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Cheskin, Ammon Matthias (2013) *Identity, memory, temporality and discourse: the evolving discursive positions of Latvia's Russian-speakers*.

PhD thesis

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Identity, memory, temporality and discourse: the evolving discursive positions of Latvia's Russian-speakers

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of PhD in Russian, Central and East European Studies

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Abstract

This thesis examines how discourses are utilised by media and political elites to construct, propagate, and alter national and ethnic identities. It uses Latvia as a case study, focusing on the construction of ‘Russian-speaking’ identity from the late Soviet period to the present. A central aim of this research is to study how discursive constructions of identity are created, and to what extent media and politicians are able to influence such constructions.

In order to meaningfully assess the extent of multiple influences over discursive production and consumption this research employs a triangulated approach, using data from focus groups, elite interviews with Latvian politicians, survey data, and discourse analysis of the Latvian press. This has allowed for a fuller examination and assessment of top-down and bottom-up influences and pressures on identity creation and how these are interrelated.

Previously conducted research on ethnopolitical identities in Latvia has revealed how collective memories, interpretations of the Soviet past, post-Soviet state-building policies, and issues surrounding language usage are all heavily politicised and used to demarcate the boundaries between the ‘core nation’ (Latvians) on the one hand, and ‘Russian-speakers’ on the other. Accordingly, this research explores how the constructions of these positions are negotiated, propagated, intensified, or mitigated through discursive practices, as manifested in media, political, or personal discourses.

This research is concerned with the temporally contingent nature of discourses and as such, considers multiple eras, rather than a single de-contextualised and static time period, to investigate how discourses have evolved in the Latvian context. By comparing discursive productions from the late Soviet period with those of the present, it has been possible to examine how certain discursive positions have become meaningfully embedded within popularly conceived notions of identity. It has also facilitated a study of discursive strategies by people who attempt to represent Russian-speakers in the media and political spaces. This research argues that discourses are firmly rooted in the past, even if their contemporary form differs greatly from that of the past.

Contents

Abstract	1
Acknowledgements	5
Publications	8
A note on translations.....	9
Introduction	10
Scope and aims of the study	11
Why Latvia?.....	14
Brief literature review of existing research on Russian-speakers in Latvia.....	18
Thesis overview and structure.....	23
Chapter 1: Theoretical framework	27
Discourse or ‘In the beginning was the Word’	28
Material or ‘In the beginning was the chemically constituted object’.....	40
Towards a workable model or ‘In the beginning was it the chicken or the egg?’.....	47
Conclusions.....	57
Chapter 2: Media effects: How media can form national and ethnic identities ..	59
The role of media in the formation of national identities	60
<i>Media and hegemony</i>	71
Conclusions.....	74
Chapter 3: The politicisation of memory: from perestroika to the present.....	76
Collective memory and national identities	77
Organic crisis and the collapse of the Soviet Union	85
<i>The emergence of Latvia’s new hegemonic order: Latvian democratisation and nationalism</i>	87
<i>Latvia’s post-Soviet state-building: discourses, myths, and narratives</i>	90
Memory politics, ‘memory wars’, and the trifling problem of Russia(ns)	93
The Popular Front of Latvia: setting the agenda for Latvian nation-building?	104
<i>Analysis of Atmoda: the nation</i>	105
<i>Learning to work with, and fight against, soviet discourses</i>	110
Conclusions.....	114
Chapter 4: Media analysis: the Russian-language press and identity formation	117
Methodology.....	118
The discursive construction of ‘Russian-speakers’	120
Analysing Russian-speaking media discourse	128
<i>Anti-discourse</i>	129
<i>Synthesis with Latvian discourse</i>	140
<i>Articulation of counter-narratives</i>	145
The evolution of Russian-speaking discourse	149
Conclusions.....	152

Chapter 5: The primacy of politics? The impact of political discourse on identity formation	155
Hegemony, democracy, and the ‘primacy of politics’	156
The Russian Federation and Russian-speaking identity in Latvia	159
Latvian political parties and their discourses	170
Latvian state-building policies and their impact upon Russian-speakers	182
Conclusions	187
Chapter 6: Examining Russian-speaking identity from below	190
Methodology	191
Focus groups	193
<i>Kmo Bы? Who are you?</i>	193
<i>The influence of Russia: politics, culture, and historical memory-myths</i>	198
<i>The influence of Latvia: integrational or anti-discourse?</i>	205
<i>In search of homeland: finding a legitimate place for Russian-speakers in Latvia</i>	212
So, do the media matter?	218
Conclusions	220
Chapter 7: The ‘democratisation of history’ and generational change	223
A tale of two histories?	224
Observing Victory Day in Latvia	227
<i>Survey results: occupation and liberation</i>	229
Conclusions	245
Conclusions	250
Temporality	251
Discursive strategies	253
The primacy of politics	257
Top-down and bottom-up influences	259
Media effects	262
Final conclusions and predictions for the future	265
Appendices	268
Appendix 1: Materials presented to focus group participants for discussion (with English translations)	268
Appendix 2: Victory Day questionnaire as presented to respondents in Russian (with questions translated into English below)	274
Appendix 3: Full results of May 9 survey	277
Appendix 4: Latvian political parties and alliances represented in the 10 th and 11 th Saeimas	279
Glossary	281
Latvian political parties and alliances	283
List of interviewed Latvian politicians	283
Bibliography	284

List of tables

Table 1: Collective memory and formal history	79
Table 2: School children's attitude to 9 May by school's language of instruction.....	102
Table 3: School children's attitude towards 16 March by school's language of instruction	102
Table 4: School children's assessment of Soviet liberation/occupation by school's language of instruction	233

List of figures

Figure 1: Population of Latvia by ethnicity 2011 (%)	15
Figure 2: Population of Latvia by ethnicity and citizenship 2010	16
Figure 3: The temporal helix of <i>being</i>	53
Figure 4: Four stills from FF/LNNK's political advertisement	179
Figure 5: Survey respondents by age and sex	230
Figure 6: It is not right to talk of 'Soviet occupation'. There was no Soviet occupation (by age group and %)	231
Figure 7: In 1944 Latvia was liberated by Soviet troops (by age group and %).....	234
Figure 8: Latvia was forcefully annexed by the Soviet Union against the will of a majority of its inhabitants (by age group and %)	237
Figure 9: Acceptance of Soviet 'occupation' and 'annexation' within age group 18-25 (%)	237
Figure 10: When celebrating Victory Day we should also take into account the fact that the incursion of Soviet troops into Latvia in 1944 had many terrible consequences for the country and its inhabitants (by age group and %)	238
Figure 11: I can understand why some people do not like to see 9 May being celebrated in Latvia (by age group and %)	239
Figure 12: History is never straightforward. For this reason I can come to terms with the fact that different people have different interpretations of the Second World War and its consequences (by age group and %)	241
Figure 13: The parades of the Latvian legionnaires cover Latvia in shame (by age group and %).....	242
Figure 14: We should not condemn too harshly those who served in the 'Waffen SS' legions (by age group and %)	244

Acknowledgements

My most sincere thanks go to my wife Amy for her unwavering support, and for allowing me to pursue my dreams. Thanks also go to my parents who have always supported me notwithstanding their bewilderment that it is possible to be a student for so long. I am also thankful to Geoffrey Swain and David Galbreath for supervising my work and providing timely and sensible feedback when it was needed. Without the help of these people this thesis could not have been written.

Author's declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Signature:

Printed name: Ammon Matthias Cheskin

Abbreviations

CPS	Constitutional Protection Bureau of Latvia
ECP	Estonian Centre Party
FF/LNNK	For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK
FHRUL	For Human Rights in a United Latvia
HC	Harmony Centre
LFP/LW	Latvia's First Party/Latvia's Way
LNIM	Latvia's National Independence Movement
PFL	Popular Front of Latvia

Publications

The substantial proportion of the analysis and theory which is presented in this PhD thesis has been published in the form of journal articles and book chapters. Much of the content of these articles is identical to large sections of this thesis. However, there are also a number of additional insights in these publications which are not to be found in this thesis and therefore may be of note to anyone interested in this topic. Below is a list of publications which have come about as a direct result of this PhD:

- Forthcoming Re-examining Russian foreign policy: the Baltic states and the 'Russian diaspora' in context. Forthcoming chapter in White, S. Hanson, P. & Marsh R. (eds.) *Contemporary Russia: Sources of stability and change*.
- 2012 Exploring Russian-speaking identity from below: The case of Latvia. *Journal of Baltic Studies*.
- 2012 Synthesis and conflict: Russian-speakers' discursive response to Latvia's nationalising state. *Europe-Asia Studies* 64(2): 325-347.
- 2012 History, conflicting collective memory, and national identities: How Latvia's Russian-speakers are learning to remember. *Nationalities Papers* 40(4): 561-584.
- 2010 The discursive construction of 'Russian-speakers': The Russian-language media and demarcated political identities in Latvia. In M. Golubeva & R. Gould (eds.) *Shrinking Citizenship. Discursive Practices that Limit Democratic Participation in Latvian Politics*. Rodopi: Amsterdam.

A note on translations

In the course of this research I have utilised materials (both textual and audio) which have been in Russian and Latvian. When analysing such materials I have necessarily had to provide a workable English translation of them for presentation within this dissertation. Inevitably a microanalysis of the linguistic devices and structures employed in the original language will often be rendered senseless by a translation (no matter how proficient) into another language. I have therefore endeavoured to preserve the meanings and tone of the original language in all the translations provided, rather than attempt to provide a stubbornly literal translation. My focus encompasses more of a macro and sociological perspective and therefore I feel that such an approach is appropriate. In cases where I felt that a particularly significant word was used in Russian or Latvian which conveys a different meaning or nuance from its English equivalent, then I have included the Russian/Latvian word in parenthesis immediately following the word in question.

Introduction

Scope and aims of the study

While this study focuses on a single country – Latvia, it is nonetheless intended to be more than a descriptive, country-specific exposé of practice in this one country. Instead this is a case study of how the concept of *discourse* can be more usefully used and studied in academic examinations of social identity formation, and specifically *national* and *ethnic* identity formation. It is thus both an in-depth examination of identity in Latvia, and specifically the identity of Russian-speakers in Latvia, and simultaneously a serious attempt to come to a better understanding of the workings and functioning of discourse. Of central importance therefore is understanding the relationship between discourse and identity.

Richard Jenkins (1996: 5) defines social identity as, ‘our understanding of who we are and of who other people are, and, reciprocally, other people’s understanding of themselves and of others (which includes us).’ Identity is therefore about identifying ourselves with others, people with whom we can identify common attributes, tastes, appearances etc., either subjectively or objectively. While there is a vast literature on the subject of identity, in its simplest form, identity relates to how individuals relate themselves with other individuals and with other social positions. In an extremely complicated world, which is impossible to understand fully, identities serve as a simplifying principle which enables us to categorise ourselves and others relatively quickly. As Richard Mole (2007a: 5) states, ‘identity/identification thus helps us make sense of our environment by defining our location and that of others in the social world.’

It perhaps goes without saying that the foundations for social identities are numerous, interdependent, and complex. As individuals we are able to choose between and construct various overlapping identities which may refer to (among other things) specific or general aspects of our political, economic, and social preferences, our geographical location, our ethnic and racial background, our family and national histories, our gender, and the country name printed in our passports. Nevertheless, each of these areas of identity is liable to be affected by others (Craib, 1998). The political preferences of a black woman, or a white man, for example, may be motivated by both her/his gender and her/his race (Gay & Tate, 1998,

Conlin Casilla & Fowler, 2005). Likewise, a homosexual person's (and, equally a heterosexual person's) sexual identity may lead them to adopt additional identities and patterns of behaviour which, on the face of it, have no direct correlation with sexual orientation (Epstein, 1992).

From the outset then it is admittedly problematic to attempt to isolate pure, national or ethnic identities from other forms of social identities. Indeed, even within the category of 'national identities', there may exist several layers of national, sub-national, and supra-national identification. A person living in the Highlands of Scotland, for example, may or may not identify themselves with Highland culture, Scottish culture, British culture, or European culture (however they define such things).

Nevertheless, while it may be difficult to isolate such identities from other social identities, there often exist undeniable and identifiable *discourses* of nationality or ethnicity which can be traced relatively easily. This is especially true of so-called elite discourses which are often analysed in order to map out discursive constructions of nations and nationalisms (for example, de Cilia et al., 1999; Blackledge, 2002). Such elites are most commonly understood as individuals in privileged positions within political and media spheres (more on which below).

However, does the fact that certain 'elites' are able to articulate and propagate certain ideas of what it means to belong to a certain nation, necessarily mean that these articulations will have any meaningful effect on the people who consume such discourses? The discourses of politicians and journalists are often singled out for particular attention within studies which employ a discourse-theoretical approach to the academic enquiry of a range of topics. There are two main reasons for this focus. The first is the assumption that in order for any discourse to be effective in creating social change and meaning it needs first to be widely accessible and widely known. Journalists and politicians are therefore chosen as leading and potentially influential figures whose words are able to reach large audiences. The second factor is that, in the case of politicians, it is argued that they are able to enforce their discourse with actual legislation and the 'repressive state apparatus' (Althusser, 2008) of institutions such as the police, courts, and prisons etc.

This research has therefore been designed to examine in some depth the relationship between elite media and political discourses, and the identity formation process which does or does not occur at the ‘ground level’. Rather than analysing and identifying elite discourses in isolation, this study employs a triangulated approach in order to examine why elites propagate certain discourses, and how much influence these discourses have in creating group identities.

The central research questions of this study can thus be summarised as the following:

- How easily can media and political elites create national identities which suit their own political and commercial aims?
- Do the articulations of journalistic and political elites filter down into observable and significant changes in attitudinal and behavioural patterns for the public at large?
- To what extent are discursive constructions of identity top-down or bottom-up processes?
- What factors constrain and what factors facilitate the articulation of certain discourses?
- To what extent do elite discourses change over time and why?

These research questions demand a number of things. Firstly it is important to map out and identify elite discourses. The methodologies, ontological, and epistemological assumptions and grounding for this to occur will be discussed below. Secondly it will be necessary to examine understandings and identities ‘from below’. This will allow us to compare the production of elite discourses with the consumption of them by a number of individuals. If elite articulations are directly reproduced by people on the ground then we may suppose that this is substantial evidence for real media and political effects of discourse and discursive construction.

The final question presented above additionally demands that we examine discourse over time. Rather than analysing materials and discourse which are grounded in a single time, this research will set out to examine real, observable changes in the composition of popularly

articulated discourses relating to the status of nationalities and national identities in Latvia which occur over time.

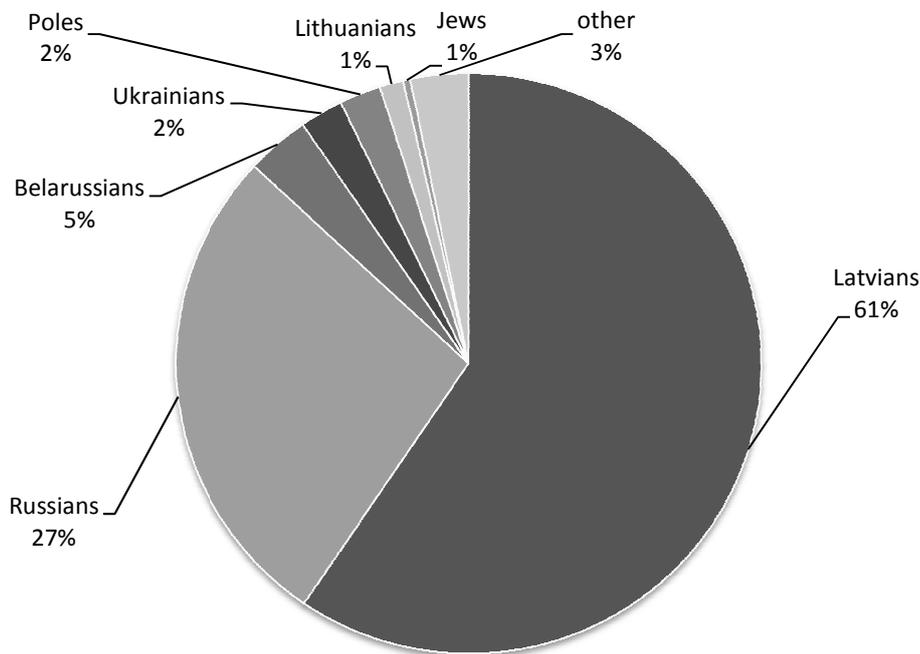
Why Latvia?

Although the main research aims of this study, as enumerated above, are of a theoretical nature, they can only be answered through a rigorous engagement with empirical data. The macro-focus of this research is to understand the formation of national identities and their relation to articulations of discourse better. However, the more micro-focus is to explore a specific geographical area with its particular historical, political, social, and economic peculiarities – Latvia.

Latvia has been chosen as a valid and potentially illuminating case study for a number of reasons. Firstly, in terms of ethnicity, Latvia is a highly diverse and multiethnic society (see figure 1). Ethnic Russians comprise 28% of the total population. However, the total number of so-called ‘Russian-speakers’ totals approximately 38% of the population. It is important to note the problematic nature of labelling populations and peoples into succinct and clearly defined groups, especially with regard to Russians/Russian-speakers/the Russian diaspora outside of Russia (see Poppe & Hagendoorn, 2001). We must acknowledge from the outset an understanding that this labelling and signification is potentially an important source of reality construction and identity formation. Indeed, we will return to this later in this study.

Irrespective of the constructivist nature of ethnicity, however, Latvia is a country where nationalisms and identity politics have played an important political and social role in the country’s post-Soviet development. Following the seismic changes of the late 80s and early 90s this small Baltic country has moved from incorporation into the Soviet Union, to ever deepening integration into the European Union, becoming an EU and NATO member state in 2004. In adapting to the changes of the post-Soviet era ethnicity, nationality, and belonging became salient issues of state-building as the newly forming elites debated who was eligible for Latvian citizenship.

Figure 1: Population of Latvia by ethnicity 2011 (%)



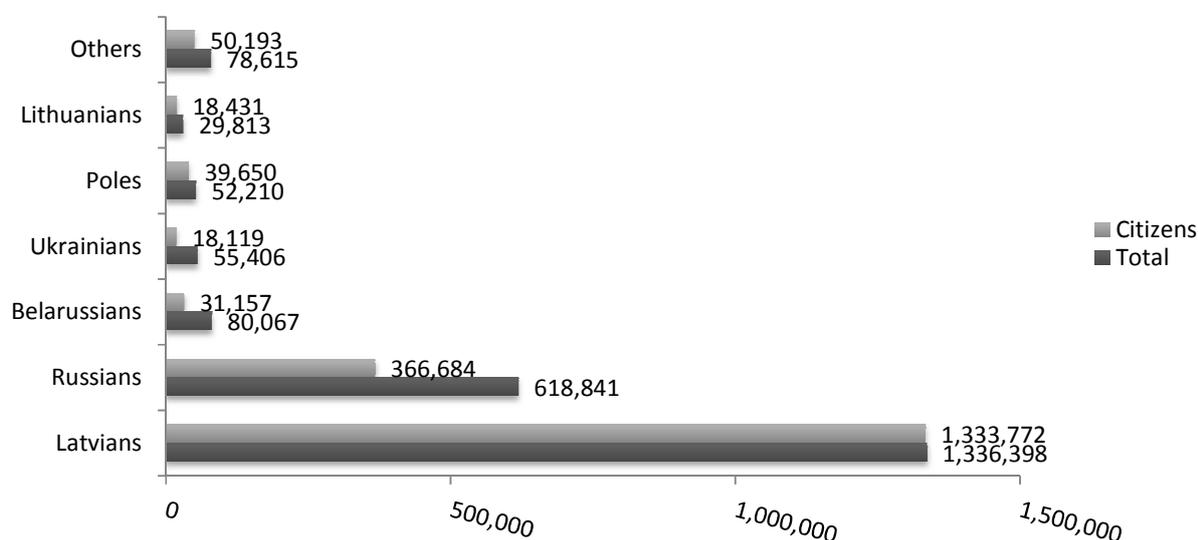
Source: Centrālās statistikas pārvaldes datu bāze (<http://data.csb.gov.lv/dialog/statfile1.asp>)

As we shall see later, this has meant that the ethnic dimension to Latvian politics and society has been at the forefront of political and social discourse. Latvia's move away from the Soviet Union was discursively premised on the idea of a return to a particularly 'Latvian' way of life and politics which highlighted and privileged the position of ethnic Latvians. Indeed, the Latvian space is still filled with competing national discourses which have been aimed at creating a renewed vision for a 'Latvian' post-Soviet Latvia. To a great extent these national discourses have had a significant impact on Latvia's Russian-speaking population. Within the main Latvian narratives of statehood that emerged during the late 80s and early 90s Russian-speakers often found themselves at the margins of Latvian discourse, unable to fulfil any meaningful role in a nationalising state which was seeking to remove itself from Russian and Soviet influence.

Indeed, much of the Latvian discourse has served as a basis to exclude Russian-speakers from the legitimate body of Latvian citizenry (this will be explored in more detail in chapter three). The fact that a majority of Russian-speakers were initially denied citizenship in the newly

independent state also further underlined the unclear status of Russian-speakers in contemporary Latvia. Indeed, such was the stringency of Latvia's citizenship policy that only those people who could trace their ancestry back to pre-Soviet Latvia were granted citizenship. Everyone else (the vast majority of whom were Russian-speaking immigrants who had immigrated to Latvia during Soviet rule) were unable even to apply for citizenship until 1995, and then people not born in Latvia had to wait until 2001 (Pabriks & Purs, 2002: 73). Importantly a large proportion of Latvia's ethnically Russian inhabitants still do not have citizenship today (see figure 2).

Figure 2: Population of Latvia by ethnicity and citizenship 2010



Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/policy/4641/4642/4659/>

This is important because it allows us effectively to factor the role of the state and of political institutions into our analysis. As outlined above, one of the main areas of concern for this study is to determine the effect of political discourse on identity formation. For the case of Latvia there have been explicit measures aimed at (at least temporarily) excluding a certain, well-defined section of Latvia's inhabitants from formal political participation in Latvian affairs. We will examine the exclusionary discourses employed by various nationalist factions later. However, there have also been reasoned political arguments justifying Latvia's

nationalistic course based on the concepts of stability and, perhaps paradoxically, democratisation (Karklins, 1994a; Jubulis, 2001).

It is therefore clear that Latvia presents a more than interesting case study. Not only have there been an abundance of discourses explicitly aimed at influencing national and social identities, but we have also witnessed the inception/restoration of new/restored political and social institutions. Indeed, in a relatively short period of time people's perceptions of themselves in relation to others have undergone great changes. No longer Soviet citizens Russian-speakers have been forced to come to terms with the often competing cultures, ideologies, and identities proffered by Latvian, Russian, and international bodies and organisations.

With these considerations in mind, the main research questions relating specifically to Latvia as a case study are:

- What have been the main determinants of Latvia's Russian-speaking identity (or identities)?
- How has Russian-speaking identity emerged in Latvia and who are the authors of this identity?
- How significant are popularly articulated discourses of the Latvian state and Latvian elites in determining Russian-speaking identity in Latvia?
- To what extent are Russian-speaking individuals able or not able to integrate their own personal identity within the publicly articulated identity of Russian-speakers?
- How significant are discourses which emanate from the Russian Federation in determining Russian-speaking identity in Latvia?

In answering these questions it is anticipated that we will also be able to answer the key theoretical research questions which have been listed above.

Brief literature review of existing research on Russian-speakers in Latvia

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian-speakers in the Baltic states, especially in Latvia and Estonia, have been the subject of a great deal of academic and political attention. This section aims to give a brief overview of research which has been carried out on Russian-speaking identity in Latvia and the Baltic states. Because much of this literature will be discussed in more depth in the empirical and theoretical chapters of this thesis, the aim here is simply to provide a lucid and brief overview rather than a comprehensive review.

Earlier research on Russian-speaking identity in the Baltic states found that there was actually a rather weak sense of collective identity based on the idea of being a Russian-speaker (Melvin, 1995: 24; Aasland, 1994). The collapse of the Soviet Union left many people whom we often now describe as ‘Russian-speakers’ without a solid identity. Many of the early Baltic barometer surveys (Rose & Maley, 1994: 51; Rose, 1995:47; Rose, 1997: 46), for example, discovered that the majority of these people identified primarily with their city or locality rather than with Russia or any other state (see also Galbreath, 2006b: 396-398).

However, in time the identity of belonging to a community of Russian-speakers has become one of the most important identifiers and markers of identity in the Baltic states (Khanov, 2002; Cheskin 2010). David Laitin (1995) thus outlined what he saw as the emergence of a ‘Russian-speaking nationality’ in the Baltic states which was distinct from Russian identity in Russia. Indeed, a number of studies have shown that Russian-speakers in the Baltic states consider themselves to be very different from Russians in Russia (Zepa, 2005; Vihalemm & Masso, 2003).

Melvin (1995) refers to the process of ‘Balticisation’ whereby life and existence in the Baltic states has led to the formation of a different identity from Russians in Russia. Nevertheless, even with this Balticisation, it is nonetheless true that there are clearly visible divisions between popular projections of identity of Russian-speakers on the one hand, and the ‘core nations’ (Estonians/Latvians/Lithuanians) on the other hand. For example, studies of media discourse in Latvia (Cheskin 2010; Rožukalne 2010; Šulmane & Kruks 2001) have revealed a sharp division between the form and content of Latvian-language and Russian-language

media. It is often argued that the stereotypes and intolerance of many of the country's media publications help to further demarcate, construct, and propagate the divisions between the two constructed communities and as such have a very real impact on group identities. (This, of course is something we will investigate below.)

In the field of Latvian politics, analysts have identified an equally visible and sharp division between 'Latvian' political parties and 'Russian' ones (Kažoka 2010; Golubeva & Kažoka 2010). Here, 'Latvian' parties are seen to represent the interests of the constructed group of 'Latvians' while 'Russian' parties largely draw their support from the constructed group of 'Russian-speakers' whose interests they claim to represent. In this respect Latvian politics is far more ethnicised than in Estonia where the majority of Russian-speakers with Estonian citizenship tend not to vote for 'Russian' parties but instead most commonly vote for The Estonian Centre Party (*Eesti Keskerakond*: ECP). This leads Solska (2011: 1099) to the optimistic conclusion that 'In Estonia, ethnicity is not politicised any more, and economic issues, and recently accession to the Euro-zone, have dominated the public debate and rendered the Estonian political path an unprecedented success story among former Soviet republics'.

The comparatively less ethnicised nature of Estonian politics has led some commentators to suggest the possibility for Russian-speakers of creating an increasingly globalised, or Europeanised, identity based on economic well-being and prosperity (Vihalemm & Masso, 2003; Laitin, 2003). Perhaps tellingly, there has been an absence of any such predictions for Latvia's Russian-speakers which in many ways is related back to the country's far more ethnicised political spectrum (this will be considered in chapter five).

In terms of pinning down what differentiates the identities of Russian-speakers from Latvians, the theme of historical interpretation has increasingly been seen as a crucial factor. In the analysis of international relations between Russian and Latvia there has been much discussion of the so-called 'memory war' (Mälksoo, 2009) between the two sides. Memories and collective memories can be seen as essential elements in the formation of group identities and for this reason Muižnieks (2011b, 9) argues that it is impossible to understand Latvian-Russian international relations without an understanding of the role identity plays in forming these

relations. Chapter three will focus on these issues of memory and I will discuss and analyse the various debates surrounding this issue in due course.

However, while these issues of collective memory and historical interpretation have been so effectively explored in studies of Latvian-Russian relations, the literature on the integration and acculturation strategies of Latvia's Russian-speakers has so far preferred to focus more on linguistic proficiency, perceived discrimination, a sense of geographical association with Latvia and Latvian spaces, and contemporary state policies, than on the issue of historical interpretation (Pisarenko, 2006; Priedīte, 2005; Zepa *et al.*, 2008b; Zepa *et al.*, 2006; Laitin, 1998; Tabuns, 1999). David Laitin suggested in 1998 that Russian-speakers in Latvia and Estonia would gradually choose to assimilate into Latvian and Estonian cultures based on the economically pragmatic expediency of learning the state language and culture. However, recent research has shown that Russian-speakers favour integration (identifying with both Latvian culture and Russian culture) over assimilation, marginalisation or separation (Pisarenko, 2006). Thus, while approximately 95% of Russians in Latvia believe that everyone in Latvia should be able to speak Latvian freely (Zepa *et al.*, 2008b: 7), Russian-speakers have nevertheless been adamant of their right to continue to use Russian in the private and public spheres, and especially in the school (see Hogan-Brun, 2006).

The fact that a majority of Russian-speakers would prefer to maintain their Russian-speaking identity while concurrently integrating into Latvian society and culture is very significant. However, although the literature on integration usually focuses on language proficiency in Latvian and other aspects of integration, there is often a deficiency in terms of analysing integration in relation to state-sponsored discourses and narratives. A number of studies of Russian-speakers in Latvia have attempted to analyse Latvian state-building policies and discourses. The discourses identified have included narratives of a geographical and temporal 'return to Europe' and 'return to normality' (Eglitis, 2002), official historical interpretations of the past (Onken, 2007), and the belief that 'Latvians' need to be the 'core' and dominant nation in a post-soviet and independent Latvia (Smith, 1999a: 82). (These will all be discussed in more detail below.)

Brigita Zepa relates how the development of these discourses has resulted in the emergence of popularised ideals of what it means to be a 'Latvian'. This individual, sometimes ironically referred to as 'homo Latviensis' (Zepa et al., 2006: 74), must speak Latvian, maintain 'Latvian' cultural values and traits, and display loyalty to the Latvian state by not questioning the state's official narratives and historical interpretations. In many respects this category of citizen can be contrasted to the idealised Soviet individual 'homo Sovieticus' (Peschel, 1998: 304) and the 'neo-Soviet' narratives which formed the basis of Interfront activities in the perestroika period (Smith et al., 1998: 10). It can also be contrasted to a person loyal to the ideals and official interpretations of the Russian Federation.

While these state discourses have effectively been studied and identified, there is need for further research which can examine the status of Russian-speakers in relation to these narratives and discourses. It may, in fact, be relatively easy to gain linguistic proficiency in Latvian, especially for younger generations who now learn Latvian from a young age in the state's schooling system. The task of being able to integrate into discourses and narratives which are can be seen as largely hostile to Russian-speakers, is perhaps a much more problematic scenario.

One much studied and visible result of Latvian state discourses and narratives can be evidenced in the country's much-discussed and controversial citizenship laws (Chin & Truex, 1996; Aasland, 2002; Brubaker, 1992) which initially conferred citizenship only to those people who could trace their ancestry to the pre-Soviet Latvia of 1940. This newly (re)constructed citizenry therefore represented Latvia's 'core nation', and was part of the drive to return Latvia to its 'normal' and 'European' self. The vast majority of the group most commonly known today as 'Russian-speakers' were ineligible for citizenship as it was thus initially defined. These were people who had mostly arrived in Latvia during the Soviet occupation and were therefore neither 'normal', 'European', nor part of the 'core nation'. As such they became non-citizens until, following pressures from the EU, OSCE, and Council of Europe (Galbreath, 2006a), Latvia partially relaxed its citizenship laws to allow for a process of naturalisation, based on linguistic proficiency in Latvian and a basic knowledge of Latvian history.

Because national identity and a sense of belonging is so closely linked with reciprocal relationships with the state (Croucher 2004), these narratives of Latvian statehood and history can be seen as especially problematic for Russian-speakers resident in Latvia. Official state policies have discursively placed them outside of the 'core nation'. Nevertheless, the process of 'Balticisation' whereby the lived experience of life in Latvia has led to the development of a particular Baltic, or Latvian, Russian identity has meant that Russian-speakers in Latvia often are unable to align their identities fully with the Russian Federation.

Returning to the theme of conflicting memory, recent research into the actual historical interpretations of the Second World War and Latvia's Soviet history certainly show a clear division between Russian-speakers and ethnic Latvians (Makarov & Boldāne, 2008; Golubeva, 2011). Russian-speakers are much more likely to agree with Russia's official interpretation that the Baltic states were liberated by the Red Army and that there was no occupation. On the other hand, research has also revealed a tendency for Russian-speakers to feel increasingly loyal to Latvia and to Latvian symbols of nationhood (Rodins, 2005; Zepa et al., 2005).

Bearing in mind the ostensible desire of Russian-speakers to integrate into Latvian society, it was clear that more research was needed in order to explore their discursive strategies more fully, and to investigate how Russian-speakers have been able to form their identities in the context of the underlying, official narratives which surround them. Specifically then, this research set out to examine how Russian-speakers were, or were not, able to relate to official discourses and narratives which were propagated by the Latvian Republic, the Russian Federation, and by 'elites' who claim to represent Russian-speakers in Latvia. Rogers Brubaker's extensively used triadic nexus famously noted that, in order to understand minority nationalism in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe, we would need to focus on three elements: 'national minorities, the newly nationalizing states in which they live, and the external "homelands" to which they belong' (1996: 4).

Much of the research which has been conducted on the topic of Russian-speakers in the Baltic states has utilised this triadic framework, with a number of authors adding a fourth node, that of international institutions (Galbreath, 2005; Smith, 2002; Kelley, 2004). This approach has

been very fruitful in attempting to determine the influence of international organisations (the EU, OSCE, Council of Europe), external homelands (Russia), nationalising states (Latvia), and national minorities (Russian-speakers). However, the focus has largely been on institutions and politics without a focus on the discursive practices associated with these four nodes.

For the broadly similar (although far from identical) situation in Estonia, Gregory Feldman argues that ‘post-socialist identity discourse in Estonia should be studied as a result of the dialectical relationship between the international context in which Estonia exists and the perceptions of history and culture that elites deploy in the public discourse of Estonia’s identity’ (2000: 406). While the same advice holds for Latvia, to date there has been little engagement with theories of discourse in the study of identities in Latvia.

Interestingly one of the few studies to have employed a discourse-theoretical approach in the Latvian context focused not on the identity of Russian-speakers, but on that of ethnic Latvians (Mole, 2007b). Mole’s research explored how the majority group were affected by discourses which either stressed the vulnerabilities of the in-group vis-à-vis the out group of Russians, or which highlighted multiculturalism as a positive discourse for Latvia. The main findings of this research were that the in-group perceptions of the Latvian respondents were most liable to be influenced with regard to their perceptions of the ‘other’ group. Perceptions of their own status within the in-group were much less easily influenced (at least in the short-term) by exposure to certain discourses. This is a finding which has great resonance with the research carried out in this study. The relationship between in- and out- groups will be explored further in due course.

Thesis overview and structure

Chapter one of this thesis sets out the central theoretical framework which will form the basis of my analysis. The concept of discourse is firstly examined with an evaluation of the usefulness of this concept in academic research. This section reviews the work of a number of leading practitioners and theorists who have contributed to our understanding of this concept

and whose insights have been vital in understanding the role of discourse in creating stable meanings and identities.

In addition to an exploration of the successful utilisation of the concept of discourse this chapter will also consider criticisms and potential pitfalls of employing a discursively centred theoretical approach. The acknowledgement of certain criticisms will allow us to consider in more depth how discourse actually functions and what constraints are placed on individual agents who wish to construct meanings and identities. One of the most important theoretical cornerstones of this chapter is the thesis that discourses need to be understood as temporal phenomena. It will be argued that, in order to understand contemporary discourses, it is necessary to understand also the past usage of certain linguistic signs which relate to those discourses.

Chapter two turns its attention to media discourses. This chapter considers various academic debates concerning media effects which have been evidenced in a number of academic disciplines. It will also examine arguments which have been put forward to explain why media are so commonly analysed in discursive analyses which relate to national identity formation. Following on from the previous chapter this section will also examine the concept of hegemony and consider how media figure as an essential element of hegemonic construction.

Chapter three examines the debates and controversies surrounding memory in the Baltic context. It will be demonstrated that discourses which revolve around memories and historical myths are of prime importance in the Baltic states and especially in Latvia. Gramsci's concept of organic crisis will be employed to highlight the importance of the late Soviet and early independence periods in forming hegemonic identity blocs in Latvia. Based on this understanding, and the concept of temporality as outlined in chapter one, this chapter will also analyse discourses which emerged in these periods of time. Specifically state practices of nation-building and state-building will be examined which have attempted to (re)define the Latvian nation and the inhabitants thereof. The official publication of the Popular Front of Latvia will also be analysed in some depth.

Chapter four provides a detailed analysis of media discourse in Latvia, with a specific focus on the Russian-language press. Firstly this section will explore by what means the media have attempted to construct a sub-national group of Russian-speakers in Latvia, and to what extent they have managed to imbue this imagined community with certain characteristics and traits. Secondly, a comprehensive discourse analysis of the leading Russian-language daily *Chas* will be conducted. Specific attention will be paid to how journalistic elites respond to the various ‘Latvian’ discourses of statehood and nationalism which have been identified in earlier chapters.

Chapter five offers an examination of political discourses and the composition of Latvian politics. Using Rogers Brubaker’s ‘triadic nexus’ model, the role of the Russian Federation will be considered as an ‘external homeland’, and therefore potential identity creator, for Russian-speakers in Latvia. This chapter will then examine Latvia’s domestic political structure in order to determine how the field of politics affects Russian-speaking identity in Latvia. Interviews with members of the Latvian parliament will be utilised as part of this analysis.

Chapter six moves away from an analysis of so-called elite discourse and instead analyses discourses and understandings of Russian-speakers at the ground level. This chapter is based on focus group interviews with groups of Russian-speakers in Riga. As part of this analysis, focus group participants were asked to respond to various quotations from the media analyses of previous chapters. Their responses are analysed and comparisons are made between elite discourse and the ground-level discourse which these focus groups revealed. The influence of discourses which emanate from Russia and from Latvia are also analysed as part of an attempt to understand how Russian-speakers are negotiating their sense of identity in Latvia.

Chapter seven returns to the theme of memory which was explored in chapter three. This time, however, the focus is again on ground-level perceptions of history and collective memory-myths which relate to the identity formation of Russian-speakers. The data from a survey of Russian-speakers in Latvia at the site of the 2011 Victory Day celebrations will be analysed. In this section special emphasis is attached to generational changes which are occurring in

Latvia among Russian-speakers. It will be argued that by focusing on generational change we are better able to understand how young Russian-speakers are negotiating bottom-up and top-down pressures to adhere to certain identity and memory positions.

