russians in general has not been changed by Russia´s actions in Ukraine ("Lietuvos priešų sąrašą išvydęs politologas šokiruotas: praradome partnerę", 2014). The results were similar when researching public opinion towards Russians living in Lithuania. 77% stated that annexation of Crimea has not changed their opinion about Lithuania's Russian minority ("Lietuvos priešų sąrašą išvydęs politologas šokiruotas: praradome partnerę", 2014). Overall, almost 50% of Lithuanians believe that Russia is the one to blame

for Crimea's annexation ("Lietuvos priešų sąrašą išvydęs politologas šokiruotas: praradome partnerę", 2014).

7.4. The behaviour of the minority after the conflict

It is an interesting aspect to take a look at the minority itself as it might be expected to take two completely different sides: either to support the Russian intervention and be pro-Russian or agree that the aggression caused in Crimea is illegal.

The Moscow Times (Person, 2015) writes, "There can be no doubt that cultural grievances continue to resonate among the Russian minorities". At the moment, there is no sign of any kind of Russian separatist movements or groups existing in the Baltic region (Person, 2015). One of the reasons for no extreme changes in the Russian minority could be the fact that many of the Russians living in the country actually consider themselves Lithuanians. What is more, having citizenship of Lithuania also provides the Russians of possibilities to travel, live and work within the EU (Person, 2015).

LRT Commission carried out a research on the minorities in Lithuania and their approaches towards Russia. As the results state, most of the national minorities (58%) have learnt about Ukraine from the Russian media ("Apklausa: Lietuvos tautinės mažumos apie įvykius Ukrainoje sužino iš Rusijos", 2015). Only around 30% of the respondents chose LRT while informing themselves about the crisis in Crimea ("Apklausa: Lietuvos tautinės mažumos apie įvykius Ukrainoje sužino iš Rusijos", 2015). When asked which country, Lithuania or Russia, presents the situation in Ukraine in a more objective way, the respondents opted for the same answer: around 30% think that it is better to receive information from the Russian sources and around 30% believe that Lithuania is portraying the annexation more objectively ("Apklausa: Lietuvos tautinės mažumos apie įvykius Ukrainoje sužino iš Rusijos", 2015). Finally, when asked who to blame for the events in Ukraine, the respondents were also divided. 26% of people stated that it is the fault of Ukraine itself, meanwhile 16% thought that it is Russia´s fault ("Apklausa: Lietuvos tautinės mažumos apie įvykius Ukrainoje sužino iš Rusijos", 2015).

However, there have not been presented or carried out any researches that would have helped to get a deeper insight into the current opinion of the Russian minority in terms of the Ukraine crisis.

8. Analysis

In order to analyse the overall situation of the Russians in Lithuania, their relation to soft power, Russia´s role and probability of a conflict analysis will be divided according to the previously presented chapters.

8.1. History

All in all, there was lack of sources found claiming that in the 20th century the Russian minority in Lithuania was perceived as danger. All the sources and information clearly showed the gap between the minority and the Communist regime. As a consequence, it could be concluded that Lithuanians remained quite neutral in terms of the minority.

The results showed that common Lithuanian – Russian history is also one of the most sensitive aspects nowadays. Wars and aggressions date back to more than only 20th century, however, Soviet occupation is considered to be one of the biggest Russia´s crimes ever. The Russification processes were happening in Lithuania in many diverse aspects. The destruction of the society and its replacement with new citizens played an important role in these processes. Lithuanians were slowly and quite naturally accustomed to the Russian culture and language with the help of the indoctrination, Russianization and Russification. Due to the fact that Lithuania was seen as a good option for work and career, the Russianization processes happened even faster. To some extent, the case could be compared to the Schengen zone's situation in the EU and the constant move of labour force nowadays.

