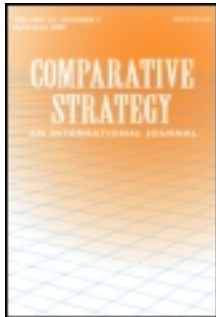


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# Russia and the Baltic States: Is Russian Imperialism Dead?

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*Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, Russia has been trying to define its identity in an ever-changing international security environment where it has seen itself as a great power. This belief is further conveyed through Russia's attempts to influence the policies of other states in the region, most notably those in the near abroad including Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia (i.e. the Baltic countries), which are regarded as part of Russia's sphere of influence. For Russia, and previously the Soviet Union, the Baltic countries were seen as a buffer zone against Western encroachment. Through a number of policies and policy levers (i.e. diplomatic pressure, propaganda and disinformation campaigns, military threats and peacekeeping deployments, economic leverage and energy controls, exploiting ethnic and social discontent, and discrediting governments via political influence and penetrating intelligence services), Russia has tried to maintain its influence upon them in order to manipulate their foreign, security and domestic strategies, and thus far, it has been unsuccessful in its attempts to do so.*

The stability and security of states in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union has always been of interest to many in the West and to Russia. Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, Russia has been trying to define its identity in an ever-changing international security environment.

For centuries, Russia has seen itself as a great power. But, overnight in 1991, the power of the Soviet Union, and therefore of Russia, disappeared, leaving the country suffering from what is called a greatness syndrome, or the “desire of the populace to live in a superior nation.”<sup>1</sup> Russia continued to see itself as a great power and to explain the country's status through its historical past and traditions, including: “its rich literary and music accomplishments; its large educated class; and in some cases, its spiritual, cultural, and moral superiority over the rest of the world.”<sup>2</sup> This belief is further conveyed through the attempts by Russia's leaders to influence the policies of other states in the region, most notably those in the near abroad.

The current regime of President Vladimir Putin (the former president and now prime minister) does not publicly use the term “near abroad.” This expression refers to the former Soviet republics, including Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia (i.e., the Baltic countries), which are regarded as part of Russia's sphere of influence: “This point of view is based on several factors (historic, demographic, political and geographic) that place [these three states] closer to the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) than to the states of Central Europe.”<sup>3</sup>

One might ask, how has the great power syndrome affected Russian policy toward the near abroad, or in particular the Baltic countries? How has Russia tried to influence and manipulate the foreign and security policies of the three Baltic countries? What leverage does it have on these countries? Has it tried to influence their policies? Has it succeeded?

Russia, and previously the Soviet Union, saw the Baltic countries as a buffer zone against western encroachment.<sup>4</sup> Russian leaders still seem to believe that the Baltic countries

are a part of Russia's sphere of influence. Through a number of policies and policy levers, Moscow has tried to maintain its influence upon them in order to manipulate their foreign, security, and domestic strategies. A policy lever is a tool and/or instrument "of power that can be used by an agent [in this case a state like Russia] to pressure another actor [the Baltic countries] in order to influence a policy outcome or to make a statement."<sup>5</sup> So far Russia has been unsuccessful in its attempts to do so.

## The Policy Levels

In his book *Cold Peace: Russia's New Imperialism*, Janusz Bugajski argues that Russia continues to "try to influence each country's foreign and security policies, benefit from local political, ethnic, subregional, religious, and social rivalries, to limit the progress of military integration with the United States, and to obstruct forms of regional cooperation that countered Russia's objectives to reestablish its zone of influence."<sup>6</sup> Richard Krickus further summarized the goals defined in Bugajski's book as follows:

1. *Expand foreign policy influence*—Developing the exclusive right to influence the foreign policy and "security postures of nearby states that were formerly in the Soviet zone of influence."<sup>7</sup>
2. *Promote economic monopolization*—This entails targeting foreign investment and strategic infrastructure to gain economic benefits.
3. *Consolidate political [and economic] dependence*—"Increasing East European dependence on Russian energy supplies and capital investments."<sup>8</sup>
4. *Limit Western enlargement*—Limiting the ability of the United States, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and other Western institutions from expanding and influencing other states in what Russia feels is its sphere of influence.
5. *Rebuild global influence*—Using Eastern Europe as a launching pad into Europe to redevelop its great power status, and therefore, a larger sphere of influence.
6. *Eliminate U.S. unipolarity*—Systematically weakening or restricting the relationship between the United States and its European allies.<sup>9</sup>

Based on these six goals, Bugajski and Krickus argue that Russia uses certain policy levers or tools, in combination or individually, that will be used in this paper to prove that Russia attempts to influence the foreign and domestic policies of the Baltic countries, including: diplomatic pressure, propaganda and disinformation campaigns, military threats and peacekeeping deployments, economic leverage and energy controls, exploiting ethnic and social discontent, and discrediting governments via political influence and penetrating intelligence services.<sup>10</sup> Table 1 provides examples of the policies used by Russia.

## Diplomatic Pressure

Diplomatic pressure is used to increase Russian influence politically and reduce the ability of its neighbors to engage in an independent foreign policy and regional cooperation initiatives excluding Russia. According to Bugajski, this form of international pressure is used primarily against states that were once part of the former Soviet Union. "High level and sometimes ostentatious visits by Russian dignitaries or the deliberate snubbing of certain governments, serve as standard diplomatic devices to extract concessions and voice disapproval for specific foreign policies."<sup>11</sup>

Treaties and other international agreements are another form of manipulation and intimidation. Although the government of Russia may enter into a bilateral treaty, that does not mean treaty ratification will occur quickly. Many times the Russian Duma has delayed or