Chapter 1:

Theoretical

framework

Discourse or 'In the beginning was the Word'

'The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice, we will call *discourse*.' Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 105

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.'
John 1:1

It often seems that there is not a paper written nowadays which does not, at some point, refer to the term discourse. Following the general trend towards constructivism in the social sciences, it has become common to talk of discourse as a constructive element in any aspect of social life. But what exactly is signified by this concept and how can it be usefully employed as a theoretical and methodological tool for research into social identities?

This section seeks to first outline what is meant by this broad term, and to examine some of the relevant academic theories of discourse, especially in relation to identity formation. The term discourse itself is perhaps a strange, vague, and often mis/over-used concept in academic research. In its most simplistic form discourse can be conceived in strictly linguistic terms as 'texts' which can take the form of spoken conversations as well as printed or written matter (Fairclough, 2003: 3). However, this does not encapsulate the complexity of discourse, which must also be considered as something distinct from (although overlapping with) language. Fairclough thus distinguishes between specific lexical units (verbal language) and discourse in general, which 'signals a particular view of language in use... as an element of social life which is closely interconnected with other elements' (3). In this light, we can understand discourses as social structures based on, and continually referencing, the cumulative volume of texts devoted to their particular field. Discursive formations can thus be described as 'a result of the articulation of a variety of discourses into a relatively unified whole' (Torfing, 1999: 300).

However, it is a very difficult task to separate language from discourses that are created by language. This is because language itself is devoid of meaning without its social context, and lexical units are but empty signifiers whose content is filled by the social context of the discourses that surround them. Given this appreciation of the relationship between language

and meaning, and between language and the social, we can begin to understand such diverse discourses as ‘clinical medicine’, ‘politics’, ‘economics’ etc.; each of which possesses its own terminologies and its own points of linguistic reference that are only intelligible with an understanding of the social context within which they are placed. For example, the term ‘graduate’ has no meaning if detached from the knowledge of the university structures and procedures which form ‘graduates’. As van Dijk explains, ‘Language users actively engage in text and talk not only as speakers, writers, listeners or readers, but also as *members* of social categories, groups, professions, organizations, communities, societies or cultures’ (1997: 3).

Fairclough, (2003: 27) attempts to provide a coherent link between language and the social by proposing three main categories for discourse analysis of textual meaning: *action*, *representation*, and *identification*. Text often belies social relations because in the *action* of the speech act certain roles are being fulfilled, whether it is a lecturer addressing his students, a doctor talking to a patient, or a school caretaker scolding a group of pupils. Within such articulations there exists an implicit knowledge of the different social positions that these people hold relative to each other. In the process of *representation* the text reveals the ‘knowledge’ of the orator. When Ronald Reagan decided to refer to the Soviet Union as ‘the evil empire’, this emotive representation was based on his own understandings of ‘evil’ and of Soviet Communism. Because of this, text is not only a representation, but also itself represents an ordering of society and, to use Foucault’s distinction, ‘control over things’ (1994: 318).¹ Thirdly, text often reveals ‘relations with oneself’ (318), or the author’s *identification*. This can be manifested explicitly; ‘I am’ or more subtly in representations of others. In the above example, Reagan’s representation of the Soviet Union as the ‘evil empire’ not only serves to represent an external entity, but also strengthens the identity of the United States of America. The sanctity and righteousness of the American position is justified precisely because it is distinct from that of the ‘evil empire’.

Therefore, we can see how the social world is reflected (and constructed) in the production of language. This has led to the emergence of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as an increasingly prominent methodological approach in academic research. Van Dijk (2001: 352)

¹ Foucault uses three categories which are broadly analogous to Fairclough’s distinctions: *relations of control over things*, *relations of action upon others*, and *relations with oneself* (see Foucault, 1994: 318).

defines CDA as, ‘a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context.’ Discourse analysis, and especially CDA place a large amount of emphasis on the way in which language usage and power relations are interwoven. As such it is born out of a non-positivist, constructivist, epistemological position. Indeed, in light of this understanding we must be careful, when analysing any text, to not look for reproductions of social perceptions as relayed by ‘objective’ observers or participants, but rather as enactments and forms of resistance to socially perceived situations.

However, even though language has the power to be socially creative, it does not necessarily follow that language is the *sole* contributing factor to social realities, discourses, and structures. The discourses of clinical medicine, for example, are based not only upon Fairclough’s three categories of textual meaning, but are also based on empirically testable criteria and data. Nevertheless, as Foucault (2007) demonstrates in his study of ‘the clinic’, even supposedly scientific discourses have a largely social character. Doctors opt to dress in certain fashions because it symbolises the social relationship between physician and patient, clinical space is ordered according to socially acceptable norms, and even various forms of knowledge are socially constructed – for example, what defines and constitutes ‘madness’ (See Foucault 1967). Therefore, even in the supposedly ‘natural’ sciences language, text, and representation all play an essential role in the overall formation of discourses.

As such, proponents of discourse theories often claim that articulation must be seen as a socially creative force rather than simply a reflexive one. Foucault, whose thought has perhaps done the most to stimulate the creative understanding of discourse, also adds power as an essential, constitutive source of any given discourse. As such, in his move from archaeology to genealogy (see Simons, 1995: 27) Foucault conceives the idea of a ‘regime of truth’. According to Foucault (2002: 133), “‘truth’ is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it.’ In other words, the articulation of discourses creates ‘truths’ that possess constructive power, while concurrently power has the ability to create its own ‘truths’. This is interesting because it turns on its head the previously held linear axiom that, for example, regimes come to power and *then* impose their ideology on the masses in order to sustain

power. Instead here Foucault is arguing that in order to gain this power there is firstly a necessity for something to have been articulated meaningfully. As Foucault's oft cited quotation suggests:

There are manifold relations of power that permeate, characterize and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse. (Foucault, 1980: 93)

This circular chronology may seem strange to observers when trying to understand, for the sake of argument, a phenomenon such as European colonialism. Surely, we may feasibly ask, should not this practice be seen a result of human selfishness (agency) which represents an exploitation of an inequality in technologically facilitated access to the means of production? Nevertheless, for a society (or a section of society) to embark on such an undertaking as colonising other lands and peoples there must first be recourse to legitimising discourses. For Foucault there are therefore prerequisite *a priori* which are historically laid before us and which represent the realm of the possible. In our example of European colonialism there are the notions (among others) of 'civility' 'economic prosperity' 'superiority' which each have their own discursive histories and which are each tied in turn to 'real' structures as well as modes of thinking (see Schreuder, 1976).

This constraining (or liberating depending on one's point of view) nature of discourse is central to Foucault's archaeological approach to historical enquiry. For our study this is important inasmuch as it suggests a limited and constrained role for human agency. For Foucault, the independent role of the agent is denied, and is instead determined by the underlying discursive conditions wherein the author finds themselves located (see below). We will return to this question of agency later. However, as we shall demonstrate below, the role of agency is not necessarily disregarded as a result of this theoretical insight. Rather, the modes of thought, and the acceptance of what constitutes 'truth' in a given society at a given time also constitute the constraints for human action. If we invert this statement, we could also say that the *a priori* also constitute the realm of the *possible*. For this reason discourse is seen as the foundation for subsequent activity and action. In terms of social identity this would also mean that identities would be founded upon historical discourses and understandings.

This appreciation of ‘truth’ as an intrinsic element of discursive formations, and as centrally tied up with the practice of power has great resonance with Gramsci’s ideas of hegemony. Gramsci notes how, ‘The realisation of a hegemonic apparatus, in so far as it creates a new ideological terrain, determines a reform of consciousness and of methods of knowledge: it is a fact of knowledge, a philosophical fact’ (1971: 365). The hegemonic order, for Gramsci, indicates the relations of power between the ruling class and those groups in subordination to it. As such relations of power are also an important component of Gramsci’s thought. Nevertheless, one of Gramsci’s main theoretical contributions to understanding hegemony is the idea that hegemonic orders can be formed first in the field of ideology (discourse):²

Previously germinated ideologies become “party”, come into conflict and confrontation, until only one of them...tends to prevail, gaining the upper hand and propagating itself throughout society. It thereby achieves not only a unison of economic and political aims, but also intellectual and moral unity...It thus creates the hegemony of a fundamental social group over a series of subordinate groups. (181-2)

Therefore, although Gramsci understood that hegemony can be exercised through ‘domination’ he also conceives of power as resting upon successfully articulated discourses and ideologies or ‘intellectual and moral leadership’ (57). Therefore discourse is at the heart of hegemonic or political orders, especially in the ‘West’.³

Gramsci believes in the primacy of politics and in the necessity of understanding the political in order to understand the social:

Critical understanding of self takes place therefore through a struggle of political “hegemonies” and of opposing directions, first in the ethical field and then in that of politics proper, in order to arrive at the working out at a higher level of one’s own conception of reality. Consciousness of being part of a particular hegemonic force (that is to say political consciousness) is the first

² Although Gramsci’s use of ‘ideology’ differs from our understanding of ‘discourse’ (Purvis & hunt, 1993), there is nonetheless enough overlap between the two terms that I feel it is appropriate to refer to the ‘field of ideology’ as one of discourse.

³ Gramsci often differentiates between ‘West’ and ‘East’ in his writings where the West signifies capitalist democracy and the East signifies Soviet-style communist dictatorship.

stage towards a further progressive self-consciousness in which theory and practice will finally be one (333).

Political hegemony, as conceived by Gramsci, dictates social identities and realities. This is because individuals and groups united under one political banner can conceive of themselves as a social unity. Because this unity is initially constructed in the theoretical and ideological realm, the behaviours and actions of this group are constantly referenced to the group's underlying discourse. Writing from a Marxian perspective, Gramsci was mostly interested in class consciousness. However, a number of scholars have taken a neo-Gramscian approach to politics to demonstrate the link between political hegemony and subsequent discursive formations more generally.

Thus Gill (2003) successfully uses Gramsci's concept of hegemony to demonstrate that American academic discourse is effectively determined by the prevailing political order and thereby serves to legitimise and sustain that order by offering dominant modes of thinking, and of knowledge production. For Gill this is reflected in the out-of-hand dismissal of Marxist thought, and of the common acceptance of simplified paradigms which have led, in the post Cold-War era, to the acceptance of neo-liberal ideology. For Gill this ideology, rather than representing a real and naturally occurring 'end of history' (Fukuyama 1992), is determined by the political hegemony that needs to constantly shore up its own identity.

Likewise, Herman and Chomsky (1988) have highlighted the pervasive impact of the political order on the American mass media. They note how similar incidents that occur in different parts of the world are framed in different ways depending on the political implications those events may have for the legitimacy of the American hegemonic force which constantly looms large. Thus, the persecution of religious figures in a Communist country will be given extended coverage, whereas a similar incident in a so-called liberal democracy will receive very little attention. Other social discourses (crime, clinical medicine, education, economics etc.) are also liable to be influenced by the power of the political hegemony inasmuch as they are integral parts of the political identity and project of that hegemony.

In these examples the field of identities can also be seen to be driven by political hegemonies. Although it may be argued that in Gill's and Herman and Chomsky's analyses the prevailing political hegemony simply leads to the creation of new or perpetuating discourses, these discourses are nevertheless expressions of social identities. We can see in these media and academic discourses all three of Fairclough's categories of discourse (*action, representation, and identification*) which are used to establish one's subject position. Moreover, we can also see how the political structure is constantly referenced (although not necessarily explicitly) in order to legitimise and position these articulations.

Laclau and Mouffe (1985) reassert this Gramscian belief in the primacy of politics but also add a layer of sophistication to our understanding of the ways in which politics impinge upon various discourses. Mouffe (1995: 105) asserts that, 'The political can no longer be conceived as located in a certain type of institution or as constituting one sphere of society. It should rather be understood as a dimension inherent in human practices.' To elaborate this point she differentiates between 'the political' (which refers to the dimension of antagonism which exists potentially in human relations – an antagonism that can take many forms) and 'politics' (which seeks to establish a certain order and to organize human coexistence in conditions that are permanently conflictual because they are affected by 'the political').'

In advancing their position, Laclau and Mouffe additionally propose a complex set of theoretical observations that aim to solve some of the apparent contradictions in Foucault's conceptions of the workings of discourse. Foucault differentiates between 'primary' and 'secondary' relations between objects. For Foucault primary relations, 'between institutions, techniques, social forms etc' (1972: 50), differ from secondary relations because they are formed independently of discourses, while secondary relations are 'formulated within discourse itself'. Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 107), on the other hand, affirm:

Our analysis rejects the distinction between discursive and non-discursive practices. It affirms: a) that every object is constituted as an object of discourse, insofar as no object is given outside every discursive condition of emergence; and b) that any distinction between what are usually called the linguistic and behavioural aspects of a social practice, is either an incorrect distinction or ought to find its place as a differentiation within the social production of meaning.

Thus, even the ‘reality’ of supposedly fixed and concrete objects, such as institutions, must be viewed as being formulated within the field of discourse. In line with their belief in the primacy of the political, Laclau and Mouffe thus employ a neo-Gramscian conceptualisation of hegemony which is set against essentialist conceptions of identity (Torfing, 1999: 41). They insist that social identities (or subject positions as they term them) are formed as a result of *hegemonic practices of articulation*. Groups form and attempt to gain political hegemony through articulations which aim to include as wide a base of support as possible. However, these articulations necessarily occur within a political – and therefore antagonistic – setting. According to Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 111), this is because group identities can never be fully sutured internally. Instead they must be fixed upon the ‘otherness’ of a force external to their own identity. Irrespective of the fact that any two people can lay claim to the same nationality or identity (however defined), there will always be an infinite number of differences preventing the suturing of their identity as concrete and final (put simply, you and I may both claim to be of the same nationality, but our patterns of behaviour, appearance, likes, dislikes etc. may – and most likely do – differ greatly).

In order to further elaborate on this point Laclau and Mouffe introduce the dual concepts of *the logic of difference* and *the logic of equivalence*. Because, as we have seen, internal identities are necessarily diverse, there must be a reference to an externality beyond the limits of a particular discourse. However, when an external group is introduced what do we encounter? The answer is that we are met with yet more differences to contend with. Through the logic of equivalence, however, we can articulate and emphasise a particular, universal difference (even if this universal represents a blatant fabrication). For example, I know I am British (whatever that may mean) because I am not French (whatever that may mean). Thus, the logic of equivalence establishes ‘equivalential identities that express a pure negation of a discursive system’ (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000: 11); every Frenchman is equally different from ‘us’ *because* he is French. This dichotomising logic is therefore an overdetermined one, based on an oversimplification of a common difference.

In contrast to this logic, the logic of difference focuses on the different positions that can be adopted by separate groups, and takes account of their diversity. In other words, rather than

envisaging a bi-polar divide between ‘them’ and ‘us’, the logic of difference opens up the discursive field to many divisions. However, these logics can be easily interchangeable. For example, we can view many of the various ‘informal’ groups that sprang up during the final years of the Soviet Union either through the logic of equality or of difference. If viewed through the lens of difference, then each of these groups must be examined in its own light. If, however, we employ the logic of equivalence, then we can say that they all display something in common – that their actions were directed against the prevailing social, political, and economic order. Indeed, Brovkin (1990) describes the evolution of the position of such groups. Although initially ‘concerned with specific local issues’ such as ‘environmental protection, preservation of historical monuments and investigations of crimes of the Stalin era...only in the context of growing political awareness during the spring of 1988 did these clubs turn to explicitly political causes’ (234). This example is therefore also illustrative of the primacy of politics, and that of hegemonic articulations. In order to form a hegemonic formation, in this case formed in opposition to the then dominant Soviet hegemony, the logic of equivalence becomes vitally important in uniting different discourses, and then funnelling them towards a political goal. The equivalence is thus created of opposing Soviet power, or of fighting for more political freedoms.

According to Laclau (1995) the most effective way of constructing this system of equivalential identities is to suggest an externality that is not simply representative of another difference, but a real existential threat to (and therefore a negation of) one’s own internal discourse. In the above example, the Soviet Union was used as a negation of discourses of environmental protection, historical objectivity, economic development etc. In other words the logic of equivalence seeks to neatly place people either side of a discursively created divide. This then creates contingent frontiers separating antagonistic discourses. However, the paradox of such a relationship is manifested in the realisation that it is this very divide which is actually constitutive of discursive objects. Because neither side’s identity is neither fully formed nor internally sutured, they necessarily rely upon a symbolic anchoring to the ‘other’. For this reason, even when discourses appear to be marginalised and excluded from the hegemonic order, they nevertheless are *integral* to the formation of that very hegemony which marginalises them. Effectively this marks out the frontiers of political discourses as the battle grounds for discursive legitimacy and hegemonic articulations.

As a result of the contingency of such borders, the latitude is granted for each side to contest their proscribed equivalential identity. What is represented here is therefore simultaneously the ‘conditions of possibility of the system’ and ‘also its conditions of impossibility’ (5). The discursive formation is made possible, and thus limited, by its relationship with external discursive formations. For this reason it is possible not only to talk of a hegemonic order in the Gramscian sense, but also hegemonic formations generally. In summarising Laclau and Mouffe’s theory Howarth and Stavrakakis (2000: 14) define hegemonic practices as ‘an exemplary form of political activity that involves the articulation of different identities and subjectivities into a common project, while hegemonic *formations* are the outcomes of these projects’ endeavours to create new forms of social order from a variety of dispersed or dislocated elements.’ Hegemonic formations, which are generated through the process of the logic of equivalence can therefore also refer to subordinate groups which have created their own hegemonised formations. Indeed, the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe suggests that such subordinate, externalised hegemonic formations are essential to the suturing of the hegemonic order.

However, in order to conceive of a *universalised* externality, there must be recourse to the particular. If the identity of any object is premised on the universalisation of the negative relations with an external object, how is one to represent such an object? The answer, according to Laclau, is that the particular is used to symbolise the impossible totality (5). This logic means that certain representations, symbols, representatives etc. of a particular discourse become the embodiment and the very essence and universalisation of that discourse. Importantly, this use of the overdetermined symbol of the universal should be seen in the context of forming (and being formed by) its own regime of truth. For the far right, for example, the particular representation of the immigrant taking ‘our’ jobs and having no respect for ‘our’ culture is at the heart of their regime of truth. This particularisation permits the universalisation of all immigrants even though, in reality, individual ‘immigrants’ (an empty signifier filled with subjective meaning) differ as much from each other as they do from ‘us’.

For Laclau and Mouffe it is precisely this contingency and antagonism which facilitates the logic of hegemonic articulation: ‘given that [no subject position] manages ultimately to

consolidate itself as a *separate position*, there is a game of overdetermination among them that reintroduces the horizon of an impossible totality. It is this game which makes hegemonic articulation possible' (1985: 122). It is possible because the inconveniences of *the particular* are paradoxically overcome through recourse to *a particular*: 'did you know that immigrants (– not *the* immigrants, but *a particular* immigrant whose face I have never seen, but who has been shown to me) are taking our jobs?' Žižek takes this one step further, demonstrating how particularised representations can, and are, inverted. To illustrate this point he takes the example of anti-Semitism: 'at first 'Jew' appears as a signifier connoting a cluster of supposedly 'effective' properties (intriguing spirit, greedy for gain, and so on), but this is not yet anti-Semitism proper. To achieve that, we must *invert* the relation and say: they are like that (greedy, intriguing...) *because they are Jews*' (1989: 96).

It is at this point, if we accept that subject positions are contingent upon exterior subjects – whose discourses are in turn dependent upon other external subjects – that we may ask, how is any order or discursive formulation possible? What is to prevent articulations forming and reforming with such rapidity that discursive formations will have no time to form? If the social world is based on such a system of differences how do certain identities and discourses persist for hundreds, even thousands, of years in relatively constant forms? For Laclau and Mouffe, the answer is that discourses are anchored onto what they term 'nodal points':

...the impossibility of an ultimate fixity of meaning implies that there have to be partial fixations –otherwise, the very flow of differences would be impossible. Even in order to differ, to subvert meaning, there has to be *a* meaning. If the social does not manage to fix itself in the intelligible and instituted forms of *society*, the social only exists, however, as an effort to construct that impossible object. Any discourse is constituted as an attempt to dominate the field of discursivity, to arrest the flow of differences, to construct a centre. We will call the privileged discursive points of this partial fixation, *nodal points*. (1985: 112)

Nodal points play a vital role in endowing discursive structures with legitimacy, and in allowing them to fit within understandings, or 'realities' which have been commonly accepted. For Foucault, who uses the term *episteme* to describe a similar concept, the validity of a discourse is founded on its historical *a priori* (see 1972: 143-4). Foucault does not mean by

this that there is an eternally existing, absolute, and fixed *a priori* that produces discursive structures. Rather, this *a priori* represents all the statements historically made within a discursive field (*actions, representations, identifications*), and therefore ‘has to take account of the fact that discourse has not only a meaning or a truth, but a history, and a specific history that does not refer it back to the laws of an alien development’ (211). Nodal points, however, differ from Foucault’s *episteme* inasmuch as they can refer to single discursively meaningful units rather than the totalised system of prevailing discourses.

Importantly, nodal points are produced and reproduced because they have been said, uttered, and articulated *historically*. Therefore, to take one example, dynastic rulers could seize upon the ‘divine right of kings’ as a central nodal point in the propagation of regal discourses because such axiomatic ‘truths’ had earlier been articulated, propagated, and commonly accepted. Indeed, according to Benedict Anderson, the formation of the modern nation-state, and the withering of dynastic discourses of absolute monarchy, were only made possible when this conception lost its ‘grip on men’s minds’ (2006: 36).

This does not mean that such external nodal points cannot change, or that new nodal points cannot be instituted; on the contrary they are often the battlegrounds for competing discourses to vie for legitimacy. For example, as Žižek (1989:102) has shown, both Communist and Capitalist regimes used the concept of ‘freedom’ to anchor their ideologies. However, while the two discourses employed a common empty signifier (freedom), this signifier represented a very different meaning based on the historical *a priori* found within each discourse. Within the Communist discourse ‘freedom’ entailed freedom from bourgeois modes of exploitation, whereas for capitalists it signified individual economic, social, and political freedoms. This all goes to highlight the importance of examining the ways in which antagonistic subject positions vie for supremacy in defining not only internal units, but also external reference points. Hence, we should be wary of accepting the objective reality of any such signifier at face value. Even external structures and ‘realities’ such as, for example, military threats are liable to be manipulated in order to provide temporary suturing to a given subject position.

Material or ‘In the beginning was the chemically constituted object’

It is clear from the above section that discourse is a theoretically fruitful and potentially illuminating conceptual tool. Nevertheless, there are some who would doubt the boundless power of discourse to be socially creative. Geras (1987), for example, sees Laclau and Mouffe’s assertion that ‘every object is constituted as an object of discourse’ (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985: 107) as absurd and representing ‘shamefaced idealism’. For Geras this absurdity is manifested in the difficulty of ‘*pre-discursive objectivity or reality*’. If no object is constituted outside of the discursive field, how then can we explain the existence of objects which pre-date human discourse? Although Geras’ diatribe against Laclau and Mouffe is somewhat devalued by an overzealous preachiness levied against two of the leading heretics of ‘post-Marxism’, we might nonetheless consider for a moment that the man has a point.

Discursive and cultural approaches to media studies have also come under criticism for being linguistically reductive and for not paying due attention to material considerations (McGuigan, 1992). Nicholas Garnham, for example, insists that we must take stock of ‘material’ considerations if we are to understand cultural phenomena:

...the capitalist mode of production has certain core structural characteristics – above all that waged labor and commodity exchange constitute people’s necessary and unavoidable conditions of existence. These conditions shape in determinate ways the terrain upon which cultural practices take place – the physical environment, the available material and symbolic resources the time rhythms and spatial relations (1995: 71).

Certainly this critique laid down by political economists against exclusively cultural and discursive approaches to media studies would seem to be well founded. As such political economists are right to claim that so-called ‘material’ factors, such as media concentration, media’s reliance upon advertising, external sources of funding, etc., are important in determining the composition of media messages (see Fuchs 2009). However, just as we have attempted to pin down the term ‘discourse’ above, so must we dissect the term ‘material’.

In its purest form ‘material’ can be defined as chemically constituted, observable entities (though not necessarily observable with the human eye). Therefore, while discourse represents norms, values, symbolic constructions, understandings etc., material represents tactile and ‘real’ objects. For example, in Geras’ polemic against Laclau and Mouffe, his appeal to ‘pre-discursive objectivity or reality’ is an appeal to this material; atoms that have been bound, not by the discursive practices of humans, but by the ‘real’ and pre-existent laws of existence.

We will examine Geras’ point below. However, is this pre-discursive materialism the same materialism as espoused by political economists and Marxian theorists? For Marx his economic and social analyses were materialist to the extent that they were ‘scientific’ and revealed universal laws which were the basis of historical development:

In the analysis of economic forms, moreover, neither microscopes nor chemical reagents are of use. The force of abstraction must replace both. But in bourgeois society, the commodity-form of the product of labour — or value-form of the commodity — is the economic cell-form. To the superficial observer, the analysis of these forms seems to turn upon minutiae. It does in fact deal with minutiae, but they are of the same order as those dealt with in microscopic anatomy (Marx, 1978: 295).

Marx’s materialism is therefore based on a social materialism. Marx claims to reveal universal social laws, and to study social forms in as rigorous a manner as natural scientists. Where, for the biologist, the human form is made up of organic, material cells, the economic form is composed of ‘the commodity form of the product of labour’.

Of course Marx also attempts to conceptualise capital in more conventionally material terms, as resources (including the human body and its capacity for labour), but even he is sensitive to the fact that commodities are fetishised in advanced capitalism and are used as mystified markers of social relations. There exists therefore, a clear division for Marx between the ‘real’, ‘material’ laws of economic relations on the one hand, and the ‘false’, fetishised appearance of them which confounds us on the other.

This brings us neatly to Laclau and Mouffe’s response to Geras’ appeal to pre-discursive reality. For them Geras is guilty of confusing the *being* of an object, which they define as

‘historical and changing’, with its *entity* or *existence*, which does not change (Laclau and Mouffe, 1987: 85). The *entity* of the object corresponds to the chemical form untainted by human attempts to filter this object through discourse – the Real in the Lacanian sense. Therefore, for Marx, it is the *existence* of capital that determines the ‘true’ laws of economic relations. The *being* of the object is how we, as communicators and interpreters, perceive of that object through the lens of the various discourses we employ. For Marx then, it is this *being*, the process of fetishisation, or human corruption, which taints the ‘real’.

With this distinction in mind we can logically conceptualise three distinct, abstract fields of existence/being: *discourse*, *being*, and *existence*. Within these categories *being* is where purely material *existence* (the Real) is intersected by the purely discursive (the communicative). However, for Žižek the Real is a site of immense trauma because there is no way that we can adequately describe, know, and understand it through discourse. In our descriptions of objects we are unable to convey the Realness of the object. In this sense between every *being* and its corresponding *existence* there is an irreducible gap. For Adorno this constitutes the non-identity of the object; a surplus of the object’s existence that is left behind every time we attempt to bring that object into the world of our lived experience. As Adorno famously noted, ‘objects do not go into their concepts without leaving a remainder’ (1973: 5). Chemistry, to take a practical example, has been able to categorise much of the *existence* of the material and has been able to order it into a relatively manageable system of scientific knowledge. However, even Mendeleev’s periodic table is a discursive attempt to order material in a way that is humanly intelligible and practical. Outside of this table there is still the traumatic non-identity of the elements which defies description.

It is because of Laclau and Mouffe’s willingness to accept the existence of a non-discursive world that criticisms levied against their ‘linguistic reductionism’ are perhaps overstated. Thus, for Laclau and Mouffe, a mountain can be ‘protection from enemy attack, or a place for a touring trip, or the source for the extraction of minerals, etc.’ However; the important point is that ‘It is because it exists that it can be all these things’ (Laclau & Mouffe, 1987: 85), i.e. the *existence* of that object outside of discourse is necessary. A much more salient criticism of Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory would be that it does not sufficiently account for the agentic capacity of *existence*. Yes, a mountain can be all these things ‘because it exists’, but if

the chemically constituted form of the geological formation we have chosen to call 'mountains' were to be radically different then perhaps these discursive appellations would not be possible. Laclau and Mouffe would presumably argue that all *being* is relative, i.e. discursively bound within a relational network of meanings, whereby one object can only *be* precisely because it has been linked relationally to a thousand other signifiers. What is important then is a Foucauldian focus on the relations of things with its relations on others and on its relations with us.

While such a focus is patently useful, I argue that it is nonetheless theoretically deficient. There needs to be a better developed theory of *existence* and the power of this Real to configure *being*. Within the discourse theory espoused by Laclau and Mouffe the theme of agency is a clouded and confused one. According to Howarth and Stavrakakis (2000: 14) agency is best understood within discourse theory as a situation whereby, 'the political subject is neither simply *determined* by the structure, nor does it *constitute* the structure. Rather, the political subject is forced to take decisions – or identify with certain political projects and the discourses they articulate – when social identities are in crisis and structures need to be recreated'. This moves away from Foucault's determinist (post)structuralism, as the human agent is given some leeway to create meanings and *being*. On the other hand it also rejects 'essentialist conceptions of social agency' (6).

Social change, according to Laclau and Mouffe, is brought about as a result of structural necessities and can be explained through reference to the political logics of antagonism, equivalence, and hegemony which have been enumerated above. There is therefore a constrained role for human agency within this theory. However, I argue that there needs to be more rigorous attention paid to this issue of agency if we are to understand why social agents create the discourses they create, and why certain discourses become popularly accepted and form popularly understood *being*.

Diana Coole's phenomenological approach to agency (2005) provides us with a good starting point to do just this. By rejecting Cartesian dualism (a clear separation between minds and the spiritual on the one hand and bodies and material entities on the other), Coole is able to reject simultaneously any similarly crude dualism between structure and agency. Conventionally,

humans have been viewed as agents to the extent that they are capable of independent thought which can in turn be constrained by the material structures which surround them. However, Coole asks us to rethink agency so as to also consider the agentic capacities of corporeality. By understanding that communication is situated corporeally we can also comprehend how agency 'is irremediably embodied' (127). When we communicate we do so with recourse to bodily movement and gesture. Moreover, as recipients of discourse, words become embedded into our bodies. Consider, for example, the instance of a child being subjected to constant bullying and consequently avoiding eye contact with his/her assailants.

This accords very much with Judith Butler's work on performativity (1997) which highlights the role of the body in the perpetuation and transmission of discourses; 'As utterances, they work to the extent that they are given in the form of a ritual, that is, repeated in time, and, hence, maintain a sphere of operation that is not restricted to the moment of utterance itself' (3). In other words the body 'performs' discourse by repeating it and allowing certain discourses to gain legitimacy. For this reason Butler's approach also opens up the concept of agency by 'Untethering the speech act from the sovereign subject' (15). Thus, while the subject maintains a degree of agency, there is never an instance when we, as speakers, are fully in control of the words we speak, and where the words we speak have, to a large extent, a life of their own.

It is perhaps useful then to distinguish between two different types of agency: the agency of the human subject, and an agency that comes from a more material source. Jane Bennett elaborates on a similar distinction in her theory of 'thing-power'. For Bennett 'Thing-power materialism is a (necessarily speculative) onto-theory that presumes that matter has an inclination to make connections and form networks of relations with varying degrees of stability' (2004: 354). Bennett thus draws on Latour's term *actant* which differs from the word actor inasmuch as an actant can be either human or nonhuman. At the heart of Bennett's thing-power materialism is the belief that things have power to arrange our thoughts; when standing in front of any given object, that object will pull our thoughts and therefore our actions into certain directions.

This form of materialism is very appealing in that it acknowledges the role of discursive interpellation in the constitution of any object, but it also maintains that material objects can be actants. This makes logical sense. Let us return briefly to Gerras' pre-discursivity. The moment humankind first comes into contact with an object (fire for example) there is no prior knowledge of what constitutes 'fire' and of what constitutes the properties of fire, or of the relations of fire with other signifiers. Therefore, the process that leads to *fire*, i.e. the naming and constitution of 'fire' within discourse, can be seen as one relying on both the agency of the human subject (in deciding to announce that it is indeed 'fire') and on the agency, or actancy, of chemically determined phenomena. Fire 'burns'⁴ the outstretched hand of our primitive and mythical human – a chemically determined reaction over which he/she has no control except in the interpretation thereof. However, once the *existence* has unleashed its brutal actancy on the human subject, then the object ceases to be a purely material, Real phenomenon, but is dragged into the discursive world of the subject by being instantly linked to the thousands of other discursive points of reference at work within the subject. In short, the *existence* becomes *being*. Nonetheless, we should still be able to categorise this *being* as both a material and as a discursive construct.

Our crude example here might seem to provide limited support to descriptivism, which holds that the names given to objects actually serve to describe those objects, and to describe the qualities of those objects. However, by drawing on the being/existence distinction offered by Laclau and Mouffe, we can safely sit on the theoretical fence between descriptivism and anti-descriptivism. For Žižek the anti-descriptivist position is preferable because there is no guarantee that words actually do relate to the Reality of the terms they are employed to describe. Žižek (1989: 90) uses an example from Kripke to illustrate his point. If asked to describe 'Kurt Gödel', the public might answer 'the author of the proof of the incompleteness of arithmetic'. However, if in truth Gödel never did write this proof, but stole it from another man 'the name 'Kurt Gödel' would still refer to the same Gödel, although the identifying description would no longer apply to him'. In other words, although the description attributed to the name might change, the signifiers ascribed to the object remain. Thus, for Žižek there

⁴ Of course, in this instance I am faced with the traumatic truth that I cannot describe the Real burning, even though it is what I wish to do. Instead I have to rely on the signifier 'burning' – a poor imitation of the Real thing

occurs a ‘primal baptism’, a moment when the object is endowed with discursive form, and which persists irrespective of certain ruptures in any identifying descriptions that might occur.

What Žižek then adds to our understanding of anti-descriptivism is the notion of ‘the radical contingency of naming, the fact that naming itself retroactively constitutes its reference’ (95). This accords strongly with Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory and it is no coincidence that Laclau provides the foreword to Žižek’s work. Certainly we must accept that naming has a radically creative function insofar as naming an object necessarily goes beyond simply fixing a particular sound or combination of letters/hieroglyphs to an object. Instead, the naming fits that object into a knowable chain of relations with other named objects.

What then can we say regarding the material actancy of the object in such circumstances? In Kripke’s example of Kurt Gödel there is a case of mistaken identity. There *was* nonetheless an underlying set of Real factors and laws external to discourse which enabled the writing of the proof of the incompleteness of arithmetic. Therefore, while Žižek is right to highlight the contingency of naming, he nevertheless neglects to consider fully the impact of the Real on this process. Even if a person or object is named incorrectly or under false guises, and even if at the moment of the ‘primal baptism’ the agent does not comprehend fully the *existence* of the object (which is actually impossible), this self same *existence* will still exert its actancy upon the naming process. Even if our primitive human does not understand any of the chemical features of fire and believes that fire is a god, this does not mean that the Real *existence* has not influenced this person. They have constructed their own *being* for the Real object and their own means to understand this Real, which is formed within discourse, but the Real is nonetheless present, operating at some level.

Also, Žižek does not sufficiently account for changes which might occur in the relational chain that the signifier finds itself located within. The signifier may well remain constant, but if it were shown publicly that Kurt Gödel did indeed plagiarise his colleague’s work, then there would be a reconfiguration so that when asked ‘who or what is Kurt Gödel?’ the answer would no longer be ‘the man who proved...’, but instead ‘the man who we, until recently, thought proved...’. In this instance a portion of the Real has caught up with Kurt Gödel. For

this reason Žižek's insistence upon the pivotal role of the primal baptism needs to be subjected to greater scrutiny. One way to do this is to consider the *temporality of being*.

Towards a workable model or 'In the beginning was it the chicken or the egg?'

Within Foucault's 'archaeology of knowledge' Foucault sets out how, in any period of time, there are discursive formations which operate independently from human agency, and which determine human activity. In his move towards genealogy, Foucault seeks to explain how changes can occur within these discursive formations. For Foucault each era is bound by its own *episteme* which threads together discursive fields without the subjects necessarily ever being aware of its presence:

This *episteme* may be suspected of being something like a world-view, a slice of history common to all branches of knowledge, which imposes on each one the same norms and postulates, a general stage of reason, a certain structure of thought that the men of a particular period cannot escape – a great body of legislation written once and for all by some anonymous hand. By *episteme*, we mean, in fact, the total set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, sciences, and possibly formalized systems. (Foucault, 1972: 211)

Foucault's use of *episteme* here has some similarity with Laclau and Mouffe's use of the term *nodal points* discussed above. Certainly nodal points seem to be necessary in order to suture or anchor any given discourse. As Laclau and Mouffe understand, without them the discursive world we inhabit would be far too malleable and fragile for *being* to take any meaningful shape. A major difference is that the *episteme* can be considered to cover the 'total set of relations' which govern human relations as opposed to the nodal point which can refer to a single discursive unit.

Unfortunately neither Foucault nor Laclau and Mouffe offer any detailed methodological framework with which to examine the emergence of these nodal points. Although Foucault's archaeological method sets out the importance of a temporal perspective (trying as it does to understand change), it is nevertheless vague as to the concrete methodology that one could pursue in order to understand how changes occur to the *episteme*. Instead, he seems to content

to refer enigmatically to the ‘anonymous hand’ which has written this *episteme*. Indeed, despite Foucault’s interest in time there is even an often paradoxical refusal to treat and study time according to the calendrical norms with which most people are familiar (Brown & Cousins, 1980: 253).

In many respects Foucault’s genealogical method thus continues to disavow the role of human agency⁵ and seeks to understand discursive changes in terms of external, non-discursive changes (Gutting, 2000: 290). As we have discussed, Laclau and Mouffe reject this distinction between discursive and non-discursive objects, on the grounds that without discourse nothing can have any meaning and must lie outside of human experience. Nevertheless, even if we were to accept the presence of non-discursive objects, Foucault does not provide a workable methodology with which to examine the emergence and development of the *episteme*.

There is therefore a need for a methodological approach which can examine the emergence of the individual nodal points which make up the *episteme*. If nodal points are so vital for the anchoring of any discourse then it is essential that we can, at some level, understand the regularities which bind and are created by them. My proposed solution is to combine the rich theoretical insights of Foucault’s work with Žižek’s work on the radical contingency of naming – and his focus on the ‘primal baptism’. By so doing it is hoped that we can start to develop a methodology conducive to CDA which can help us document the temporal emergence of nodal points and see how these nodal points anchor contemporary discourses and, in our case, national identities.