The end of the USSR era revealed the stance of the minority. It could be argued that the fact that most of the Russians decided to opt for the citizenship and remain in Lithuania proved that they were not too keen on supporting the USSR regime. This could be seen as a proof of integration. On the other hand, the people who stayed in Lithuania became compatriots of Russia, as it is seen by the Russian Federation now. Thus, it could be argued that the decision to extend Lithuanian citizenship to all the minority members could have been interpreted as Lithuania's try to preserve Lithuanian culture and create a more homogenous society, with the majority having Lithuanian passports. This meant that in the long term perspective Lithuania might have expected the minority to fully integrate. The law could have been seen as Lithuania's intention to completely integrate its minorities by limiting access to their national cultures. All in all, the citizenship processes revealed the two-sidedness of the situation in Lithuania at the time. On one hand, Lithuania's all-inclusive laws and decisions showed its respect towards the minority and willingness to integrate it. However, together

with that there was a growing threat that minorities are going to lose their cultural faces due to such a strong inclusion and limited access to their own culture.

So, in conclusion it could be said that the 20th century was responsible for forming Lithuania's opinion about Russia but not about the Russian minority. Both parts, the majority and the minority, managed to differentiate between the politics of Russia and the individual aspects. Dissolution of the USSR has left thousands of people looking for their identities or trying to integrate. Even though the Russianization processes happened, Lithuanians remained loyal to their identity and were not affected completely by the soft power applied by the USSR. The massive decision to opt for Lithuanian nationalities in 1991 also revealed that the Russian citizens, even though subjected to the soft power, were not strongly influenced by it..

8.2. *Soft power*

Soft power results generally revealed the two-sidedness of the situation. Generally, comparing Crimea with Visaginas showed that Russian soft power works in a similar way in the Russian populated regions, most of the attention being paid to the language´s influence. The minorities are usually approached through the media, various activities, education. In these cases Crimea does not differ from Visaginas. However, on the other hand, it should be noted that Visaginas is in a country that belongs to the Eurozone, EU and NATO. This means that it is affected not only by soft power coming from the Russian Federation, but also by soft power coming from the EU. The benefits coming from belonging to the "Western world", like security, open borders, common currency, to some extent, are soft power influences. This means that people-to-people level does not work as effectively as it could because Lithuania is strongly pro-West (Kojala, Zukauskas, 2015, p. 186). Thus, it could be said that Visaginas might be affected by two soft powers while Crimea was experiencing a very strong, ongoing soft power coming from the Russian Federation.

Overall, this research showed that soft power is a current and very popular tool of expanding country's influence. This case focused specifically on Russia, which puts a lot of importance on the language policies. Having in mind that Russian is one of the most spoken languages in the world, Russia's choice of strengthening the language even more is very smart. The emotional connection that language gives to an individual guarantees the success of soft power. It could be said that language is the dominant aspect in all soft power applied by Russia in general. It is counting on the media, press, culture, various celebrations. All of these aspects are united by the language, thus it could be concluded that Russian language is the most powerful tool in terms of soft power.

8.3.   Integration

The integration of the Russian minority to Lithuanian society can be seen as two sided. From my own, subjective prism, I could claim that I have noticed various examples of the Russians feeling a complete part of the Lithuanian society and others still struggling to admit that the USSR does not exist anymore. As a result, the situation in Lithuania is still very versatile. However, overall, the integration level is quite high.

This means that naturally, a "forced" integration has happened as there are not that many Russian communities and now the minority needs to approach the majority. On the other hand, gap between Russians and Lithuanian Russians can be felt. It can be related to the general idea sovietisation as its final goal was creating people who could not identify with their former ethnicities. This means that many Russians are not necessarily the same Russians as in the Russian Federation because they are more related and attached to Lithuania. Historically, they are Soviet, not Russian citizens. Thus, even though it is sometimes perceived as a threat, its physical capabilities should be taken into consideration while trying to predict its behaviour. As for now, the minority itself is not a strong power and does not have many chances on growing. Such a widespread, small population would not stand many chances in becoming and actual physical danger. What is more, the decline in the Russian schools and Russians choosing education in Lithuanian are the signals of the Russian minority shifting towards the Lithuanian education and in this way, integrating and assimilating into the society. As a consequence, even though the minority might not agree with some of the educational policies in Lithuania, the fact that majority of the Russian nationals opt for the Lithuanian schools show the strong integration. On the other hand, by closing the schools of minorities, Lithuania itself is challenging the minorities and simply does not leave them any other options. Thus, to some extent a forced integration could be created.