**Table 1**  
Examples of Incidents of Foreign Policy Levers Used to Influence the Baltic Countries

Country	Diplomatic Pressure	Propaganda and Disinformation Campaigns	Military Threats and Peacekeeping Deployments	Economic Leverage and Energy Controls	Exploiting Ethnic and Social Discontent	Discrediting Governments via Political Influence and Penetrating Intelligence Services
Lithuania	Changing ambassadors with connections to energy companies	Borisov—use of newspapers to fight against disinformation		1. Borisov—use of companies he owned to funnel money from Russian intelligence services trying to control Mažeikių Nafta by stopping oil shipments 2. Energy companies		Paksas—impeachment due to relationship with Borisov
Latvia	Russia not ratifying border treaty	Campaigns against government		Pressure for control of Ventspils Nafta		
Estonia	Russia not ratifying border treaty	Campaigns against government		1. Control of energy 2. Internet attacks stopping all commerce	Demonstrations of ethnic Russians after the moving of the WWII Memorial	

postponed a ratification vote without objection from the executive branch. Such resistance from the Duma has occurred to hide Russia's noncompliance. "This was reminiscent of the 'good cop-bad cop' routine and was intended to extract maximum concessions from the targeted country by gaining greater advantage from reworking any interstate accord."<sup>12</sup>

Not only is the Duma ratification process used as a tool of diplomatic pressure, but so is the Duma, which is able to influence the public and political climate surrounding certain foreign policy issues. Frequent antagonistic statements in the Russian media by deputies or leaders of political parties have had the effect of demonstrating for many Eastern European leaders that Moscow can take a very hard line, while at the same time making the executive branch appear to be more accommodating.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Propaganda and Disinformation Campaigns***

Propaganda and disinformation campaigns leveraging Russian and international media, both newspapers and TV are still used to influence public opinion throughout the region and, particularly, in Russia. Since coming to power, the Putin regime made incremental steps to take control of the media. In some cases direct control was not achieved, but major businessmen with ties to the Kremlin have bought these outlets. Through its media control, the Kremlin can influence the information provided by many major news media outlets in the former Soviet Union to "air opinion, commentaries and discussion that enhance Moscow's foreign policy offensives."<sup>14</sup>

One prime example was the campaign opposing NATO expansion to the borders of the former Soviet Union. The Russian press "frequently cited U.S. and European commentators who [spoke] out against NATO enlargement on the grounds that it will undermine relations with Moscow by making the Alliance more anti-Russia."<sup>15</sup> Bugajski writes that Russian officials and media continually used the argument that any threats to Russian security or efforts to isolate it would encourage extremist groups to challenge the current moderate administration.<sup>16</sup>

In the case of the Baltic countries, such information campaigns attempted to discredit the Baltic governments and their supporters.

### ***Military Threats and Peacekeeping Deployments***

Military threats and peacekeeping have been a form of coercion and control since the breakup of the Soviet Union. Bugajski separates these two types of levers, but for our purposes here, they are one variable.

Moscow employed military threats primarily to oppose to policies in Eastern Europe. NATO expansion is one such issue that Russia warned would cause a renewed arms race. Russian policymakers threatened to withdraw from arms control treaties, maintain tactical nuclear weapons in the western regions of Russia near the Baltic countries, and form a military pact within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).<sup>17</sup> "The threats themselves highlight Eastern European contentions that Russia had not resigned itself to a loss of control in the region even though Moscow did not possess the capabilities to stage a massive rearmament against the 'NATO Threat.'"<sup>18</sup>

Peacekeeping can also be used as a form of military threat. Russia considers itself a protector of stability in the former Soviet Union. Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, Russia either "... fomented, orchestrated or capitalized on rebellions in neighboring CIS states and then pressed for the injection of Russian troops as long-term peacekeepers."<sup>19</sup> By becoming the main regional peacekeeping force, Russia promotes its policies by deciding

which side it should support, when it should mediate, and when it should try to become the neutral peacekeeper. Because of these policies, many governments in the region feel that they cannot resist. They end up facing either "... a domestic war and territorial disintegration or foreign occupation disguised as peacekeeping."<sup>20</sup> The three Baltic countries are not affected by peacekeeping because there are no civil wars or conflicts and they do not have Russian troops permanently based on their territories.

### ***Economic Leverage and Energy Controls***

Moscow uses economic leverage to win concession from several states in the region, especially from those dependent upon Russia for certain goods or products. Bugajski labels this the "politicization of economics," the objective of which is to trap states into a network of financial and commercial ties that allow Russia to control their policies.<sup>21</sup>

By allowing or encouraging Russian entities with ties to the Kremlin to purchase or acquire a high percentage in strategic industries, Moscow is able to achieve some form of control of neighboring countries. One example is the highly touted Russian energy sector. The Putin administration has put a very high priority on this industry because it provides Russia with the needed resources to rebuild its economy, its military capabilities, its foreign reach and, therefore, its superpower status. Much of the energy sector is currently controlled by the state-owned Russian energy giant, Gazprom. Not only does the Russian state have its own energy company, but many companies also have Russian government officials or businessmen with ties to the Kremlin on their boards, and this allows the Kremlin to directly influence the decisions of these companies.<sup>22</sup>

Both Gazprom and the pipeline firm Transneft have bought controlling shares in the energy transportation system in Eastern Europe. They also have agreed to form joint ventures with several Eastern and Western European companies, providing the Kremlin with additional influence in the region.<sup>23</sup>

### ***Exploiting Ethnic and Social Discontent***

There are a large number of Russian ethnics or Russian-speakers residing in the CIS. Many are permanent residents and some, like those in the three Baltic countries, are considered a minority. Russian minorities in Estonia and Latvia are larger than the Russian population in Lithuania (See table 2)

Several things are important to note about the Table 2. First, the Russian population in 1989 was larger. Oftentimes, the Soviet census would exaggerate the actual number of

**Table 2**  
Russian Minorities in the Baltic Countries

Country	Total Number of Ethnic Russians	Percentage of Total Population	Year of Census or Estimation	Russian Population in 1989	Percentage of Population in 1989
Estonia	351,178	25.6	2000	500,000	30.3
Latvia	684,657	29.2	2002	900,000	33.8
Lithuania	219,789	6.3	2001	300,000	9.4

*Source:* Jakob Hedenskog and Robert L. Larson, *Russian Leverage on the CIS and the Baltic States* (Stockholm: Swedish Defense Research Agency, 2007), p. 31.