Using CDA as a means to study ‘texts’ we can examine how Fairclough’s categories of *action, representation, and identification* (for Foucault; *relations of control over things, relations of action upon others, and relations with oneself*) reveal themselves for any given linguistic sign. As such, we are examining the complex web of linguistic and discursive relations within

⁵ There has been much debate concerning the role of agency in the works of Foucault (see Ahearn, 2001: 116). Certainly, it is true that a number of authors have seen little space for human agency within Foucault’s conceptions of discourse (for a concise overview of these arguments see Allen, 2000: 115-121). However, in Foucault’s latter writings (notably *Discipline and Punish*) emphasis is shifted towards a more instrumental use of discourse, whereby power has the effect of creating individual subjects (see Allen, 2002: 134-136). This leads O’Hara (1992) to theorise a conflictual understanding of human agency within the latter works of Foucault whereby power and discourse not only constrain the human subject, but also facilitate its very existence.

which any given word is embedded *at the particular moment of the texts' articulation*. Then, if we have access to another volume of 'texts' which chronologically precede our first set, we can apply the same analytical method in order to determine the preceding conditions which have facilitated the relations we can observe in the present. This process can then be repeated indefinitely for as long as there are accessible 'texts'. Ideally, of course we would want to get all the way back to the 'primal baptism', but this is admittedly hardly likely.

The rationale for adopting this methodology is that it will allow us to map out how the *discursive relations* of an object change and evolve through time, and how certain concepts are introduced and referenced as nodal points in different periods of time. Relying on Žižek's theory of the radical contingency of naming, we can see that the naming of an object; i.e. the placement of an object within a complex relational network of meaning, gives *being* to that object. However, it is clear that the relations one discursive object has with other discursive units are not necessarily the same *now* as they were at the moment they were first uttered. What Žižek therefore does not consider in sufficient detail is the *ever-present* radical contingency of *renaming*. That is to say that, at any moment, a named object can acquire a new meaning, or, to continue Žižek's metaphor, a spiritual rebirth. The meaning is never totally fixed. However, according to Laclau and Mouffe, nodal points serve not only to facilitate but also to restrict this radical power of renaming. This therefore leads to my hypothesis that, in order for discourses to gain power and legitimacy in the present, they must necessarily engage with the discursive relations of the past. If it is possible to alter the form or *being* of the nodal points which anchor the identity and 'reality' of the object, then it will also be possible to alter the *being* of that self-same object.

For this reason intertextuality plays such an important role in the discourse-historical approach espoused by Ruth Wodak in her studies of racism and national identities. An essential aspect of Wodak's approach has been to utilise a triangulated approach in attempting 'to integrate as many of the genres of discourse referring to a particular issue as possible, as well as the historical dimension of that issue' (van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999: 91). Thus, in Leeuwen and Wodak's (1999) study of Austrian immigration authorities' frequent rejection of family reunion applications of immigrant workers, the authors not only submit the official letters of rejection to a linguistic analysis, but they also examine the issue of family reunion and the

historical context of immigration in Austria. According to the authors the most central elements to their discourse-historical method are ‘the content of the data, the discursive strategies employed, and the linguistic realization of these contents and strategies’ (91; see also de Cilia et al. 1999: 157-66).

The content of the data refers here to the main ‘macro-areas’ or topics which relate to the specific field. For example, in a study of national identity, these may well include such macro-areas as narratives of collective political history, ideas of what it means to be German, American, Austrian etc., the discursive construction of a national body, and a common history (de Cilia et al. 1999: 158). In elaborating on the meaning of ‘discursive strategies’ Wodak and her colleagues provide four categories of macro-strategies which are employed to change or maintain the content and form of national identities: ‘(1) constructive strategies; (2) perpetuation and justification strategies; (3) transformation strategies; and (4) dismantling or destructive strategies’ (160). The linguistic realisation of these contents and strategies refers to the linguistic practices and units which individuals and groups employ and which have traditionally been the focus of study for CDA.

These macro-strategies are ones which allow an agent to engage with previously articulated discourses in order to ensure that their currently uttered discourses enjoy enough congruence with the nodal points of the past. Based largely upon these categories for macro-strategies which have been enumerated by Wodak et al., I would like to propose and elaborate on three generalised categories for the potential form of discursive engagement which allow for a theoretically deeper integration with the aspects of Foucault and Žižek’s work that have been discussed above, as well as placing further emphasis on the role of temporality in the emergence of contemporary discourses. The three categories I propose are: Anti-discourse, integrational-discourse, and constructive-discourse.

Anti-discourse represents an attempt to delegitimise the preceding discursive relations of an object in order to establish new nodal points, effectively freeing or disentangling a discursive unit from its preceding points of reference. For example, if a monarch holds that their power derives from the God-given ‘divine right of kings’, and I wish to de-legitimise this position, I may well direct my discourse against God, religious belief, the church, or any discursive

aspects associated with them. If I can convince enough people that God does not exist, or that God is not the deity the king has deceived us into believing he is, then this nodal point (although there may well be other important nodal points) is thrust away to reveal a new *being*, or leaving a space for new *being* to be created.

Integrational-discourse, on the other hand, seeks to work within the existent discursive relations in order to gain legitimacy for another object or subject position. A state's decision to go to war, for example, will most likely be framed within the already established and generally accepted prisms of discursive 'reality' with which people can easily understand and contextualise the current expediency to wage war ('democracy-building', 'holy-war', 'security' etc.). In other words, the new object gains its legitimate *being* by being able to slot into pre-established nodal points.

Constructive-discourse differs from anti-discourse and integrational-discourse inasmuch as it does not directly address (either positively or negatively) the pre-established nodal points which anchor an object. Instead it indirectly engages with them by seeking to create a whole new nodal point, or series of nodal points, for the object. Naturally, there has to be a certain amount of overlap between this and the other two forms of discursive engagement. The new relations introduced between the object and a new nodal point may well contradict and weaken the previous nodal points but they may also serve to strengthen them.

The categories of anti-discourse and constructive-discourse correspond almost exactly with de Cilia and Wodak's categories of dismantling and destructive strategies and constructive strategies. I have chosen to combine these authors' categories of transformation strategies and perpetuation and justification strategies into the single category of integrational-discourse. This is because I feel that all discourse is necessarily transformed when we reproduce it in the present. As I have argued, discourse needs to be understood as the total set of relations one object has with all the other objects that are discursively connected to it. This means that when I use the linguistic signifier 'king' today, the discursive relations of this sign are different than they were a thousand years ago, and even twenty years ago. Therefore, perpetuation and justification strategies are necessarily simultaneously transformation strategies. We will discuss this in more detail below.

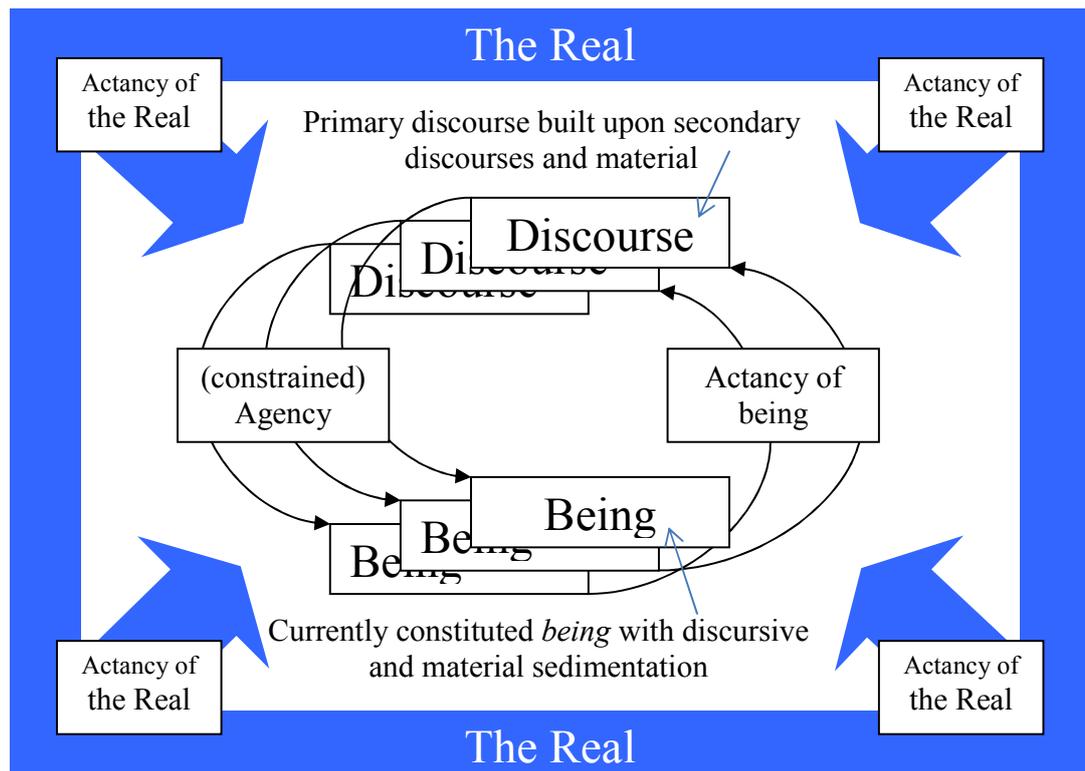
Within these categorisations my hypothesis is that contemporary discourses are bound to engage with previously-established discourses. For this reason I have also seen fit to distinguish between *primary* and *secondary* forms of discourse. Primary discourse can be defined as the level of discursive articulation which is directly produced by individuals *in the present*. Secondary discourse, on the other hand, can be understood to represent the levels of discourse which have *historically* operated in the formation of discursive entities.

For Tolbert and Zucker (1996), discourses are constantly being built upon previous discourses thus forming a ‘sedimentation’ of discourse which establishes the current form of the entity in the present. This process is presented in figure 3. The currently constituted *being* of any given unit is represented at the top of the helix. The constitution of this *being* is firstly framed and limited by the actancy of the Real which exerts an omnipresent influence throughout all stages of this process. It is this Real (pre-discursive reality) which allows humans (agents) to produce discourses which are aimed at describing the unit. This in turn leads to the formation of the initial *being* of the object; the moment when it comes into the world of lived experience. Then, once these relations have been established the *being* is endowed with its own actancy which both limits and facilitates the establishment of new relations between the named object and other named and non-named objects. Another agent will still be able to inject new meaning into the object through recourse to primary discourse. Nonetheless, this agent, if they want their words to become meaningfully integrated into the *being* of the object, will have to take account of the secondary discourse(s) and material considerations that underpin the *being* of the unit. Moreover, at each level on the helix, new meanings are introduced creating over time a sedimentation of discursive reality.

This temporal helix also helps us to conceptualise the role and formation of power in creating *being*. The way that I wish to employ the term power differs considerably from Foucault’s usage but also draws greatly upon his ideas. Within Foucault’s methodologies there is (allegedly) no space for human agency (Calvert-Minor: 2010: 2). Instead, the surface – or primary – discourse produced by individuals is simply the expression of ‘the will to power’, i.e. a generalised desire to create knowledge or truths which is determined by the extraneous rules of discursive formation (Fox, 1998: 418). For this reason Foucault prefers to consider

authorship from the perspective of the ‘author function’ rather than the privileged and humanistic role of the author. Instead of being endowed with creative power, Foucault views the subject (author) ‘as a variable and complex function of discourse’ (1984: 118).

Figure 3: The temporal helix of *being*



For Foucault power is therefore not power to be creative in any humanistic capacity. Power instead is intrinsically bound with knowledge and is manifested through discourse; the ‘author’ of any text ‘creates’ his/her words based on the knowledge they have of the world, as dictated by the prevailing discursive conditions, which then creates new regimes of truth and continues in a never-ending cycle. Power, therefore, is intrinsically located within and inseparable from discourse. Power is also dispersed through all social actions and relations and therefore lacks a concrete centrality. For this reason Foucault envisages a future where we no longer ask ‘who is speaking?’ but instead focus on the more salient issues such as ‘what are the modes of existence of this discourse? Where has it been used, how can it circulate, and

who can appropriate it for himself? What are the places in it where there is room for possible subjects? Who can assume these various subject functions?’ (120).

This understanding of power differs considerably from traditional sociological notions of power where power has been seen as an oppressive or controlling force which enables institutions and individuals to maintain order and control over other groups and individuals. It also differs from the Gramscian concept of hegemony which helped to uncover the role of cultural power, used alongside coercive force, as a means to perpetuate state-power and the power of capitalism. There is, however, a certain overlap in Foucault’s diffused notion of power and Laclau and Mouffe’s use of hegemony. In both cases power is diffused, lacking a central location. Nevertheless, by invoking the concept of hegemony Laclau and Mouffe are necessarily admitting an *empty space of power* (Newman, 2004: 150-53). That is to say, they believe that although power is diffused, and that it is never fully sutured, the very lack of this suturing inevitably leads to hegemonic practices. Because there can be no Real power in the Lacanian sense, there is only the desire to fill the symbolic space with one’s own identity. And, because one’s own identity is so insignificant, there must also be recourse to the universal alongside the particular, in order to transform ‘I’ into ‘we’. Thus the struggle to create a hegemony composed of a paradoxical assimilation of the particular and the universal is what characterises the struggle to occupy this *empty space of power*.

Within the helix model the partial materialisation of *being*, which is enacted through the actancy of the Real and then perpetually reinforced (although modified) through the actancy of *being*, there is provision for power to be spatially located, as well as for power to be discursively and socially dispersed. This is because certain sites, such as the state, can gain power through the historical sedimentation that lies beneath the *being* in the present. What is therefore important within this helix model is not so much an avowal or denial of the humanistic role of power. Instead it emphasises the fluid nature of power which can be relatively centralised but which is also manifest throughout various social institutions and interactions. The central aspect of power within the helix is therefore a focus on *the power to create being*. That is, the process whereby individuals, groups, institutions, or even ideas gain legitimacy and become endowed with ‘truth’, thus allowing them to reconfigure the discursive relations within which humans operate.

For one thing this power is manifested temporally. Discursively, a person is at liberty to *say* anything he or she wishes (unless under extreme conditions of physical force). However, for there to be creative power in their discourse, the individual must be placed sufficiently high on our upwardly spiralling helix. This means that discursive conditions have to be met as well as material ones. For example, for a leader of a country rich in oil supplies to enjoy substantial power, then first there are the material conditions of power, i.e. that technological advances have led to oil being a valuable resource, and that the oil reserves themselves are sufficiently large in relation to oil's supply and demand. In this sense material resources are a potentially essential necessity in order to construct hegemonies, and therefore to inject meaning or *being* into the social, political, and economic space. On the other hand, discursive conditions also have to be met. Our imaginary leader must somehow fit into discursive value systems that allow him/her to legitimately interact with other world leaders and within global economic systems. Additionally, along with the other numerous, relevant discursive conditions the sedimented *being* of oil would necessarily have to be at an appropriate position on the helix. If, for example, ecologist discourses against using oil become more meaningfully sedimented in the *being* of oil, then the material power, or latent actancy, of our world leader's oil will also logically diminish, as people turn away from oil as a means to power motorcars.

Here we may introduce Gramsci's distinction between political and cultural hegemony. For Gramsci regimes in 'the East' were able to hold onto power because of their political hegemony, i.e. their use of coercive measures which relied upon their control over various material resources, whereas in 'the West' power was maintained through a combination of coercive measures (although to a lesser degree than in 'the East'), combined with cultural hegemony; i.e. a utilisation of norms, values, and culture with which to enforce order.

Interestingly, this distinction can also allow us to integrate performativity into the workings of power. Cultural hegemony operates because at some level the discourses employed within the cultural realm are able to establish their own truths, and therefore are able to create *being* which subsequently possesses its own actancy. However, regimes of truth which rely upon the bayonet, or political hegemony, for their power also create *being*, not so much by convincing publics of the 'truthfulness' of their regimes, but because they are able to make people

perform being. This brings to mind an old Soviet joke, popular in the Brezhnev years: ‘They pretend to pay us and we pretend to work’. In this quip there is the realisation that the discourse of the regime does not correspond to the perceived reality of the worker. In this sense *being* is not primarily created by the regime’s primary discourse. Nevertheless, the worker still understands the need to work within this system, even if it means ‘pretending to work’. What is therefore important is that our imaginary worker is in fact perpetuating *being* not through his or her words, thoughts or beliefs, but rather by performing it.

Alongside the material conditions required for the power to create *being* there are also the discursive ones. There are two main aspects to this. Firstly, as discussed earlier, one must engage with secondary discourses in order to find a meaningful space for any primary discourse. If, for example, a leading candidate for a political position were to say something in public that was deemed unacceptable based on the sedimentation of historical discourse relevant to them, then that person’s power would soon vanish. In modern American politics this could conceivably take the form of someone saying something particularly racist or sexist, but it could also be a statement that could be seen to somehow go against ‘American values’, for example, anything that could be explicitly construed as ‘communist’ or ‘socialist’. Therefore any primary discourse must conform to an effective strategy of anti, integrational, or constructive discourse.

The second aspect is the platform from where primary discourse emanates. Because institutions, titles, social positions etc. are all endowed with their own *being*, they are thus also endowed with a certain amount of latent power. Consider two people producing the same primary discourse but from very different social positions; one a learned professor from a leading educational institution, the other a cashier in a supermarket. The words are the same but the professor inevitably has more power to create meaningful *being* due to the platform from which he or she speaks. In a sense this is a form of integrational discourse insofar as the primary discourse of the professor is being automatically, but indirectly, integrated within the already established secondary layers of discursive legitimacy of their social platform.

Conclusions

In summation then, while there is much to commend theories of discourse in studies of social identities, there are also significant criticisms which need to be examined. This chapter firstly examined theories of discourse with a particular focus on the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe. Central to this theory is the notion of political antagonisms and the need that any group has of articulating externalised hegemonic formations if they wish their own identity to be sufficiently sutured.

This section also examined the criticism that discursively centred approaches can be linguistically reductivist. If we are to understand a phenomenon as complex as national identity formation then it surely is not enough simply to select a portion of seemingly important ‘texts’ and to subject them to linguistic micro-analysis, no matter how vigorous this analysis can be. Through an engagement with the criticisms proffered by proponents of more ‘materialist’ approaches we were able to consider the actancy of objects as an agential force.

Notwithstanding the criticisms levied at them, Laclau and Mouffe do not reject the idea of pre-discursive reality. Instead they note that nothing is able to be experienced without recourse to discourse, and as such every object must be understood as a discursive one. This insight was essential in examining the temporality of *being*. The pre-discursive composition of objects may not change but its discursive composition may well change. As Saussure (1960) understood, language, and the system of language, must be understood as a totality. That is to say that every word, signifier, identity, etc., is intrinsically and relationally linked with every other word, signifier, or identity. By extracting Laclau and Mouffe’s distinction between *being* and *existence* I was able to consider how the *being* of an object can fit within this totalised system, and therefore form an integral agential power within it.

An important emphasis, however, was on the role of agency in determining how individual objects, or discursive units, gain their meaning and are able to form nodal points. By drawing on material theories of embodiment and corporeality I was able to conceptualise a temporal helix of *being*. This helix helps to explain how objects gain their discursive meaning and also how these meanings can be altered in the course of time.

The final section of this chapter attempted to bring together the theoretical insights which were discussed into a workable, methodological approach to the study of social and national identities. I enumerated my theory that social agents will need to engage with previously sedimented discursive *being* if they wish to create new ‘truths’ and, by extension, power. Based on the previous work of Wodak and her colleagues I suggested three main strategies whereby discursive agents would be able to engage with, and potentially alter, the form and *being* of various nodal points.

In terms of national identity then we can posit that the sedimented past must be a central element of what it means for anyone to be German, Finnish, Russian, etc. Even if we do not recognise the past in this, it is still there, operating at various levels that we can hardly perceive. With these considerations in mind I will later consider how memory studies are becoming an increasingly popular topic for studies of identity, and how memory and history have formed an integral part of national identity formation in the Latvian context (see chapter three). First, however, I shall consider the role of the media in forming such identities.

Chapter 2: Media
effects: How media
can form national
and ethnic
identities

The role of media in the formation of national identities

As our previous chapter touched upon, in CDA and within Cultural Studies the mass media of communication are often singled out as an important locus of identity and hegemonic construction. Certainly mass media are one of the most prominent sources of discursive articulation in modern societies, where they possess enormous coverage and outreach and their messages can reach millions of people almost instantly. This effectively means that the words, images, and depictions ('texts') of the mass media are potentially integral to the formation of social hegemonies accepted by the public at large. In chapters three and four I will turn to media analysis as a central methodological approach within this study. This chapter firstly explores some of the theoretical aspects of media studies which are relevant to this research and asks how media can inform national and ethnic identities.

Benedict Anderson cites the emergence of the printing press and the subsequent proliferation of what he terms 'print capitalism' as one of the most important factors leading to the formation of the modern nation state, and the formation of collective identities on a national scale. For Anderson,

...print-languages laid the bases for national consciousness [by creating] unified fields of exchange and communication below Latin and above the spoken vernaculars. Speakers of a huge variety of Frenches, Englishes, or Spanishes, who might find it difficult or even impossible to understand one another in conversation, became capable of comprehending one another via print and paper. In the process, they gradually became aware of hundreds of thousands, even millions, of people in their particular language-field, and at the same time that *only those* hundreds of thousands, or millions, so belonged. These fellow-readers, to whom they were connected through print, formed, in their secular, particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of the nationally imagined community. (2006: 44)

National identities, like any social identities, do not simply emerge objectively from the 'realities' of primordial histories. Instead, Anderson argues, the 'imagined community' that forms the basis of the modern nation state has first to be conceived. It is this role of conception that Anderson attributes to print-capitalism. The availability of vernacular-language materials

meant that language could become a defining feature of national consciousness. Anderson also notes how in Europe this led to the decline of dynastic rule because European dynasties had often been based not on racial, ethnic, or linguistic kinship to the subjects of a particular kingdom or principality, but rather on the privileged position of power passed down through royal families (77). Thus it was perfectly possible for a German-speaking monarch to rule English-speaking peoples. However, once an imagined community had formed its subject position based on a common language – and subsequently a common culture as defined in print, it became increasingly difficult for an ‘outsider’ to be their ruler.

Before accepting the importance of media in forming such subject positions, however, it is important to take note of some of the literature relating to media influence in *contemporary* societies. Gerbner (1985), for example, argues that mass communication has the macrosociological function of creating its own publics and providing a sense of common identity. For Gerbner understanding culture, which he defines as ‘a system of messages that regulates social relationships’ (14), is essential for an understanding of media influence. Culture regulates social relationships, he suggests, by providing a framework of possible actions:

The communications of a culture not only inform common images; they not only entertain but create publics; they not only reflect but shape attitudes, tastes preferences. They provide the boundary conditions and overall patterns within which the processes of personal and group-mediated selection, interpretation, and interaction go on. (14)

Gerbner’s argument is similar to Anderson’s. However, by adding cultural production, or ‘cultural indicators’ as he calls them, as a defining feature of mass communication, Gerbner highlights the importance of the mass media in creating mass publics. According to Gerbner, community consciousness would be impossible on such a large (national) scale were it not for the mediated intervention of a mass culture projected through the mass media (Gerbner, 1969).

To elaborate on this point let us briefly consider Hobsbawm and Ranger’s celebrated work, *The Invention of Tradition* (1992). Hobsbawm notes the importance of symbolic spaces, both geographical and temporal, in the creation of traditions that are integrally linked with the

nation state. Thus, for example, in nineteenth century France, Hobsbawm observes that public commemorations and public monuments become ‘the visible links between the voters and the nation’ (Hobsbawm, 1992: 271). Although Hobsbawm does not explicitly acknowledge any role for communications media in the public dissemination of these symbolic fields, it is nonetheless implicit. For example, the symbolic ability of the Houses of Parliament in London to create any meaningful link with voters in Sheffield will be greatly enhanced by textual, artistic, and at a later stage - photographic, reproductions and references to this edifice. It is, of course, perfectly plausible that without the intervention of mass media, this linkage may have been formed through personal contact with people who had themselves seen or heard about the Houses of Parliament. However, mass media provide a far more accessible and immediate channel for such large-scale articulations.

This seems fully congruent with our model of temporal change. We can see, in the above examples, that it is the emergence of a structural base comprised of material and agential innovations (in this case the invention of the printing press) which allows for a new level of primary discourse. In turn these discourses affect the *being* of the nation state and other institutions which leads to a newly emergent form of identity formation. Moreover, we can see in Gerbner’s depiction of culture the constraints that are placed on human agency just as we see in our helix.

However, in the literature ‘culture’ is often treated in isolation from material considerations. A focus on culture, for example, defined as ‘the sum of the available descriptions through which societies make sense of and reflect their common experiences’ (Hall, 1986: 34) has been central to the so-called Cultural Studies approach to media effects. The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), from its inception in the late 60s up to its closure in 2002, was a centrally important institution in the emergence of this field. For Stuart Hall, the former director of studies at the Centre, culture plays a vital role in laying the foundations for national and large-scale identities on the grounds that ‘it is difficult to know what ‘being English’, or indeed French, German, South African or Japanese, *means* outside of all the ways in which our ideas and images of national identity or national cultures have been represented’ (Hall, 1997: 5). Admittedly cultural studies as a discipline is far from unified in its

methodological approaches and scope of study.⁶ However, the discipline's main assumption has been that culture is a legitimate and imperative object of study.

Cultural studies, especially as practiced at the CCCS, was initially greatly influenced by French structuralism. Saussure's theory of language (1960), for example, provided the theoretical starting point that allowed cultural theorists to see how specific language (*parole*) and the system of language (*langue*) could order social relations. Consequently, cultural studies has been able to study 'texts' – which can be defined as literary texts but also in a broader sense as social action, verbal communication, pictures etc., in order to examine the underlying structures which facilitated their existence. Therefore discourse is not studied in isolation, but as part of an attempt to locate the social structure (or culture) behind the discourse.

Althusser's theory of ideology (2008) was also an important foundation for cultural studies as it departed from classical Marxism's degrading of culture simply to a consequence of the economic base (see Turner, 1990: 17-9). Althusser saw *Ideological State Apparatuses* (ISAs) such as the family, church, the education system, and importantly the media, as powerful institutions which operated by ideologically turning people into subjects in line with the dominant interests of the ruling class. ISAs are the mechanisms through which people are indoctrinated and taught 'know how' in order for the dominant class, with its (*Repressive State Apparatus* (i.e. the state mechanisms of violence such as the army, police, courts, prisons etc.) to maintain control and dominance over the population at large. For Althusser culture, or ideology, was essential for this dominance. Indeed, he sees ideology as the crucial force which structures human behaviour and dictates every small action, thereby turning each individual into a subject of ideology. His famous example illustrates this point; in responding to a policeman's call 'Hey, you there!' (48) and turning round, the individual is automatically subjected to the ideological recognition of the ideological social relations inherent in social life. Even a hand shake with a friend is 'a material ritual practice of ideological recognition in everyday life' (46). Such Althusserian ideas allowed cultural studies to examine actions and texts produced by individuals in relation to the dominant cultural modes surrounding them.

⁶ For a lucid overview of some of the different approaches within cultural studies see Turner, G. 1990.

However, one of the great advances of cultural studies has been its break from the overdetermined structuralism of Althusser which had envisaged little chance for the individual to escape the dominant cultural structures.

Hall's theory of encoding/decoding (1980b) therefore emphasises not only the moment of discursive production whereby media messages are first encoded by its producers but also considers the process of decoding by the message's recipient. In contrast to Althusser, Hall's view of consumption, or ideological reception, is far less deterministic and structuralist. Instead of the dominant order being ideologically forced upon us, Hall states that consumers are able to decode messages according to different *codes*, or frameworks which he terms *negotiated*, *oppositional*, and *dominant*. If the dominant code represents an Althusserian view of dominance springing from the prevailing (Repressive) State Apparatus, then Hall provides alternative modes of thinking and action for the cultural consumer: 'since there is no necessary correspondence between encoding and decoding, the former can attempt to 'pre-fer' but cannot prescribe or guarantee the latter, which has its own conditions of existence' (Hall, 1980b: 135).

This theoretical advancement has thus also allowed cultural studies to move beyond earlier 'direct influence' approaches to media effects which had supposed a pervasive and explicit relationship between media output and public opinion (see, for example, Lasswell, 1927; Lippmann, 1954). The direct influence theories of Lippmann and Lasswell were born in an era that had witnessed extensive use of war propaganda as a direct channel of influence. For Lippmann the ability for elites to 'manufacture consent' was facilitated by the mass media and the fact that the 'world outside' 'is altogether too big, too complex, and too fleeting for direct acquaintance' (1954: 16). According to Lippmann the media allows the public to construct a simplified model of the world that they can understand.

However, as subsequent empirical research has demonstrated, these theories of direct media effects are far too simplified and lack empirical substantiation. For example, Lazarsfeld et al (1948) found that, contrary to their expectations, media did not seem to be as important a factor as personal contacts in determining voting behaviour in an American presidential election. This led to Katz and Lazarsfeld's groundbreaking study *Personal Influence* (1955)

which argued for a limited effects model of media influence. Instead of a 'hypodermic' model, the authors posit a 'two-step flow of communication' whereby the public are more influenced by individual 'opinion leaders' (personally known contacts who possess a disproportionately large influence on others) than by direct media exposure. However, it is a two-step model because these opinion leaders pay close attention to the media in the first instance. In other words, Katz and Lazarsfeld see the media as important in providing information to opinion leaders, but as relatively ineffectual in *directly* changing public opinion.

These observations are insightful and offer a more nuanced understanding of media effects. Certainly they question the power of the mass media to directly influence human behaviour. However, this limited effects paradigm has come under criticism for its focus on short-term and empirically measurable changes. For example, Gitlin views the narrow scope of Katz and Lazarsfeld's study (focusing as it does on voting behaviour in one election period) as a severe limitation to their theory's ability to document more general media influence. According to Gitlin (1978, 205-6), the two-step approach to media effects,

...has drained attention from the power of the media to define normal and abnormal social and political activity, to say what is politically real and legitimate and what is not; to justify the two-party political structure; to establish certain political agendas for social attention and to contain, channel, and exclude others; and to shape the images of opposition movements. By its methodology, [this dominant paradigm in] media sociology has highlighted the recalcitrance of audiences, their resistance to media-generated messages, and not their dependency, their acquiescence, their gullibility. It has looked to "effects" of broadcast programming in a specifically behaviouralist fashion, defining "effects" so narrowly, microscopically, and directly as to make it very likely that survey studies could show only slight effects at most....thereby deflecting attention from larger social meanings of mass media production.

Gitlin's perspective allows us to factor into our analysis the macro, rather than micro, effects of media output. Certainly Gitlin's criticisms of the limited effects model are highly salient to studies of mass cultures and identities. It would be almost impossible to apply the same methodologies used by Katz and Lazarsfeld in their analysis of voting behaviour to large-scale identities and cultures. Moreover, people would surely be far less likely to cite the influence of personal acquaintances in determining their national consciousness. Personal influence is far

more likely to affect short-term choices, as well as attitudes to matters relating to an individual's immediately visible and inhabited space.

Another important factor to consider, when assessing the impact of personal and impersonal influence, is the nature and structure of the society in question. In polyethnic societies the level of dichotomisation and separation of different (imagined) groups can be an essential element in allowing media messages to take precedence over real, lived experience. Marilyn Brewer (1999: 439), for example states that:

segmentation promotes social comparison and perceptions of conflicts of interest that give rise to negative attitudes to outgroups and high potential for conflict. By contrast, the potential for intergroup conflict may be reduced in societies that are more complex and differentiated along multiple dimensions that are cross-cutting rather than perfectly correlated.

Societies which are based on numerous cross-cutting ties rather than a single, primary category (for example 'ethnicity') will lead to individuals being able to interact and identify with people from different social, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. It will also mean that media messages that attempt to depict certain 'others' will be less successful. The decoding of media messages will take on a more critical aspect if the consumer finds incongruence between their own lived experience and the messages being directed to them. Indeed, in the context of this case study, this is a topic which will be addressed in chapter six, where Russian-speaking focus group participants discuss their levels of contact with 'Latvians'.

These contrasting conclusions of Gitlin's long-term and Katz and Lazarsfeld's short-term perspectives are very insightful in coming to terms with the limitations of media discourse to instigate social change. They might, at first glance, seem to contradict one another. However, if we apply the distinction of primary and secondary discourses to a study of media effects then both a limited effects model of media influence and a cultural approach can be usefully integrated into our knowledge of media effects. By isolating a specific event in a specific short-term time period Katz and Lazarsfeld's focus was on *primary discourse* which they found to have severe limitations in terms of its power to change and influence opinions. On the other hand Gitlin focuses on *secondary discourse* as he attempts to uncover the discursive

conditions which permit the emergence of certain forms of institutions and other structures, and their effects over time.

Interestingly, Mutz brings the debate closer to the present day by arguing that it is modern communications technology which facilitates a widening gap between our perceptions of the personal world we inhabit and that of the social world around us (1998: 13). This is because indirect associations and connections between people can now be symbolically formed through reference to ‘the generalised other’, now so prevalent and widely disseminated within popular media discourses. This ‘other’ is not the same other in Katz and Lazarsfeld’s work. It is not a personal associate or community leader. Rather it is an imaginary and symbolic other decoded from the media messages that individuals receive. For Mutz it is therefore ‘impersonal influence’, in place of personal influence, that forms our social perceptions of the world. If media present issues from a particular standpoint then the viewer may assume that this is the standpoint taken by most people in a particular social group. Gerbner (1985: 14) elaborates on this point, noting;

As a quality of information, the awareness that a certain item of knowledge is publicly held (i.e. not only known to many, *but commonly known that it is known to many*) makes collective thought and action possible. Such knowledge gives individuals their awareness of collective strength (or weakness), and a feeling of social identification or alienation.

For this reason Gerbner’s theory of ‘media cultivation’ (Gerbner et al., 1986) also takes a longer-term, macro perspective on the influence of mass media. For Gerbner the media often take the place of educational and religious establishments in creating and cultivating audiences to dominant modes of thinking. This, he argues, is brought about through the constant stream of images and texts which frame what is acceptable in ‘our’ given culture through reference to the worldviews of ‘our’ people. Moreover, instead of operating within a fixed, short-term time-scale, media cultivation works through a prolonged process of exposure to dominant themes and points of view.

Accordingly, this longer-term perspective fits with Laclau and Mouffe’s conception of nodal points. As discussed above, Laclau and Mouffe assert that dogmatised points of cultural and

historical reference are discursively created over relatively long periods of time and can be difficult to displace in the short-term. In other words, nodal points are cultivated. The rationale for believing that media hold a privileged position in the discursive construction of these cultivated nodal points is that media are able to mass produce textual and visual discourses.

Predictably one of the strongest criticisms of many approaches to media effects, especially to cultural studies, is that they do not pay due attention to the material conditions which underpin cultural production, nodal points, ideologies, or any other such discursive constructions. For example, Fuchs (2009) notes how media messages are in danger of being fetishised if the means of production are not given full consideration. For Marx (1978: 319-29), commodities become fetishised when their value is not determined by the amount of labour used in their production but rather by their external exchange value which does not take into account the social relations and practices involved in the commodity's production. Similarly, in terms of the *cultural* value inherent within the articulations of mass media, we must take stock of the social relations behind such articulations. As such, to examine media as an entity separate from the work and social practices of journalists and staff leads to mysticism and fetishism. For this reason Fuchs argues that, 'Marx's analysis of the total process of capital accumulation that is based on the exploitation of labour that generates surplus value and produces commodities can be applied to the realm of the media' (2009: 383). In other words, we can, and should, treat media as a commodity produced with certain social (for Marx, class-based) relations, and these relations must be understood in order to fully understand media production itself.

Fuchs' argument is powerful reminder of the limitations of the cultural studies approach to media effects. It also helps us to reconcile the discursive (or cultural) elements of media structures and effects with its material elements. It is therefore important to identify not only who is responsible for authoring media images, texts, and symbols, but also to identify the social and material structures and hierarchies of power under which journalists operate, and which have been sedimented through time.

Several authors have thus adopted a more materialist perspective on media output (Fuchs, 2009; Garnham, 1990; Knoch 1997). For these authors, and other proponents of a political

economy model, the economic base creates (or at least facilitates) the media superstructures. Within capitalist systems, information must be understood as a commodity which is tradable following the extraction of surplus value from the labour of journalists and other staff. Following this line of thought, hegemony and the dominant ideology of the state is filtered down through journalistic professionalisation and a bias towards the state (Piepe et al., 1975). Indeed, a number of studies have reported findings that seem to validate a political economy explanation of media content. In Herman and Chomsky's study of American media the authors propose a 'propaganda model' for media whereby;

...the "societal purpose" of the media is to inculcate and defend the economic, social, and political agenda of privileged groups that dominate the domestic society and the state. The media serve this purpose in many ways: through selection of topics, distribution of concerns, framing of issues, filtering of information, emphasis and tone, and by keeping debate within the bounds of acceptable premises.' (1988: 298)

Central to Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model are certain filters which ensure that national media generally comply with the hegemonic interests of the state and of the political and economic interests of a handful of powerful individuals. These include the concentration of media ownership, the reliance on advertising in order to generate income, and a dependence on information provided by government, the business community, and on so-called 'experts' who have been funded and approved by these 'agents of power' (2). For these reasons Garnham sees cultural production as intrinsically linked to material production (Garnham, 1990). For Garnham 'all commodities become symbolic forms, representations of the social world and of the consumer's perception of his or her place within it' (13). Thus, the symbolic and cultural images and identities that are propagated in the media serve to reinforce the interests of capitalist hegemony and have an essentially materialistic genesis.

Certainly there is much to be said for the argument that economic and political hegemony informs media output. These materialist arguments are certainly welcome and provide a much needed counterpoint to cultural perspectives which most often completely overlook the material factors of production and economic interests that lie behind media production. However, although Garnham provides a well-thought out and reasoned argument for a possible reconciliation between the fields of cultural studies and political economy (Garnham,

1995), political economy nevertheless does not sufficiently allow for the possibility of culture and discourse to be a socially creative force, capable of creating their own superstructures. In other words, a political economy approach does not conceive of culture as a base upon which subsequent superstructures could be built.

A further argument against the political economy model is that even in capitalist societies there usually exists a great deal of political dissent and media activity which operates *against* the status quo of the dominant order (Altheide, 1984). In this sense discourse seems often to be produced in opposition to the structural base rather than being built upon it (anti-discourse). Garnham counters this with the assertion that ‘the capitalist mode of production does not demand, require, or determine any one form of politics’ (Garnham, 1995: 66). There is instead a range of possible polities that can all be understood to work within capitalism. Indeed, Garnham also states that ‘in addition to political systems, a range of kinship systems, religious beliefs and practices, and aesthetic traditions may happily coexist with the capitalism mode of production’ (66).