The same could have been noticed in the politics. The support to the Lithuanian-based parties shows how well integrated the minority is. It could be interpreted in the way that the minority feels represented by the majority's parties. On the other hand, the parties supported are the ones that still include non-Russian nationals and oppose the rightists, who were known as the biggest critics of communism. In such a way, the minority, indirectly is supporting the minorities in politics yet manages to remain pro-Lithuanian. However, even this type of support does not help to avoid the homogeneity in the parliament. On the other hand, the fact that it is possible not to state one´s nationality also contributes to the homogeneity of the Lithuanian parliament. An assumption can be made that the candidates

consciously choose not to state their nationalities sometimes as it might be seen as an actual obstacle for the career. So, it could be concluded that the Russian minority is not showing any specific behaviour that would be of a great concern in the context of politics. Still, it is quite actively participating in the political life of Lithuania. This shows that it wants to be a part of the decision-making of the country.

Two-sidedness can also be noticed in the traditional celebrations. The choice of the Russian minority and other Lithuanians to publicly support the Victory day or organize Russian culture days shows the presence of freedom of speech in Lithuania when it comes to the minorities. However, it also reveals that a part of the Russian minority is still strongly attached to the Russian values and history as they decide to celebrate a date that Lithuania considers a crime. In this case, the Russian minority actually appears as a soft power. It does not only keep up with the Russian traditions, by making them public, it is spreading the influence and Russian values. As a result, in the cases like this, one can see a division between the Lithuanians and Russians.

However, it is needed to highlight the fact that almost half of the Russian minority's population was born in Lithuania, thus they are automatically not only Lithuanian but also European Union's citizens. The EU membership is somewhat a guarantee that "Baltic minority policies would remain in line with international standards" (Ehin, Berg, 2009, p.4). In other words, these citizens have the opportunity to enjoy the benefits that are coming from the EU, NATO's protection. No need for visa, open borders are one of many advantages that the Russians of Lithuania and the Baltics can enjoy and would not necessarily like to lose. In this way, Russians of Lithuania might still be preserving their culture but also keeping up with Lithuanian and European values due to political situation of Lithuania.

While discussing Lithuania´s approach it is needed to pay attention to its juridical behaviour. Firstly, the fact that there is no present law at the moment might indicate that there is no actual need and concern to define the rights of the minorities. What is more, the various subordinate legislations are available and they are replacing the previous law. On the other hand, this can also show the irresponsibility and lack of accountability of the government of Lithuania in terms of its minorities. Not renewed law can indicate that the minorities and their rights are not seen as of great concern. In this way, the ignorant behaviour of the state towards these groups is clear to see. The ignorance could have been noticed while focusing on the labour market. The issues of the unemployment of the national minorities are not considered of a serious importance as they are not tracked anymore.

The public media aspect is also worth discussing. The amount of media options available shows that culturally Lithuania is not forbidding or limiting the access to the sources from the Russian Federation. If some limitations occur they are directly related to misinformation. However, Lithuanian media itself might spread some negativity regarding Russian minority. It is worrying due to the fact that media is able to form a public opinion.