Russians within the population. The trend in the Soviet Union was toward assimilation, and many who were of mixed origin identified themselves as Russian. After independence, this changed and many started to identify with the country they lived in.<sup>24</sup>

Russia has used these large ethnic Russian populations to sow discontent and, therefore, influence the local government to adopt a policy that is more to Moscow's liking. Moscow has tried to force many nations in the near abroad to provide a more important status to the local ethnic Russian population, while at the same time labeling them victims. Russia also uses this ethnic population to cause instability through the creation of secessionist enclaves. Such scenarios have allowed Russian troops to enter the region as peacekeepers and thereby control the outcome and policies of that state.<sup>25</sup>

Local Russian populations have also been used to promote uncertainty by arguing that they are a mistreated minority. "Persistent allegations of mistreatment enables Moscow to use the issue as a bargaining chip in dealing with questions such as military deployments, economic and trade relations, diplomatic recognition, and qualifications for membership in international organizations."<sup>26</sup>

### ***Discrediting Governments via Political Influence and Penetrating Intelligence Services***

Over the years Moscow has tried to weaken, destabilize, or even demoralize the democratically elected pro-Western governments in the near abroad. One of NATO's requirements for accession is a stable, democratically-elected government. Moscow has tried to undermine efforts by new states to meet this criteria. "This has involved media campaigns and the promotion of alternative political parties that can expound the policies closer to Russia's goals."<sup>27</sup>

Moscow has used Russian companies in Eastern Europe to form political parties in order to impact policymaking procedures of local governments.<sup>28</sup> It has also used these same companies to develop public relations campaigns to influence or replace governments that oppose Russian policies.<sup>29</sup> Russia has used its highly developed security services to funnel monies to these same parties through connections established during the late-Soviet period.

### **Schools, Interests, and Threat Perceptions**

How have these processes developed? We will now explore the development of these levers in terms of the different schools or historical phases of thought that affected the development of Russian foreign policy. The thinking within each of these schools and/or historical phases can also be described in terms of Russian perceptions of mutual threats and national interests or in terms of geopolitical and geostrategic concepts.<sup>30</sup>

### ***What is National Interest?***

One concept that has always affected Russian foreign policy is the somewhat vague concept of national interest. It is as if one could say that Russian foreign policy is demonstratively linked to domestic politics. For the purposes of this paper, national interest can be defined as "the common good of a society within the boundaries of a nation-state."<sup>31</sup> Foreign policy is therefore best described as a way to "ensure the objective of defending the national interest, and, hence, simultaneously strengthening the national identity."<sup>32</sup> This mobilizes domestic

society.<sup>33</sup> There are several reasons why mobilization occurs. First, national interests are shared by all members of domestic society no matter what ethnic, religious, or class affiliation. Second, foreign policies designed to defend the national interest are not subject to the same standards used to make decisions regarding other policy areas. Third, foreign policy can be very emotional and, therefore, can elicit either a positive or negative reaction depending upon how it can affect the national interest. Finally, foreign policy can help bring to the surface leaders who are strong and charismatic and “portray themselves as the only effective defenders of the national idea.”<sup>34</sup>

### ***Westernizers or Atlanticist School***

For the first couple of years after the breakup of the Soviet Union, the Westernizers or Atlanticists, a school favoring cooperation with both the West and Western institutions, influenced Russian foreign policy.<sup>35</sup> As champions of this school, both President Boris Yeltsin and his Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev sought to integrate Russia into the global economy. Their policies defined the Russian national interest “in terms of forming a partnership with the West, while focusing primarily on the United States.”<sup>36</sup> It was a form of withdrawal in which Russia reduced expensive economic and military engagement beyond its current borders. “Domestic economic reforms had highest priority; economic aspects predominated, and eventual military, strategic and geopolitical interests had only low priority.”<sup>37</sup> Former Soviet troops inherited by Russia, and not nationalized by the newly independent states, were withdrawn.<sup>38</sup>

Many in the former Soviet Union saw the policies of Westernizers like Kozyrev as a continuation of Gorbachev’s policies of new political thinking. They were an “idealistic strain which put less emphasis on Russia’s national interests than it did on common human values that were to be assured through international norms and institutions.”<sup>39</sup> Kozyrev believed that states were the primary actors in the international system and that their interests reflected their actions and behavior. This is why he stressed the importance of a strategic relationship with the United States.<sup>40</sup>

Although both Yeltsin and Kozyrev backed the United States in terms of its international agenda and even considered joining the West, there seemed to be movement against these policies. Both were accused of selling out Russia’s interests to accommodate the West.<sup>41</sup> Changes began in early 1992 when the International Monetary Fund (IMF) required Russia to conduct economic “shock therapy,” where price controls were lifted at once and the economy was left to run on its own. This led to very severe economic hardship for many ordinary Russians who were disillusioned with Western aid.<sup>42</sup> This school was completely abandoned when NATO expanded into Eastern Europe and invited former members of the Warsaw Pact and the Baltic countries as members. Many saw this expansion as an effort by the West to encircle Russia.<sup>43</sup>

This caused many Russians to voice their reaction during the 1993 parliamentary elections, when many parties, such as the Communists and other reactionary groups, won the majority. After the election, Yeltsin and Kozyrev moved more toward a moderate postimperial form of “geopolitics known as *derzhavnost* (aspirations of a great power status).”<sup>44</sup> Kozyrev termed this new policy toward the near abroad the Yeltsin Doctrine or the “Russian Monroe Doctrine.” This, like the U.S. Monroe Doctrine, “recognized Russia’s vital interests and special role in the former republics of the Soviet Union and legitimizes Russian intervention to protect them, by military means where deemed necessary.”<sup>45</sup> The doctrine provided the opportunity for Russia to legitimize its case for peacekeeping activities



within international organizations such as the Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). This doctrine was finalized into the 1993 National Security Concept, which encouraged an active role for Russia in the near abroad while still emphasizing a cooperative relationship with the West.<sup>46</sup>