This is an important point, especially when trying to understand the possibilities for discursive articulations at the primary level. A single structural or hegemonic order, when isolated in time, will offer a wide spectrum of possibilities for cultural production. Earlier I posited the belief that discursive articulation is informed by the secondary levels of material and discursive sedimentation that historically precede it. Certainly then a reigning hegemony which has successfully managed to centralise a significant amount of power (such as capitalism) will be able to limit primary articulations in the short-term. However, even within these limitations there is still room for agents to choose between a range of possible articulations. Their cultural and discursive productions might fit entirely within the interests and status quo of the existing order. In this case the new political and economic base will not have changed from its original form. If, on the other hand, social actors such as the media create a culture (discourses) which is in some way ‘deviant’, i.e. goes against the status quo, then the political and economic hegemony will be slightly altered.

We can therefore see that although the secondary structure constrains discourse, there is nonetheless a constrained possibility to produce alternative forms of cultural production,

which in turn will be able to shift the hegemonic order slightly (but not entirely). Therefore, even within a reigning hegemonic order, there is room for change and debate within that hegemony. Importantly however, in order to more fully understand this model we must first explore the concept of hegemony in more detail.

Media and hegemony

In discussing hegemony it is useful to bear in mind Gramsci's distinction between *political hegemony* and *cultural hegemony*. In order to understand the role of the media it is important to understand each of these two concepts and to elaborate somewhat on each. If it were possible to detach political hegemony from its cultural aspect then this pure form of power would be centrally located within the state and the state's attendant institutions. The extent by which this political hegemony could be exercised would be dependent upon the coercive ability of the state to control its populace (*hard power*). Cultural hegemony, on the other hand, if it were to also possess a pure and undiluted form, could be conceptualised as *soft power*. This power would be based on ideological discourses and the propagation of cultural symbols as described in Gerbner's cultivation theory.

Because of this, we may expect the role of the media to be far more important in relatively open societies where, to use Gramsci's distinction, civil society is the seat of hegemony and not the state.⁷ This is simply because in authoritarian societies order can be enforced primarily through violent means, but in less-authoritarian societies order must be maintained primarily through cultural, symbolic, and ideological production. This, of course, makes logical sense when we take into account the fact that authoritarian states exercise far stricter controls over their media than non-authoritarian ones, hence limiting the effectiveness of the media to influence social change. This does not mean that 'democratic' societies do not rely upon some form of coercion. All modern democracies have legal institutions, law-enforcement personnel, and punitive sanctions against law-breakers. Significantly, they also frequently enforce controls over the content of their mass media of communication. This can take the form of

⁷ It should be noted, however, that Gramsci himself is not entirely consistent in maintaining this neat dichotomy. For example, Anderson notes how Gramsci also talks of hegemony as being a mix of both consent *and* coercion, and that his terms 'hegemony', 'state', 'political society', and 'domination' 'all undergo a persistent *slippage*' (see Anderson, 1976: 43-4).

regulation, the issuing (or refusal) of broadcasting licenses, as well as state provision of information through state-funded channels of communication. Therefore, even if they possess a cultural or ideological hegemonic attraction, they also rely on material power.

Indeed, if we are to study the effects of hegemony on media production then we must consider both its political and cultural aspects. Chibnal (1977), for example, cites four main 'professional imperatives' through which journalists filter their work either consciously or subconsciously: *dramatisation*, *simplification*, *conventionalism*, and *structured access* (23-38). According to Chibnal journalists are forced to operate in certain 'professionally' proscribed ways which ensures a fairly standardised style of reporting. Media messages are *dramatised* in order to satisfy the commercial aims of the medium, namely attracting as much attention (read money) as possible to the news item. They are *simplified* to binary oppositions thus providing 'the materials and dynamics of spectacle and drama' (30). They are also *conventionalised*, i.e. placed within existing frames of meaning which can be instantly understood by the public at large. Finally, media messages are subjected to the imperative of *structural access*; which, in Chibnal's own words,

...requires that news stories be firmly grounded in the authoritative pronouncements of experts in the fields covered by the stories. It survives largely because it helps to situate the media within the State's framework of power, defining their relationship to the plurality of institutional elites in the wider society.' (37)

In these four categories we can see both elements of political and of cultural hegemony. The role of the state and its institutions figure, but we also see news reporters responding to prevailing cultural conventions and understandings (although we may ask ourselves how these became accepted in the first instance). Certainly, for Chibnal, there is a highly economic element inherent in the professionalisation of media cadres, which for political economists is often indistinguishable from cultural elements (seeing as they view culture as a commodity).

What we may therefore conclude from this discussion of hegemony is that even though the distinctions between political and cultural hegemony are fruitful, we should not exclude the study of the state as a centrally located actor in 'open' societies, nor should we neglect the role

of ideology in authoritarian societies. In other words, when analysing discourses found within the media it is not enough to examine these in isolation either as separate words and sentences, or as articulations produced by media outlets and journalists. Instead we must examine the wider *imperatives* that come from the state, the material conditions of a particular medium's existence, and the cultural norms in which it finds itself embedded. In other words – and this is crucial to our study – the messages which come from the mass media are not conjured out of thin air. Instead, media messages themselves are subject to a whole series of sedimented constraints which encompasses both the cultural aspect; i.e. 'professional' norms and practices, but also constraints set out by the economic requirements of the media, and the constraints of the reigning political order.

To sum up then, within the literature there is a fierce debate regarding the extent of media effects. Evidence can be found both in favour and against a strong causal link between media messages and common beliefs and actions. Certainly, I would strongly suggest that the hypodermic model of media influence is much too overstated. However, I would also suggest that the media do have a significant role to play in the construction of national identities. As Anderson's thesis suggests, without mass communication via the invention of the printing press, it simply would not be possible to 'imagine the nation'. Nevertheless, we must also understand the limitations of media messages. As our discussion has revealed, the media are also subject to various discursive and material constraints which limit their ability to produce meaningful texts that will have the power to create new *being*. Also, it is important to differentiate between the long-term ability of media to foster and cultivate opinions, and its short-term deficiencies in changing opinion.

In chapter four I will therefore proceed to examine media discourse in Latvia through a critical discourse analysis of Latvian newspapers. Bearing in mind the considerations from this chapter's discussion on media influence and of the constraints surrounding journalists ability to produce meaningful primary discourse, I will analyse the content of journalistic discourse, and attempt to contextualise it within the historically transmitted 'reality' that has been inherited from the past (although constantly modified). The results of this analysis will then later be compared to the discourses of focus-group participants in chapter six. Thus, through my media analysis I aim to uncover how the media are constrained by secondary discourse,

while also how they are currently responding to it, and how they are producing new or modified visions of national consciousness for Russian-speakers. Later I will investigate the strength (or weakness) of media influence in Latvia through an examination of whether there is a link between the emerging discourses within the media and the actual sentiments expressed by focus-group respondents.

Conclusions

This discussion of media effects has explored a number of theories which have been put forward to help explain the importance of media in forming identities. The work of Benedict Anderson has convincingly demonstrated that comprehensive national identities would be impossible without the technological advances that led to invention of the printing press. This indicates, quite logically, that articulations and discourses which are able to reach large audiences will be the most important discourses in any given society in terms of identity construction. If discourses are able to reach large audiences they are more likely to be able to influence more people, and are more likely to be able to unite groups of individuals.

However, a number of theorists have been sceptical of the direct link between media messages and social behaviour. The ‘hypodermic’ theories of media effects which posited a direct correlation between media outputs and readers’ attitudes and behaviours have been shown to have severe limitations. For example, if we are to understand the importance of media in forming social identities then we must take into account the bottom-up process of decoding alongside the top-down process of articulation. Stuart Hall’s theories of encoding/decoding are therefore very useful in allowing a focus on both the moment of production and the moment of consumption.

Just as I suggested in chapter one, social agents are constrained by the discursive and material conditions of their particular time. The same is true for the mass media of communications. Media elites are unable to produce effective discourses which fall entirely outside of the comprehensions and understandings of the public at large. If media messages are encoded in such a way that their reception will be hindered by a lack of bottom-up receptive congruence,

then their messages will be largely ineffectual in creating new identities and patterns of behaviour. This means that while in the long term comprehensive change is possible in the content and effect of media messages, in the short term it is only incremental change which is possible barring exceptional circumstances.

This accords with the findings of much of the research which has been cited above. In the short term it would appear that the media are greatly constrained in their ability to effect change. Media elites are constrained by the secondary discourses which underpin identities and understandings in the present. They are able to produce alternative identities and understandings but in the short term they are unable to produce primary discourse which breaks entirely from the secondary discourses of the past. They can create new identities, but these are constrained by the past. Unless there is an organic crisis (see next chapter) which radically alters the secondary base, then wide-scale changes will have to occur over longer periods of time.

**Chapter 3: The
politicisation of
memory: from
perestroika to the
present**

Collective memory and national identities⁸

In recent years there has been a steady rise in academic interest in theories of memory and remembering, and of their relevance for group formations and identities. In the Baltic context this trend has also been evidenced with an increasing number of articles appearing on the theme of memory, and especially conflicting memory (for example, Mälksoo, 2009; Onken, 2007). A recent special issue of the *Journal of Baltic Studies* was even devoted to the subject of ‘Memory and Democratic Pluralism in the Baltic States’ (Onken, 2010), which followed a special issue in 2008 on ‘Contested and Shared Places of Memory: History and Politics in North Eastern Europe’ (Hackmann & Lehti, 2008).

Having set out my discourse-historical/temporal approach to identity formation, the potential value of a well-theorised concept of memory should be apparent. Memories are discursively created understandings which are embedded in the past, but which are also contemporary phenomena (as we shall see below). In many ways then memories and myths can connect our current discursive positions with those of the past. As such they can be an important source of identity creation and maintenance in the present.

However, as Olick and Robbins (1998: 105) note, ‘social memory studies is a nonparadigmatic, transdisciplinary, centerless enterprise’. On many levels this has been a positive feature of social memory studies, meaning that memory has been usefully and innovatively studied from the perspective of various disciplines, without being overly hampered by the dogmatic need to fit within prevailing paradigms. On the other hand, the ‘centreless’ nature of this endeavour means that it can be difficult to grapple with a vast literature which jumps from discipline to discipline. Nevertheless, in what follows I will attempt to integrate some of the insights of previous work on social memory into my existing theoretical framework and also to review briefly the literature which has examined memory in the context of the Baltic states.

⁸ A large section of the theoretical aspects of collective memory enumerated in this chapter have been published in, Cheskin (2012a)

Halbwachs is generally seen as the father of the term collective memory in its sociological aspect. For Halbwachs, who published his seminal *Social frameworks of memory* in 1925, memories are produced within a social context, meaning that the group dynamics within which a person might find themselves necessarily impinge upon the memory forming process (1992). Halbwachs distinguished between autobiographical memory and historical memory and between history and collective memory (see Olick & Robbins, 1998: 111). Here autobiographical memory is personally experienced memory. Historical memory, on the other hand, is ‘memory’ which is transmitted to us via various media including written and oral accounts, images, monuments etc., to which we have no direct experience. Collective memory differs from history inasmuch as collective memory refers to a past which plays an integral role in the formation of our identities in the present, while history refers to a past which does not.

Drawing on Halbwachs’ distinction between history and collective memory, as well as Norvick’s work on the ‘objectivity of history’ Wertsch provides a succinct overview of what separates ‘collective memory’ from ‘formal history’ (see table 1). While Wertsch admits that this is a necessarily overly simplified dichotomy, it is nonetheless very useful methodologically. Formal History corresponds very closely to the idea of a ‘democratisation of memory’ (Brüggemann and Kasekamp, 2008: 441), whereby individuals are able to reflect critically on historical events more than rely on simplified myths and cultural axioms linked with a particular group. Within this ‘democratisation’ there is acknowledgement by all sides that history is complicated and ambiguous, and alternative views of history are tolerated or accepted. Indeed, in the Baltic context, Brüggemann and Kasekamp argue that this democratisation of memory is the only way to resolve the current tensions between opposing memory-orientated groups in the Baltic states – issues which we will examine below.

Nevertheless, a number of theorists have taken issue with the very term collective memory, arguing that it privileges the collective at the expense of the individual. For example, Bell (2008) attempts to replace what he sees as the misuse of the term collective memory. Instead of Halbwachs’ categories of autobiographical memory, historical memory, history, and collective memory, Bell introduces his own tripartite division between forms of historical

consciousness. Bell distinguishes between *social memory*, *mythology*, and *critical history* (150).

For Bell Critical history is broadly analogous to Halbwachs' history and Wertsch's formal history as set out in table 1. Social memory is defined as the interaction of *individuals* sharing and exchanging personally experienced memories. For this to occur, Bell notes that there must be a certain spatial or temporal overlap; memory can only be social memory, i.e. transcend the individual level of consciousness, if the person with whom we are exchanging or sharing our memory also has a personal memory of the event. Because of this Bell (2008: 151) notes that 'memory is not transmissible – *as memory* – across generations and outside relatively small groups.' For example, we might be familiar with the Battle of Hastings, but we have no *memory* of the battle. In this instance it is not the memory of the event which has been passed down, but something else.

Table 1: Collective memory and formal history

Collective memory	Formal history
'subjective'	'objective'
Single committed perspective	Distanced from a particular perspective
Reflects a particular group's social framework	Reflects no particular social framework
Not self-conscious	Critical reflective stance
Impatient with ambiguities about motives and the interpretation of events	Recognises ambiguity
Denies 'pastness' of events	Focuses on historicity
Links the past with the present	Differentiates past from present
Ahistorical, antihistorical	Views past events as 'then and not now'

Source: Wertsch, 2008: 150

Bell therefore prefers the term myths to collective memory. Myths, in this context, refer to the narratives which are transmitted between people and which confer simplified meaning to particular events, people, and places. The word myth here does not imply that the transmission

is somehow false or deceptive (although of course it might well be). Rather, the meanings are necessarily simplified and constructed in order to allow their successful transmission from, and integration within, memory. In terms of the nation, Bell (2003: 75) understands a nationalist myth as ‘a story that simplifies, dramatizes and selectively narrates the story of a nation’s past and its place in the world, its historical eschatology: a story that elucidates its contemporary meaning through (re)constructing its past.’ In this respect myths also serve a vital function of ensuring and anchoring one’s self-identity within national identities and myths, allowing the self to be placed within wider frameworks of meaning and belonging.

As Bell acknowledges though, myths do not occur and reproduce in a vacuum. Instead he refers to the terrain where myths and memories interact as a *mythscape*. The ‘national *mythscape*’ therefore is ‘the discursive realm, constituted by and through temporal and spatial dimensions, in which the myths of the nation are forged, transmitted, reconstructed and negotiated constantly’ (75). This *mythscape* can be understood with reference to our temporal helix. At the top of the helix meanings are never fully sutured and are always open to reinterpretation and renegotiation. These reinterpretations and negotiations are constrained by the secondary layers of discourse (‘temporal dimension’) which lie beneath, and therefore shape, the *mythscape*. They are also constrained and facilitated by the location (‘spatial dimension’) of the discursive actors who strive to give meaning (*being*) to certain myths. Accordingly, Bell notes the need to consider power relations as an important factor in determining which narratives and myths emerge as dominant within the *mythscape*.

In light of Bell’s understanding of the constantly evolving nature of memory-myths, he is critical of much of the literature on nationalism which examines nationalism as a phenomenon with specific temporal origins. Instead he argues that national identities emerge in specific instances and then are ‘translated over time’ (69). In other words, myths are organic entities, constantly being translated and, at times transmuted, through their everyday (primary) usage.

While this concept of the *mythscape* is undoubtedly fruitful, it is useful to expand it using Jan Assmann’s ‘four formats of memory’ (2004). Here, Assmann differentiates between individual, social, political, and cultural memory. Individual and social memory can be understood as bottom-up memory, i.e. memories which are transmitted by and between

individuals or groups of individuals. Political and cultural memory, on the other hand, can be best understood as top-down memory, created and transmitted by political and cultural ‘elites’ (see also Onken, 2010 for a discussion of these processes in the Baltic states).

With this understanding it is perhaps best to refer to *collective memory-myths* rather than collective memories. Real, mnemonic memories and remembering are largely bottom-up processes but they are augmented, mediated, and framed by the top-down process of political and cultural discursive construction. A nation’s national narratives, which emerge through the manipulated use of, among other things, archives, museums, libraries, and public monuments (Brown & Davis-Brown 1998), can be seen as discourses which allow the individual to feel a meaningful connection with ‘their’ particular nation. As Assmann (1995) argues, it is collective memories which allow individuals to function as coherent groups, and to frame themselves as equal members of this group based on their commonly accepted history.

Nevertheless, the national myths of a particular group have to be able to find a way to be compatible with individual and social memories. Therefore, for top-down memory-myths to be effective and to be accepted by large numbers of people, they cannot ignore bottom-up pressures, perceptions, memories, myths, and discourses. Importantly however, bottom-up memory-myths are very liable to change, especially when they are transmitted from one individual to another. This is all the more apparent when the person to whom the message is being transmitted was not present at, or not even alive during, the event in question. For this reason Schuman and Scott (1989) note the impact of ‘generational effects’. The authors’ national survey of memory recollection in America was found to support Mannheim’s theories on generational identity, whereby ‘even in cases where the surface memory of an event does not vary by age...the *meaning* of the event will nevertheless be different for different cohorts’ (361).

Because memory-myths rely on aspects of both bottom-up and top-down reproduction and articulation it is clear that as bottom-up remembering changes with time, so also will the totalised memory-myths. A person who personally experienced and lived through the Second World War may transmit their autobiographical memories of the war to their children. However, that child will then pass on *historical* memories to their children in a form which

has been mutated and framed by that person's own experiences. Thus, while it may be true that there can be a relatively stable memory-myth of the war, it nonetheless must necessarily change with time generationally. This is something that will be explored in some depth in chapter seven, where Russian-speaking attitudes to history will be analysed by age group. Indeed, in the course of this thesis we will consider both bottom-up and top-down memory forming processes in some depth. While this chapter, as well as chapters four and five will examine the discourses of 'elites' both in the fields of politics and journalism, chapters six and seven will then focus on bottom-up identity creation.

From the perspective of top-down memory-myth formation, one thing we need to add to our analysis is an appreciation of how technological advances have changed the way memory-myths are projected and disseminated, and how the process of remembering has thus been revolutionised. Thompson (1995), for example, notes how electronic means of communication have changed the way individuals are able to have greater access to the past. Similarly Le Goff (1992) views the 20th century as a period of revolutionary change in the ways 'memories' are able to be conveyed and transmitted over greater geographical and temporal distances than was ever previously possible. Thus, although I was not even alive during World War II, I have nevertheless been able to witness hours and hours of video footage of the events of this horrific war. This means that I may not have an actual 'memory' of the war, and yet I have, to some extent, actually witnessed it, or at least certain aspects of it. It is for a similar reason that Anderson (2006) cites the emergence of the printing press as the critical moment in laying the foundations for modern national consciousness, inasmuch as printed material allowed people to form common, collective ideas about themselves and their histories.

Of course there are great differences between participating in an event and viewing it retrospectively on a TV screen. Perhaps one of the greatest differences is that once a historical record of the modern type (i.e. one employing modern technology and not simply an oral history passed from person to person) is created we have no productive control over it. We may have a degree of receptive control (Hall 1980a), but unlike the individual who is experiencing the event, we cannot turn our heads to see what is to the left and right of the TV screen. Naturally, the individual is also never fully in control of the productive creation of memory as we are all constrained by numerous discursive and material factors (not least the

fact that we can only be in once place at a time). Thus, when forming memories of current events, we are also victims to the many secondary sedimentations of *being* which surround us. Nevertheless, when watching, reading, or listening to a historical record we are even more at the mercy of others, and how they have chosen to film and frame the event.

In this respect the 'text' becomes invaluable as a source of myth making. The text cannot make us remember an event (unless we were there) but it can help to create powerful myths and connections between the past and ourselves. A war memorial honours the lives of those lost in battle, but it is also often constructed for us, in order to remind us that it was *their* sacrifice which has given us *our* freedom today. For this reason Halbwachs' distinction between history and collective memory still has value, notwithstanding Bell's objections, for it is important to differentiate between historical ties with the past which actively form a sense of (collective) identity and those which do not. Moreover, while it is important to consider the individual (bottom-up) processes that determine memory-myth formation, it is also important to consider the ability of elites to create relatively stable memory-myths which are commonly accepted.

Thus, as argued above, we can employ the term *collective memory-myths* in preference to collective memory. Collective memory-myths can refer to dominant myths that have gained a hegemonic position within a certain group of people. This does not deny that there may be conflicting or subsidiary myths in circulation. Neither does it fully deny a useful role for social agency in creating, propagating, and altering these myths. Instead, it allows us to see how, in the field of hegemonic desires, certain positions and views of the past gain pre-eminence. Thus, although there may be diversity within the mythscape, we may suppose that there nevertheless exist certain collective myths which help to define (become sedimented within) particular communities.

A vital question therefore for us to consider is by what means do myths gain their legitimacy in order to function at a collective level. In terms of nationalist myths, many theorists of nationalism have seen the nineteenth century of particular importance in the emergence of such memory-myths which have come to define the modern nation state. Hutton, for example, notes how in this period mnemonic practices were widely employed to link the emerging

narratives of particular states to concrete national shrines; ‘In effect such shrines were actual memory palaces, constructed of imposing architecture and adorned with aesthetically pleasing icons and artefacts designed to evoke memories of a heroic or glorious past and to imprint them vividly on the minds of visitors’ (1987: 386). Likewise Hobsbawm’s (1992) influential ‘invention of tradition’ thesis posited that nineteenth century European political elites effectively invented traditions in order to secure their political goals (i.e. the effective administration of a particular geographical area). In order to do this they relied primarily upon the provision of primary education, public commemorations, and public memorials (271).

As we have noted earlier, however, Bell is critical of theorists who attribute ‘the invention of traditions’ solely to one particular period of time. It is perhaps true that nineteenth century Europe witnessed an extraordinary rise in the use of such mnemonic practices of remembrance and mythmaking. Nonetheless, we must also view the construction of myths as an on-going and never-ending process. In the modern age, alongside public memorials and commemorations (which in the Baltic context we will examine in more depth below), there are also countless other media and agents which can transmit ‘memory’ and myth. In modern societies, as we have noted, modern communications media enable coherent myths to be transmitted over far greater distances (see chapter two).

For Brown & Davis-Brown (1998) archives, libraries, and museums are also an important part of cultivating a shared sense of ‘collective memory’. Such institutions are highly political because of their reliance on external funding, but also because of the subtle and mostly latent practices that allow any given archive to function; for example, who is allowed access to what materials, how are the archives organised and labelled, what materials are collected and what are not etc. For this reason the authors assert that

...archives are the manufacturers of memory and not merely the guardians of it. It is not that archivists do not tell the whole truth about reality. It is that they cannot tell it. As soon as we accept that any process of perception and representation is a process of constructing reality from a given observer’s social position and point of view, then there are more potential truths than there is possible data ultimately to confirm any of them. Thus each truth has a varying degree of intersubjective validity and of public legitimacy, which is established or manufactured through processes laden with power. (22)

In sum then, there is a vast literature on memory studies which often explicitly links memory, or mythmaking to identity formation – especially national identity formation. Moreover, many theorists have noted how memorials, commemorations, education, archives, museums, and mass media can all contribute to creating links with the past which actively inform contemporary identities. In what follows I will therefore attempt to examine the case of the Baltic states, and specifically Latvia, in order to understand how such memory practices have been salient in the post-Soviet era.

In order to do this, I shall argue, in line with Gramsci's notion of an 'organic crisis', that the collapse of the Soviet regime represented an extraordinary time for memory politics in the Baltic states; new political and social hegemonies emerged in this period which also brought to light new nation-building imperatives. Indeed, during this time museums, grand narratives of the past, monuments, commemorative events, and officially sanctioned ideas of history were all enthusiastically utilised by various state and non-state actors – the consequences of which, I will argue, had a lasting impact on identity and memory politics in the region for better or for worse.

For this reason, I shall firstly outline how a new Latvian hegemony emerged and gained its legitimacy in the perestroika period, and then how the actions and discourses produced by this emerging hegemony led to officially accepted ideas of common Latvian history and memory-myths. Following this I will explore the impact of these memory-myths on identities within the Baltic states in the contemporary context.

Organic crisis and the collapse of the Soviet Union

In certain periods of time there occur large-scale ruptures within the nodal frameworks which structure discursive items. Gramsci refers to such periods of time as organic crises. According to Gramsci, in periods when the dominant hegemony of the ruling classes is in decline, there is an opportunity for another hegemonic bloc to emerge by configuring its own hegemony:

A crisis occurs, sometimes lasting for decades. This exceptional duration means that incurable structural contradictions have revealed themselves (reached maturity) and that, despite this, the political forces which are struggling to conserve and defend the existing structure itself are making every effort to cure them, within certain limits, and to overcome them. These incessant and persistent efforts ... form the terrain of the 'conjunctural' and it is upon this terrain that the forces of opposition organise. (1971: 178)

What Gramsci here terms 'incurable structural contradictions' we may understand as being comprised of both material and discursive components. Thus, from a combination of the effects of material actancy and of (anti/integrational/constructive-) discursive strategies, the nodal points securing the hegemony of the ruling class have been sufficiently eroded or transformed.

This description of organic crisis seems to fit almost perfectly the demise of the Soviet regime from the mid to late 1980s up to its dramatic collapse in 1991. There has been much debate as to the reasons for the collapse of the Soviet Union, with arguments being based on, among other things, economic decline (Wallander, 2003), nationalism (Fowkes, 1997), the key agency of Gorbachev (Brown: 1997), and on external pressures from international actors and countries (Wohlforth, 1994). However, whatever the reasons were for the regime's collapse, it is clear that this period of time was extraordinary for the political, social, and economic changes which occurred with such rapidity. The on-going demise of the Soviet regime left room for a new hegemony to emerge, and thus the empty space of power become the focus for emerging hegemonic designs and manoeuvres. Essentially this meant that many of the nodal points securing the legitimacy and power of the ruling classes were being eroded. In short, this led to a situation whereby there was an urgent need to create and cement a workable, intelligible, and ultimately meaningful hegemonic bloc. If such a bloc could not be formed, then the previous hegemony would have time to patch up and replace its nodal wounds and regain power.

Within this historical context of the perestroika period, it should be clear that the decisions made at this time will have had a lasting impact on subsequent discursive formations in the new post-Soviet, independent Latvia. Of course, many nodal points will have survived this organic crisis and will have their genesis long before this time. However, if we are to

understand today's contemporary discourses and identity politics in Latvia then it seems apparent that this interval of time is a key period for our studies. It was in this period of time that the now-prevailing hegemony gained its discursive legitimacy and a large portion of its sedimented *being*, and it is therefore this hegemony and these nodal points which are so vital in the primary discourses uttered today. As I have posited, in order to gain discursive power to create *being*, one must necessarily engage with the secondary discourses inherent within any unit. Thus, in order for Russian-speakers in contemporary Latvia to create meaningful identities for themselves, it will logically be these discursive relations which will be most important as a reference, as a support, and as a target to destroy.

The emergence of Latvia's new hegemonic order: Latvian democratisation and nationalism

In many ways it was Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost*' which opened up the political field for hegemonic confrontation. Before this policy hegemony had been maintained largely (though not solely) through recourse to political hegemony rather than being based on its cultural aspect. Of course, the Brezhnev years can hardly be categorised as totalitarian in the same way that the years of Stalin's reign can. In reality the coercive force officially sanctioned within the Soviet Union had been diminishing from the time of its horrific apex during Stalin's Great Terror. Nevertheless, as Shlapentokh notes, the subsequent Soviet elites under Khrushchev, Brezhnev, and even Gorbachev shared many of the coercive controls practised under Stalin (2001: 12). As a result they were still able to control most of the popularly disseminated discourses through rigid control of the media and through the threat of punitive penalties (although not as appallingly as under Stalin's political reign).

In formulating his theories of hegemony Gramsci (1971: 57) noted that 'The supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as "domination" and as "intellectual and moral leadership".' It was Gorbachev's stated aim to increase the *moral* legitimacy of the Soviet regime which prompted him to introduce *glasnost*'. However, this policy of openness had a number of unintended consequences for Gorbachev and his fellow reformers. Karklins, for example, (1994b) notes how the policy of *glasnost*' redefined official Soviet ideology 'in a way that undermined its claim on a monopoly of truth', which meant that people were made

aware of their ability to utilise and produce language publicly in a much more open way than had previously been possible under a more authoritarian system of rule. In this way the very authority of the Communist Party was undermined as people began to question and debate, among other things, the history of Stalinism, the nationalities question, and even the activities of the Party (Tolz, 1995: 94), all of which turned out to be important nodal points for the regime.

Throughout the immense expanse of the Soviet Union, Gorbachev's *glasnost* led to the formation of numerous political and social movements. These included organisations which professed a desire to 'democratise' the Soviet Union, notably the 'popular' movements in the Baltic states led by *Sąjūdis* (lit: 'the movement' derived from its original, full title – 'the reform movement of Lithuania') in Lithuania, *Latvijas Tautas Fronte* (the Popular Front of Latvia) in Latvia, and *Rahvarinne* (the Popular Front) in Estonia.

If full national independence for the Baltic countries was the long-term goal for these organisations then they had the sense to realise that the structural conditions were not, at the beginning of Gorbachev's reforms, conducive to such demands. Instead, they worked within the discursive frameworks that were opened up to them through perestroika. This meant that 'democratisation' (*demokratizatsiya*), environmental, historical, and cultural campaigning were the main platforms initially available for the emerging hegemonic demands of the popular front movements. However, this soon led to new opportunities as these initial discourses became sedimented into the fabric of a new set of realities for the Soviet Union.

As a result outright nationalism (i.e. the demands for national self-determination based on a particular constructed concept of the nation) emerged as a unifying theme for the popular fronts (Karklins, 1994a; Jubulis, 2001; Tuminez, 2003). Democratisation had revealed itself to be a relatively unifying hegemonic pole of attraction, but nationalism proved a far more mobilising and powerful tool. This is perhaps because, as Jubulis (2001: 198) states, 'nationalism serves the *collective* interests of the nation, while liberal democracy is concerned with *individual* rights and interests.' Nationalism is, by definition, a movement or ideology which seeks to create a cohesive group out of disparate individuals. Therefore, in order to

create the concrete ‘we’ for which hegemonies are in such dire need, it was clear that nationalism was the most potent force available to opponents of the Soviet regime.

The structural reasons for nationalism’s ability to become such a consolidating factor in the emergence of new hegemonic orders can be traced to many of the historical sedimentations inherent within the *being* of Baltic realities during the perestroika period. Soviet practices, including the policy of *korenizatsiya* (the use of local cadres in the ranks of the Communist Party), and the Soviet federal system of union republics, maintained clear distinctions between the officially recognised Soviet nations and therefore nationalities. For this reason we should challenge Hiden and Salmon’s claim that ‘In the years between 1945 and 1985 the Soviet Union came closer than any past rulers to extinguishing the national identities of the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian peoples’ (1994: 126). Instead, as Tuminez notes, Soviet policies were able to consolidate nationalist and ethnic identities, particularly at the level of the separate republics of the USSR. For Tuminez (2003: 96) it was these Soviet republics which ‘evolved into building blocks for the possible — but certainly not inevitable — attainment of separate states in the future.’

With this historical background in mind, it should be clear that the perestroika period was a crucial time in terms of the emergence of new hegemonic orders. In Latvia this period from the mid to late 80s to early 90s is most commonly referred to as *Atmoda*: the Awakening.⁹ Indeed, there were consequently also seismic changes in the discursive relations and nodal points holding together Soviet power. For this reason, an examination of the (now sedimented) discourses of this period of time will enable us to put into perspective and contextualise any discourses that we may wish to study from within contemporary Latvia.

As I have stated previously, it is my hypothesis that any primary discourse which aims to gain power (i.e. the power to become discursively creative and to create *being*) *must* engage with previously sedimented, secondary discourse. Therefore, in this section I would like to examine a number of relevant discursive tropes which emerged during and immediately after the

⁹ It is also known as *Trešā Atmoda* (the Third Awakening). The First and Second Awakenings refer to two previous periods of notable Latvian nationalist endeavours, firstly in the mid to late nineteenth century, and later leading up to the proclamation of Latvian independence in 1918.

perestroika reform period. This will then enable me to test my hypothesis through a more comprehensive examination of how contemporary discourses are being employed in Latvia, and how they are, or are not, being referenced to the discourses of this *Atmoda* period. Because of my focus on national identities, I will pay attention to the ways in which the Latvian nation-state became conceptualised and institutionalised during *Atmoda*, and to the definition of the Latvian nation that was to form the basis for this nation-state. This examination will be based on previously conducted research into Latvia's post-Soviet nation-building project, as well as my own discourse analysis of The Popular Front of Latvia's (PFL) official publication *Atmoda*.

Latvia's post-Soviet state-building: discourses, myths, and narratives

In the immediate years following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Baltic states' successful reacquisition of independence, the issue of citizenship, i.e. who constituted the legitimate body of citizenry, had to be adequately resolved in order to construct a workable and stable domestic polity. Both Estonia and Latvia opted for restrictive citizenship laws which defined their country's legitimate citizenry on the basis of their pre-Soviet citizenry.¹⁰ The Latvian citizenship law is explicit in setting out this policy of legal continuity; 'Latvian citizens are: 1) persons who were Latvian citizens on 17 June 1940, and their descendants' (Latvian Citizenship Law, 1998). Although the law also allows for other categories of citizenship, including naturalisation, it is significant that this is the first category of citizenship, and that this was the sole category for the country's first post-Soviet elections.

The justification for invoking such a restrictive policy was that Latvia had been illegally occupied by Soviet forces. Therefore it was only the pre-Soviet order which had any legal basis. In other words the legal Latvian state ceased to exist in 1940 at the time of the incursion of Soviet troops and was only finally restored in 1991 when Latvia was able to declare full independence from the Soviet Union. As such, in 1993, the first elected parliament in the

¹⁰ In Latvia, as in Estonia, the groundwork for this restrictive citizenship law was laid by the Citizens' Committee. The Committee was established in 1989 by the more radical section of the Popular Front, under the direction of Latvia's National Independence Movement (LNIM). The Committee was intended as a more legitimate alternative to the Supreme Soviet and was comprised of people who could prove a direct or ancestral link to the inter-war republic. From 1989 onwards, those eligible were encouraged to register for the Committee which subsequently became more and more influential.

newly independent Latvia was referred to as the *fifth Saeima* (parliament) of the Latvian Republic (the fourth *Saeima* was elected in 1931).¹¹ Additionally the 1922 Constitution (*Satversme*) was restored and used as the legal basis for the country's renewed independence.

Along with this narrative of restoration there has also been a clear narrative of 'Europeanisation', or a 'return to Europe' (Mikkel & Pridham, 2005; Smith et al., 1998; Eglitis, 2000). For this reason Eglitis (2000) outlines the two main Latvian narratives which, for her, have driven and framed the country's post-Soviet transition: spatial normality and temporal normality. Eglitis notes how in the narrative of spatial normality Latvia's 'place in space' was used as the core element of the country's transformation. From this perspective Latvia was conceived as being a natural member of the European family of nations, or more broadly 'the West'. In this context normality is defined not only spatially but also in terms of the perceived characteristics of Western European countries such as economic prosperity and democracy.

Temporal normality, as the name suggests, focuses on 'place in time'. Instead of looking towards the West, this narrative centres on Latvia's inter-war republic which lasted from 1918 to 1940, until the time the country was incorporated into the Soviet Union, then invaded by Nazi Germany before again being reincorporated back into the Soviet Union. For many Latvians this romanticised era represents a time of great prosperity. Therefore it was perhaps inevitable that calls were made for the full restoration of the political institutions of the inter-war republic, along with a return to a traditional 'Latvian' way of life that had, in the words of the Latvian Supreme Soviet, 'been brutally violated' throughout the Soviet period (Latvian SSR Supreme Soviet, 1989:133).

Graham Smith identifies similar discursive narratives in Baltic discourses of statehood. For him a central element in understanding these discourses is to be found in what he terms the 'core nation discourse'. According to Smith (1999a: 82), the core nation discourse, as seen in the Baltic states, links the legitimacy of the nation-state to the principles of 'one nation, one

¹¹ This principle of 'legal continuity', it seems, is in no way hampered by the fact that in 1934 the fourth *Saeima* was dissolved by Kārlis Ulmanis and replaced by an authoritarian system of rule which lasted right up until Soviet troops entered Latvia in 1940.

language, one political community'. It is thus a discursive strategy that is used in order to create a hegemonic 'core nation'. In their study of Baltic post-Soviet nation-building Graham Smith et al. thus offer five Baltic narratives which have been used in order to create and cement such a core-nation discourse: titular nation status, de-Sovietisation, the standardising state, protection of the historic homeland's culture, and the return to Europe (Smith et al. 1998: 99-109).

There is a great deal of overlap between these five narratives and the two used by Eglitis. However, it is worth expanding on two particular points which Smith et al. highlight. In terms of ensuring *titular nation status* Smith et al. note that especially in the years after successfully regaining independence, the political elites in Latvia (and also Estonia) were almost entirely comprised of ethnic Latvians (and in the case of Estonia – Estonians) (99). This, they argue was a strategy that allowed the 'legitimate' core nation (i.e. Estonians and Latvians) to have full political representation at the expense of those groups which fell outside of this core nation discourse.

The authors also note how the symbolic efforts to *de-Sovietise*, or de-colonise, the Baltic states can be evidenced in the relabelling of hundreds of thousands of Soviet-era immigrants as 'aliens' (103). If the post-Soviet Latvian state was to be based on the principle of legal continuity from the inter-war republic, then a crucial moment here is the acceptance that Latvia was occupied by the Soviet Union. If this occupation could not be unwaveringly accepted then much of the rationale and momentum behind Latvia's state-building project would be invalidated. However, if we accept the 'fact' of occupation then by extension the civilians who relocated from other parts of the Soviet Union must also be seen as a consequence of this occupation. Indeed, the issue of occupation is therefore a centrally important one in the primary discourses of Russian-speakers today, and will be treated in more depth below.