It should not be surprising that Russia is paying a lot of attention to its minorities. Seemingly, close geographical and historical ties between Russia and Lithuania can result in more attention for the minority as it is also easier to reach and approach. On the other hand, Russia itself understands that the minorities in the Baltics are different from the other minorities in the "near abroad". As the official website of the Russian council writes: "the Russians in each of the Baltic countries are different, they have their own characteristics that must be considered" (Смирнов, 2012). Thus, the Russian minority, to some extent, is a threat to Russia itself. It is seen as not that attached to Russia. As Smirnov (Смирнов, 2012) poses a rhetorical question: "Yes, New Year and 9 May is still their main holidays, but for how long?" As a consequence, the promotion of Russian language might result in a more positive appreciation of Russia. This could also be applied to the minority in Lithuania, as in general it is expected (from both sides) to be more supportive to the Russian Federation just because of the common language. Generally, the existence of Russian cultural centres could be the consequence of Russia´s diasporas possible cultural or emotional distance from their homeland. However, it is also needed to note that Russia is not the only country establishing cultural centres in order to promote its cultural values and language. British Council, Cervantes Institute are also examples of the promotion of specific country´s values. Noticeably, a conclusion that these types of cultural centres only exist in order to indoctrinate the society and strengthen Russia's soft power should not be drawn. However, the disagreement to cooperate and explain the sources of funding unfortunately creates a quite negative image of these non-governmental organizations. What is more, and then they are actually expected to be related to Russia´s propaganda and its indoctrination of the minorities in the close abroad. As a consequence, the existence of funds like this, that are not completely open to the public investigation, strengthens the possibility of Russia using the minority as a tool for influence within a country.

8.4.   Crimea

Lithuania has been taking any kind of aggression towards Ukraine seriously. What is more, it is an example of how the country is trying to protect its own ethnic minorities, namely Russophone, as they are the main target of the Russian media. Blocking of specific TV

channels, open Ukraine´s advocating and general concern over the situation might also be influential for the Russian diaspora.

However, the results also revealed that Lithuania´s minorities are supportive of both, Lithuania and Russia. Nevertheless, due to the fact that minorities still mostly get informed by the Russian media, their support towards Russia´s actions is understandable. It could be said that they are indoctrinated. However, the numbers are not that significant having in mind that the biggest part of Lithuanian society is pro-Ukrainian. Thus, the fact that some people are pro-Russian, especially if they are of Russian origin should not be surprising. It is rather normal. The same could be applied for people feeling pro-European.

8.5.   Can this lead to a possible conflict/clash?

8.5.1.   Lithuania´s measures

At this very moment, Lithuanian – Russian relations could not be considered friendly. There is a growing tension between countries especially because of Lithuania's willingness to be as independent as possible. Lithuania's decision to support Ukraine also contributed to even worse relations between the neighbours. As a result, it should be of no surprise that this could escalate to an even bigger conflict. The dissatisfaction of Russia can be seen from various examples. The suggestion from one of the Duma's deputies to simply terminate diplomatic relations with Lithuania is a perfect instance ("Russian Communist Party offers to terminate diplomatic ties with Lithuania", 2014). According to N. Kolomeytsev ("Russian Communist Party offers to terminate diplomatic ties with Lithuania", 2014), Lithuania's president's support to Ukraine and calling Russia a terrorist state is unacceptable. Instances like this show how relatively easy it is to destabilize the diplomatic relations between these two countries.

One can notice the growing fears and tension in the region just by analysing Lithuania's actions. Not only it is seeking for the support from NATO, it is also counting a lot on its neighbours and seeking for the military partnerships. Generally, the whole Eastern region is worried about Russia's military actions. The current position of Russia was described as "continuing aggressive posturing" by the states (Szary, 2015). As a consequence, Lithuania together with Poland and Ukraine, is considering the creation of the joint military brigade, which would possibly be called "UkrPolLitBrig" ("Ukraine, Poland, and Lithuania planning to create joint military brigade", 2014). The examples like this prove that the country and the whole region are seeing the threats from Russia as possible. Thus, the question is raising: is

Lithuania waiting for the war? Another example, that proves that the Baltic region is preparing for the worst is the idea of creating a "jointly operated mid-range missile defence system" (DeGhett, 2015). These ideas for cooperation also indicate that Lithuania considers itself too weak to resist to the possible intervention and is looking for strategical partners. All in all, Lithuania is expecting to have an alliance powerful enough to fight against Russia ("Military reforms bolster Russian army to 'unprecedented levels'", 2015).