### ***The Eurasianist School***

The “Russian Monroe Doctrine” brought to an end the influence of the Westernizer school of foreign policy and the beginning of an era of greater influence among the Eurasianists or statistes. Statists placed a greater emphasis on Russia’s regional relationship by maintaining a presence in the former Soviet Union.<sup>47</sup> This school chose the values of sovereignty, power, stability, and security. Statists believe that Russia’s security is always threatened. They are inherently anti-Western and emphasize the development of Russian military capabilities. This school was led by Evygenyi Primakov, who replaced Kozyrev as foreign minister and then eventually became prime minister.<sup>48</sup> Many believed that earlier policies under Yeltsin and Kozyrev paid too much attention to Western foreign policies while ignoring the issues to the south and east. “The Eurasianists argued that, first of all, Moscow should deal with ‘the arc of crisis’ developing on Russia’s southern borders. . . .”<sup>49</sup>

Statists’ policies under Primakov were focused to help Russia regain its status as a great power. One way of gaining such power was to balance U.S. unipolar motives through policies that would bring the former Soviet region under Moscow’s control. As mentioned earlier, this region included the Baltic countries.<sup>50</sup> Eurasianists were the first to bring attention to what they felt to be the plight of Russian minorities in the near abroad. To many Eurasianists, Russian involvement in minority issues helps to stabilize the region. They do not see it as imperialism because many countries like Germany and Turkey were able to handle compatriot issues without being accused of imperialism.<sup>51</sup> As we shall see later, many, including the governments of the Baltic countries, do not feel this is the case.

Finally, Eurasianists began to see that the economic prosperity of Russia and the near abroad were very important. They began to focus not only on military security, but also on forms of economic integration with the CIS.<sup>52</sup> The economic and security tenets of the Eurasianist philosophy influenced the current Putin regime.

### ***The New Statists—Putin and the Silovki***

Vladimir Putin’s philosophy toward Russian power, like that of the Eurasianists, stresses strong economic ties between Russia and the near abroad and a strong Russian economy. To President Putin, the energy sector is important to the development of the political and economic power of the Russian state. Putin believes that foreign enterprises should not be permitted to own shares larger than 20 percent of any one company. He does not trust foreign ownership and does not consider privatization as “the best way in diversifying Russia’s economy and generating revenue.”<sup>53</sup> In addition, he supports the concept of protecting private property, but believes that no private company should take more control than the state, since it represents the interests of the people.<sup>54</sup> These convictions seem to be very paradoxical but are understandable because of his background in the Soviet secret service, the KGB (now the FSB, or Federal Security Service).

These principles stem not only from Putin’s work in the KGB, but also from his studies at the Mining Institute in St. Petersburg. While attending the institute, he was influenced by the new rector, Vladimir Litvenenko. Litvenenko believed that the energy sector was a tool

of the state.<sup>55</sup> Putin followed his mentor when preparing and defending his thesis, *Mineral Raw Materials in the Strategy of Development of the Russian Economy*, which focused on developing economies and how to institute a Western management style into Russia's raw material sector. The thesis itself is not publicly available, but many analysts, like Henry Balzar, believe the reason for this is because Putin used some classified material from the KGB/FSB. The abstract of the thesis was labeled classified once he became prime minister. It is also rumored that Putin himself did not write the thesis but authorized and supported its main arguments and content. This was common practice among leaders of the former Soviet Union.<sup>56</sup> Many of the points found in this thesis have influenced his thought in regards to Russia and energy.

Putin believes that Russia's natural resources guarantee its international position and ensure economic development. This means that the state should set the priorities of the energy sector and the companies involved to benefit both the state and the Russian people. In addition, the state ought to work to help these companies become more competitive "by using market means, regulating development and providing assistance to the development of the mineral processing sector."<sup>57</sup> The thesis adds that both the state and the private sector should work together to create a monopoly. These companies, which hold a monopoly, should, with the assistance of the state, have the ability to compete with non-Russian corporations. In return "these [companies] are supposed to promote: processed industry products, exports, [as well as] provide minerals and to develop a resource base."<sup>58</sup> The thesis further stresses that the state's priority for the energy sector should be to further "the geopolitical interests of and maintaining the national security of Russia."<sup>59</sup>

Once President Putin came to power, he surrounded himself with a number of people sharing the same point of view regarding Russia's energy security. These men of power, or "Silovki," were KGB/FSB associates of the president who "believe that Russia cannot be ruled without a strong state."<sup>60</sup> Putin has been able to maneuver many of these Silovki onto the boards of some of the major oil companies. The Silovki believe they represent the eternal state, or the view that no matter what the political system is in existence, the interests of the state stay the same. "The mission of the Silovki, therefore, is to reestablish, preserve and extend the authority and influence of the state."<sup>61</sup> This is why many of the Silovki "harbor imperial ambitions and cling to the fantasy that Russia can restore the power that enabled the Soviet Union to be a major player in world affairs."<sup>62</sup>

These imperial ambitions concern the people of the Baltic countries. Since coming to power, the foreign policies of President Putin continue the historical trend of defining spheres of influence and continuing efforts to reign in the near abroad. But the philosophy of these concepts is completely opposite of that of his predecessors. First, there is very little reference to these concepts in any government statements except to deny and criticize the use of the term.<sup>63</sup> "The Kremlin understands that the imperialist connotations of the term both offend the former Soviet republics and send the wrong signals to influential players in the international community, namely the United States and Western Europe."<sup>64</sup> On the other hand, Russia continues to develop relations with Eastern European states by showing the benefits of closer ties with Russia. Russia has developed these relationships without "the mixture of threats and complaints that characterized Moscow's behavior in the 90s."<sup>65</sup> Such an approach has increased Russian influence in the region.<sup>66</sup> "The signs of Russia's resurgent influence are everywhere in Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia: in Kremlin-financed media; in the financing of local politicians and economic development; in a growing assertiveness, encouraged by Moscow, among the third of the Baltic population that is of Russian heritage; in the Kremlin's manipulation of its energy supplies as a bludgeon."<sup>67</sup>

## Influencing the Baltic Countries

President Putin has quietly used several different levers to help increase Russian influence in the Baltic countries, including: diplomatic pressure, propaganda and disinformation campaigns, military threats and peacekeeping deployments, economic leverage and energy controls, exploiting ethnic and social discontent, and discrediting governments via political influence and penetrating intelligence services. These levers were used at times when Russia tried to influence the NATO accession process or to change the security and foreign policies of the near abroad to match those of Russia.