However, irrespective of one's stance on the occupation question, it is clear that the discourse of occupation has had significant consequences for Latvian state-building, and for the reconceptualisation of Soviet-era immigrants and their families. In any evaluation of contemporary primary discourses it is thus important to bear these narratives and discourses in

mind. Because the very being of the Latvian state is so closely tied to these various discourses (nodal points), the ability to gain power in the sense that I have described it above will depend on one's ability to integrate, destroy, or supplant these discourses and narratives.

Memory politics, 'memory wars', and the trifling problem of Russia(ns)

As discussed above, the creation of collective myths concerning the nation can form an integral part of national identity formation. In Latvia, as the previous section demonstrates, the notion of strong historical links to the past has been used to good effect in symbolically pulling Latvia away from the Soviet sphere towards its symbolically and politically reconfigured post-Soviet, 'Western' sphere. However, the attempts to construct collective state and national narratives have not been without opposition. One of the problems encountered along Latvia's path of national myth-making has been a conflict of historical interpretation, often where people's individual and collective memories and memory-myths do not correspond to the official myths of the Latvian state. There is, of course, one political entity whose official historical interpretation is of particular note here: the Russian Federation.

Kattago (2010: 383) argues that in the Baltic states 'two narratives of the recent past perennially conflict with one another'. For Kattago (383), whereas Baltic narratives highlight the victimhood of Soviet and Nazi occupations, the 'Soviet-Russian narrative emphasizes the USSR as the liberator of Europe from fascism and the willing annexation of the Baltic states to the USSR.' Berg and Ehin (2009: 1) argue that these competing narratives are not only incompatible, but antagonistic, adding that 'this antagonism has increased, rather than eroded over time, reflecting certain content shifts in national identity constructions, as well as the consolidation and institutionalization of these constructions as the ideational base of state- and nationhood'.

Certainly one of the most antagonistic aspects of these conflicting narratives can be found within the competing interpretations of the events and consequences of World War II. The victory of the Soviet Union over fascist Germany in the Second World War is arguably one of the most important state narratives that the Russian state has at its disposal in order to create

its own contemporary collective myths. In the Soviet period this victory was not only a source of immense pride, but it also served as a legitimating factor in Soviet policies (Weiner, 1996; Tumarkin 1987). Indeed, for Tumarkin (1987), the myth and idealisation of victory in the so-called Great Patriotic War (alongside the myth and cult of Lenin) held a central place in the legitimisation of the Soviet regime with Soviet leaders often propagating myths of this victory in order to ‘sustain, and sometimes inspire, popular solidarity with their policies’ (69).

In the post-Soviet era much time and money has also been invested in keeping the myth of this victory alive. Consider, for example, the efforts and monies invested into Moscow’s Victory Park in order to construct a vast architectural memorial to the war which includes a memorial chapel, mosque, synagogue, over 1,418 fountains (one for each day of the war), a museum of the Great-Patriotic War, and a Tsereteli-commissioned statue of Nike, the God of Victory (see Schleifman, 2001). Consider also the great pomp devoted to the annually celebrated Victory Day on 9 May – a national holiday of great importance in Russia.

However, this reverence for the Soviet victory in World War II clearly clashes with the official position taken by all three Baltic states that their countries were illegally and mercilessly occupied by the Soviet Union. Instead of the incursion of Soviet troops being seen as liberation from Nazi Germany, the Baltic states prefer to concentrate on the ensuing *occupation* by Soviet troops. Thus the Occupation Museum in Riga and the Museum of the Occupations in Tallinn stand testament to official myths (remember that I use this word not in the conventional sense of denoting truth or lies) which are largely financed by the respective states of Latvia and Estonia (Velmet, 2011). Indeed, for Velmet, one of the main functions of the significantly state-funded occupation museums in Estonia and Latvia is to reinforce coherent state narratives and myths. Velmet (192) relates how the Occupation Museum in Riga, ‘according to its chief administrators, tries to subvert deliberate or accidental misinformation that dominates nationalist Russian discourses about the Latvian occupations.’¹²

¹² In fairness to the Museum of Occupation in Riga it should also be noted that in Velmet’s view the museum (in contrast to the Museum of the Occupations in Tallinn) does also acknowledge its problematic role as an identity constructor.

For Mälksoo (2009) the clash of historical interpretation between the Baltic states and Russia has led to a series of ‘memory wars’. The most notable and physical expression of this largely symbolic ‘war’ was evidenced in Tallinn in 2007 during the so-called ‘Bronze Nights’. In April 2007 the Estonian authorities decided to relocate the ‘Bronze Soldier’ memorial from central Tallinn to a military cemetery on the outskirts of the city.¹³ The memorial was initially located on the site of a small grave, where the remains of a number of Soviet soldiers were buried who had died in 1944, when Soviet troops retook the city of Tallinn. The monument was originally called ‘The Monument to the Liberators of Tallinn’. The statue itself had served as a venue for unofficial celebrations of Victory Day on May 9 and was therefore seen by many as a site of symbolic antagonism against Estonian myths of statehood and history. In April 2007, at the height of the Bronze Statue controversy the Estonian Embassy in Moscow released a statement which read:

For the inhabitants of Estonia this statue has a double meaning: on the one hand it is a painful reminder of Estonia’s occupation by another state. On the other hand it reminds us of those who sacrificed their lives in the fight against Nazi Germany. For Estonia, it is clear that the glorification of this first meaning and its demonstrative celebration is unacceptable. The second meaning is, of course, possible and corresponds with the meaning of monuments in other parts of Europe. (Estonian Embassy in Moscow, 2007)

This ‘demonstrative celebration’ (*demonstrativnoe prazdnovanie*) surely refers to the Victory Day celebrations of Estonia’s ‘Russian-speaking’ population. What is made clear here is that the celebrations are seen as a direct glorification of Estonia’s occupation by a foreign state, and that this is clearly unacceptable.

It was perhaps unsurprising therefore, taking into account the sacredness of this statue and the myths that it represents for a large percentage of the population, that the decision to relocate the monument was met with fierce opposition. This opposition culminated in extensive rioting by mostly Russian-speaking youths, pickets against the Estonian embassy in Moscow, and a series of targeted cyber-attacks on Estonian banks (Berg & Ehin 2009: 5). Russia’s foreign minister Sergei Lavrov was especially critical of the Estonian authorities’ actions, claiming in

¹³ For a more in depth explanation of the reasoning behind the decision to relocate the statue see Burch & Smith (2007).

a letter to EU member states, that ‘by equalling [sic] the heroism of soldier-liberators and the crimes of Nazis and their henchmen, Estonian authorities were attempting to rewrite history and reinterpret the role of the anti-Hitler coalition in the victory over fascism in World War Two’ (as cited in Haukkala, 2009: 206).

Thankfully both Lithuania and Latvia have not witnessed such heightened and explicit scenes of ethnic tension. However, in Latvia May 9 is also a politically divisive date for many. Each year, in the capital city of Riga, tens of thousands of (mostly Russian-speaking) people gather in Victory Park by the Monument to the Liberators from the German fascist invaders in order to celebrate their ‘Great Victory’. In 2011 it was estimated that as many as 200,000 people participated in the celebrations (Diena, 10/05/11). Likewise, March 16 is also a date with particular symbolic resonance which is able to stoke passion and controversy. Each year on this date veterans from the Second World War and their supporters stage a march from Dome Square in Riga’s Old Town to the Freedom Monument. The central controversy here however, is that these veterans served within the ranks of the Waffen SS.¹⁴

These two dates are therefore often symbolically pitched as polarised opposites in Latvia’s memory politics (Denis, 2008; Cheskin, 2010). To celebrate the Soviet victory in World War II is often portrayed as tantamount to celebrating the occupation of the Baltic states, while paying respects to those who fought in the ranks of the Waffen SS is similarly linked to a glorification of Nazism. In 2005 this clash of historical interpretation came to the fore in the Baltic states and in Russia when President Putin invited all three Baltic heads of state to attend Russia’s official Victory Day celebrations in Moscow. Latvian president Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga was the only Baltic leader who chose to attend the commemorations, but even then there was much debate as to the acceptability of giving tacit approval to Moscow’s official history (see Onken, 2007). However, in order to make sure that Russia did not use President Vīķe-

¹⁴ The formation and activities of the Latvian Legion are highly contested and controversial. It is difficult to find a measured and unbiased account of the proceedings. The ‘Latvian’ argument claims that those who volunteered or were conscripted to the Waffen SS were fighting against Soviet occupation, and for the freedom of Latvia but not for fascist ideology (see Rislaki, 2008, 127-42). The ‘Russian’ argument, on the other hand, places the Latvian Legion on level terms with the other legions of the SS proper, and therefore sees the organisation (and all of its members) as criminal and fascist (see Chernov and Shlyakhtunov, 2004). For a good overview of the activities of the Latvian Legions see Felder, 2009.

Freiberģa's visit as a means to cement its historical interpretation of the war, earlier in the year, President Vīķe-Freiberģa had presented President Putin with a book entitled 'History of Latvia: 20th Century'. The book became an instant target for Russia's media who widely condemned it as an attempt to re-write history (Denis, 2008). The main controversy surrounded a section of the book which dealt with the Nazi concentration camp at Salaspils, a small town 25km east of Riga. The book referred to the camp as an 'instructional labour camp' which drew a pointed and invective response from Russian commentators and media. Solvita Denis' analysis of Russian media revealed the extent of the criticism from the Russian media. One newspaper article entitled 'A Slap in the Face for Veterans' noted;

This creation is something between a history textbook and an anti-Soviet propaganda booklet. A furious reaction from the Russian side was evoked by the caption under a photograph of the concentration camp in Salaspils – "an instructional-labour camp." And this, taking into account that during WWII about a hundred thousand people were killed there by fascists! (as cited in Denis, 2008: 81)

Similarly a Russian radio station news report on the subject related how;

Our diplomats were upset by the book of the President of Latvia Vīķe-Freiberģa in which, to their mind, facts, gossip and falsifications are merged together. In Moscow they are astonished that the president of Latvia found it appropriate to distribute this book during mourning events in the former death camp at Auschwitz (as cited in Denis, 2008: 81-2).

In many respects this again reveals the seeming incompatibility of the two competing historical interpretations proffered by The Russian Federation on the one hand, and the Baltic states on the other. However, because 9 May is so widely celebrated *within* Latvia by a large number of the country's inhabitants, including an increasing number of Latvian citizens, the issue of historical interpretations and national memory-myths takes on a more complicated aspect. Indeed, the Russian Federation has spent a great deal of time and money symbolically and financially supporting World War II veterans resident in Latvia and providing financial support for Victory Day celebrations in Latvia and in other post-Soviet countries (Lerhis et al, 2007: 45).

Moreover, the Russian Federation has attempted to intervene in a number of cases at the European Court of Human Rights which relate to Russian-speakers in the Baltic states and the legacy of the Baltic states' Soviet past. Nils Muižnieks sees fit to refer to these interventions as 'memory battles' where again Russia's interpretation of the past comes face to face with the historical interpretations of the Baltic states. Muižnieks notes the importance for Latvia and Russia of securing legal recognition for their respective positions. As he states, 'what the court considers to be historical fact is more difficult for either side to contest at the political level' (2011a: 219).

One of the most important and significant of these cases has been that of *Kononov v. Latvia* in which, in 2010, the European Court of Human Rights finally came down on the side of Latvia, repealing the previous 2008 judgement which had gone against Latvia. Kononov was appealing against the Latvian courts' decision to convict him for his involvement in a war-crime in 1944. The crime in question was the murder of nine people, including a pregnant woman, carried out during Nazi Germany's occupation of Latvia by a group of Soviet partisans dressed in Wehrmacht uniforms (for a concise overview of this case see Mälksoo, 2011). Russia was able to intervene in this case as a third party because Kononov gave up his Latvian citizenship (he had been a Latvian citizen of pre-Soviet Latvia and was therefore immediately eligible for post-Soviet citizenship according to the principle of legal continuity outlined above) and, in 2000, took up President Putin's offer of Russian citizenship which was granted through special presidential decree.

It is clear from the attention paid to this case within Russia and Latvia that it was about more than just the actions of one Vasilii Kononov. As Mälksoo (107) argues 'The *Kononov* case is a mirror image of the Baltic-Russian debate on the history of World War II...In Moscow's opinion, Kononov's actions were justified for essentially the same reason that Moscow continues to argue that the Soviet takeover of the Baltic states in 1940 was not an illegal occupation.' Although the court declined to pass any explicit judgement over whether the Soviet Union's incursion into Latvia in 1940 could be legally referred to as an occupation, it was clear that this was an important issue both legally and symbolically within the case (Mälksoo, 2011: 106-7; Muižnieks, 2011a: 222-4). Following the verdict the Russian Foreign

Ministry released a statement which called the ruling ‘a very dangerous precedent’ noting also that:

...the ECHR Grand Chamber has actually agreed today with those who seek to revise the outcome of World War II and whitewash the Nazis and their accomplices...

We should also particularly note the serious negative consequences of the ruling in the Kononov case for anti-fascist veterans in all countries that fought against the Nazis and their accomplices during World War II, as well as for their descendants. The verdict of the Court, concurring with the wrongful conviction in a Council of Europe member country of one of the fighters of the Anti-Hitler Coalition, means, in essence, a justification the Nazis and their accomplices and will be conducive to the further growth of the influence in Europe of revanchism and pro-Nazi and extremist/radical nationalist forces. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2010)

In Russia the media also devoted much time and space to the Kononov case, most commonly (in the mainstream media we may say *exclusively*) in support of Kononov and speaking out against the ‘rewriting of history’ and the emergence of ‘neo-Nazism’ in Latvia (Petrenko, 2008; Denis, 2008). This ‘rewriting of history’ again brings us inevitably back to the issue of Soviet occupation versus Soviet liberation. The reason the Russian Federation was willing to spend an estimated five million roubles on Kononov’s defence (Mälksoo, 2010: 104), and conversely why Latvia was so keen to convict a 75-year old man for crimes committed over 50 years ago, is that the issue of Soviet occupation/liberation is so central to both countries’ meta-narratives. This is a theme I will return to later, in my survey-based analysis of the Victory Day celebrations in Riga in 2011, in which I specifically addressed the questions of occupation and liberation (see chapter seven).

However, one of the consequences of this memory war between Russia and Latvia has been a distrust of the Russian-speaking population of Latvia. As Jaeger (2000) has noted, Latvia (along with Estonia and Lithuania) has often ‘securitised’ its non-Latvian population as a latent threat. This was seen most obviously in the early to mid 90s. For example, the *Latvian National Security Concept* of 1995 states:

Because Latvia's external threat can be connected with the efforts outside of Latvia to destabilise Latvia's internal situation, it is impossible to simply separate external threats from internal ones. (1)

Although Russia is not directly named here, it is clear that the 'efforts outside of Latvia to destabilise Latvia's internal situation (*ārvalstu centieniem destabilizēt Latvijas iekšējo situāciju*) must be in reference to the Russian Federation. It is more than significant that the Latvian state saw fit to draw a direct correlation between the actions of Russia and those of Latvia's Russian-speaking population. Admittedly, in the National Security Concepts of 2008 and 2011 the rhetoric was softened. In the 2008 document the focus was placed on social integration. Nevertheless, an important aspect of this integration is identified as education, specifically educating people about Latvia's history:

Social integration is one of the factors which stabilises the state's internal, political situation...Education has a special role to play – the teaching of language and Latvian history as well as its explanation. (Latvian National Security Concept, 2008)

In this context the competing interpretations of history are again seen as a threat to Latvia's security, not simply at the international level, but in this case, at the internal level. For this reason education reform has been one of the most charged issues in Latvian domestic politics over the last years. The education reforms were initially passed in 1998 and originally envisaged all state-funded schools moving to 100% of instruction being conducted in Latvian by 2004. However, following strong opposition from within and without Latvia, a compromise was reached whereby 60% of instruction in state secondary schools would be conducted in Latvian with the other 40% being free to be conducted in the language of the minority group (most commonly Russian) (see Hogan-Brun, 2006; Galbreath & Galvin, 2005).

Although the educational reform has ostensibly been about ensuring the status of the Latvian language, Galbreath and Galvin (2005: 450) note that 'policies are being reformed to suit a political project rather than simply a practical, educational logic.' For them the reform policies are indicative of a 'Soviet legacy of show politics...meant to express domination more than to influence daily practice' (455). In light of our discussion of Latvia's historical 'memory wars' we might add memory politics as another important factor in the country's education reforms.

For example, Karklins has observed that in 1996 the majority of textbooks in Latvia's Russian schools were either imported from Russia or were published in the Soviet Union (as cited in Galbreath and Galvin, 2005: 458). In terms of fostering memory-myths which support Latvia's post-Soviet nation-building project we can easily see how these textbooks could be a threat to Latvian security, as defined by the country's own National Security Concepts.

The school has to be one of the most effective institutions within the national mythscape with which to establish one's own national memory-myths. Therefore, the mere presence of schools which use materials that have not been published in post-Soviet Latvia, is a matter of potential concern, especially when the history taught in those textbooks does not correspond to the official state history and memory-myths that the state would wish to perpetuate. The Latvian government's Guidelines for National Identity, Civil society and Integration Politics, approved in 2011, state that one of the criteria for social integration is 'the creation of collective social memory' (6). While there is much that is positive in these guidelines, such as the desire to 'respect multifarious opinions' of history (21), the document nevertheless makes it clear that one of the country's central, social problems 'is conflicting social memory which is based on Soviet ideological interpretations of Latvia's occupation, Latvia's fate in World War II and life in the Soviet regime' (9). The document reaffirms Latvia's official position on this history (11: footnote 62) and calls for measures to teach 'true historical facts' to national minorities (37). This issue of the 'false' teaching of history has thus been a central concern for the Latvian authorities.

For Maria Golubeva (2011), the simple division of Latvian (and Estonian) schools along ethno-linguistic lines is problematic for the state which wants to foster a commonly accepted, official, national narrative. To this degree, Golubeva (316) observes how 'The schools for Russian-speaking students, even when offering bilingual instruction, as in the Latvian case, are sometimes viewed as a locus of transmission of another country's historical narratives; and they are pressured to shift towards a more 'unified' model of national narrative to produce 'loyal citizens'.

Indeed, in Golubeva's research it was revealed that a large proportion of teachers in Latvia's so-called Russian schools (i.e. schools where the language of instruction is Russian) often

supplemented the official curriculum with extra materials in order to provide, what they considered to be, a more balanced view of history – often explaining to the students that their textbooks were not always accurate (324). Because of this, teachers are able to uphold historical interpretations which do not necessarily correspond to the official narratives set out in the Latvian national curriculum.

Table 2: School children's attitude to 9 May by school's language of instruction

What is your attitude to the following event? May 9 celebrations by Victory Monument							
<i>Answers divided by school language of instruction (%)</i>							
School's language of instruction		Positive	Mostly positive	Mostly negative	Negative	Difficult to say	Total
of instruction	Latvian (n=207)	12.1	30.6	24.3	20.9	12.1	100
	Russian (n=193)	82.3	12.5	2.6	1.6	1.0	100
	Total	46.0	21.9	13.8	11.6	6.8	100

Source: Makarov & Boldāne, 2008: 11

Table 3: School children's attitude towards 16 March by school's language of instruction

What is your attitude to the following event? The procession of former legionnaires on March 16							
<i>Answers divided by school language of instruction (%)</i>							
School's language of instruction		Positive	Mostly positive	Mostly negative	Negative	Difficult to say	Total
of instruction	Latvian (n=207)	19.9	47.6	19.4	2.9	10.2	100
	Russian (n=193)	3.2	7.4	13.7	65.3	10.5	100
	Total	11.9	28.3	16.7	32.8	10.4	100

Source: Makarov & Boldāne, 2008: 11

This was further evidenced in a 2008 survey which compared historical knowledge and interpretations of school children in 'Russian' and 'Latvian' schools (Makarov & Boldāne, 2008). The survey found that while there was little difference between the 'factual knowledge' displayed by the students of the different schools, it was in the interpretation of events where opinions were much more divergent. As such, students displayed a similar knowledge of key

figures and dates in Latvian history. On the other hand, their interpretation of the two key dates of May 9 and March 16 varied considerably (see tables 2 & 3): whereas 82.3% of students from Russian schools reported a 'positive' attitude to May 9 celebrations in Riga, only 12.1% of children from Latvian schools shared this assessment. Conversely, whereas 67.5% of pupils from Latvian schools had a 'positive' or 'mostly positive' attitude towards the March 16 procession, the figure for students from Russian schools was only 10.6%.

In summary then, memory-wars in Latvia have become an increasingly researched and salient topic. Much of the conflict comes from a competing interpretation of history which seems to centre on two main conflicting poles: the Russian Federation on the one hand and Latvia (along with the other two Baltic states) on the other. Later in this study we will turn our attention to a fuller quantitative and qualitative examination of the extent by which people's historical memory-myths diverge from these rigidly outlined 'official' histories as described above. However, having given the background and contextualised Latvian memory politics we may now return to the *Atmoda* period of Latvian state development. As I have asserted above, this period of *organic crisis* must be seen as an essential one in having set the future course of Latvian statehood, and in determining a new (or reconfigured) set of nodal points with which to anchor the then emerging hegemonic order. For this reason, if we wish to understand cotemporary developments in collective memory-myths among the Latvian population, we must first examine this period in order to trace the discursive strategies employed by 'Russian-speakers' and 'Latvians' in the post-Soviet era.

I will argue that the initial discourses which emerged from the Popular Front of Latvia (PFL) were not always, contrary to what is normally asserted, ethnically inclusive. Instead, I shall demonstrate through my analysis of PFL discourse, that the PFL were often keen to create discursive boundaries between Latvians and other nationalities within Latvia. In light of our previous discussions I will map out the evolving PFL stance on questions of nationality and ethnicity which emerged in the late Soviet period, and to explain these changes in relation to the underlying structures which were apparent at the time (i.e. discursively and materially manifested structures).

The Popular Front of Latvia: setting the agenda for Latvian nation-building?

We invite you, independent of your social, national, or religious background, of your sex, age, or profession, to actively join in the work of restoring the Republic of Latvia's independence.

(Atmoda 24/04/90)

It has often been noted that the initial rhetoric of the Popular Front of Latvia was far more conciliatory and inclusionary in relation to the country's non-Latvian inhabitants than was seen in the years after independence had been regained (Antane & Tsilevich, 1999: 83). Lazda (2009: 519), for example, writes of the PFL: 'rather than an exclusively "ethno-nationalist" force, the Latvian movement of 1989 was equally, perhaps even more importantly, a transethnic and transnational movement that informed the reestablishment of democratic institutions after 1989'. This would make logical sense when we take into account the discursive/material structure that members of the PFL had to work within. Had they initially outlined a citizenship policy based on the principles of legal continuity or Soviet occupation then it is unlikely that the Communist Party organs, or Gorbachev himself, would have tolerated the activities of the PFL, thereby reducing their power to operate in the public space.

However, there has actually been very little concrete analysis of PFL discourse relating to non-Latvians, especially Russians and Russian-speakers. This deficiency is all the more striking when we consider the importance of creating new nodal points in times of organic crisis such as those seen towards the end of the Soviet era. The declining fortunes of the Soviet regime meant that new discourses could increasingly take centre stage in the formation of new hegemonic orders and therefore national identities within Latvia. *Moreover, because it was in this period of time that new hegemonies were being created, the legitimacy of these new hegemonies would be anchored to this period's nodal points for many years to come.* Thus, with the emergence of any hegemonic order there are certain logics inherent within their subject position which become central to their subsequent legitimacy and therefore power.

For this reason I analysed the PFL's official newspaper *Atmoda* for two six-month periods running from January 1989 – June 1989 and then from January 1990 – June 1990. Included in my analysis were also two editions of *Atmoda* from December 1989. These were included because they were the first two editions of the publication and were therefore deemed to be significant and worthy of note. The analysis of two separate sixth-month time periods, first in 1989, and then in 1990, was chosen because it would allow us to see the changing position of the various discourses employed by the Popular Front. As we shall see, the structural conditions of 1989 turned out to be quite different from 1990 as the Popular Front was becoming increasingly assertive and increasingly able to push aside Soviet discourses which had previously been sacrosanct (nodal points).

One of the central goals of this analysis was to allow for a comparison with contemporary discourses. As I set out in my theory section, my historical approach envisages an examination of different texts from different time periods in order to examine the radical renaming of discourse and to map out discursive change over time. Specifically though, I was interested to see to what extent the discourses of the PFL were in fact more inclusive than in the subsequent years of independence. Was it simply a case of the rhetoric of key Latvian politicians changing as structural conditions opened up for them, or were many of the discourses which have been outlined above evident in some form or another even at this early stage? To this extent I read both the Latvian and Russian-language versions of *Atmoda* noting any differences in their content, and paying particular attention to any articles which discussed issues relating to national identity, the Latvian state, and the role of non-Latvians in the political vision of the PFL. Contrary to many people's expectations (including my own) I found much evidence of the core nation discourse, discussed earlier, which was to later become so politically salient.

Analysis of *Atmoda*: the nation

One of the most striking features of the *Atmoda* articles which I analysed was the way in which nationality was treated. In Latvian there are two words which can be translated into the English 'nation': *tauta* and *nācija*. In most instances (although not always) *nācija* corresponds to the meaning of nation which is political, economic, or geographical. Therefore, the Latvian *nācija* would most commonly refer to the geographical territory of Latvia (however defined)

and to all the people resident therein. *Tauta*, on the other hand, has more of a cultural, or ethnic, connotation and corresponds very closely to the Russian *narod*. As such, the Latvian *tauta* generally refers to a construct which signifies people of Latvian ethnic origin.

In *Atmoda tauta* was almost used exclusively to refer to ethnic Latvians. In fact a number of articles in *Atmoda* were at pains to point out the distinctness of the Latvian and Russian *tautas*. Interestingly this was most apparent in articles which dealt with the topic of Russian-speakers and their role in the political struggles of the time. One article entitled ‘To the Russian community on the problems of Russians’, which did not appear in the Latvian language edition, states:

Our nation (*narod*) in this land is a guest and our interventions can only be to help the Latvian nation (*narod*) in its process of self-determination. Moreover, this help can only be offered when the Latvians agree to accept it. We have no moral right to intrude, we can only offer help. Whether they accept or decline this is up to the Latvian nation (*narod*) itself and its leaders. (*Atmoda* 19/05/89)

It is clear from the above quotation that the Latvian *tauta/narod* is conceived as a purely ‘Latvian’ construct which members of the constructed ‘Russian *narod*’ have no right to interfere with. In fact, there were a number of articles which also appeared exclusively in the Russian-language version of *Atmoda* which echoed similar sentiments. It should be noted that generally the content of the Latvian-language and Russian-language versions of *Atmoda* was almost identical with accurate translations of the Latvian articles being reproduced in the Russian-language edition. In the rare cases when articles were published solely in the Russian-language edition they were almost exclusively directed towards the expected roles that Russian-speakers, or representatives of the Russian *narod*, were expected to fulfil. One such article went to great lengths to explain that the duty of Russians in Latvia was to represent ‘our’ *narod*, i.e. the Russian nation:

We need to take into consideration the views and perspectives of Russians in Russia, in Asia, and in the Baltic. Then when we combine these things we can understand...our mission as representatives of our nation (*narod*). (Russian-language version of *Atmoda*, 20/02/89)

Interestingly, following the Soviet practice of rigidly defining nationality (*natsional'nost'*), the Russian *narod* was a term which was used to refer exclusively to ethnic Russians and not Russian-speakers. As we shall see below, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Poles etc. were all singled out as belonging to separate nations.

In another article, which appeared exclusively in the Russian-language edition, an Old Believer discusses the upcoming celebrations for the religious holiday *Paskha* (the Old Believer and Russian Orthodox equivalent to Easter):

For me, the Latvian, the Russian, the Jew – he who knows his history and culture, and who knows and respects his traditions, prepares himself to respect other cultures, especially if we are talking about the culture and traditions of the titular nation (*titul'nii narod*)

Today people are more or less starting to understand that there are not 'good' and 'bad' nations. *However, all nations (narodi) are different.* The differences may be more or less significant, but they are always there – in mentality, understanding, temperament etc. Only non-scientific pedagogical ideas could lead to an attempt to organise under one roof the teaching of two psychologically dissimilar groups of pupils. (Russian-language version of *Atmoda* 24/04/89, emphasis added)

It is evident therefore, that within the discourses of *Atmoda*, the popular conception of Russians in Latvia was not necessarily as an integral part of the Latvian nation, but rather as an appendage to it. Perhaps tolerated and respected, but certainly distinct and, to a certain extent, separate.

In fairness to the Popular Front, it is important to point out that there was also a general desire to respect Russian, and other non-Latvian, cultures and groups. In one article outlining their programme for the elections to the Latvian Supreme Soviet in 1990, the Popular Front declares that:

The Supreme Soviet must pass laws that would guarantee all national groups

- The rights and opportunities to receive education in their native language.
- Full participation in the forming of national opinion, by ensuring the rights of national groups and their representatives the right to participate

in the parliamentary commission and in the work of the committees.
(*Atmoda* 13/02/90)

Indeed, there was a great deal of attention paid to quelling excessive xenophobia or anti-Russian sentiment:

Dear parents! Do not sow hate among your children for those boys and girls who in the playground speak a different language than you choose to speak at home. (*Atmoda* 06/03/89)

Moreover, the PFL often called for unity among different ethnic groups for the united aims of achieving, initially, an autonomous Latvia within a Soviet federal framework, and then later, an independent Latvia:

We categorically condemn efforts to stoke up the ‘refuge syndrome’ in our society and invite all people of all nationalities (*tautība*) who support the idea of an independent Latvia to join forces for the realisation of this goal.

The PFL is against the use of any national criteria with which to determine property rights, income distribution, and the right to be accepted for leading positions in various spheres. (*Atmoda* 06/03/90)

Nevertheless, while *Atmoda* often called upon Russian-speakers and non-Latvians for support, and even talked of ensuring that their national and human rights were protected, it was still apparent that the Latvian *tauta* was to be paramount in the newly emerging hierarchy that was being envisaged. Among the most significant signifiers of this hierarchy were the words *pamatnācija* and *pamattauta* – the core nation,¹⁵ which were employed time and time again.

Ethnic relations often complicate the democratic order in post-colonial states. However, the future will require the reversal of colonially instigated unfairness, in order for the core nation (*pamattauta*) to regain its equal and leading position in Latvia. This equality can be gained through so-called POSITIVE DISCRIMINATION. (*Atmoda* 09/01/90)

¹⁵ Both these words derive from the Latvian *pamats* – foundation/base/principle and the two previously discussed words for ‘nation’ – *nācija* and *tauta*.

We have previously discussed the idea of the core nation discourse, and found that it was a discursive strategy of some importance in Latvia's post-soviet nation-building project. Here this strategy can be seen in a more nascent form. On the one hand the discursive use of the concept of the 'core nation' has the effect of differentiating between 'Us' (the Latvians) and 'Them' (the non-Latvians, especially Russians). However, on the other hand, there is also a call for a form of inter-ethnic political cooperation between the different constructed ethnic groups. For example, in the same article where the previous quote was published, the author goes on to say:

...Ideally of course there would be large, interethnic parties [in an independent Latvia]. If, however, there are minority parties then it is better to create them along geographical or religious lines. This would be similar to the status of minority politics in independent Latvia where there was observed a high degree of loyalty towards the state among Russian minorities.

Therefore, while there is a more inclusionary strategy of attempting to co-opt the Russian-speaking minority into Latvian political life, it is nevertheless clear that there is a distinct division between the different communities in Latvia, and that the 'core nation' is comprised of 'The Latvians'. In fact, the creation and/or maintenance of distinct cultural boundaries between cultural groups emerged as a central strategy of the Popular Front. In 1990 this was increasingly evidenced in *Atmoda's* discussions of a future citizenship law for Latvia. As we know, the actual citizenship laws which were passed following the country's regaining of independence divided the country's inhabitants between citizens and non-citizens, which in effect meant a general division between Latvians and non-Latvians. However, even in *Atmoda* there is a stated necessity for creating cultural boundaries:

We must pass a citizenship law which accords with preserving the interests of the Latvian nation (*latviešu nācija*). Nationalism is not intended to discriminate against other people, but rather as a cultural principle – an external boundary to protect you from others, and an internal boundary to protect others from you. Without boundaries it is not at all possible to have (separate!) interaction of national cultures. (*Atmoda* 12/06/90)

For Castles and Davidson rigidly defined and exclusive identities of the type we see above are essential if a culturally defined nation is to find congruence within a political entity. As they

state: ‘porous boundaries and multiple identities undermine ideas of cultural belonging as a necessary accompaniment to political membership’ (1998: viii). It would seem that even within the PFL this need for concrete boundaries was understood, even when the organisation wanted simultaneously to engage with and attract the support of non-Latvians.

Learning to work with, and fight against, soviet discourses

When analysing the discourses of the perestroika period it is vitally important to consider the sedimented influence of the Soviet structures which informed PFL strategies and understandings of the time. For example, the word *pamattauta* itself can be rendered into Russian as *korennaya natsiya* and was a commonly employed term in the Soviet Union used to refer to the ethnic groups which the union republics, autonomous republics autonomous *oblasti*, and autonomous *okrugi* were named after. So, in the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic – ‘Latvians’ were the root nation; in the Chechen–Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic – ‘Chechens’ and ‘Ingushians’ etc.

This Soviet practice of rigidly defining nationality (*natsional’nost’*), and of insisting that each territory was inhabited by a core nation, has led a number of commentators to see the Soviet Union as more of a nation-builder than a nation-killer (see for example Agarin, 2010: 45-52). In this context the repeated use of the linguistic signifier *pamattauta/pamatnācija* makes historical sense, as it is a plea to justify a new order on the basis of understandings from the (then) current one.

Indeed, in the earlier editions of *Atmoda* which I analysed, a great deal of the arguments which were put forward for greater Latvian autonomy were contextualised within existing Soviet norms and realities. Lenin was often cited in these earlier editions in order to justify and legitimise the PFL position, and the Soviet Union’s nationality policies were likewise referred to in order to bolster the legitimacy of their claims to greater freedom and autonomy for the Latvian nation:

According to the constitution of the USSR and according to the 1922 Union Agreement, and by juridical practice, the Latvian SSR is a national state. What

does that mean? What is the role of the Latvian nation (*nācija*) in this state? Is this role simply that Latvians have ‘given their name’ to the republic?

In truth the role of the Latvian nation (*nācija*) in Latvia’s statehood is as the bearer or subject of statehood. It was no accident that Lenin viewed the genesis of the nation (*nācija*) in connection with the process of forming national statehood. The nation (*nācija*) is the sovereign ethnos, in other words the ethnos is the bearer of statehood. (*Atmoda* 20/03/89)

One article even created a fictional ‘interview with V. I. Lenin’ in order to show that Lenin would have supported the goals of the Popular Front over those of Interfront – the pro-Soviet, reactionary communist movement which opposed the activities of the Popular Front (*Atmoda* 24/04/89).

Earlier we enumerated three main categories for macro-level discursive engagement: *anti-discourse*, *integrational discourse*, and *constructive-discourse*. In these earlier *Atmoda* articles it would appear that integrational discourse was the most commonly utilised discursive strategy. In order for the Baltic Popular Front movements to be able to wield any effective power they understood the necessity of initially fitting their demands within Mikhail Gorbachev’s ambitious and newly emerging programmes of *perestroika* and *demokratizatsiya* (see above). Hence the PFL initially argued ‘for the Latvian SSR’s development only within the USSR’ (*Atmoda* 16/01/89).

With these structural conditions in mind we can understand how the linguistic units *pamattauta* and *pamatnācija* emerged as essential nodal points which allowed PFL discourse to be integrated and find legitimacy within the Soviet hegemony of the period. At the same time, Gorbachev’s call for greater democratisation facilitated a concurrent emphasis on respecting all peoples/nations and individuals. This emphasis on democratisation also led to the PFL strategy of attempting to prise out the discursive *being* of ‘Russian-speakers’ from its entanglement with the discursive understandings of Communism, the Communist Party, and the Interfront movement:

A number of anxious and indignant Latvians ask themselves and us: are the views and goals of our fellow Russian citizens truly expressed openly in [the Interfront] congress? It is sad that Latvia’s ethnic Russian inhabitants have

become victims of this event. *Our duty today is to fight for the honour of the many thousands of people in whose name the various members of a small group arbitrarily spoke. These people represent only their own selfish interests.* (*Atmoda* 23/01/89, emphasis added)

However, while this discourse is a positive one in that it allows space for more positive depictions of Russians and other non-Latvians in Latvia, there is also a political expediency which lies beneath its surface. The call to ‘not let our prejudices oversimplify all of these diverse people into one generalised ‘enemy image’’ (*Atmoda* 16/12/88), for example, can be seen as a positive attempt to refrain from constructing an external Other with which to cement an internally sutured Us. It can also be seen as part of an attempt to break up, and therefore lessen the power of, the externalised hegemonic grouping of Russian-speakers:

We are witnesses to the bankruptcy of the chauvinistic term ‘Russian-speaking inhabitants’ which levels, and moreover, humiliates all the nations (*tautas*) who live in Latvia and who do not speak Latvian. (*Atmoda* 06/01/89)

In chapter four we shall see how various representatives of the so-called Russian-speaking community have attempted, with some success, to unite various (constructed) ethnic groups into a unified community of ‘Russian-speakers’. However, for the PFL such unification could have had a number of adverse effects on their attempts to form a political and cultural hegemony. It is not difficult to see the potential problem of facing a well-defined group comprised of almost 50% of the total population, as opposed to a number of smaller groups. Just as Gramsci understood, in order to gain power it is necessary to enjoy some form of hegemony. The threat of a well-defined, non-porous hegemonic bloc comprised of ‘Russian-speakers’ was evidently a serious concern for the Popular Front.

For this reason throughout 1990 *Atmoda* published a series of features, each focusing on a separate ‘national minority in Latvia’: Jews, Estonians, Crimean Tartars, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Armenians, and Tatars were all covered in the period of my analysis. Clearly the goal of the PFL was to highlight the distinct presence of a number of nations (*tautas*) which were separate from the Russian nation. In this regard the Popular Front discourse was aided by the ambiguities and paradoxes of Soviet nationalities policies. The PFL were able to seize upon the doctrines of Lenin on nationalities which upheld the ideas of nations and

nationalities, for example his belief in ‘the Right of Nations to Self-Determination’ (Lenin 1972). At the same time this integrational discourse helped to support the anti-discursive strategy of rubbishing Soviet discourses of internationalism:

Latvians have become a minority in their own country...[which] was a result of the systematic realisation of Stalin and Brezhnev’s national policy, which aimed to create a Soviet nation (*tauta*) with one language – Russian. In other words the spirit of Russification has been cultivated and cannily hidden behind the words ‘Soviet’ ‘Internationalism’ and ‘friendship of the nations’. (*Atmoda* 19/05/89)

If we return to our discourse/material helix then we can see that the Latvian Popular Front was attempting to dig down to the Soviet origins of the concept of nationality, thereby removing a great deal of its subsequent sedimentation. An anti-discourse strategy is greatly aided, it would seem, by the ability to ‘dig down’ and uncover discourses which actually seem to support one’s current articulations. By (selectively) appealing to Lenin’s formulations on the national question, the PFL managed to pursue a strategy of integrational-discourse rather than one of anti-discourse.