On the other hand, as L. Donskis (2015) claims, Lithuania is waiting for the war that has already stopped. On one hand, it is understandable why Lithuania might fear Russia's intervention, due to its current actions in Ukraine, however, the fact that Lithuania is a part of the EU and NATO should not be ignored. As L. Donskis (2015) states, Lithuania is very intertwined with the Western World. Even though the country has many fears that in case of Russian intervention it would not receive the Western support and would be left alone, it is necessary to understand that then NATO and the USA would lose the global leadership and their image if they did not defend Lithuania (Donskis, 2015). Thus, a conclusion could be drawn, that Lithuania is "safer" than Ukraine in the possible Russia's aggression's scenario. It is also more protected already, compared to Ukraine. And NATO keeps on strengthening its military force in the region. In October it even launched one of the biggest military trainings in ten years (Emmot, 2015). The organisation is concerned about the growing armaments of the Russian Federation in the region, especially in Kaliningrad. However, it is not considered as an actual preparation for the war. The current situation could be described as extra security measures. As the commander of the USA Europe Army ("U.S. Army commander warns of Russian blocking of Baltic defence", 2015) states: "coming and freeing our Allies is much more expensive than deterrence". Thus, it means that the region is getting ready "just in case" Russia wants to intervene.

Growing fears of Lithuania can also be illustrated by the numbers. The country has dramatically increased its military spending as of 2015. It is planned, that in 2016, Lithuania will spend 35% more only on military and safety ("Leadership: Lithuania pays to play and survive", 2015). Together with the military expenses comes the conscription which was also re-introduced in 2015. As a consequence, "at least 3,000 men a year will be called up for nine months service (mostly training) and then become reservists" ("Leadership: Lithuania pays to play and survive", 2015). Even though this new policy has caused a lot of dissatisfaction from the society, it has also showed that Lithuanians are becoming more and more concerned with the safety of their country as many young men decided to volunteer in the army. Together with an increased national army, the troops from NATO will strengthen the country as it is

planned to send extra 4000 troops to the Baltic States and Poland (Parfitt, 2015). At this very moment, "The U.S. Army <…> has two infantry brigades based in Eastern Europe, totalling approximately 7,000 soldiers" ("US military leaders propose sending more forces to Europe to deter Russia", 2015). To add more, Lithuania is asking for even bigger military enforcement from its allies. Recently it has requested for Strykers and other military equipment (Judson, 2015). These actions show how seriously Lithuania is taking the current situation in the region.

Meanwhile, Russia is openly proclaiming only peaceful coexistence with its neighbours. As the president V. Putin claimed at one of the national Russian radio stations, there is no wish to re-establish the old empire of the USSR as it would go against the fact that Russia itself destroyed the Soviet Union ("V. Putinas: „Neturime jokio noro atkurti imperija ar SSRS", 2015). Thus, as from the perspective of Russia, the actions in Ukraine should not be considered as anything close to the expansion to the old territories of the USSR. However, this does not reduce the concerns Lithuania is having.

However, the fact that Lithuania is a member of NATO and EU should not be forgotten. Lithuania is a part of one of the most powerful military unions in the world. It has all the rights to be protected under the Article 5 of NATO. As a political activist Gary Kasparov (Goble, 2015) suggests, the Baltics would be invaded only if Russia was close to collapse. The Western strength is still a threat to Russia and as a result it is choosing weaker targets, like Ukraine (Goble, 2015). As a result, the help of NATO for the country is essential. One of the biggest benefits is the fact that bigger presence of NATO also gives a safety feeling. It is shown to Russia that even considering attacking the region is dangerous due to the strength of the alliance defending Lithuania and the other two Baltic states (Kaupinis, 2015). On the other hand, the constant reinforcement of NATO bases in Eastern Europe might call for a conflict as such. By some scholars it is also equalised to an occupation. For example, Joaquin Flores, director of the Centre for Syncretic Studies in Serbia, highlighted that: "it's a US military occupation of these states which it feels it's losing control over and it's using Russia, the phantom menace of Russian aggression, as a pretext to continued military occupation of other sovereign states" ("US 'occupying' Eastern Europe using 'Russian aggression' as pretext: analyst", 2015). To make it worse, it is also illegal because of the treaty signed between the Baltics and Russia in the aftermath of the Cold War. Even though Putin is claimed to have already breached the treaty, this still does not mean that NATO or Lithuania itself have a legal right to arm the borders ("Baltics finally aligning on energy security", 2015).