### *Lithuania*

In Lithuania there have been two main levers used by Russia to influence its security and foreign policies: economic leverage and energy controls, and discrediting governments via political influence and penetration of intelligence services.

Many of the actions against the Baltic countries were to prove the government unstable. A democratically elected and stable government was one of the criteria for their accession to NATO.

Russia's attempt to discredit the government through the elections process could be seen in the presidential election of 2003. Lithuanian presidential power is defined in Article 84 of the Lithuanian Constitution. The primary role is to settle important policy issues and, together with the government, to implement foreign policy. The president also appoints and dismisses, upon approval of parliament, the prime minister, the Army commander-in-chief, and the head of the Security Service, and nominates judges for the Constitutional Court-Supreme Court.<sup>68</sup> Article 58 also gives the president the power to call untimely or premature parliamentary elections.<sup>69</sup> In addition, the president may award citizenship to any individual, provided that it is within the procedures established by law.<sup>70</sup>

For years the Lithuanian government was considered very stable and had achieved a sense of democratic consolidation. Prior to 2002 there had been several parliamentary and presidential elections that involved a smooth, peaceful transition of power.<sup>71</sup> This image of stability was made ever stronger during the first administration of President Valdas Adamkus's which was marked by Adamkus's heightened international authority and public popularity.<sup>72</sup>

In December 2002, Lithuania held its third presidential election since 1993. In the first round, no one received an absolute majority. The top two candidates, President Valdas Adamkus and former Prime Minister Rolandas Paksas, had to participate in a run-off election, which showed Rolandas Paksas winning 54.9 percent of the vote to Adamkus's 45 percent.<sup>73</sup> This was a complete surprise to Adamkus and his supporters, who thought his popularity would carry him to another term as president.

Paksas's campaign spending was also a surprise. Official figures showed that Paksas had spent over \$1 million. It was later estimated that he spent about \$5 to \$7 million, which could not be traced. The money paid for TV commercials and newspaper advertising from sources outside the campaign.<sup>74</sup> "There were widespread rumors that much of that money came from Russia."<sup>75</sup> Although these rumors continued to spread, the transition from President Adamkus to President Paksas was very smooth.

These rumors were just beginning to be confirmed to have some factual basis in October 2003, when Director of the Security Department Mečys Laurinkus reported to parliament that the President's National Security Advisor, Remigijus Ačas, had links to Anzor Aksentyev Kikalishvili, a Russian citizen of Georgian descent and head of the firm 21st Century,

a company with alleged connections to international organized crime. Paksas suspended Ačas and denied any knowledge of the connection.<sup>76</sup>

Laurinkus also accused the president of at first ignoring this information and leaking classified material. He also reported that there was growing Russian interest in Lithuania. Laurinkus cited efforts by powerful Russian economic enterprises, criminal groups, and security operatives who were in league with compliant Lithuanian officials and sought to gain control of strategic industry, especially in the energy, transport, and communications sectors. Moscow then hoped to use Lithuania as a pathway into the vast European Union (EU) market, a path taken by Russian gangsters. "To achieve these goals, Russian provocateurs would buy or control Lithuanian police and customs officials."<sup>77</sup> Further inquiries centered on Yuri Borisov, the single largest supporter of the Paksas campaign. Borisov is a Russian citizen who owned a firm that sells and services Russian-made helicopters. Paksas granted him Lithuanian citizenship following his election.<sup>78</sup> It became clear that some of the funds given to Borisov were traceable to his contacts within the FSB. A large portion of the funds were somehow funneled through his company. This is a prime example of using economic leverage to influence a desired outcome.

The State Security Department also discovered plans at Borisov's residence, designed by the Russian public relations firm Almax, to discredit Lithuania's major political parties.<sup>79</sup> It was later revealed that both Borisov and Almax had connections to the Russian Security Service.<sup>80</sup> This was the first connection between a Lithuanian citizen and the use or development of a plan to use propaganda and disinformation campaigns.

To create a disinformation campaign against what he felt was an attack on him, Borisov printed his own newspaper. Funding for this was also rumored to have come from Russia.

As this was the first real crisis involving a government official, no real precedent or tradition had been established. The parliament followed its rules of procedure to further investigate these accusations. Parliament appointed an ad hoc committee of parliamentary members to investigate.<sup>81</sup> After several months, the committee reported back to parliament, accusing the president of six impeachable acts including: "The President violated his oath; failed to protect classified information; attempted to illegally influence the actions of private companies; failed to reconcile public and private interest; hindered the functioning of state institutions and discredited their authority; and failed to take measures to stop his advisors from abusing their official powers."<sup>82</sup> Parliament then appointed a 12-member panel made up of six lawyers and six members of parliament to further study the charges and see if a vote for impeachment was justified.<sup>83</sup> The special panel added six more charges to the original five. The Lithuanian Constitution requires that the Constitutional Court rule on the legitimacy of the charges. Then, 85 of the 141 members of parliament must vote on any one of the charges for the president to be impeached. In April, 2004, the Constitutional Court ruled that President Paksas was guilty on three charges: 1) overstepping his power by giving Borisov citizenship; 2) releasing classified information; and 3) using the Office of the President to influence the outcome of private transactions.<sup>84</sup> In April 2004, the parliament voted to impeach the president. Immediately, the parliamentary speaker became acting president until a new presidential election could be held in June 2004. At that time, there was no legal restriction that barred an impeached government official for running for reelection. Therefore, Paksas, who had been campaigning during the impeachment process, formally announced that he would run for reelection. The Constitutional Court later barred Paksas or any other impeached official from running for elected positions that require an oath to assume office.<sup>85</sup> The final outcome of the June 2004 election led to a runoff in which former President Valdas Adamkus defeated former Prime Minister Kazimiera Prunskienė, who received backing from Paksas.