Interestingly, there was a noticeable change in the style and content of PFL discourse in the two periods of my *Atmoda* analysis. In the earlier period, as we have seen, there was a desire to integrate Popular Front discourses within selective Soviet discourses and realities. However, in 1990, as the PFL became more confident in its position, and as the foundations of Soviet rule were increasingly undermined, it became increasingly clear that there was no longer any need to rely on these Soviet discourses. Lenin was no longer referenced as a legitimate source of support for the Popular Front. Calls were made for outright independence rather than autonomy within a federal Soviet Union.

This change in perspectives was summed up well in an interview with Anatolijs Gorbunovs, the chairman of the Latvian Supreme Soviet. In the interview Gorbunovs was asked how he could be talking about full independence from the Soviet Union when, two and a half years previously, he had said that anyone who laid flowers at the Freedom Monument would be acting against the Latvian *tauta*. In reply Gorbunovs stated:

In answer to your concrete question I can say that, of course, I am also changing, because the things I am telling you today I was not even sure about three months ago...so events have been before me and I have acted accordingly.
(*Atmoda* 03/04/90)

The structural conditions of 1989 had gone through seismic changes by 1990 and this was evident in Gorbunov's response. No longer were the PFL and its supporters forced to work solely within the discursive frameworks of Marxism-Leninism, or to justify their positions within Soviet discourses. The strategies of the late 80s had successfully engineered new nodal points with which to create new truths, and ultimately new political structures. However, notwithstanding the fact that new nodal points had been created, that is not to say that the old nodal points had been entirely dismantled. Instead, the period of organic crisis was dusting off certain sedimentations of meaning whilst simultaneously covering various discourses with new, or modified, layers of meaning.

One thing from this analysis is clear however: for the PFL the nation (*tauta*) was a sacred entity deserving of special privileges. This was as true in 1988 as it was in 1990. Moreover, the Latvian *tauta* was to be the core nation, be it within the confines of the Latvian SSR or within an independent Latvia. Representatives of other nations were not expected to represent Latvian culture or language. Instead they were representatives of their own ethnos, be it Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian etc. These people should help the Latvian nation, champion democratisation, and should support Latvian independence but they were not representatives of the core nation, and it was not envisaged that they would ever be so. These were some of the newly emerging nodal points which were to have a profound effect on the course of Latvia's post-Soviet state-building project.

Conclusions

Following on from our theoretical discussion of discourse and the outlining of the importance of temporality, this chapter explored the ideas of history and memory from both a theoretical and practical perspective. In the Latvian context it was demonstrated that conceptions of Latvia's past have formed an integral part of the country's post-Soviet state building project

following the collapse of the Soviet Union. I analysed in some detail the main narratives and state discourses which have served to legitimise official Latvian policy. Using the previously enumerated concepts of temporality and sedimentation I looked to the Soviet period for explanations of these practices and also viewed them through the prism of hegemonic formations.

The work of Gramsci was important in realising that periods of organic crisis are fundamentally significant: it is in such periods of time that many of the nodal points which anchor given discourses are effectively delegitimised, leading to the possibility (and expediency) for actors to create new discursive relations and meanings. From this I posited that the discursive constructions of this period would be extremely significant in determining contemporary discourses and identities in Latvia today. Gramsci's insights help to explain the emergence of antagonistic formations which are competing to access the empty space of power. The use of history as a discursive tool must therefore be seen as an essential element of the hegemonic projects of the constructed 'core' group of 'the Latvians', as well as that of the externalised 'other': 'the Russians'. The 'memory war' that has been witnessed between the three Baltic states and Russia was therefore examined in some detail which has highlighted the contemporary importance of these issues in Latvian domestic and international affairs.

In order to better understand the process of hegemonic formation more thoroughly I analysed the Popular Front of Latvia's official newspaper publication for two six-month periods. The analysis revealed how many of the discourses emerged which have been central to the Latvian hegemonising project. This gives weight to the idea of temporality. Just as the temporal helix of *being* suggested, the very sedimented nature of the material and discursive structure of the present necessarily constrains agents. The PFL, and the social agents involved with the PFL, were unable to create certain discourses until particular material and discursive conditions had been met.

Through the implementation of integrational, anti, and constructive discursive strategies Latvian elites were eventually able to construct and modify nodal points to the extent that they were able to implement the state building policies that have been discussed in this chapter. Importantly, the impetus for much of these policies has been the discursive construction of an

external 'other'. In the early *Atmoda* years this external 'other' was the Soviet Union. However, as the power and influence of the Soviet Union waned, so there was need for a different external other. There is therefore a paradoxical treatment of Russian-speakers by the discourses found within *Atmoda*. On the one hand the leaders of the PFL wanted to co-opt this community for their own political ends. Indeed, the structural conditions in Latvia were such that this was a necessary step. On the other hand, there was the need to maintain strict boundaries between Latvia's imagined communities. Therefore, even when there were relatively inclusionary calls for Russians and Russian-speakers to form an integral part of their hegemonising project, there were simultaneously discourses which explicitly delineated Russians and other nationalities as separate from the Latvian *tauta*.

The findings from this chapter will help to inform our discussion of contemporary discourses and identities in Latvia, and will help us to understand the discursive strategies that are being outlined and articulated today. In order to do this we will first consider the role of media in the formation of national identities.

Chapter 4: Media
analysis: the
Russian-language
press and identity
formation

Methodology

In chapter two I discussed mass media of communication as a possible means by which national identities could be cultivated and constructed. Based on the theoretical insights of the preceding chapters I will now turn to an actual empirical investigation of media in Latvia. I will examine how Latvia's media have played a major role in the identity construction of Russian-speakers in Latvia, and I will also investigate the discursive strategies of journalistic and political elites as revealed by critical discourse analysis of the country's press discourses.

The main source for my media analysis was *Chas* (the Hour), a leading Latvian Russian-language daily. *Chas* itself can best be described as a tabloid publication. In comparison to its nearest Russian-language competitor *Vesti Segodnya* (Today's News), *Chas* presents a more liberal stance on Latvian politics. Nonetheless, it is still far a more opinionated and provocative publication than the other main Russian-language daily *Telegraf* which positions itself as a professional and impartial source of information (for a brief overview of Latvia's main newspaper publications see Rožukalne, 2010: 73).

Chas was extensively examined for two sixth-month periods separated by a gap of twelve months. The first monitoring period covered 15 Nov 2008 – 15 May 2009. The second period ran from 15 May 2010 – 15 Nov 2010. During these two monitoring periods I examined every article that appeared in the electronic version of the newspaper.¹⁶ Initially the individual articles were scanned to see if there was any content which could be related to the themes of national identity: broadly speaking – portrayals of Russians, Latvians or Russian-speakers, articles on history which could be related back to identity formation, views on education reforms and language practice in Latvia generally, reporting on events and developments in Russia, coverage of European politics which were somehow related back to Latvia, articles which attempted to defend the rights of Russian-speakers, views which were directed towards the Latvian state, and anything else that I felt warranted a more comprehensive read. The articles for which a scan indicated the possibility of relevant content were subsequently read in their entirety. Initially notes were taken on each relevant article on an individual basis. It was

¹⁶ Accessible at www.Chas-daily.com

only once the monitoring periods in question had been completed, and the individual articles had all been read, that I compared them in order to decide upon the main categories to use in order to archive the relevant sections.

The choice of focusing primarily on one newspaper, and not all three of the national Russian-language dailies, was perhaps a difficult one. However, during the periods in which I examined *Chas* I also paid limited attention to the online version of *Vesti Segodnya*.¹⁷ This entailed a daily examination of the newspaper's contents, but I limited myself to reading through the articles' headlines before deciding if there was a need to read the article in more detail (thereby presumably missing a certain amount of material that would have been relevant). Moreover, I did not devote as much time to a full examination of the articles that I had deemed relevant as I did for articles in *Chas*. Instead I often skim read the articles looking for relevant paragraphs or sentences which I then could catalogue.

In terms of the time-frame that I adopted, I was able to cover all the official and non-official cultural and commemorative events which occur annually in Latvia and which inevitably generate a number of specific articles. In light of our previous discussion of memory and memory-myths in the formation of national identities, the interpretation and framing of these commemorative events is an area of crucial importance to this study. Therefore I felt that it was important to be able to cover every calendar day. Nonetheless, by factoring in a twelve-month gap between the two monitoring periods, I was also able to compare them to see if there had been any generally observable trends and evolution in the discourses employed by the paper. I considered such a comparison essential in order to map out the current evolution of media discourse in Latvia. Also, in accordance with the discourse-historical approach outlined above, I hoped that it would enable me to see how discursive nodal points were being created and severed over time, thereby allowing us to track the course of Russian-speaking discourse in Latvia.

¹⁷ Accessible at www.ves.lv

The discursive construction of 'Russian-speakers'¹⁸

As the title of this thesis suggests, this is a study of the discourses of 'Russian-speakers'. However, the use of this term is not without its problems. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, many people were unsure of how to accurately describe the groups of Soviet-era migrants that found themselves living in newly independent states and outside of their 'natural homelands'. Although 'ethnic Russians' were the largest of these groups, the terms *Russian settlers*, *Russian diaspora*, and *Russian community* all came replete with their own inaccurate assumptions (for a more in depth discussion of the problems of categorising this group see Poppe and Hagendoorn, 2001, 57-71). In Latvia, for example, Poles, Ukrainians, Belarusians, and other former Soviet nationalities were also broadly included in these groups, therefore rendering the word *Russian* somewhat of a misnomer.

Indeed, evidence would suggest that 'Russian-speaking' and/or 'Russian' ethnic identity was rather weak when Latvia first gained independence (Melvin, 1995: 27). As such, many Russians actively supported Latvian independence and saw their futures in an independent Latvia rather than Russia or the Soviet Union.¹⁹ However, the political and commercial value of binding these people with a single identity distinct from Latvian identity has long been apparent to political and journalistic elites. It is in the commercial and political interests of newspapers and politicians to convince the public that there exists a definite, identifiable community, whose interests the papers and parties can then claim to defend. As Neidhardt (1993: 341) notes, 'Mass media create mass audiences, and they exist if they are successful at doing this. They become successful by creating a widespread demand for themselves. For this, they must have a high sensibility for perceiving and an elaborated professionalism in satisfying the interests of large audiences.' In other words, the resonance of political representation is greatly enhanced if the represented group can be depicted as a holistic and unproblematic entity, rather than be acknowledged as diffuse and diverse. In large part because of this commercial and political need, the linguistic categorisation 'Russian-speakers' has become the most useful and broad term that can be applied to this disparate group of individuals.

¹⁸ For an expanded version of this section see Cheskin (2010).

¹⁹ For example in 1991 approximately 49% of non-Latvians supported Latvian independence (see Karklins, 1994a: 102).

In many ways language marks a social identity, which according to Laitin (1998: 22), ‘often has a near mystical quality conferring membership in a category of similarly endowed people’. This term has therefore come into popular parlance as the most ostensibly applicable way of describing what is essentially an imagined community: Poles, Ukrainians, and Belarusians can suddenly be united under the broad banner of Russian-speakers. The Latvian education reforms of 2004, whereby legislation demanded that Russian-language schools conduct at least 60% of their teaching in Latvian, helped to lend much added momentum to the tendency for people to use the Russian language in order to demarcate an ethnicised identity. Pupils and parents of Russian-language schools were able to unite meaningfully as a group which was experiencing a similar perception of discrimination by the Latvian state against the use of their native language. Interestingly, as early as the mid-90s Melvin (1995: 55) had noted that Russian-speaking identity was often based more on the issues of human rights than it was on a strong attachment to Russia or a genuine collective group consciousness.

For this reason, the linguistic categorisation and referential strategy of referring to a Russian-speaking community must be seen as centrally important not only in articulating a coherent, ethnicised Russian-speaking identity in Latvia, but also in leading to a clear discursive demarcation between Latvians and Russian-speakers. Such has become the axiomatic strength and resonance of the term that, within popular discourse, there is rarely any space for any other groups; either you are a Russian-speaker or you are a Latvian, but nothing in-between. Thus, for Khanov (2002), ‘The term Russian-speaker is a good illustration of how greatly schematised [Latvian] society treats definitions of cultural identity by creating two levels of identity – either Russian, or Latvian [which] is most clearly revealed in lexical analysis of the press, television, surveys, and official documents.’

We should note that this term is also of great importance to many *Latvian* nationalistic forces, who have perceived non-Latvians as a threat to the country’s post-Soviet nation-building project. For them, the term Russian-speaker helps to differentiate a whole section of the population away from the core nation discourse which we discussed previously. It is therefore clear that the categorisation of Russian-speakers, although seemingly innocent, is in fact highly-charged. The mere fact that these people are primarily identifiable as Russian-speakers

often serves to exclude them from the ideology of a Latvian state which proclaims the need for only one language and one political community. As Castles and Davidson (1998: viii) assert, ‘porous boundaries and multiple identities undermine ideas of cultural belonging as a necessary accompaniment to political membership’. If we can be convinced of the reality of a concrete and unproblematic Russian-speaking community, it is then easier to subsequently exclude them on the basis that this community is a real threat to the core (and equally unproblematic) community of Latvians. It is a strategy that is well documented and theorised in the works of Laclau and Mouffe, and fits very much within the hegemonising project of the Latvian state.

As such, ‘Russian-speakers’ (*russkoyazichnie* or *russkogovoryashie* in Russian and *krievvalodīgie* in Latvian), as a term extensively used in Latvian journalistic speech (in both the Latvian and Russian-language spheres), must be understood in its wider political and social context. The Russian-language press often employs this as a purposeful dichotomy that aims to differentiate Russian-speakers from Latvians, which is most commonly manifested in articles devoted to the government’s perceived harsh treatment of Russian-speakers:

Yesterday the Committee of the Ministerial Cabinet reviewed planned changes to the labour law, which have been called upon to further complicate the lives of Russian-speakers. (*Vesti Segodnya*, 17/02/09)

It is clear from the above quotation that the term Russian-speaker represents more than a reference to people’s linguistic proficiency of Russian. Rather, Russian-speakers are discursively portrayed as an oppressed political class.²⁰ This idea of Russian-speakers as a political class is propagated time and time again in the pages of the country’s Russian-language print media. Moreover, this ethnic definition is most commonly drawn upon in relation to discrimination from the ruling class (read ethnic Latvians):

²⁰ I use the word ‘class’ here not entirely within the Marxian tradition. Although within the media discourses that I studied there are elements which tie the position of Russian-speakers to their perceived restricted access to the means of production in Latvia, the focus is more on their subordinate position within Latvia’s political, social, and economic realities generally. Perhaps a more appropriate word would be ‘hegemonic bloc’. However, for the sake of eloquence I have stuck here to the linguistic sign ‘class’.

An integrating society is a society of numerous opportunities, and not solely political. However, we see a huge discrepancy in the civil rights of Latvians and Russian-speakers, which also relates to all national minorities. (*Chas*, 10/03/09)

In order to emphasise that the discursive position of Russian-speakers is in strict opposition to that of the Latvians, the media adopt what Laclau and Mouffe refer to as *the logic of equivalence*. According to this logic, *all* Russian-speakers are portrayed as equal to one another irrespective of their real social, cultural, educational, and political differences because they are all equally different from the discursive Other: the Latvians. This is not a positive identity based on any perceived, positive characteristics of Russian-speakers, but is instead solely premised on the fact that Russian-speakers are not Latvians.

Moreover, because Latvia's media are so obviously and sharply divided between Latvian and Russian-language materials, the linguistic divisions can be self-perpetuating. There is an implicit understanding that Russian-language print media is intended for a Russian-speaking audience (i.e. Russian-Speakers and not simply speakers of Russian), while Latvian print media is likewise intended for dissemination among a Latvian audience. Thus, when *Chas* confidently states that "*We* have always been here" under the heading "*Our* inheritance" (*Chas* 03/01/09 emphasis added), 'we' is clearly not addressed to the wider audience of persons proficient in Russian, but instead reflects the separateness of Latvia's two media spaces, and of the discursive distinctness of the country's two main ethnic groups. It is understood that 'we' refers to Russian-speakers as a social group with shared values, experiences, and motives.

For this reason, the simple act of reading a Russian-language newspaper is linked to an understanding that the reader is a definite, identifiable member of the Russian-speaking community, and that this community is somehow distinct from the Latvian community. The act of reading a newspaper is thus a performative act, linking the individual with a whole series of sedimented understandings that underpin the newspaper's *being*. What makes this even more problematic is the extent to which newspapers are given latitude to then define the political and social characteristics of this group: if the reader of a Russian-language newspaper

is automatically linked to membership of the Russian-speaking community, then we must anticipate the power of that newspaper to articulate the very features of this community.

Politically this is manifested in the overt support given to certain political parties; parties that are deemed also to represent the interests of Russian-speakers. In Latvia the discursive division of Latvian and Russian-speaking communities is even apparent in the political spectrum used to describe political parties. Instead of using the commonly used left/right-wing dichotomy which separates political parties by ideological beliefs, in Latvia left-wing refers simply to ‘Russian-speaking’ parties (often referred to as ‘pro-Russian parties’) while right-wing is in reference to ‘Latvian’ parties (for a fuller explanation of this phenomenon see Kažoka, 2010). In Latvia’s Russian-language media ‘left-wing’ parties are given unwavering support while ‘right-wing’ parties are most commonly depicted as discriminatory and hostile to the needs and interests of Russian-speakers. This can be seen in the number of articles where so-called ‘left’ and ‘right-wing parties’ are mentioned in both the Latvian and Russian-language media. Unsurprisingly Russian-language newspapers give column space to left-wing parties more frequently than to the right – although the reverse tendency is far more obvious in the Latvian-language press, where left-wing parties are frequently ignored (Čigāne, 2007, 13).

Indeed, previous pre-election analysis of Latvian newspapers has revealed a clear tendency for the country’s two main Russian-language dailies, *Chas* and *Vesti Segodnya*, to lend direct support to left-wing parties (Kruks and Šulmane, 2002). As such For Human Rights in United Latvia (FHRUL) has been a constant favourite for the Russian-language press over recent years, as they have seen this party as a representative of the Russian-speaking community in much the same way that they attempt to portray their own role as defenders of Russian-speaking rights. Thus, *Chas* and *Vesti Segodnya*, in all of their editorials and informative news articles constantly refuse to question FHRUL policy, or to submit their politicians to rigorous and unbiased scrutiny. Even in interviews, questions are constantly framed so as to facilitate an unhindered regurgitation of political soundbites and are devoid of critical analysis or questioning (Society for Openess “Delna”, 2002).

Harmony Centre (HC), currently the most popular of Latvia’s ‘left-wing’ parties, also enjoys similar patronage in the Russian-language print media. For example, in one *Chas* article

attention is drawn to Harmony Centre's application to the Constitutional Court to acknowledge the unlawful use of the Administrative Violations Code to convict people for the non-use of Latvian. The main body of the article is 344 words long and yet a full 271 words are given over to an unabridged quotation from HC representative Valerii Ageshin, who is also pictured (*Chas* 09/03/09). In a *Chas* interview with Harmony Centre politician Jānis Urbanovičs, which follows under the headline 'We are the only alternative', the *Saeima* deputy has ample opportunity to outline his party's programme for the then upcoming European elections as well as the 2009 Mayoral elections in the country's capital Riga:

Journalist: What is the largest opposition party going to be doing in the near future?

Urbanovičs: Getting ready for the elections. We will put forward a very good programme for the elections to the Rigan local government which will envisage turning Riga into an industrial centre of the Baltic Sea Region.

A strong team will be making a start in the European elections. I think that Harmony Centre will have two MEP representatives in the European Parliament. And I would like to emphasise that they will not be isolated soloists; they will be working in one of the largest MEP blocs in the European Parliament – the socialist party, with whom we are already working successfully. And so this will be an effective mechanism to resolve many pressing issues for Latvia. We have a lot of work to do. (*Chas*, 05/03/09)

Not at any stage are party policies subject to debate or question and Urbanovičs is given free reign to reply using fragments of his party's programme. For this reason a number of analysts have pointed to the undeniable presence of hidden political advertising in the Russian-language print media (Society for Openess 'Delna', 2002; PROVIDUS, 2007a). For example, pre-election media analysis of the Russian-language press before the 8th *Saeima* elections revealed that FHRUL was mentioned in a positive light on 73% of occasions while negatively only 4% of the time (Society for Openess 'Delna', 2002, 38).

In the 2006 *Saeima* elections similar accounts of hidden advertising were uncovered in the main two Russian-language dailies. Not only did *Chas* and *Vesti Segodnya* provide an

unquestioning and pliable media canvass for their favoured parties, but they also afforded political actors extra media space through pseudo news reporting – creating news stories out of trivial events in order to give further publicity to certain politicians (PROVIDUS, 2007b). In order to sustain such high levels of publicity for politicians and political parties, the Russian-language press is forced to employ a number of tactics which essentially facilitate hidden electioneering. For example, HC and FHRUL representatives are often called upon as trusted social commentators and experts. Thus, on any given topic, be it education reform, language, Latvia's status within the European Union, or any other topic, a 'trusted' politician is always at hand to posit their opinions and share their 'expertise'.

For example, in a *Chas* article on the European elections and the possibility of obtaining pre-election materials in Russian, the paper turns to both Tat'yana Zhdanok (MEP and FHRUL member) and Boris Cilevičs (*Saeima* deputy and HC member). Instead of the author directly providing the reader with the information himself, the additional publicity is given to Boris Cilevičs:

Boris Cilevičs, chairman of the PACE subcommittee on the Election of Judges to the European Courts of human Rights and *Saeima* deputy (Harmony Centre), explained that in the European union there are no general language rules for information and campaigning. (*Chas*, 09/03/09)

Among the numerous examples in *Vesti Segodnya* is an article on Latvia's budgetary deficit and the country's need to cut back spending by 700 million lats:

Vice-chairman of the *Saeima* FHRUL fraction Yuri Sokolovskii told *Vesti Segodnya* that, "At the meeting with our fraction Dombrovskijs and D. Zaķis, head of the New Era fraction who accompanied him, also warned of the necessity to raise taxes. According to them the IMF is demanding this. Moreover, without raising taxes and cutting the budget we will not be able to maintain our budget deficit at 4.7% of GDP, but this is precisely what the Godmanis government promised the IMF." (*Vesti Segodnya*, 03/03/09)

In this above example it is unclear why we would need to turn to a FHRUL politician to tell us the opinions of the Latvian government, rather than directly asking the government themselves. It would seem that the Russian-language press prefer to use Russian-speaking

‘representatives’ not only to represent the Russian-speaking community, but also to represent Latvian political parties and the Latvian community. It is as though members of the ‘Latvian’ parties are not allowed a legitimate voice in the pages of the Russian-speaking press. Instead events, policies, and announcements that come from the ‘other’ community are framed through a process of mediation by Russian-speaking representatives and are therefore presented from the perspective of these social gatekeepers. The Russian-language press therefore reinforces the notion that Russian-speakers must be represented by Russian-speakers, and that Latvians, in turn, will be represented by ‘their own’. It is therefore a mechanism that reinforces the non-porous boundaries between Latvia’s two communities.

Added to this, numerous politicians from ‘Russian’ parties hold journalistic positions in both *Chas* and *Vesti Segodnya*. For example, *Vesti Segodnya* has no qualms in handing over entire articles to the political monologues of elected Harmony Centre politician Yuri Denisov. In one such article, where Denisov ‘continues his ‘insider’ discussion of the workings of power’, the politician’s uninterrupted musings account for 664 out of the total 712 words in the text (06/02/09). Indeed, the Soros Foundation Latvia and the Society for Openness ‘Delna’ (2002: 30) uncovered such problematic practices of the Russian-language press, whereby:

Russian newspapers were staffed by journalists who were simultaneously deputy candidates or municipal deputies [leading] one to question the newspaper’s ability and desire to remain objective and provide the reader with multifaceted information, as well as the newspaper’s ability to assemble the necessary content by itself and with sufficient qualification to analyse various issues.

In Latvia then it would seem that the worlds of politics and the media are closely intertwined, at least for the case of the Russian-speaking media. The aims of both the media and politicians have often been similar; to create a unified bloc of voters and consumers who are expected to act in certain ways and to take on certain values. For Gramsci this would be further evidence of the primacy of politics and the all-important political task of creating a hegemonic bloc with which to gain power. Now I shall examine the actual discursive positions proscribed for the imagined community of Russian-speakers by the Russian-language media.

Analysing Russian-speaking media discourse²¹

In my theory section I outlined the belief that all primary discourse, in order to be powerful or meaningful, must necessarily respond to previously sedimented, secondary discourses. Accordingly, when analysing my collected materials I found it useful not to treat the various visible discourses solely in their own right. Rather, it seemed far more fruitful to examine them in the context of Latvia's post-Soviet hegemonising project – along with the attendant discourses and narratives that have accompanied this project. Indeed, as I hope my analysis shows, the ways in which contemporary journalists portray Latvia's Russian-speakers are deeply rooted in the past, and especially in the immediate post-Soviet past. Drawing on the discursive-historical approach espoused primarily by Ruth Wodak I earlier proposed three main categories for discursive engagement with past sedimentations of discourse: Anti-discourse, integrational-discourse, and constructive-discourse. I was able to investigate how the Russian-language press are responding to the various Latvian narratives and discourses (outlined in chapter three) through the use of these three strategies.

In the course of my media analysis all three engagement strategies were clearly identifiable. In the section that follows I will examine Russian-speaking media discourses through the prism of each of these three categories in turn. For the sake of clarity, here I provide a very brief overview of some of the main aspects of each position; each of which will then be discussed in much greater detail below.

1. Anti-discourse: (negative identity construction) whereby 'Russian' parties and journalists attempt to shore up their own identity by dismantling and deriding Latvian narratives, arguing that their incorrect and morally suspect implementation has been the major reason for Latvia's political and economic instability.
2. Integrational-discourse: (integrational identity construction) perhaps the most interesting and increasingly utilised of the three discursive

²¹ The results of this analysis were also published in Cheskin (2012b)

strategies. Instead of simply deconstructing the main narratives of Latvian statehood, Russian-speaking elites here argue that they are also committed to the ideals of *Atmoda*, that Russian-speakers are loyal to the Latvian state, respect Latvian values and culture (including the Latvian language), and support Latvia's post-Soviet 'normalisation'. However, they also argue that Latvian narratives of statehood and nationalistic discourses have become distorted in the years following independence.

3. Constructive-discourse: (positive identity construction) a stage of discursive posturing characterised by attempts to construct new narratives for contemporary Latvia which include and embrace the presence of the country's Russian-speakers. This element is a logical progression from the earlier stages of anti and integrational-discourse. By attempting to destroy certain nodal points while simultaneously integrating within others, an analysis of Russian-speaking discourse reveals that Russian-speaking elites are becoming increasingly able to forge a unique discursive position for Russian-speakers in Latvia; as a bridge between Russia and Europe.

Anti-discourse

There is much space devoted in Latvia's Russian-language media to the debunking of Latvian discourses of normality. In many ways this is a predictable, discursive counter-reaction to the core-nation discourse which has played a major role in the post-Soviet hegemonising project. This core nation discourse, although a central feature of Latvian state-building in the immediate post-Soviet period, has been evidenced to various degrees in more contemporary Latvian media and parliamentary discourses (PROVIDUS, 2008), and has both a constructive and a destructive macro-function (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001, 40). Constructively this discourse sets out the legitimising foundations for a stable model of Latvian statehood and governance in the post-Soviet era. Destructively it marginalises the efforts of those people found outside of the core nation discourse to find representation and recognition within this system.

Exclusionary discourses can be found in the Latvian-language media and Latvian public space which depict Russians, Russian-speakers, and non-citizens as alien, occupiers, and as separate from the main body of Latvia's 'normal' citizenry (see Kruks and Šulmane, 2001; PROVIDUS, 2008; Rožukalne, 2010). It is important to note at this point, that while such discourses *are* visible, it does not necessarily follow that these views represent a majority view, or that more liberal, tolerant discourses are not also existent in Latvia's public media space. However, from the perspective of elites who are positioning themselves as the leaders of the 'Russian-speaking community', objective reflection on diverse opinions is not as important as manipulating discourses which are advantageous to their political and commercial interests.

For this reason, discourses which are perceived to be discriminatory and harmful to 'Russian-speakers' are seized upon as a negative way in which to shore up Russian-speaking identity: by creating a totalised perception of discrimination against all non-Latvians, Russian-speakers are linked in a chain of negative equivalence in opposition to 'the Latvians'. On the other hand, the dismantling of these discourses and the narratives that underpin them can also potentially provide Russian-speakers with the chance to create a positive pole of identity for Russian-speakers by creating a legitimate and meaningful place for themselves within contemporary Latvia (as we shall see in our exploration of constructive-discursive strategies).

Once the data from my two media monitoring periods had been collected I was able to look more closely for trends and main themes within the media discourses by comparing the highlighted portions of the articles that I had deemed important. Through this process certain themes emerged as commonly occurring points of interest for the Russian-language media. In terms of an anti-discursive strategy I was able to sub-divide most of what I perceived as anti-discourse into three main categories: (1) articles and rhetoric which queried and mocked Latvian notions of Europeanness; (2) efforts to deconstruct the Latvian myth of restoration; and (3) assertions that Latvia is a democratically deficient country which actually has more in common with the Soviet Union than many would care to admit. Each of these three areas represents a key nodal point for Latvian post-Soviet statehood and have all provided major discursive imperatives for Latvia to adopt its current form of statehood. It is therefore perhaps no surprise that these are the three main targets for Russian-speaking anti-discourse.

Russian-speaking discourses of Latvia's anti-Europeanness

As Eglitis (2002) has documented, during the times of *Atmoda*, Latvian narratives and many Latvian activists claimed that they were restoring normality to Latvia by restoring it to its natural European, democratic, and civilised state. These ideas are therefore immediate targets for Russian-speaking discourse in Latvia. Whereas the spatial narrative of Latvia's development, as described by Eglitis, posited that Latvia was rightfully a member of the European family of nations, I found numerous examples of journalists and politicians using Europe to shame the Latvian state. In this sense there was an evident desire to alter the *being* of the linguistic sign 'Europe' to the extent that it would no longer be able to support and anchor certain Latvian discourses. Articles in *Chas* often highlighted differences between 'civilised' Europe and 'backwards' Latvia:

And how many times have our [politicians] led a *baffled Europe* into bewilderment that a country that considers itself democratic can pass discriminatory, at times overtly racist, laws? (*Chas*, 20/02/09, emphasis added)

Latvia's membership of the EU further facilitates the articulation of this anti-discourse. Tat'yana Zhdanok, member of the European parliament since 2004, and re-elected in 2009, who represents the 'left-wing'/'Russian' party For Human Rights in a United Latvia (FHRUL) was foremost among those using Europe as a means to discredit Latvia's claims to Europeanness in the pages of *Chas*. Zhdanok is a controversial figure in Latvia, and for some (including many Russian-speakers) represents a more extreme political viewpoint (under Latvian law she is prohibited from being elected to the *Saeima* due to her former ties with the Communist Party and her opposition to Latvian independence). Nevertheless, her views are often published in Latvia's media, and as one of only eight Latvian representatives in the European Parliament, she is able to use her position to gain national and even international attention, especially on and around March 16 during the commemorative marches for the Waffen SS legionnaires (see below).

In this respect the fourth node affixed to Brubaker's originally triadic nexus, i.e. that of international organisations, is highly salient. Using this updated model, we should expect the identity of Latvia's Russian-speakers to be influenced not only by their relationships to both the Latvian and Russian states, but also by European structures and institutions. On a discursive level, if Russian-speaking politicians and journalists can demonstrate that the 'Europe' which Latvia has wanted to return to is in fact irreconcilable with 'actual' European norms, then this effectively serves partly to delegitimise the current Latvian state, especially its 'return to Europe'.

Thus, when Tat'yana Zhdanok can convince European politicians of the need to hold a plenary session in the European Parliament devoted to 'voting-rights of Latvia's non-citizens in local elections', not only is an issue of fundamental importance to her and her party being highlighted, but differences between 'civilised' Europe and 'backwards' Latvia are also able to be highlighted. Zhdanok is quoted in *Chas* as saying, 'The fact that the European Parliament, in one of its plenary sessions, is examining the question of the discriminatory position of a concrete group of people in an actual EU country, is a unique event.' (*Chas*, 02/02/09). Here Latvia is held up as an example of something completely anathema to the values of the European Union. The (supposed) uniqueness of this discrimination points directly to how far Latvia is out of tune with European conventions and standards. Vysotskaya (2005: 1) also notes how representation in the European Parliament has provided new opportunities for FHRUL, noting how 'they can now refer to previous precedents and norms of those old member states that have developed legal traditions of protection of their often regionally concentrated minorities...At the same time, minority activists can also demand more engagement from the part of the EU to defend their rights *versus* their own governments'.

Another method that the Russian-language media use in order to further the idea that Latvia is far from being a 'normal' European country is through its scrutiny of Latvia's supposed attitude towards the holocaust and towards Nazi Germany. Around the highly charged dates of 16 March and 9 May the accusations of Latvia's fascism and Nazi tendencies come to the fore. As has been discussed above, each year on March 16 a number of Latvians meet in central Riga to lay commemorative wreaths in honour of Latvian veterans who fought and died in the

Second World War within the ranks of the Waffen SS. Although the events and circumstances surrounding the veterans' decisions to volunteer for the Waffen SS are highly complicated (see footnote 11), the Russian-language press treats the whole affair with unwavering disgust.

Indeed, there is no attempt in the Russian-language print media to examine the March 16 events from anything but a position of moral indignation. This is because the events form a background for Russian-language newspapers to create, and each year reinforce, symbolic borders between Latvians and Russians. Moreover, by treating the 16th March events with such one-sided disgust newspapers are able to reinforce the notion that 'they' (Nazis, Latvians, fascists) are in direct opposition to 'us' (anti-fascists, Russian-speakers, liberators). In a *Chas* article on the March 16 commemorations the paper devotes the final paragraphs to expounding the views of the two main parties the paper supports. The final paragraph, under the heading 'FHRUL: strong opposition' reads:

Vladislav Rafal'skii, member of the Rigan city council, outlined FHRUL's position at a press conference. The position is effectively a strong opposition to any form of neo-Nazism and Russophobia. The appeal to ignore criminal, fascist ideology testifies to apathy and condones what is going on in the country. (*Chas*, 13/02/09)

'Neo-Nazism' here is directly linked to 'Russophobia', and is used to portray Russian-speakers as enlightened 'anti-fascists'. The term anti-fascist is used repeatedly in the Russian-language press in conjunction with the activities of prominent politicians and activists, with 'anti-fascist' groups outside of Latvia being of prime symbolic importance. Headlines in *Chas* and *Vesti Segodnya* announce: "Finnish anti-fascists oppose legionnaire marches" (*Chas*, 17/02/09) and "Estonian anti-fascist calls Latvian authorities to account" (*Vesti Segodnya*, 25/05/09). Tat'yana Zhdanok also devotes a great deal of her time to 'anti-fascist' activities and her image as such is enhanced by the media exposure afforded to her meetings with foreign anti-fascist organisations (for example *Chas* 17/02/09 and 17/03/09). This *self-referential strategy* allows Russian-speakers to find a meaningful and morally justifiable status within Latvian society. Importantly, however, it is also based on a negation of Latvian identity; i.e. it is premised on the idea that Latvians are historically susceptible to fascist tendencies.

If then, we can talk of the March 16 commemorations as constituting a profound symbolic othering of Latvians and their value system, then May 9 is the date which symbolically helps to further create or embellish positive notions of Russian-speaking identity. May 9, or Victory Day, is a holiday of extreme political and social importance for Russian-speakers, as it commemorates the Soviet Union's victory over fascist Germany in the Second World War. For the Russian-language media this is therefore the polar opposite of March 16. Rather than representing the totalitarian evils of Nazism as March 16 is portrayed, May 9 is seen unreservedly as liberation for Latvia and the Soviet Union *from* such evils.

Thus, the historical interpretations of the Second World War form a backdrop with which Russian-speakers can claim to have a legitimate place in the modern Latvian state. For the Russian-language press this is a clear cut issue and no shades of grey can be permitted to permeate the popular perceptions of Soviet 'liberation' and Nazi 'collaboration'. It is therefore a matter of grave concern for the Russian-language media that Latvian politicians and public figures are silent on the achievements of the Soviet soldiers ('liberators') who are so important to the identity of Latvia's Russian-speakers:

The silence regarding the heroic achievements of Soviet soldiers...is occurring against the backdrop of an effective glorification of the Waffen SS Latvian legion. (*Chas*, 21/01/09)

It is saddening that the self-assertiveness of the Baltic States is progressing exclusively along the path of exalting fascism...Meanwhile the Baltic prefers to count the cost of Soviet occupation. (*Vesti Segodnya*, 11/07/08)

Debunking the myth of restoration

In terms of the temporal narrative employed by Latvian nationalists in the years of the Awakening, I found a great deal of material in my analysis devoted to dispelling ideas of the contemporary Latvian state as a continuation of the inter-war republic. The temporal narrative had stressed that the Soviet Union had destroyed and occupied the Latvian state, thereby perverting its natural political, economic, and social progression. Therefore the state and its attendant institutions were to be restored to their pre-1940 condition following Latvian independence in 1991. Thus, as we have seen, in the immediate years following independence

restorationists held sway in Latvia's domestic politics. This was evidenced most strikingly in the restrictive citizenship laws of the time which initially resulted in Latvian citizenship being granted only to people who had been citizens in 1940 and to their descendants. Without doubt this narrative of legal restoration (or at least its active implementation) has had a very real impact on Latvia's non-titular²² population who have often felt victimised as a result of their non-Latvian roots. In many ways the narrative is seen by many as a vindictive and spiteful measure to punish Russian-speakers for the ills of the Soviet period. Indeed, in 1993, while discussing the country's demographic situation, Georgs Andrejevs, the then Foreign Minister, commented on the need for 'affirmative action for Latvians to compensate them for the discrimination they have experienced in their own country' (as cited in Budryte, 2005: 109-10). This 'affirmative action' has perhaps understandably been seen as highly discriminatory by many Russian-speakers.