The fact that Lithuania and Russia's relations have never been stable should be taken into consideration as well. After the fall of the USSR, Lithuania regained its independence; however, Russia was seen as the successor of the USSR. Thus, it is still held as accountable for all the crimes done by the Soviet Russia. As a result, Lithuania, together with the Baltics, is preparing to ask for the financial compensation for the war crimes. This action can also trigger the relations between the countries. As the Russian deputy D. Rogozin stated: "the only motivation behind all foreign policy of the Baltic States is to look for new excuses to start a conflict with Russia" ("Dead donkey's ears': Russian deputy PM scorns 'occupation' damages claim by Baltic States", 2015).

On the other hand, one could say that the Lithuanian-Russian conflict has been escalating since the countries took different paths back in 1991. It is quite common, that from time to time the Russian Federation "teases" Lithuania by entering its airspace or arranging military practices right next to its borders in the enclave of Kaliningrad. Already in 2005, a decade ago, Russia was repeatedly violating NATO's controlled airspace (Ehin, Berg, 2009, p.4). This had resulted in a shot Russian plane however the conflict did not escalate any further. As a result, an assumption could be made, that the current situation is not leading to a war situation either.

As Ehin and Berg (2009, p.7) suggest, the reasons why sometimes the clashes seem so close are the very diverse backgrounds of the leaders of the Baltics. In case of Lithuania, it has undergone different types of presidencies. Obviously, under the rule of a former communist, A. Brazauskas, the country had better relations than later on, when V. Adamkus took over. A very Westernized, émigré, president was more focused on Lithuanian-EU relations, thus, the gap between the neighbours was growing. Finally, the current president, D. Grybauskaitė, is very well known for her anti-Russian approaches. She has been trying to make Lithuania as independent from Russia as possible. The open condemns of Russia's foreign policies, decision to stop energetic cooperation are a few examples of quite harsh foreign policies towards Russia. As a result, the general idea of countries being too different has been created.

9. Conclusion

All in all, summarizing this research is quite challenging due to its broad scope that involves legal, political, social aspects as well as soft power and Crimean crisis. However, this research revealed that the Crimean scenario is not likely to repeat itself in Lithuania. Even though Lithuania´s minority is affected by Russia´s soft power, it was found out that the cases are too different.

To begin with, the Russian minority is relatively small compared to Lithuania's population itself, thus it is not capable of becoming an actual threat (Kriaučionytė, 2006). The minority amounts to a little bit more than five percent of the total population and is widespread, thus it should not be seen as danger as it is highly doubted that it can organize itself. What is more, the fact that a big part of the minority was born in Lithuania or has spent at least a few decades in the country and opted for the citizenship is crucial. Nevertheless, it should not be argued that the minority is not at all affected by soft power. It is directly exposed to Russian media and press, thus misinformation processes are happening. What is more, the linguistic connection is very strong as it helps to create warmer feelings towards the homeland. Generally, the Russian minority could be described as stuck between two completely different worlds. On the one hand it is expected to behave as compatriot, Russians and keep up with Russian values. On the other hand they are also expected to be quite integrated into the society they are living in and accept Lithuanian values. It is quite common for the identity of the minority members to be lost in cases like this. They turned into Russian citizens from Soviet citizens, who afterwards accepted Lithuanian nationality and finally, after Lithuania joined the EU, they also became citizens of the EU. Thus the search for their lost identity could be expected. However, it should not be implied that the Russian minority will become a threat because of its identity search. Finally, the collective memory might also play a big role in the way the minority is approached. The constant relation to the harmful soviet past is a negative influence. The minority, to some extent, is the only living memory of the communist regime. As a result, it is directly perceived as threat and danger. This represents the idea of the memory politics and is one of the main reasons why the minority might not feel welcome in Lithuania or could be perceived as danger.