Throughout the impeachment process the relationship between the parliament and the president was tense. Prime Minister Algirdas Brazauskas, the former Lithuanian president, and Parliamentary Speaker Arturas Paulauskas publicly and privately recommended to the president that he should resign for the good of the country. Even the heads of each of the Lithuanian party blocks within parliament urged the president to resign.

There was no crisis after the election of Adamkus. The country had its parliamentary elections several months later. Prime Minister Algirdas Brazauskas was reappointed to his post.

In the case of Lithuania, the inability of Russia to discredit the government is understood since all the proper rules and procedures were followed to impeach a president and successfully elect a replacement.

Another example of Russia's efforts to influence Lithuanian policies is through the energy sector. Not only is this occurring in Lithuania, but it is also evident in the other two Baltic countries. Therefore, before we can discuss what happened in Lithuania, we must also understand the current structure of Russia's energy sector.

The Russian government uses the state monopolies of Gazprom, Transneft, and the Unified Energy Systems of Russia (UES) to help gain leverage into the energy sectors of countries in the near abroad.<sup>86</sup> For the purpose of this paper, the two companies that we will focus on are Gazprom and Transneft, which produce and own the infrastructure to deliver oil and natural gas.

Gazprom is a joint stock company that has some foreign ownership. It is a state-owned monopoly that primarily controls natural gas production and transport inside and outside of Russia. It is also moving to diversify its activities into "oil production, electricity generation and the construction of nuclear power plants."<sup>87</sup> Transneft, which holds the monopoly on oil pipeline transport, is also state owned. Private companies are allowed to be involved in developing pipelines, but only for internal use.<sup>88</sup>

Putin has appointed many members of the *Silovki* to the boards of Gazprom, Transneft, and several privately owned companies. These individuals also hold government positions. Such intermingling allows the government to have leverage on these companies. Putin does not believe there is anything wrong with having his own people on many of the boards because they make no money and do not own stock. He maintains they are only on the board to ensure that the state's interests are met.<sup>89</sup> Table 3 shows the people, their board positions, and their position in the government. Some, like Michael Fredholm, have argued that the Russian government cannot use these companies as foreign policy instruments, but can use the products they develop as foreign policy levers. Table 3 proves that this argument is false. The number of people who hold positions on these company boards as well as high positions in government proves that the companies can be used as foreign policy instruments. Therefore, Putin is able to influence the entire energy sector without having full government control. Not only is Putin placing people on the boards of companies, but the state also has consolidated many companies under the Gazprom umbrella. This includes the purchase of Sibneft in 2005. Gazprom was unsuccessful in its bid to merge with Rosneft, which is now buying out many Yukos assets. Gazprom's oil subsidiary, Gazpromneft, also announced a joint venture with Lukoil, which allows Gazprom to use Lukoil's overseas operations.<sup>90</sup>

With so much control of the energy sector, it is not surprising that Russia can use it as an energy lever while others consider it as a foreign policy tool. One must consider that Russia has cut off energy supplies to Ukraine, Belarus, and several times to the Baltic countries as a foreign policy tool.<sup>91</sup>

**Table 3**  
Board Member and Associated Government Positions

Board Member	Company	Government Position
Dmitry Medvedev	Gazprom Transneft Rosneft (2005)	First deputy prime minister
German Gref	Gazprom	Minister of economics development and trade
Andrei Sharonov	Transneft	Deputy minister for economic development and trade
Evgeny Shkolov	Transneft	Head, department of economic security, ministry of internal security of the Russian Federation
Andrei Reus	Zarubezneft Rosneft	Deputy minister of industry and energy
Viktor Khristenko	Transneft	RF minister of industry and trade

*Source:* Robert L. Larson, *Russia's Energy Policy: Security Dimensions and Russia's Reliability as an Energy Supplier* (Stockholm: Swedish Defense Research Agency, 2006), pp. 139, 145, 153, 156, and 161.

Lithuania's energy sector is very dependent on outside resources, primarily from Russia via pipelines from Belarus. These pipelines lead to the Mažeikių Nafta refinery and to the oil terminals at Butingė and Klaipėda. The Mažeikiai refinery is the only one of its kind in the Baltic countries and supplies all three with refined oil products.<sup>92</sup>

Lithuania has tried to keep foreign interests, particularly those from Russia, at bay.<sup>93</sup> One of the most contentious issues has been the ownership of the Mažeikiai refinery and the associated pipelines and the oil terminals in Klaipėda and Butingė. All three make up the company known as Mažeikių Nafta. In 1999, the Lithuanian government sold its shares to Williams International. The losing company at that time was Lukoil. After the sale, Lukoil was able to persuade Transneft to cut or slow oil deliveries to the refinery and to the terminal in Butingė at least nine different times. Lithuanian supporters of Lukoil saw this as proof that Williams was not an effective partner for Lukoil, which had promised to provide oil to Mažeikių Nafta.<sup>94</sup>

This move by Lukoil could be interpreted as a proposition; if the Lithuanian company was not sold to Russia, oil would not be delivered to Lithuania.<sup>95</sup> In 2000, Williams sold its controlling stake to a Russian firm, Yukos International. In 2003, the Russian government launched a campaign to take over Yukos. Once Yukos went into bankruptcy, its assets were to be sold to creditors. At the time, Netherlands-based Yukos Finance BV, a Yukos subsidiary, still owned Mažeikių Nafta. It was in 2005 that Yukos decided to sell its shares in Mažeikių Nafta.<sup>96</sup> The Dutch-based firm and the Lithuanian government agreed that Yukos would be paid, but that the Lithuanian government would be part of the negotiations, since the original agreement between Yukos and Williams stated that Yukos could only sell its shares with the agreement of the Lithuanian government. It could also be sold to the Lithuanian government.<sup>97</sup>

Six companies had announced an interest in purchasing the company, including: a consortium between Lukoil and ConocoPhillips, Gazprom, TNK-BP, PK Orlen, and