Since 1995, with the implementation of a naturalisation law and 1998, when the process was sped up considerably, the restorationist tendency has somewhat receded in importance. However, the discourse and its consequences remain. Thus, the constructed group of Russian-speakers are constantly reminded by political elites and journalists of the inequalities in Latvia caused by the questions of citizenship and language.

In order to debunk this Latvian discourse of restoration and temporal normality, a number of strategies were observed in my research. One major strategy was to cite numerous instances of Russian culture and influence existent in Latvia *before* the inception of the inter-war republic. Therefore, instead of having to accept the title of occupiers and colonists, whose presence is somehow abnormal, *Chas* often printed articles arguing that 'We [read Russians/Russian-speakers] have always been here'(03/01/09).

²² Within the federal system of the Soviet Union titular ethnicity (*titul'naya natsional'nost'*) referred to the ethnic groups which the union republics, autonomous republics, autonomous oblasts, and autonomous okrugs were named after; their so-called 'root nation' (*Korennaya natsiya*). So, in the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic – 'Latvians'; in the Chechen–Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic – 'Chechens' and 'Ingushians' etc. The term 'titular nation' notwithstanding its Soviet usage is still widely used in the literature on post-Soviet nationalism today. As with so many other labels within this research, I have used this term but do so with an understanding that it represents a constructed reality – albeit a descriptively useful one for the task in hand.

Russian schools are a central element to this search for historical legitimacy. In 2003/4 there was a great deal of agitation and tension surrounding the implementation of reforms to Russian upper secondary schools which required 60% of all teaching to be conducted in Latvian. This greatly exacerbated the tendency for language to become one of the most important markers of ethnic identity in Latvia. It also has meant that the issue of language has become one of the most important battle grounds in identity politics and in identity formation. Before this time language may have been a relatively important marker of national and ethnic identity but it was not until the school reforms that it became the most important market. Jubulis noted in 2001, for example, that ‘the heterogeneous makeup of the Russian community [in Latvia] has hindered the development of a unified group consciousness, which could then provide the basis for group mobilization’ (2001:151). However, in 2003/4 the Russian language suddenly became the one thing that really was able to provide the symbolic basis for group mobilisation. Indeed, it was at this point that the term ‘Russian-speaker’ became the undisputed linguistic signifier of choice for journalists and politicians alike (see above). Not only was this useful in order to discursively create an imagined community which was much neater than the previously used tags – Russians, Russian diaspora, Russophone community, Soviet-era migrants etc. – but it also provided the opportunity to highlight ‘language discrimination’ as a negative means to promote the identity of Russian-speakers.

However, while much of the furore surrounding the language reforms has now subsided, Russian schools are still portrayed as ‘the cornerstone of Russian culture’. It is therefore with some pride that at the bottom of an article devoted to the 140th anniversary of ‘one of the oldest Russian schools in the country’ that the author adds:

P.S. it was only very recently, in December 2008, when the oldest Latvian [*latishskaya*] secondary school celebrated its anniversary: Ventspils Gymnasium was 90 years old. That means that the tradition of Russian education in Latvia is half a century older than Latvian education! (*Chas*, 26/01/09)

Therefore, Russian-speakers’ presence in Latvia is framed and legitimised historically, allowing it to be seen as a temporal normality rather than an abnormality. For this reason the Napoleonic Wars suddenly take on a new significance for Russian-speakers in Latvia. *Chas* reports on a monument to the Russian Empire’s victory over Napoleon which now lies in ruins

in a ‘forgotten’ part of the country’s capital. The paper draws our attention to Latvia’s selective historical memory, noting with some irony:

In Soviet times there was a full exhibition devoted to the 1812 war in Riga’s Museum of History and Navigation. This exhibition is no more. It turns out that the city’s history ended in 1710, when Peter the First took Riga, and then started up again in 1857 when the city’s fortifications began to be torn down. A full 150 years have been missed out. (*Chas*, 20/11/08)

Another means by which the Russian-language press seeks to debunk the myth of restoration is through a selective historical examination of the events leading up to Latvia’s incorporation of the USSR. As we have seen the occupation question is one that constantly looms large over Latvian politics and questions of ethnic relations between Latvians and Russian-speakers. If occupation is not accepted then it is also impossible to accept the idea of legal restoration, which is explicitly founded upon the understanding that Latvia was illegally occupied by the Soviet Union. In one *Chas* article attention is therefore drawn to the actions (and inaction) of the Latvian authorities in 1940. Historian and *Chas* journalist Igor Vatolin contrasts the experience of Finland with that of Latvia noting that:

It was very different for Latvia. When, in 1940, the Soviet Union issued its ultimatum to the Latvian government, the political elite actually gave up the country. There was no kind of resistance. Additionally they organised no form of defence – not even a purely symbolic fight for a particularly important object, even if it was for an hour. There was an exchange of fire at the border but in the end they gave the country up without a fight. (*Chas* 22/07/2010)

This reading of the events of 1940 therefore allows Russian-speakers to question the discourse of the restoration of Latvia’s independence. If the Latvian authorities essentially agreed to the Soviet ultimatum and did not put up any resistance, even at the symbolic or diplomatic level, then it should not be possible to talk of restoration.

Interestingly, the fact that Latvia had been ruled by a dictatorship from 1934 – 1940 was very seldom highlighted in my press analysis. Logically this fact would lead us to question the restoration of Latvian statehood: if we were to believe in the principle of legal continuity then Latvia should not have elected a 5th *Saeima*, but rather installed a dictator of the Ulmanis ilk.

However, while this argument was absent from the pages of *Chas*, the actions of president Ulmanis came under greater scrutiny. Historian Vladimir Simindei, in an extensive interview with *Chas* states:

We need to bear in mind that [in 1940] the Latvian nation had already been deprived of the opportunity to participate in democratic elections for six years. In the course of the coup on 15 May 1934, the Latvian prime minister Kārlis Ulmanis dissolved the *Saeima* and abolished the Constitution...He, as the dictator, took full and complete responsibility for the Latvian nation.

...He did not utter a single word of protest against the events which were unfurling in the country. In his famous radio speech he called upon the people of Latvia “to remain where they were”. It was he who provided all aspects of legitimacy for the advance of Soviet troops into the country. (*Chas*, 05/08/2010)

Again, the actions of president Ulmanis put into question the narratives of Latvia’s return to democracy, and Latvia’s restoration of statehood.

The portrayal of Latvia as an anti-democratic and totalitarian state

Linked to a dismissal of both the temporal and spatial narratives of normality is a far more provocative approach that could be seen in the pages of *Chas* as well as in the political rhetoric of Latvia’s Russian-speaking politicians. Just as Latvian activists had sought to depict the Soviet Union as totalitarian and therefore inhumane during the years of *perestroika*, certain of Latvia’s Russian-speaking elites now also attempt to perpetuate the idea of contemporary Latvia as totalitarian. Although it may seem absurd, upon first inspection, to compare today’s democratic Latvia with the authoritarian/totalitarian Soviet Union, this tactic should be viewed in the context of Latvian discourses of democratisation, human rights, and a return to such freedoms. We should not view these comments as actually trying to create an image of a totalitarian Latvia along the lines of, for example, Friedrich and Brzezinski’s paradigm (1966).²³ Rather, we should see it as a critique, not only of the current Latvian state, but of the discourses which legitimised it in the first place.

²³ Friedrich and Brzezinski (1966: 9) outline six main traits of totalitarian regimes, namely: an elaborate ideology, a single party typically led by one man, terroristic police, a communications monopoly, a weapons monopoly, and a centrally directed economy

In the Russian discourse found within *Chas*, recourse to totalitarian imagery and accusations is most commonly seen in response to Russian-speakers status as non-citizens, and their perceived lack of rights to use Russian language and culture in Latvia's economic and political space. In *Chas*, under the heading 'Who's last in the language queue?' the article reads:

The paradox is that the government is increasing the requirements for knowledge of the state language at the same time as reducing the budget of the organization which gives out the critically important '*apliecības*' [certificates]²⁴... Who does this benefit? It benefits those who don't need to pass an exam and who have, in the mean time, managed to secure a plush position in the state structure and local government. (*Chas*, 26/02/09)

Clearly there is an effort to depict Latvian political elites as a ruling class that is not only exploiting Russian-speakers for their own ends, but which is also deceiving Latvians as well. This discursive strategy is reminiscent of criticism levied at the Soviet regime and its nomenclatura comprised of bureaucrats and high-ranking party officials, who enjoyed access to goods and services unavailable to ordinary Soviet citizens. In place of the Soviet nomenclatura, Latvia now has its own ruling class: the 'professional Latvians':

[The ability to choose to speak Russian] is a threat, but not to integration or to the rights and interests of the Latvian nation. Rather it is a threat to the '*professional Latvians*' who, for two decades, have been feeding themselves on a crop of 'defence' of the single state. (*Chas*, 16/06/10, emphasis added)

Furthermore, explicit comparisons with totalitarian Latvia during the Soviet era and contemporary Latvia are gleefully reproduced in the Russian press. Again, this is most commonly associated with Latvia's language and citizenship laws. The Latvian state is therefore seen as the vehicle by which Russian-speakers are now discriminated against. Instead of the KGB during Soviet times, Latvia now has its own 'inquisitors' (*inkvizitori*) – the language inspectors (*Chas*, 10/02/09); Instead of Russians having a privileged position in Soviet structures, it is now the Latvians:

²⁴ In the original article the Latvian word *apliecības* was used instead of its Russian-language equivalent.

The language inspection's vindictive operations are well-known far beyond Latvia's borders. In Europe they are in shock over the actions of this structure. (*Chas*, 16/09/10)

Of course, although I have sub-divided my analysis of anti-discourse into three sub-sections, it does not necessarily follow that each of these sub-categories is wholly separate from the others. In the above example, not only is the journalist pouring scorn over Latvia's supposed democracy and democratic norms, but is also mocking Latvia's claims to be European. In this sense most of the examples I have categorised as anti-discourse can be linked to each other. Contemporary Latvia is not a fully democratic state, the argument goes, and therefore it is not European; contemporary Latvia has a certain amount in common with the Soviet Union, and is therefore neither democratic nor European, etc.

Synthesis with Latvian discourse

We have now outlined the main ways in which the Russian-speaking press are attempting to dismantle Latvian narratives and discourses which have hitherto served to legitimise the Latvian state. We may therefore move to the next juncture in the formation of Russian-speaking discourse in Latvia – that of synthesis. Here it will be argued that Russian-speaking identity is not formed solely in opposition to Latvian narratives and discourse, and is not solely a negative phenomenon which relies on the 'othering' of 'Latvian nationalists', 'professional Latvians' etc. Rather it is also a negotiated synthesis between competing Russian, Latvian, and to a certain extent European discourses.

Many people (including a politically significant and vocal group of Latvian nationalists) see Russia as one of, if not *the*, main poles of identification for Russian-speakers in Latvia. This can be evidenced in claims that HC and FHRUL are in fact 'pro-Russian' and 'anti-Latvian' parties.²⁵ On one level it would seem logical that Russia would exert some form of symbolic influence over its so-called 'diaspora' or 'compatriots abroad' in Latvia. Russia is, after all,

²⁵ See, for example, two blog articles published online at *Diena's* internet portal by representatives of *Visu Latvijai*: 04.06.09. *Par latviešu (ne)vienotību*. http://www.diena.lv/lat/tautas_balss/blog/raivis-dzintars/par-latviesu-ne-vienotibu & *Diena*. 05.06.09. *Divi no astoņiem Eiroparlamenta deputātiem būs krievu šovinisti*. http://www.diena.lv/lat/tautas_balss/blog/martins-kalis/divi-no-astoniem-eiroparlamenta-deputatiem-bus-krievu-nacionalisti [last accessed 12/12/10]

the country from which most people's families emigrated to Latvia during Soviet rule, and can therefore be seen as a historic homeland in the way that Brubaker's triadic nexus anticipates. The extent of this influence will be assessed in some depth in the next chapter.

However, even if Russia does play a major role in influencing Russian-speakers' identity, my research nonetheless demonstrates that this influence does *not* mean that Russian-speakers will not be loyal to Latvia and the Latvian state. Adopting the quadratic nexus approach, we must thus also look to Latvia's titular discourses and narratives for a fuller explanation of contemporary Latvian-Russian identity. Latvia, as the nationalising state in which Latvia's Russian-speakers reside must also have a powerful influence on the formation of Russian-speaking identity. Indeed, as my research suggests, Russian-speakers in Latvia are increasingly attempting to integrate their own discourses within already established discourses of the Latvian state. As such, the strategies employed within the media space are not exclusively anti-discursive ones.

The impact of Latvian narratives and discourse on Russian-speakers

In my research there were a number of instances where the Russian-speaking community, instead of portraying themselves as a poorly treated and discriminated group, was *positively* framed in relation to Latvian narratives, discourses, and symbols. This must therefore be seen as a negotiated result of the dialectic relationship between competing identities and narratives that Latvia's Russian-speakers are faced with. For example, on a very basic level there was often a geographical solidarity with Riga and Latvia rather than Russia. Thus, reporting on a hockey match between Dynamo Moscow and Dynamo Riga, *Chas* laments the loss of 'our' (*nasha*) team, referring to Dynamo Riga (02/03/09). Moreover, there is a generalised conception of 'our people' (*nashi*) which does not always revolve around ethnocentric conceptions of Russianness and/or Russian language. In an article entitled 'Our people come top in Italy', 'our people' refers to two Latvian sculptors with particularly Latvian names, but this does not prevent the paper from taking pride in their international achievements (*Chas*, 27/01/09). Similarly, in a piece on the renowned Latvian opera singer Kristīna Opolais, the singer is referred to as 'our compatriot' (*nasha sootchestvennitsa*) (*Chas*, 08/07/10).

However, more than a geographical solidarity, my research revealed an acceptance of Latvian symbols and ideals centrally located within Latvian discourse. Latvian festivals were unanimously treated positively in *Chas*. For example, the traditional Latvian, pagan summer solstice *Līgo svētki* was described in very poetic terms:

The bouquets of flowers fade away, along with the ferns and the Līgo beer, but the festival is always with us! (*Chas* 25/06/2010)

A very significant symbol which is coopted by the Russian-language press is that of the Freedom Monument. The monument in Riga, which stands as a the preeminent symbol of Latvian nationhood and independence, is an obvious rallying point for Latvian nationalistic movements, and was central in the *Atmoda* years as a symbol of hope and Latvian pride, as well as serving as a practical location for demonstrations against Soviet power (Karklins, 1994a: 67). However, notwithstanding the statue's place in Latvian nation-building and symbolism, the Russian-speaking discourse in *Chas* also embraces and co-opts this symbol of Latvia, which is inscribed with the words 'For fatherland and freedom' (also the name of the nationalistic party ever so keen to portray Russian-speakers as disloyal and alien to the state). Discussing the actions of a number of foreign visitors to the nation's capital who have been arrested for urinating on the Freedom Monument, *Chas* states:

The inhabitants of Riga constantly have to deal with the rowdy behaviour of drunken tourists who come to Latvia to spend a jolly weekend. There is always one of these fun-seekers trying to defile our indestructible symbol – Milda. (*Chas*, 02/12/08)

Milda is the commonly used name by which Latvians affectionately refer to the Freedom Monument. It is therefore striking that for Russian-speakers this is also portrayed as 'our indestructible symbol'. The adoption of this and other symbols of Latvianess highlights the complex nature of the public discourse of Russian-speakers. While they may display a keenness to remember and preserve links with 'Mother Russia', they also acknowledge Latvia as their actual homeland (*Rodina*) (for example, *Chas* 03/12/08). Similarly Rodins, in his research, also finds a great degree of cooption of Latvian symbols among the country's non-

Latvian population which reveal ‘a unification of patriotism and loyalty among the whole population of Latvia.’(2005: 49)

Perhaps one of the most striking aspects of the synthesis with Latvian discourse lies in the insistence that Latvia’s Russian-speakers have always been fervent supporters of Latvian independence and the then-stated goals of *Atmoda*. In many respects this assertion runs contrary to the discourse of certain Latvian nationalists, who hope to persuade Latvians that Russian-speakers’ allegiances lie, and have always lain, with Russia and the Soviet Union. Indeed, there were many noticeable instances in my research which revealed a solidarity and affection for the *Atmoda* years. *Chas* reports on a protest meeting in Daugavpils; a city mainly populated by ethnic Russians, against the Latvian government. Here the reader is introduced to pensioner Valentina Bogdanova who shows a cut-out from a local newspaper from 1990, explaining:

It’s a meeting in support of an independent Latvia which took place on this very spot 18 years ago. There I am in the photograph. Then I, along with other people from this city, went along to support the Popular Front. Dobelis²⁶ spoke, and in Russian, saying that in a free Latvia all inhabitants would be able to live dignified lives, that there could be no question of a division between Russians and Latvians... And I believed it; I applauded, and I voted for an independent Latvia. We have all been deceived. (*Chas*, 23/02/09)

The Russian-speaking discourse in Latvia is keen to stress Russians’ loyalty to the Latvian state and to an independent Latvia. This runs contrary to the stereotype of Russians as presented by FF/LNNK as a direct threat to the sovereignty and integrity of the state. Indeed, although there are historical references to the achievements of the Soviet Union in the Russian-language press of Latvia, there is a noticeable absence of any calls to restore any of the institutions of the Soviet period. During the years of *Atmoda* a reactionary neo-Soviet narrative (Smith et al., 1998, 10) which supported the maintenance of Soviet norms and institutions was the staple for the Baltic’s Interfront movements. However, modern Russian-speaking discourse in Latvia chooses to focus on the support for the Popular Front of Latvia

²⁶ At the time of the article’s publication a *Saeima* deputy for the nationalist party For Fatherland and for Freedom/LNNK.

from Russian-speakers. To a large extent this is illustrative of the need to understand the power of discourse in the emergence of Latvia's post-Soviet identities. Karklins notes, for example, that in a republic-wide advisory poll in March 1991 47% of non-Latvians voted 'Yes' in answer to the question 'Are you for a democratic and independent Republic of Latvia?'(1994:101-2). It is interesting that in the rhetoric of Latvia's 'Russian' political parties and the media, the focus now is necessarily on the 47% of non-Latvians who supported independence.

Conversely, the prominence of the pro-Soviet Interfront organisations during the *Atmoda* years in providing a representative voice for non-Latvians can be seen as disproportionately high. Soviet bureaucrats and similarly interested parties were able to wield their positions of influence, and their places in the structures that existed at the time, to articulate their positions much more effectively and coherently than any other group of Russian-speakers. Added to this, the voices of many 'Russian-speakers' who were supportive of Latvian independence were largely indistinguishable from the 'Latvian' discourses of the time that supported the Popular Front movement (Lapsa et al, 2007: 171). Therefore, irrespective of the diffuse positions within the non-Latvian community, we can see just how easily public perceptions can be manipulated, and just how important discursive positioning is to the subsequent legitimacy and identity of any given group.

Thus even contemporary academics working on the issues of identity politics in the Baltic states can fall prey to the quite incorrect assumption made by Magdalena Solska that 'the majority of the Russian-speaking population in all three [Baltic] countries supported the pro-Moscow and anti-independence Interfronts during the independence struggle' (Solska, 2011: 1093). Survey data from the *Atmoda* period suggests that the Latvian Interfront movement actually had relatively little support. For example, in 1990 one survey revealed that only 9% of Russians in Latvia were willing to support Interfront candidates in the upcoming elections to the Latvian Supreme Soviet – support for the Communist Party and the Popular Front among Russians stood at 23% and 18% respectively (*Atmoda*, 13/03/90).

In recent years survey data has revealed that an increasingly high proportion of Latvia's Russian-speakers have a significant attachment to Latvia (Rodins, 2005). Certainly this is why

an understanding of the synthesis between Russian and Latvian discourse is now so salient to our analysis. Russian-speakers are now responding to, as well as creating, increased feelings of loyalty to Latvia. Importantly, as opposed to the *Atmoda* period, elites are choosing to articulate this loyalty in a more coordinated manner, in a way that claims to represent the discursively constructed group of Russian-speakers. In order to reflect this loyalty *Atmoda* is chosen as a frozen point of time which symbolically represents the Russian-speaking community's full acceptance of the idea of an independent Latvian state. This is the period where Russian-speakers claim to have been working together with Latvians, 'when unity was not just an empty word.' (*Chas*, 12/01/09)

Articulation of counter-narratives

The third discursive strategy which I enumerated above was constructive discourse. As we have seen, the Russian-speaking discourse has first rejected and then adopted certain aspects of Latvian (as well as Russian) discourse. Here it will be argued that there is an ever-increasingly coherent vision and ideal of what the form of Latvia should be from the perspective of the country's Russian-speakers. This ideal is a result of a negotiated synthesis between the main Latvian and Russian discourses, narratives, and historical interpretations.

Because Europe plays such a significant role as a legitimising factor in both Russian-speaking and Latvian discourses, it should come as no surprise that Europe again figures strongly in this stage of the Russian-speaking discourse. 'European norms' of multiculturalism are often invoked as positive examples for Latvia's political, cultural, and economic development. Therefore, such documents as the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities provide a solid basis for Russian-speakers to claim the right to practice and celebrate their particular traditions and cultures:

The Parties undertake to promote the conditions necessary for persons belonging to national minorities to maintain and develop their culture, and to preserve the essential elements of their identity, namely their religion, language, traditions and cultural heritage. (Council of Europe, 1995)

In light of this ‘European’ understanding of multiculturalism *Chas* chides Juris Asars, the then head of the Secretariat of the Special Assignments Minister for Social Integration, for not being aware of the content of ‘fundamental documents in the field of social integration’ (11/12/08). Asars is quoted as saying: ‘Our greatest mistake has been that we have allowed national minorities to express themselves and preserve their own cultural traditions with state money.’ *Chas* notes, however, that the Secretariat for Integration Affairs itself is a product of EU money and was established as part of the Year of Multicultural Dialogue.

In line with this multi-cultural conception for contemporary Latvia, *Chas* is keen to cite examples of Latvians and Russians going out of their way to explore the other ethnos’ culture and language. The example of schoolgirl Santa Getmančuka, is illustrative of this. At a gala-concert to celebrate Tatiana Day, a celebration of Russian culture, *Chas* reports on Santa’s rendition of a Russian song:

Notwithstanding it being very difficult for her to speak Russian, and her Latvian accent which could be heard while she was singing, she performed the song with such feeling and enthusiasm that the hall simply exploded into applause.

The girl in question is also quoted as saying:

I liked the fact that at this festival, even when you belong to a different culture, you don’t feel like an outsider. (*Chas*, 26/01/09)

In one article entitled ‘Ok, labi, давай’ *Chas* editor Aleksei Sheinin, who was also a candidate for the political party For a Good Latvia expresses his delight at hearing Latvian, Russian, and English being used interchangeably on the streets of Riga citing numerous colourful examples of the three languages being used simultaneously – although unfortunately for the purposes of my analysis they are largely untranslatable (*Chas* 06/09/10).

Likewise, *Chas* writes highly favourably of Latvian arts and culture. For example, an album by famed Latvian composer Raimonds Pauls, is singled out for particular praise, with the author commenting that:

Surely, irrespective of nationality, everybody living in Latvia who loves nature and the country's unique landscapes can learn more about its cultural heritage thanks to these incredibly melodic modern performances of the Latvian nation. (*Chas*, 02/03/09: journalist)

For Russian-speaking discourse, this approval of Latvian culture plays an important discursive function. For Russian-speakers this is used to highlight the desirability of a multicultural society. For this reason it is perhaps wise to note that a number of integrational strategies which have been identified above are in fact constructive strategies. Russian-speaking media discourse may well have been attempting to integrate within already existing discourses (for example in expressing appreciation for and claiming ownership of certain 'Latvian' symbols). However, this is also linked with a desire to create new realities and to propagate new discursively meaningful programmes – in this case as a means to support calls for a more multicultural Latvia. As part of this call, Russian-speakers express their support for Latvian culture but also wish to stress their place as a bridge between Latvian and Russian cultures.

Russian-speakers as a bridge between Europe and Russia

Because Latvia's Russian-speakers effectively straddle competing discourses from Russia and Latvia, an effective way in which to come to terms with the inherent contradictions of their position is to create a unique space that can only be inhabited by 'Latvian-Russians'. There is evidence that Russian-speakers from the Baltic states often feel like strangers when they visit Russia (Zepa, 2005). As such their sense of belonging to Russia is weaker than some people would like to suggest. However, their belonging to *Latvia* (as we have seen) is also frequently suspect to much speculation.

Croucher (2004) asserts that a feeling of belonging is closely connected to the state, and to the reciprocal relationship between any given state and its citizenry. For Russian-speakers their relationship with the state is often subject to strain; a tendency which is often exaggerated in the media and by political parties. Therefore, Russian-speakers' sense of belonging is also subject to question. Many Russian-speakers were initially denied citizenship rights at the outset of the newly formed independent state, which can understandably have led to a feeling of inferiority in terms of their citizenship status (Aasland and Flotten, 2001: 1028). The

findings of the survey ‘On the Path to Civil Society’ reflect this; whereas 93% of Latvian citizens reported that they felt a personal sense of belonging to Latvian society, only 67% of non-citizens shared this feeling (Zepa *et al*, 2001: 83).

One way in which Russian-speaking elites attempt to combat this perceived lack of belonging is to stress the group’s unique function as a bridge between Russian and European (including Latvian) civilisations and cultures. This enables the country’s Russian-speakers to create a unique identity that is able to embrace both cultures without losing either. Moreover, it facilitates the formation of an identity that has a distinctive purpose, and therefore sense of belonging. This is also a central tenet of Latvia’s ‘Russian’ political parties. In their Founding Declaration HC declare:

We are for a ‘large’ Europe which cooperates with its Eastern neighbours, including Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and the countries of the CIS. Latvia must become a leader for constructive dialogue with Russia and the CIS, and become a bridge between the EU and Russia. (Harmony Centre, 2005)

Therefore, while the Latvian spatial narrative places Latvia firmly on the side of Europe, the Russian-speaking narrative spans both East and West. Moreover, it enables Russian-speakers to be an integral part of the post-Soviet Latvian Republic. This is most visibly demonstrated in the political arena. A forum in Brussels entitled ‘The EU and Russia: New Challenges’ attracted much attention in the Russian-language press. For *Chas*, Tat’yana Zhdanok is applauded for her ability to bring together sides from Europe and Russia:

The only Russian-speaking European Member of Parliament, Tat’yana Zhdanok, has achieved the unachievable: bringing together in one hall people who had literally been on different fronts of the conflict in the Caucasus, namely politicians from Russian and the EU. (*Chas*, 12/12/08)

Furthermore, HC has recently been assuming this role of bridge between Latvia and Russia following their victory in the Riga mayoral elections and the appointment of Nils Ušakovs as the mayor of Riga. Ušakovs has stressed his desire to renew contacts with Russia both economically and culturally. Indeed, to take one example, in July 2009 a delegation from Moscow’s city council was invited to Riga, with their representatives claiming that Latvia

should not just become a symbolic gateway to Europe for Russia, but a gateway for the large flows of goods that are available from Russia.

However, for some this gateway to Europe is simply another manifestation of Russian chauvinism. Kristīne Doroņenkova, in her study of Russian media reports on Latvia, observes how the concept of the Baltic as a ‘window to Europe’ is often propagated in the Russian (*Rossiiskie*) media. She notes that, ‘To intellectual Russians, the Baltic states are not just a window, but a bridge between Russia and Europe, constituting “our Europe.”’ (2008: 109) In Russian (*Rossiiskii*) discourse the Baltic states can be conceptualised as ‘our Europe’ because Russian-speakers, or Russian ‘compatriots’ abroad are often seen as a natural extension of the Russian nation, as visualised in neo-imperial terms (Morozov, 2004: 319). Nevertheless, in terms of the articulation of a particular Russian-speaking discourse for Latvian Russian-speakers, the ‘bridge’ function is not simply to act as a one-way conduit bringing Russian culture and traditions to the Baltic states. Rather, Russian-speaking discourse increasingly stresses its nascent Latvian values and inheritance.

Thus, HC politicians are increasingly eager to speak Latvian in public interviews, even when a number of them have obvious difficulties in doing so. Nils Ukašovs even greeted the visiting delegation from Moscow’s city council in Latvian before continuing talks in Russian. Therefore, it is apparent that the Russian-speaking counter-narrative should be seen in the context of the processes of syntheses that are occurring between Latvian and Russian discourses.

The evolution of Russian-speaking discourse

Although, for the purposes of this study I have divided the observed discourses in *Chas* into three broad categories, this does not mean that the discourses are equally used, nor that conflicting discourses (both negative and positive) are not employed by the same people simultaneously. For the sake of academic study it makes good methodological sense to make such divisions, but for politicians and journalists such distinctions are most likely not so explicitly abstracted.

It should be noted that although ‘anti-discourse’ as I have termed it, constitutes a significant proportion of the total discursive material that was analysed in my study, the number of instances when it is employed have generally fallen from their apex in 2004 (the time of the education reform). Indeed, this downward trend was fully observable in the two comparable periods of this analysis.

In the second period of analysis there were noticeably fewer articles or sentiments devoted to the ‘discrimination’ of Russian-speakers in Latvia. Anti-discourse was still present including the usual staple of articles detailing language ‘discrimination’, caricatures of ‘Latvian nationalists’, and the incivility of the Latvian state. However, the number of such articles was certainly fewer.

Instead there were even instances of journalists claiming that being a Russian-speaker was actually an advantage in Latvia. One commentator states:

There has been a thorough change in priorities. For Russian-speakers the so-called ethnic problems: language, education in one’s native language, voting rights for non-citizens etc. are no longer so heated...Today graduates of Russian schools sometimes speak Latvian better than their Latvian counterparts, and have therefore become more competitive on the labour market. (*Chas*, 06/10/10)

This is indicative of what may be termed a more pragmatic approach to identity formation for Russian-speakers. Although language is still an important issue, and measures to curb the public use of Russian were still met with frank condemnation, there was a shift towards seeing Russian as an economic commodity which placed Russian-speakers in a unique position. Indeed, Russian was seen as a means to ease the effects of the economic crisis in Latvia. For example, the head of Daugavpils University is quoted as asking, ‘If we can export sprats to Russia, why can’t we also export higher education?’ (*Chas* 28/06/10). In the same article the journalist even proposes a pragmatic solution to those who fear the use of Russian in Latvian higher education: ‘The law could be passed in such a way that only foreigners could be accepted for courses in Russian rather than our native students.’

A further evolution of *Chas* discourse was a partial softening of predicational strategies linked to the ‘othering’ of Latvians. Although there were still numerous instances of *Chas* provocatively highlighting certain actions of ‘Russophobic’ Latvians against the interest of Russian-speakers, there were also new portrayals of Latvians who were more sympathetic to the position of Russian-speakers, or at least not anti-Russian. One journalist noted that ‘Generally the Latvian political elite are already moving away from national stereotypes’ (*Chas* 26/08/10). Amazement was expressed at the former President Vaira Vīķe Freiberga’s sentiments that it would be for the good of society if Russian-speaking politicians were to be part of the new government, announcing that she ‘unexpectedly has fallen in love with Russians’ under the subheading ‘Metamorphosis’ (*Chas* 07/10/10).

On the other hand, it should be stressed that the negative identity formation associated with depicting ‘professional Latvians’ and nationalistic, Russophobic, anti-European Latvians did not entirely disappear during this period. Within texts that may be categorised as representing ‘synthesis discourse’ there was also a noticeable increase in the number of instances when *Chas* journalists reported a solidarity and affection for Latvia and Latvian culture and language. For example, the Latvian school festival of song and dance, in which participants dressed in traditional Latvian costumes and danced traditional Latvian dances was described as ‘an event for children and for adults, and for the country as a whole’ under the heading ‘The song which unites’ (*Chas*, 12/07/10).

However, in this second monitoring period there were fewer references to the *Atmoda* period than in the first period of analysis. This perhaps underlines the greater confidence felt by Russian-speaking elites in Latvia, who instead of looking to the past, are increasingly optimistic about their current and future status in Latvia. One article highlighted this in reflecting on the success of the ‘Russian Duma’ – Riga’s municipal government which was led by the ‘Russian’ HC party:

It was [Riga’s municipal government’s] fate to show the Latvian electorate that Russians in power not only do not pose a threat to the Latvian state, but dare I say, they can get on with things better than the Latvian ethnocrats [*etnokrati*], even when the government are constantly throwing a spanner in the works. (*Chas*, 04/06/10: journalist)

Linked to this rise in optimism was also a rise in the number of direct and indirect references to Russian-speakers as a bridge between Latvia and Russia. A great deal of attention was given to Ušakovs visits to Russia and his calls for greater economic ties with Russia. Added to this, articles on Latvia's economic crisis often focused on the country's unique 'advantageous, geographical position' (*Chas*, 27/08/10):

Latvia, who best knows the peculiarities of Russia, needs to utilise its [linguistic] advantages and become a mediator for business contacts and to strengthen relations between the western countries and Russia. (*Chas*, 20/09/10: Tat'yana Zhdanok MEP)

It therefore seems apparent that the focus of Russian-speaking discourse in *Chas* has moved further away from efforts to dismantle Latvian discourse and is increasingly focusing on the more positive elements of identity construction.

Conclusions

My analysis of *Chas* has revealed a complex picture of the ways in which the publically constructed identity of 'Russian-speakers' is being negotiated in the context of over twenty years of Latvia's post-soviet statehood. Naturally, an investigation of only one newspaper cannot tell us everything we need to know and we should thus be aware of the limitations of such a discursive approach to studying identity formation. However, this discursive approach does enable us to observe general trends in the identity strategies and positioning of 'Russian-speakers' by elites.

Using Brubaker's (expanded) nexus we have seen how the conceptualised ideals of Latvia, Russia, and Europe are all invoked at different times to cement and legitimise Russian-speaking discourse. We should therefore be very wary of accepting assertions that Latvia's Russian-speakers are simply an extension of Russian chauvinism, or that they, as 'compatriots' of Russians in Russia, represent a loyal 'fifth column' with more loyalty to

Moscow than Riga. Such accusations must be understood primarily to belong to the realm of the hegemonic desires of certain Latvian nationalistic forces.

Instead we have seen a dynamic process emerging whereby the relationship to the Latvian state is of increasing importance to Russian-speakers. That is not to say that Russia is not an important element or even sponsor of Russian-speaking identity in Latvia. However, the Russian-speaking community has been forced to adjust to the (discursively proscribed) conditions that it now finds itself in. Indeed, because of the power of discourse to become cemented into social consciousness, we have seen how certain concepts become central in the discursive posturing of any given group.

For our case in hand, such nodal points are abstracts ranging from ‘democracy’, ‘Europe’, and ‘loyalty’, to historical interpretations of Latvia’s past. It is because these points of reference are so central to the construction of Latvian identity in the first instance that Russian-speaking discourse is forced to actively engage with them. However, it is through the process of antagonism and discursive posturing that these concepts are being challenged/negotiated and meanings are being purposefully altered. Therefore the Europe of Latvian discourse is a subtly different Europe from that invoked by Russian-speaking discourse.

There are, however, a number of paradoxes inherent in the Russian-speaking position. Although the othering of Latvians is essential to the internal unity of ‘Russian-speakers’, there is a visible desire and trend to portray themselves as Latvian, rather than Russian-Russians. Indeed, great efforts are made to stress the loyalty of Russian-speakers to the Latvian state, its independence, and its on-going democratic development. Nevertheless, the constant overemphasis on the actions of Latvian ‘nationalists’ (usually at the expense of portrayals of moderate Latvians) can leave no doubt that Russian-speakers still define themselves in opposition to the discursive representations that ‘Latvians’ give to them. This ‘self-marginalising strategy’ (Golubeva, et al. 2007) thus maintains the distinctness of the two groups while allowing ‘Russian-speakers’ to retain their internal unity.

However, in order to marginalise the Latvian hegemonic position ‘We’, for Russian-speakers, embraces the ‘civilised’ nations of old Europe. By linking their own discourses with European

discourses of equality, racial and cultural tolerance (which are in fact Russian-speaking discourses as much as they are somehow ‘European facts’), we can see a shift in the relational nodal network that Russian-speakers are attempting to operate within.

On the other hand, Russian-speaking elites have carefully been crafting out a space for themselves within the narratives of an independent, post-Soviet Latvia. In order to find such a place, however, they have been forced to adopt many positions congruent with Latvian discourses. In so doing they have moved away from wholesale ‘pro-Russian’ and ‘homo-Sovieticus’ identities and instead have sought a meaningful role as Latvian Russian-speakers. Increasingly, it would seem, it is this dual, or ‘bridge’ identity which Russian-speaking elites are attempting to promote.

Chapter 5: The primacy of politics?
The impact of political discourse on identity formation

Hegemony, democracy, and the 'primacy of politics'

One of the most striking features of Gramsci's thought has been his break from pure economic determinism and his move towards a more nuanced conception of hegemonic orders with a central role for what we may call *the primacy of politics*. At the heart of this primacy Gramsci offers his concept of hegemony which has been discussed in some detail above. Essentially Gramsci argued for an ontological re-examination of the Marxist conceptions of class, arguing that classes – or groups of individuals under the banner of 'classes' – are not concrete objectivities, but rather came into existence in the fields of both culture and politics within a political struggle – i.e. a struggle for hegemony. With this understanding it is clear that the nature of a particular political hegemony will potentially have a major effect on the social identities of the individuals who make up the particular solidified groups who are vying for access to the 'empty space of power'. For example, if I consider myself to be working-class, middle-class, liberal, conservative etc., then my behaviour, language, attitudes, even the clothes I wear, may very well be informed by my understanding that members of this group act and think in certain ways.

For Laclau and Mouffe this is an essential starting point for their 'radical theory of democracy'. Indeed, Laclau uses Gramsci's ideas in order to explore the role of politics, and especially antagonistic democracy, in creating social identities. For Laclau (2005: 61) *politics* exists as a process which mediates between the incompatible logics of universality and particularism:

...the hegemonic operation is only possible insofar as it never fully succeeds in achieving what it attempts – i.e., the total fusion between the universality (fullness) of the communitarian space and the force incarnating such a universal moment. For if such a total suture was possible, it would involve the universal having found its own and undisputed body, and no hegemonic variation would any longer be possible. This incompleteness of the hegemonic game is what we call *politics*. The very possibility of a political society depends on the assertion and reproduction of this undecidability in the relation between the universal and the particular.