Secondly, soft power proved to be a phenomena practised by Russia in its near abroad. Comparing Lithuania with Ukraine showed that the general stability and country´s political approach also determine how soft power applied by Russia is going to work and what kind of soft power is going to be applied. Ukraine, due to its even closer historical and linguistic ties

with Russia has been exposed to more soft power. Probably, it has also been more vulnerable. Lithuania´s membership in the EU and NATO have "protected" it from Russia´s soft power and exposed the country to the Western soft power. Meanwhile Ukraine barely had this option. As a result, it could be concluded that despite the similar conditions that both countries have for soft power to be applied (presence of Russian minority, wide use of Russian language, widely promoted Russian media and press, understanding of Russian culture, territory with heavily concentrated Russian speakers) Ukraine is the more vulnerable one. The faster shift of Lithuania to the West protected it from too many close ties with the Russian Federation.

Overall, it could be said that Lithuania and Russia have never had perfect relations. The fact that Russia is an official successor of the USSR means that for Lithuania, its neighbour will always be associated with a very dark and sad historical period. What is more, Russia´s will to control its near abroad and protect the Russians living there will be seen as a direct threat to Lithuania´s independence. On the other hand, Russia is not expected to take any important actions against Lithuania due to the fact that its soft power is affecting Lithuania in a different way than it was in Ukraine. There is a part of Russian minority that is supporting Russia; however, this Russian minority also belongs to the EU. This could be a reason for a division within the minority itself.

Thus, all in all, I would like to conclude that the Russian minority is not a danger for Lithuania and will not be a cause of Lithuanian-Russian conflict.

10. Recommendations

Finally, the research will suggest some recommendations for Lithuania and its Russian minority. To add more, the second part of this chapter will discuss what else could be done in order to deepen the research.

10.1. What should Lithuania do?

To start with, Lithuania as a state should start paying more attention to the Russian minority as well as to its other minorities. No presence of minority laws and no current data on the minorities show that at the moment the minorities of Lithuania are still not perceived important. There is not enough attention paid to them. As a consequence, the laws on the minorities should be revised and renewed. The issues of the minorities should be considered to be equally important and receive enough attention. This would also help the minorities integrate and increase their acceptance.

Secondly, more attention should be paid to the city of Visaginas. Even though the results and analysis sections showed that Visaginas is not as problematic as Crimea, the fact that more than half of the city´s population is of Russian origin and Russian is the main language used in the region should concern Lithuania. The city has the perfect conditions for Russia´s soft power to flourish.

Thirdly, Lithuania should continue increasing its independence from Russia. The establishment of its own LNG terminal has been one of the biggest steps so far. However, country´s economy is still highly dependent on the Russian market which is relatively dangerous economically.

Fourthly, the country should also remain tolerant toward its minorities. The fact that Lithuania allows Russian celebrations and other various events to happen also helps to foster better relations between the minority and the general Lithuanian society. It is important to strengthen the integration; however, the Russian minority should be allowed to preserve its own cultural heritage too.

10.2. What more should be done for this research?

The research generally had quite some limitations due to the fact that there were no interviews conducted as well as no sign of quantitative research which would have been beneficial. As a result, in order to improve the research and make it more academic, the

consultations with the experts should be done. What is more, it would be useful to pay more attention to the actual situation of the minority in Lithuania by either surveying, interviewing it or creating a focus group. These things would help to present a more realistic view of the current situation.

What is more, it is needed to add that the research should present more case studies. In order to see more examples of Russia using its soft power, it would be beneficial to research another similar cases, for instance in Georgia. The situations of the Baltic States should also be taken for consideration. Lithuania is the only one out of three with a relatively small minority. As a consequence, it would be useful to compare and contrast Lithuania to the other two Baltic States which have bigger Russian minorities.

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