KazMunaiGaz.<sup>98</sup> To end KazMunaiGaz's bid, the Russian government convinced Transneft to cancel a ten-year agreement on deliveries and allow Lukoil to purchase the company. As of February 2006, the issue was yet unresolved.<sup>99</sup>

In May 2006, Poland's PK Orlen won the bid to acquire Mažeikių Nafta. The final documents were signed in December of that same year. On May 29, 2006, Transneft's president stated:

We really don't know who they are... I suppose they should talk to Russian producers about supplies and then only come to us... We know their rivals: Lukoil, TNK-BP and KazMunaiGas. We have met them many times. But we have never met PKN or Russian producers willing to supply them crude.<sup>100</sup>

Several months later, in July 2006, Transneft stopped all shipments to Mažeikių Nafta. The explanation provided was that the northern branch of the Druzhba pipeline sprang a leak near Bryansk, Belarus. Soon after, Transneft officials announced the disruption would only affect shipments to Lithuania. This was seen as intentional because of the known Kremlin dissatisfaction that a Russian company lost its bid for Mažeikių Nafta.

Today the pipeline still remains unrepaired. Seyon Vainshtok, the president of Transneft, stated that the company was "awaiting the results of an independent study before deciding whether to simply repair the pipeline or build an entirely new one."<sup>101</sup> Transneft also stated that it may not reopen the pipeline because the company can reroute its oil to alternative terminals or by increasing oil shipments via the terminal in Primorsk, a coastal town in the Leningrad Oblast and the largest Russian port on the Baltic Sea.<sup>102</sup> By rerouting shipments to the port terminal of Primorsk, the Russian energy sector is following Putin's determination to use only pipelines that go through Russian territory. But this has not halted PKN Orlen's operation of the refinery. It is currently delivering oil via the sea to Butingė and delivering it via pipeline. It is now considering developing additional pipeline infrastructure that connects the refinery with Lithuania's export-import facilities.<sup>103</sup>

By continually denying gas and oil shipments to Lithuania, Russia continues to try to influence the decisions of its government. Russian leaders still believe Russia should be able to control the energy sector of the Baltic countries.

## *Latvia*

Unlike Lithuania, Latvia has had more problems with minority and border issues, as well as a fight to avoid Russian control of its energy sector. So far, no incidents of trying to discredit the government have been found. But Latvia has had some concerns regarding issues surrounding its border with Russia, minority issues, and energy. In all aspects, Russia has tried to use these issues to influence the government of Latvia to change its policies to make them more amenable to Russia's wishes. They have also used propaganda campaigns against Latvia to make the government look bad.

For the last 16 years Latvia and Russia have been trying to negotiate an agreement regarding the status of their current border. In March 2007, Latvia and Russia signed a treaty that delimited it.<sup>104</sup> This process took approximately 15 years to complete. Both parties had originally agreed to the text of a border treaty in 1996. But signing the agreement was delayed, due to disagreements over additional wording as well as Russian accusations of Latvian mistreatment of its ethnic Russian minority.

First, Russia objected to Latvian insistence that any language in the border treaty reference the 1920 Treaty of Tartu. Russia argued that such a reference would give Latvia “a claim for territorial reunification with the Region of Abrene which was stripped from Latvian territory without Latvian consent in 1944.”<sup>105</sup> To many Latvians this was important because such language would have forced the Russian government to recognize that Latvia and the other Baltic countries were occupied and illegally incorporated into the Soviet Union. Russia would not agree to this. Although such language was not included in the original treaty, in 2005 the Latvian government adopted explanatory language regarding the Abrene region that was included in the ratification law. Russia refused to ratify the new treaty until the language was removed.<sup>106</sup> Although language objectionable to Russia was removed in 2007, Latvia continues to believe that they were occupied by the Soviet Union and sees that Treaty of Tartu as the basis of its statehood.

During this period, the Russian government, through the press, also accused the Latvian government of being fascist. Russia’s executive and parliament have argued that Latvian citizenship laws violate the human rights of the Russian minority in Latvia. According to Latvian government sources, including its Foreign Minister Maris Riekstins, the Russian Foreign Ministry continues to issue statements about Latvian fascism and discrimination against the Russian minority.<sup>107</sup> This was after the OSCE High Commissioner on Russian Minorities found that Latvian laws had not violated the rights of the Russian minority.<sup>108</sup>

Not only has Russia tried to use the minority issue to gain leverage over this Baltic country, it has also tried to blackmail Latvia into selling its energy assets to Russian oil companies. Russia, as with Lithuania, hopes to control the energy sector in Latvia and, therefore, influence Latvian policies.<sup>109</sup> The problem between Russia and Latvia has focused on Russian attempts since 2002 to gain control of the Latvian oil company Ventspils Nafta by cutting off the supply of oil. The official reason for this cutoff was attributed to high tariffs Latvia charges Russia for use of the terminal.<sup>110</sup> But this occurred after Ventspils Nafta refused an offer by both Lukoil and Transneft to purchase the terminal. The offer was interpreted more as a nonnegotiable demand than a friendly takeover.<sup>111</sup> Right after the refusal, Transneft announced that oil would no longer be carried via the pipeline to Ventspils until a Russian company gains a majority of its shares. Oil has been shipped via rail to Ventspils. Although transit fees have been reduced, the cost of shipping by rail remains considerably more expensive.<sup>112</sup> Soon, these Russian companies will begin to use the newly built terminal in Primorsk, Russia.

By cutting oil supplies, Transneft continues to work to consolidate control of oil shipments through its pipelines and uphold the Kremlin’s wishes to squeeze Latvia.<sup>113</sup> It is important to note that the Latvian government wants to sell its shares, but not to a Russian firm and certainly not to Russia.<sup>114</sup>

As in Lithuania, Russia has used several different levers to influence the policies of Latvia. The first is the use of the border treaty to keep Latvia from joining NATO and the EU. This failed, as Latvia still joined NATO in March 2004 and the EU in November 2003. Russia has also tried to cut off oil and gas to force Latvia to sell ownership shares in its energy sector. This has not worked and has only brought Latvia closer to the West.

## *Estonia*

Russia used several levers simultaneously to influence this Baltic country. These included: diplomatic pressure, economic and energy controls, exploiting ethnic and social discontent, and propaganda and disinformation campaigns.



Like Latvia, Estonia also had problems negotiating a border treaty. As was the case in Latvia, Russia hoped that, by stalling on the border treaty, its accession to NATO would also slow. Estonia, like Latvia, wanted language included in the treaty that would recognize the Treaty of Tartu. Russia refused and again stated that Tallinn still had territorial claims against it. Such alleged territorial aspirations were shown as evidence that Estonia had failed to meet such criteria. Estonia later dropped the language but continued to argue that the Treaty of Tartu was and still is the basis of its statehood.<sup>115</sup> A border treaty was agreed upon in March 2005.<sup>116</sup> But several months later, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov withdrew Russia's signature because the Estonian Parliament added language to its ratification law referencing the Tartu Treaty of 1920. The Estonians believed the language did not affect ratification.<sup>117</sup> The treaty was not ratified by the Russian Parliament until 2007, when the Estonian parliament withdrew the language. But since that time Estonia was periodically attacked by members of the Russian Duma in order to discredit the Estonian government in the West's eyes. Many of the statements were ignored by the EU and NATO.

Not only has Russia tried to use the treaty and diplomatic pressure to discredit and influence the Government of Estonia, but, over the years, it has also tried to use the issue of minority rights in Estonia.

Russia tried to use Russian minorities in Estonia and Latvia to pressure the governments to move closer to Russia's point of view. One example of this occurred in Estonia in 2007. In January 2007, the Estonian Parliament passed legislation, signed by Estonian President Toomas Hendrick Ilves, that required the removal of a Soviet War Memorial from the center of Tallinn. Part of the memorial included the burial place of several soldiers of the Red Army who died fighting the Germans.<sup>118</sup> To many in Estonia the war memorial is a reminder of the occupation. "It [the monument] was erected in the 1940s to commemorate the so-called liberation of Tallinn. . . That's when the Soviet troops entered Tallinn in autumn of 1944. And they called it liberation. Estonians have always regarded it quite differently."<sup>119</sup>

In April, the statue on the monument was removed and transferred to a safe place. The remainder of the monument, including the bodies of the soldiers, would all be moved to a cemetery at a later date. The removal of the statue caused riots by Russians in Tallinn. Members of the Russian government, including the foreign minister, called it blasphemy and some, including Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov, called for economic sanctions.<sup>120</sup> The Estonian government blamed Russia for this provocation. The Estonian foreign minister stated: "we have had lots of provocations on this site, so that it turned into a political issue."<sup>121</sup>

Several months later Estonian internet sites at banks and the government were attacked from Russia via a Denial of Service Attack. Estonian experts charged that some of the attacks originated from hackers working inside the Kremlin.<sup>122</sup> These attacks brought internet commerce in Estonia to a complete standstill.

Another form of manipulation is the process of seeking to influence Estonian policy through control of energy supplies. Estonia does not have as much strategic importance to Russia when it comes to energy. Nevertheless, Russia continues to try to influence the policies of this state, particularly in the political dimension. Russia has tried to use its energy leverage to influence the policies of the Estonian government toward its ethnic Russian population. In 1993, Russia cut off gas shipments when the Estonian Parliament adopted a new law on citizenship. This was considered to be a form of punishment and pressure to change these laws. Although cutoffs have occurred, Estonian citizenship policies have remained unchanged.<sup>123</sup>

## Conclusion

Russia has tried to manipulate and influence the policies of the three Baltic countries. In Lithuania, Russia provided funding through several associates to promote the presidential candidacy of Rolandas Paksas. Although Paksas' election could be considered a win for Russia, it was actually a failed attempt to create instability in Lithuania. The post-1991 Independence Constitution worked. Paksas was impeached, a new presidential election took place, and a newly elected president was peacefully inaugurated into office. Such Russian actions continue to this day, with many Baltic leaders afraid of the very large sums of money coming from Russia to be used to corrupt Baltic officials.<sup>124</sup>

Russia also tried to manipulate the Baltic countries diplomatically. But this failed, since the Baltic countries did join NATO, even though the border agreements were not finalized.

Russia also manipulates internal policies through the incitement of Russian minorities in Estonia and Latvia. Although Russia has refused to sign the border treaties, due to what it felt was the ill treatment of Russian minorities, the Russians eventually agreed to the treaties because they could further their relationships with other European states in the EU. Also, such pressure further irritated the Baltic countries and brought back many memories of Soviet imperialism, thus affecting Russian-Baltic relations.<sup>125</sup>

In terms of economic and energy pressures, Russia continues to try to take control of the energy sector in the Baltic countries. All three have refused to give up their energy sectors to the control of the Russian state-owned monopolies. In response, Russia stopped using the pipelines and the sea terminals in the Baltic countries to export oil. It is also developing a more direct route to deliver natural gas to Western Europe through the Northern European Gas Pipeline (NORD STREAM). NORD STREAM is to start in Vyborg, Russia and end in Greisvald, Germany. The pipeline will completely circumvent all three Baltic countries and Poland. It will allow the Russian companies to completely avoid any transit fees via Belarus, Poland, and the Baltic countries. This concerns the Baltic countries because it completely isolates them from the European Union (EU), when the EU would like to include them. Some Polish officials, including former Defense Minister Radoslaw Sikorski, have likened it to the Molotov Ribbentrop Pact of 1930, which divided Europe between the USSR and Nazi Germany. NORD STREAM does the same.

Russian efforts to deter other companies from purchasing the Baltic infrastructure and the NORD STREAM project proves that Russia continues to use the energy sector as a foreign policy lever to influence the three Baltic countries

Russia also tries to manipulate Estonian policy via the Denial of Service Attacks that occurred in January 2007. Although Russia has denied any wrongdoing, the United States, NATO, and the EU have sent experts to investigate how such attacks occurred.

In conclusion, the policies of Russia against the Baltic countries have, thus far, failed to bring them under the Russian sphere of influence, and these three countries continue to move closer to the West.

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