Hegemonies are therefore formed and reformed through the never-ending process of antagonism which exists between groups who all have their own universalised hegemonic aims. Laclau makes the distinction between the political and the social much as Gramsci distinguishes between cultural and political hegemony. For Laclau most of our social practices are determined by 'the social', i.e., outside of politics. However, in times of organic crisis Laclau sees a much greater role for the political: 'For example, if you live in a period of relative social stability, you are going to have that the social expands at the expense of the political. If you are living in "an organic crisis period", in the Gramscian sense, obviously many more areas of social life are susceptible to political construction' (Interview with Laclau in Worsham & Olsen, 1999: 18-19).

Laclau goes into greater depth in describing what he means by 'the political'. Laclau sees social practice as acts which are enacted by all of us and which, through their repetition, become part of the social fabric. In other words, the social is performative. However, the key, for Laclau, is that the original genesis of the act (its primal baptism for Žižek) is forgotten when we enact it. 'The political', however, he describes as the moment when the social is given meaning (*being*) through its institution: 'the institution of the social through contingent decisions is what I call "the political"' (18). In other words there are actors who make contingent decisions which then become embedded into social life and social practice; actors who have power to create meaning, which then moulds social life.

Perhaps Chantelle Mouffe's distinction between 'the political' and 'politics' can serve us well here. For Mouffe (1995: 105) 'the political' is the unavoidable condition of antagonism which is inherent in human relations and which is therefore evident in all spheres of human relations. 'Politics', on the other hand, is the attempt to organise and regulate this inherent antagonism within human relations. With this understanding 'politics' can be practised by anyone and anywhere. However, if we return to our discourse/material helix then we will also be aware of the relative power imbalance experienced by individuals sited within differing social/discursive/material institutions and locations.

For this reason the world of politics, i.e. what is conventionally understood as politics, (political parties, governments, legislatures, judiciaries, executives etc.) must be seen as the

primary realm where ‘the political’ is organised, regulated, and institutionalised. Even if the place of power is diffused throughout all social institutions and is in fact an empty space of power, we should still accept that the realm of politics ‘proper’ has more creative power than most other fields. This is because governments can wield power through recourse to, what Althusser (2008) refers to as, ideological state apparatuses as well as (repressive) state apparatuses (see chapter two). If a government wishes to pass laws and enforce them it will most commonly have a police force and a prison system ready to support the enactment of these laws. In democratic societies it will also be able to claim legitimacy through a universalisation of the aggregated totality of the individual votes which brought them to power in the first place.

As we learn from Laclau, politicians, if they want to occupy the empty space of power, will need to reconcile the particular with the universal. On a practical level, it is of course impossible to give full representation to the individual needs and desires of the voters who elect candidates to public office. Therefore governments have to make aggregated decisions, often claiming to be operating in the name of the people when, in fact, they might well be going against the will of the majority, or when it is impossible to know the actual views of the majority.

On a symbolic level, governments and influential political parties can also universalise the particular. In the case of Latvia this has been evidenced in the construction of universal notions of Latvianess and Russian-speakerness – i.e. what it universally means to be a Latvian or Russian-speaker in contemporary Latvia. These representations have necessarily come at the expense of the particular – the acknowledgement that within each group interests divulge greatly. It is therefore in politicians’ interests (as it is in the interests of journalists) to universalise certain groups in order to cement their hegemony.

Interestingly, as Laclau states, this process within politics will be all the more apparent during times of organic crisis. As we have seen from our discussion of organic crisis and Latvian nation building at the time of the Soviet Union’s collapse, this would seem to be the case. In this section, therefore, I will pay attention to the world of politics; that is the world of political parties and especially political governments in forming national identities in Latvia. I will

attempt to determine to what extent government policy and legislation, as well as the constitution of political parties, play a role in determining national and ethnic identities in contemporary Latvia.

This chapter will be split into two main areas of analysis: firstly an analysis of the role of the Russian Federation in sponsoring Russian-speaking identity in Latvia; secondly an overview and examination of the political scene in Latvia – including an examination of Latvian political institutions and policy decisions and their effect on Russian-speaking identity, as well as discourse analysis of the rhetoric used by mainstream Latvian political parties and politicians.

The Russian Federation and Russian-speaking identity in Latvia

While Mouffe's conception of 'politics' is undoubtedly useful in understanding identity forming processes, this does not mean that we should look solely to the realm of domestic politics. Later in this chapter I will consider the role of domestic, Latvian politics in forming group identities in Latvia. However, it is also important to consider the role that Russian politics plays in forming identities in Latvia. As we have seen, Russia is often used by Latvian elites as the external, discursive 'other' with which to anchor Latvian identity. Russian politics then cannot be separated from our understanding of Latvian state-building, Latvian identities, and Latvian politics.

This fits very much within the triadic/quadratic nexus model put forward by Brubaker which has already been used extensively in this study. For Brubaker, Russia, as the 'natural external homeland' for Latvia's Russian-speakers and Soviet migrants, inevitably plays a significant role in the formation of their national identity. Brubaker cites the example of interwar Europe to illustrate how 'fault lines' of tension emerge between nationalising states such as Poland, where there were sizable German, Belarusian, and Ukrainian populations, and the homeland nationalism of Germany and the Soviet Union. Here, the Soviet Union and Germany attempted to exert their influence on peoples that they considered as their own. Therefore, Germans living in Poland had to contend with and manage competing national identities.

According to Brubaker this is all the more apparent in nationalising states which are attempting to define and consolidate their statehood such as Latvia and Estonia, where ‘their restrictive citizenship policies toward their large Russian minorities, have met with harsh Russian condemnations of “apartheid” and “ethnic cleansing” and repeated assertions of Russia’s right to protect Russians against allegedly massive human rights violations.’(1996: 108)

It is perhaps inevitable therefore, that Russia should be able to hold some cultural, political, social, or economic influence over Russian-speakers in the Baltic states. In the section that follows I will examine how the Russian Federation has discursively conceptualised its ‘diaspora’ in Latvia, and how this has evolved into observable policies. I will also examine how the policies and discourses from Russia have affected Russian-speaking identities in Latvia. I will argue that Russia’s ‘hard’ power to influence this group of individuals has diminished greatly from the time of the Soviet Union’s collapse to the present day, and that Russia has increasingly moved towards ‘soft’, or cultural, power in order to counter the hard power deficit. I will argue that this recourse to soft power can be best understood as a discursive attempt to maintain a positive image of Russia at home and abroad, and therefore as an attempt to fill the ‘empty space of power’ with a positive identity which is only possible with reference to an external other: the Baltic states.

In the immediate aftermath of the Soviet Union’s collapse there were as many as 120,000 ex-Soviet military personnel stationed in the Baltic states (Lepingwell, 1994: 81). President El’tsin, by presidential decree, placed these personnel under Russian command in the January of 1992 (Simonsen, 2001: 771), meaning that thousands of Russian troops were operating in the newly independent territories of the Baltic states. These troops were only completely withdrawn from Lithuania in 1993 and from Latvia and Estonia in 1994. Along with the logistical difficulties of relocating so many troops, the main reason Russian authorities gave for this delay was an express concern for the rights and welfare of Russian-speakers in these republics. Indeed, President El’tsin declared that he was ‘profoundly concerned over numerous infringements of the rights of Russian-speakers’ in the Baltic states, adding that troop withdrawal would be put on hold unless measures were put into place to ensure the social welfare of these people (as cited in Barber, 1992).

This meant that in the early 90s Russia established an explicit linkage between the Russian diaspora in the Baltic states and Russia's military actions. Although the Russian troops finally left the region in 1994, it nonetheless left a lasting impression that Russia was willing to use various mechanisms in order to ensure a continued influence over policies relating to their diaspora.

Despite its barbed rhetoric, however, Russia has not been provided with a legitimate basis to intervene militarily in Baltic affairs. President El'tsin, in response to Estonia's restrictive 1993 Law on Foreigners, proclaimed that Estonia has 'forgotten about some geopolitical and demographic realities, but that Russia has the ability to remind it of them', going on to say that 'Russia will not be able to remain in a position of the independent onlooker' (as quoted in Ott, Kirch & Kirch, 1996: 22). In truth, however, El'tsin understood all too well that Russia was in no position to justify any real military intervention with which to back up his strong words.

It was therefore a logical step, in the Baltic states at least, for Russia to turn towards 'soft' power in seeking to define its interests in the 'Near Abroad'. If hard power can be broadly defined as being comprised of coercion and inducements (Nye, 2004: 5), then soft power is the ability to affect behaviour through values, cooption, and 'attracting others to do what you want' (5). Hard power is often understood in terms of the actions of the state. Soft power, on the other hand, is better conceptualised as the realisation of contacts between two groups of non-state actors (economic, social, religious or otherwise), or between one state and a group of non-state actors (Tsygankov, 2006a: 1081). For Moscow an alternative hard power lever has been that of economics, especially owing to Russia's dominant position in the energy market within the post-Soviet space (Dannreuther, 2001; Perovic, 2005). However, another potentially useful soft power resource at the Kremlin's disposal has been conveniently located outside of the borders of the Russian Federation: the (approximately) 16-25 million 'Russian compatriots' living in post-Soviet states outside of Russia. As Tsygankov (2006a: 1084) states, 'In the absence of pro-Russian governments in Georgia, Ukraine and elsewhere, the task of mobilising ties amongst peoples, rather than with governments, is seen as especially important for preserving influence.'

The ‘Russian diaspora’ (*rossiiskaya diaspora*) or Russia’s ‘compatriots abroad’ (*sootchestvenniki za rubezhom*) were thus conceptualised by Russia as a group of people who were linked directly to the Russian Federation. Smith and Wilson (1997: 854) note that this attempt to create a discursively meaningful group based on the linguistic sign ‘Russian diaspora’ was never going to be easy, not least because of the relatively fragmented identities of the individuals who made up this so-called diaspora. Nevertheless, the conscious decision to label these people as a well-defined group must be seen as a vital moment in the formation of Russian-speaking identity in Latvia. As Graham Smith writes (1999b: 508):

By recodifying Russians outside Russia as a diaspora (...), statisticians are in effect signalling two things. On the one hand, they hold that Russia has abandoned its claim to a larger homeland and no longer seeks sovereignty beyond *Rossia*. On the other hand, such a change in policy emphasis also signals that Russia has a clear part to play as the historic homeland (*rodina*) of the Russians

In the political field we can therefore observe a similar phenomenon to that observed in my media analysis: a disparate group of individuals is being discursively conceptualised as a single group with common features. This time, instead of journalists, it is politicians from Russia who have been keen to create and cement a diaspora for their own ends.

A significant feature of President Putin’s polity has thus been the renewed attention and financial resources paid to the compatriot issue compared to that of his predecessor President El’tsin. This increase in spending was maintained during Medvedev’s presidency. As Nozhenko (2006) notes, there was a noticeable change in Moscow’s official attitude towards Russian compatriots abroad from 2002 onwards, where the diaspora was increasingly seen as a resource which the Kremlin could utilise to achieve a number of aims (see below). This, I will argue, has been of central importance for Putin’s *domestic* political hegemony.

The increased attention paid to the compatriot question was very much in line with Putin’s pragmatic approach to foreign policy. A number of analysts have seen fit to distinguish between three main foreign policy outlooks within Russia: those of the *westernisers/democrats*, the *imperialists/expansionists*, and finally the *statists/stabilisers* (Kassianova, 2001: 824-5; Tsygankov, 2006a: 1084-90). Whereas Russia adopted a

predominantly pro-Western and pro-democracy foreign policy course under Foreign Minister Kosyrev, Putin's administration has favoured policies that were politically stabilising and advantageous to Russia's internal stability.

One benefit of this statist position was that it helped to pacify imperialist demands from the more radical political voices within Russia (most notably of course that of Zhirinovskii, but a number of other voices as well). The imperialists wish to see Russia regain its Great Power status, and see westernisation as alien to their mythically constructed visions of Russian civilisation. For such expansionists the space of the former Soviet Union represents the 'Russian world' as it was in the 'good old days' of the Russian and Soviet empires. However, Putin was pragmatic enough to understand the lack of effective levers at Russia's disposal in order to pursue such an imperialistic polity. Nevertheless, he was also mindful of the criticisms levied at Russia's westernising project. Therefore his compromise has been to emphasise Russia's role within the post-Soviet region as a moral and cultural leader, rather than simply a military one. As Tsygankov (2006a: 1090) attests, 'By demonstrating that strengthening Russia's ties in the former Soviet region does not require revising existing territorial boundaries, depriving neighbours of their political sovereignty, or taking on the burden of an imperial responsibility, the successful application of soft power redresses the appeal of the Imperialists.'

There are many (especially within the Baltic states) who have seen Russia's increased financial and symbolic attention towards its compatriots abroad as cultural imperialism, or outright imperialism through the back-door, by attempting to build up a fifth column of supporters more loyal to Moscow than to the diaspora's current states of residence. At some level this can be logically inferred from the rhetoric of some mainstream Russian politicians. For example, Konstantin Kosachev, while acting as the chairman of Russia's Duma Committee on Foreign Affairs, gave an interview to *Chas*, in which he commented:

We should not restrict our campaigning for the Russian world simply to its cultural and historical aspects. It is all good and well if people love Russia, speak Russian, and play Russian folk instruments. But this is not enough.

Does not every diaspora lobby for the interests of its fatherland from the country of its residence? (*Chas*, 11/12/08)²⁷

Nevertheless, while Moscow would undoubtedly love to see a group of loyal compatriots lobbying for their interests within the European Union, the pragmatism espoused by Putin has allowed the Kremlin to come to terms with the fact that this is an unlikely scenario.

Instead of seeing Putin's 'cultural turn' simply as an explicit attempt to galvanise support for Russian policies and for Russia generally in the 'Near Abroad', I argue that Russia's foreign policy towards its Baltic diaspora is based on three key areas which are centrally important to Russia's own *domestic* image of itself, namely: (1) the imperative of defending Russia's moral position vis-à-vis its interpretation of the events and consequences of World War II, (2) deflecting international attention and criticism away from Russia's human rights violations – especially in Chechnya, and (3) the desire for Russia to maintain its special status as a regional hegemon, if not by bayonets then at least symbolically.

To this end, much of Russia's engagement with the Baltic states should be viewed in the context of the prevailing political hegemony in Russia, i.e. as a *domestic* issue rather than an international one. Just as Gramsci understood, political hegemonies come to power and maintain their legitimacy through a combination of material force and cultural persuasiveness. As we have discussed, collective memory-myths present a very effective means of cementing a common identity which is essential in creating the sutured 'us' required for any hegemonic order. The preservation of the official Soviet/Russian interpretation of the Second World War is thus linked with the preservation of the Russian hegemonic order.

At the same time, simply because Russia's policies are largely based on domestic considerations, and the desire to preserve a positive identity, it does not follow that these policies will not have a meaningful effect on the identities of people outside Russia. Not surprisingly history is a major area of concern for Russia in its dealings with the Baltic states.

²⁷ This was one of the quotations later used within my focus groups where Russian-speaking participants were invited to share their opinions on certain excerpts from the Latvian press; see appendix one and chapter six.

Tellingly the theme of history, and of the historical interpretations of the Second World War, appears in Russia's 2008 Foreign Policy Concept:

Russia, being committed to universal democratic values, including protection of human rights and freedoms, sees its goals in the following:

...to firmly counter manifestations of neofascism, any forms of racial discrimination, aggressive nationalism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia, attempts to rewrite the history, use it for instigating confrontation and revanchism in the world politics, and revise the outcome of the World War Two.

Because this issue of historical interpretation is so important to Russia's domestic and international status, it should come as no surprise that it is precisely in this area that the Kremlin's attempts to utilise its Baltic diaspora are most visible. For Russia, their compatriots in the Baltic states represent a useful medium with which to remind Europe of the crucial role played by the Soviet Union in liberating the whole of Europe from the horrors of Nazism. Indeed, as we have previously noted, the Russian Federation has invested a great deal of money in supporting Second World War veterans in Latvia and the other two Baltic states (see chapter three).

Moreover, in line with Laclau and Mouffe's theory of discursively proscribed antagonistic relations, Russia's focus on the Baltic states allows for important 'enemy images' (Muižnieks, 2008) to be produced which further delineate 'them' from 'us'. Balts ('them') are therefore often depicted as Nazis or fascists, in contrast to 'us'; the liberators and anti-fascists (see also Cheskin, 2010). In the above-quoted section of the 2008 Foreign Policy Concept, for example, 'revanchism' of the official Russian version of history is linked to 'manifestations of neofascism...racial discrimination, aggressive nationalism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia'. In other words if you disagree with Russia's official history, you are automatically accepted as a defender of fascism.

In terms of assessing the impact of Russia's assertions of historical righteousness on the actions and values of Baltic Russian-speakers, perhaps the most visible sign of Russian influence can be seen in the annual 9 May celebrations held in Riga and in a number of other

Baltic cities with large Russian-speaking populations. The sheer numbers of those in attendance of the celebrations (a reported 200,000 people participated in the 2011 celebrations in Riga (*Diena* 16/11/11)), would seem, at first glance, to indicate that Russia *is* able to wield significant influence over its ‘compatriots abroad’, and is able to do so by attraction rather than coercion. It is surely no coincidence that the rise in prominence of the 9 May celebrations in Russia, whereby ‘Vladimir Putin, turned to Victory Day and its parade as a potential occasion for renewed Russian patriotism’ (Norris, 2011: 209-10), has coincided with an equally visible rise in the prominence of the celebrations in Latvia (Ločmele et al., 2011: 123-8).

Another area where the Russian Federation has been able to lever some influence among Latvian and Baltic Russian-speakers is in its efforts to champion their human rights. Russia has been foremost among critics of Latvia and Estonia’s post-Soviet citizenship policies and has unequivocally condemned the political and social situation in these two countries on numerous occasions. It was telling that, in 2005 and 2006, in response to a poll conducted by the Levada Centre in Russia, Latvia ranked top of the list of nations ‘least friendly and most hostile towards Russia’, with 49% and 46% of Russian respondents respectively citing the small Baltic country among their list of five countries (Levada Centre, 2011). Even in the most recent poll, Latvia still managed to garner 35% behind only Georgia on 50%. In this same list Lithuania comes in at third place (34%) and Estonia ranks fifth (30%). While the recent 2008 conflict with Georgia has meant that Georgia has overtaken Latvia on this list, it is striking that the three small Baltic countries figure so prominently in the consciousness of Russian inhabitants as enemies of the Russian Federation. Taking into account the comparative lack of any military or security threat to Russia from the Baltic states, one can only conclude that identity politics is the major reason for Russian preoccupation with the Baltic states. As Muižnieks (2011b: 9-10) states: ‘It is difficult to explain through a rationalist perspective why the Russian government and the media beholden to it for many years consistently manufactured an enemy image of Latvia, such that Latvia’s importance as a foreign policy “partner” and “unfriendliness” were blown out of all proportion.’

If this aspect of Russia’s dealings with the Baltic states can be characterised as an effort to preserve a positive image of Russia both domestically and on the world stage, then another use

that Moscow has for the Baltic diaspora is in trying to deflect attention from the negative image associated with Russia's human rights record. For example, whenever the issue of Russian human rights violations is raised in international forums, Russian officials are always quick to point to the 'double standards' of human rights violations in Europe's own back yard, especially in Latvia and Estonia with regards to the discrimination of Russian-speakers (Fawn, 2009; Preissler, 2012).

Preissler (2012) concludes that the main aims of the Russian Federation vis-à-vis is Baltic compatriots have thus been to prevent the EU and EU member states being overly critical of Russian policies in the Caucasus and the lack of political freedoms in Russia generally. For Preissler (2012) 'the issue of the Russian-speakers has become the *central* argument with which the Russian leadership (...) tries to fend off Western and especially EU criticism of its human rights record and of political developments in Russia more broadly.' Again, Russia's relationship with its diaspora in the Baltic states should therefore be seen primarily as a *domestic* strategy to maintain legitimacy and control within its own borders, rather than as an attempt to effectively manipulate Russian-speakers abroad.

Russia's engagement with its so-called diaspora is therefore an experience centred on the need the Russian domestic hegemony has of filling the empty space of power with its own identity. As Laclau and Mouffe have theorised, this is only possible with recourse to an external 'other'. As such the Baltic states are key players in constituting this external other, and the Russian-speakers who reside in these states are strategically important as a group which ostensibly legitimises Russian involvement in the region.

Alongside the issues of historical interpretation there are various other 'soft' mechanisms which the Russian authorities have increasingly been able to employ to present a positive image of Russia in Latvia (at least to Russian-speakers). These include the large penetration of Russian television channels in Latvia – in 2007 three out of the four most watched TV stations by Latvia's Russian-speakers were produced in Russia (Lerhis, 2007: 54). This logically leads Muižnieks (2011b: 65) to the conclusion that 'Russia's media probably have the effect of strengthening certain viewpoints, including pro-Russian sentiment, among the large segment of the population that consumes Russian media products.' This is all the more significant

when we consider the extent that the Russian state has been able to control its mainstream, domestic media in recent years (Oates, 2007).

Alongside Russia's media presence in Latvia, there has also been a noticeable expansion of Russian-funded NGOs, cultural organisations, and think tanks which all aim at promoting a positive image of Russia abroad (Popescu, 2006: 2). One study of Russian cultural influence in Latvia found that within Latvia's locally based Russian-language media, there was a much higher level of interest in Russian cultural institutions operating in Latvia than in Latvian institutions (Tabuns, 2006). This, Tabuns notes, is especially true for the influential House of Moscow (*Dom Moskvi*), a cultural centre largely funded by Moscow's municipal government.

Because of this increased emphasis on the soft power of attraction, we should ask ourselves whether Russia is able to wield any *political* influence over its 'compatriots abroad'. A report by the global intelligence company Stratfor (2008) concludes, that while Russia is unlikely to interfere militarily in the affairs of the Baltic states, 'internal political meddling or support for increased ethnic tensions are very much within the Kremlin's capability' adding that 'the Baltic's' Russophone population is perhaps the strongest lever Russia can use against the states' governments.' However, as we shall see in chapter six, the evidence from my focus groups would suggest that Russia's cultural attraction is far greater than its political attraction.

On the other hand, there are indications that Russian soft power may also enjoy an attendant political influence over the Russian-speaking population of Latvia. For one thing it is perhaps impossible to separate fully political intentions from cultural ones. As discussed above, history is a highly politicised issue in Latvia in the context of Russo-Latvian relations. Therefore, to take one example, the 'cultural' aims of providing extra financial resources for Victory Day celebrations outside of Russia must also be seen in a politicised light.

One of the most significant indicators of Russia's soft power being able to influence political views comes from the conduct of certain prominent members of the Russian-speaking community in Latvia. For example, it is not only Russian officials who have been able to play the 'double standards' card in relation to the EU's acceptance of human rights abuses within the Baltic states. Tat'yana Zhdanoka, Latvian MEP who represents the 'Russian' party For

Human Rights in a United Latvia (FHRUL), is a prominent advocate for the rights of Russian-speakers in Latvia. Two weeks before the EU-Russia Summit in 2010, Zhdanoka participated in a televised discussion on EU-Russian relations on EuroparlTV, the European Parliament's internet TV station. German MEP Joachim Zeller brought up the question of Russia's dubious human rights record. Zhdanoka's reply could have been scripted by the Russian Foreign Ministry:

I just want to pose you a question. Can you imagine how harshly would Russia be criticised if 20% of Russian population would be deprived of the rights to vote, even in local elections, the rights to access to civil service etc? [sic] (EuroparlTV, 2010)

Likewise, Zhdanoka was eager to defend Russia's position in its 2008 conflict with Georgia. Noting firstly how Russia had come under unfair criticism for its military actions in Georgia, Zhdanoka went on to say:

Unfortunately, as a Russian-speaker, as a Russian person, as a Russian Orthodox person living in Latvia I just feel badly about experiencing all these anti-Russian feelings. Sometimes even when we are mentioning the prohibition of some phobias in the documents – Islamophobia, anti-Semitism – I would also like to add Russia-phobia which is a widespread phenomenon now in the European Union.

This sort of support for Russia, from a member of the European Parliament no less, would seem to point to the potential political value of Russia's Baltic diaspora for the Russian Federation. It would also indicate that Russia presents not only a cultural pole of attraction, but also an external node with which to anchor self identities for Russian-speakers in Latvia.

Consequently, we must accept that there is at least *some* potential for Russia to find limited support from political elites, and certain sections of the Russian-speaking population of Latvia. While I would argue that the aims of Russian foreign policy towards its diaspora in the Baltic states are primarily focused on shoring up their own domestic political and cultural hegemony, this is not to say that these policies will not have a very real effect on the identities of 'Russian compatriots' abroad.

The expansion of Russia's cultural hegemony in place of political hegemony (in Gramscian terms: war of position instead of war of manoeuvre) is thus highly significant. In order to examine the effects of this cultural hegemony in more detail, I will later turn to qualitative data from focus groups with Russian-speakers which will allow us to start to form an assessment of the impact of Russian policy towards its diaspora in Latvia. From this section however, it is clear that Russia has a vested interest in ensuring that its diaspora maintains certain 'Russian' positions, even if the primary reasons are of a domestic rather than international dimension. We may suppose that at the very least these efforts must have some influence over Russian-speakers in Latvia.

Latvian political parties and their discourses

In this section I will examine Latvia's domestic political landscape in order to see to what extent it is possible to talk of the 'primacy of politics' in terms of forming national identities in Latvia. We have already looked at the possible political and cultural influence of the Russian Federation and so now turn to the domestic political setup with a focus on political parties and their various discourses.

Methodologically this section is based on a number of interviews with members of the Latvian parliament. Elite, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six members of the Latvian parliament; Inese Laizāne (The National Alliance), Jānis Dombrava (The National Alliance), Visvaldis Lācis (The National Alliance),²⁸ Nikolaijs Kabanovs (Harmony Centre), Aleksandrs Sakovskis (Harmony Centre), and Boriss Cilevičs (Harmony Centre).²⁹ These individuals were all members of the 10th *Saeima* which sat until President Zatlers successfully called a snap referendum to dissolve parliament – leading to a new parliament being elected in September 2011. All of these deputies, with the exception of Visvaldis Lācis, were re-elected to the 11th *Saeima*.

²⁸ Although Visvaldis Lācis was a member of The National Alliance on the day I interviewed him, the following day he was expelled from the alliance as a result of a scandal involving certain discrepancies with his expenses claims. He then became an independent member of parliament. He did not stand for re-election to the 11th *Saeima*.

²⁹ Interviews were conducted in English, Russian, and Latvian according to the preference of the interviewee.

Latvia's ethnic political spectrum

In chapter two we examined how the mass media of communication can create discursive meanings and identities. At the start of this chapter we also examined Laclau and Mouffe's work on the role of politics and the political in forming such identities. The discursive struggle to access the empty space of power of the Latvian state must be seen as an essential one in the facilitation of hegemonic groupings and therefore group identities. An examination of political discourse can therefore allow us to understand how this struggle is being played out and to consequently grasp the effect of such political manoeuvring on identity formation.

As has already been mentioned, the Latvian political spectrum which goes from left to right wing is not the same scale commonly employed in political science to distinguish between left and right wing ideological preferences. Essentially in Latvia a left-wing party is most commonly understood as a 'Russian' party, i.e. a political party which gains most of its support from the Russian-speaking population, while a right-wing party is a 'Latvian' party, i.e. one which garners most of its support from the Latvian population (see Kažoka, 2010). On the face of it this would seem to be a very different political landscape than that found in Estonia, where the so-called 'Russian' parties have rarely penetrated the political mainstream, and who have only twice managed to pass the 5% barrier required for representation in the *Riigikogu* (parliament) (Solska, 2011: 1099). Instead, the majority of Estonia's Russian-speaking citizens tend to vote for The Estonian Centre Party (*Eesti Keskerakond* ECP) (Stratfor, 2011), a party which is commonly accepted as a 'normal Estonian party', rather than a 'Russian' one.

This contrast in Latvian and Estonian politics is all the more striking when we consider that surveys have revealed a strong preference for leftist social ideals in Latvia, not just among Russian-speakers, but also among the entire population (Rose, 1997; Rose, 2000; Rose 2002; Rose 2005; Makarov 2002). However, even with this preference for leftist social policies, the Latvian electorate has never elected a left-leaning government. It would appear that in Latvia the parties of the social left are discursively tied to concepts associated with the Soviet past and, by extension, to Russianness. This leads Tālis Tisenkopfs to the conclusion that 'the

political superstructure is quite artificially constructed and does not reflect national sentiment' (2002: as quoted and translated in Makarov, 2002: 6-7). This 'artificial' political superstructure would suggest that the realm of Latvian politics has been able to create discursive boundaries between 'Russian' and 'Latvian' political perspectives.

For this reason Latvia's left-wing parties (in the conventional, non-ethnised sense), such as Harmony Centre have been unable to shake the notion that they are exclusively Russian parties precisely because they have also adopted leftist values and aims, while parties which wish to be seen as 'normal' 'Latvian' parties have adopted right-wing policies in order to distance themselves from any association with Russianness and Russia. Of course, the other main discursive barrier HC faces in finding acceptance as a normal, Latvian party is the inevitable stumbling block of historical interpretation. As we shall see in chapter seven, HC play a central role in the organisation of Riga's annual 9 May celebrations and their representatives often speak at the events, thus reinforcing the image of HC as a 'Russian' party, i.e. a party which adheres to a 'Russian' reading of history.

When we compare the Latvian political scene with that of Estonia, it would appear that the presence of large, well-represented 'Russian' parties (i.e. parties that are popularly perceived as being 'Russian') in Latvia is therefore largely a result of an explicit ethnicisation of political issues. However, is the field of politics really able to ethnicise and manipulate issues which, on the ground level, are not already moments of contention? In the interviews which I conducted the ethnicisation of politics was a theme which was widely discussed by the three representatives of HC. All three shared the belief that the biggest differences and conflicts between Latvians and Russians were manifested in the realm of politics and not in the everyday lives of the inhabitants of Latvia. Boriss Cilevičs went as far as claiming that Latvia was unique in having such a mixed ethnic composition without any ethnic violence (a sentiment that was expressed to me on numerous occasions both by academics and everyday contacts):

I wouldn't say that the level of intolerance in Latvia is particularly high. Not at all, at the everyday level it's very good. Latvia is one of the few European states where we have never had any ethnically based violence ever. Given this

ethnic composition and this very fragmented society it's surprising, it's unique.
(Interview with Boriss Cilevičs)

Aleksandrs Sakovskijs was also of the opinion that inter-ethnic relations were mostly positive outside of politics, but that within politics they were manipulated:

If you continue to research this topic you will see that our society is very patient. All parts of our society; both the Latvian and Russian parts. If you analyse the lives of Russian-speakers then they have problems. But even having such problems you will not see any real confrontations. No demonstrations, no strikes, not what we see in Europe...I think that this is only possible in Latvia and only because the normal, large part of society tries to understand each other. Because all of us; Latvians and Russians, are from the Soviet past...the politicians use this in a bad way. They use it for their own interest and their own profit. (Interview with Aleksandrs Sakovskijs)

The stark difference in real life experiences and politics was also highlighted in my focus group interviews with groups of Russian-speakers. As we shall see in the next chapter, the focus group participants generally talked of positive interactions with Latvians in their everyday lives and saw politics as a field which artificially inflated ethnic concerns in order to serve the selfish interests of politicians.

From the 'other', Latvian perspective Inese Laizāne, representative of the National Alliance, talked of how 9 May, for its part, had been regrettably politicised. Laizāne compared 9 May celebrations that she had personally led, in her home town of Daugavpils, where 'veterans get together by a place of remembrance and are honoured with flowers, songs are sung for them, and the end of the war is emphasised' with those elsewhere in Latvia where: 'unfortunately there are political ambitions, and people fulfil these political ambitions at various celebrations. They turn it into a weapon of hate.'

The ethnicisation of the issue of 9 May, and of the issue of occupation, has been a theme which has largely come to define HC and their desires to move from the side of opposition to government. Following their strong showing in the 11th *Saeima* elections, where they became the most represented party in the Latvian parliament, there was inevitably a great deal of talk about HC forming, or being included in, the governing coalition. However, in the end HC

were excluded from such a coalition with Unity instead forming an alliance with Zatlers' Reform Party (ZRP) and the National Alliance.

Just as was the case in the aftermath of the 10th *Saeima* elections in 2010, the main stumbling blocks for HC's inclusion in government were not their economic programme or their political ideology. Rather it was the question of loyalty towards the Latvian state and publically acknowledging the fact of occupation. That these questions were at the fore of the political discourses of the time is all the more strange when we consider that HC's political programme differed greatly from that of Unity and ZRF: HC opposed the scale of Unity's proposed budget cuts and proposed maintaining a much higher budget deficit than Unity or ZRF. In other circumstances these differences would have been centre stage. However, for HC the biggest challenge in coming to power has been discursive the perception that they are pro-Moscow and anti-Latvian.

Following the results of the *Saeima* elections numerous politicians from ZPR, Unity, and the National Alliance were quoted in *Diena* coming out against forming a coalition with HC:

V.Liepiņš [*Saeima* deputy for ZRP] said that, in principle, he was not against cooperation with HC in the future. However, he did mention a number of arguments which at present make it impossible to bring them into the governing body. *Primary among these arguments was that he was not convinced of HC's ability to be loyal to the Latvian state...*“the fact of the matter is that they do not acknowledge the occupation. They think that it was a fateful fact which occurred and they do not have a problem with that” (*Diena* 25/09/11 emphasis added)

Likewise Krišjānis Kariņš (European Member of Parliament for Unity) gives his reasons for not allowing HC to join the governing coalition. Again, the primary reasons, at least in the media reporting of Kariņš's comments, are HC's pro-Russianness. Secondary to these concerns are those of policy:

As regards Harmony Centre (HC), the politician points to the fact that this party is oriented not towards Europe, but is manifestly pro-Moscow, and that such political forces do not have a place in the government of Latvia.

...Likewise HC, in the opinion of Kariņš, is an economically left-wing party “who are proposing to increase the budget deficit by 4-4.5% in order to prop up the social sector with borrowed money”, which will lead to an economic catastrophe. “That’s like an alcoholic borrowing money in order to continue drinking” added the politician. (*Diena* 27/09/11)

When asked about this issue of occupation and the difficulty HC has encountered in dealing with it, the members of HC whom I interviewed discussed the complexities of this issue for them and for HC. Both Boriss Cilevičs and Nikolaijs Kabanovs explained that it was not a black and white issue:

As for occupation I’m ready to explain, I’m ready to say it. But no-one has asked me to because my answer will be paradoxical and will make people uncomfortable. People think that either no there was no occupation or yes there was an occupation from 1940 to 1991. But it wasn’t like that...Let’s take the situation, for example, when Germany occupied Denmark. No Danes sat in the Reichstag in Berlin and made the decisions. But with us Latvians sat in the Supreme Soviet in Moscow, in the Central Committee, even in the Politburo. (Interview with Nikolaijs Kabanovs)

Aleksandrs Sakovskijs displayed frustration that Latvian politicians could not drop the issue:

My opinion is that history is history. Someone somewhere has done something. What does this mean? That we, the next generation, always remember when something was done wrong 100 or 200 years ago? From that perspective all Russian-speaking people would have to kill all Germans because Hitler killed a lot of Russians. But this is moronic. That is moronic. How long do we have to dig up history? (Interview with Aleksandrs Sakovskijs)

Boriss Cilevičs noted how Prime Minister Dombrovskis simply used the issue of occupation ‘to cope with the problems within his own bloc’, adding that:

We’ve never defended the view that events here in 1940 were something like Socialist revolution or whatever. We never said that it was just. We said it was a historical fact – how to describe it is not essential.

It was this desire to move beyond history which motivated HC’s call for a three year moratorium on the occupation question which was outlined in the party’s 11th *Saeima* pre-election campaign. The rationale behind this moratorium was that it would allow Latvian

politicians to stop focusing on history, and instead focus on the more pressing issues of Latvia's economic and social well-being.

Unexpectedly the call for such a moratorium went largely unheeded in the debates in the run-up to the 2011 elections. To a great extent this was because a number of prominent 'Latvian' politicians publicly voiced their mistrust of HC and doubted their sincerity when trying to sound a reconciliatory note. Jānis Dombrova, in his interview stated:

In principle [Harmony Centre] are a hateful force for Latvians. Harmony Centre try to, let's say, join the mainstream by talking about social integration in the pre-election period, and about how we are all for national friendship. At the same time the rhetoric which is used for a Russian audience is fundamentally different.

For Visvaldis Lācis it was unacceptable for Russian-speakers to expect to be able to move beyond history and agree to disagree. Instead, the onus was on them to prove their loyalty to the Latvian state. Pressed on whether it was appropriate to confer citizenship to people who have lived all their lives in Latvia and who spoke Latvian fluently, the politician answered:

(VL) Under no circumstances. In my opinion, we can give citizenship to someone once they have assimilated. We are 58.5% [of the population of Latvia] and cannot assimilate 40% whose TV and radio all comes from Russia.

(AC) Even if that person knew all about Latvian history and Latvian culture?

(VL) Yes, but they are hateful. Kabanovs³⁰ also knows Latvian culture.

(AC) But what if he shared the exact same opinions as you?

(VL) Then we could. *But firstly he has to prove it publicly!* (Emphasis added)

Here it is obvious that Russian speakers are presumed hateful until proved loyal to the Latvian state. They are first and foremost Russians, whose inherent interests naturally go against the interests of the Latvian nation. As Visvaldis Lācis stated, 'Latvia's Russians who are here are also Russians because they belong to the Russian nation. They vote for their own privileges.'

³⁰ Reference to Harmony Centre politician Nikolaijs Kabanovs, who was also interviewed.

It would seem therefore that overt ethnicisation is a feature of Latvian politics which is very difficult to now avoid. For HC this is both their strength and weakness. It is their strength inasmuch as it allows them to draw great support from the Russian-speaking electorate but at the same time they are unable to 'join the mainstream' of Latvian politics. The demand to acknowledge Latvia's occupation is therefore one which is unpalatable to HC as it would most likely divert a significant amount of support away from their party.

Accordingly, HC are often left trying to balance the need to appeal to a demarcated political electorate who have certain, assumed values and collective memory-myths, with the need to gain legitimacy and acceptance in the eyes of the other political parties in Latvia. One of their strategies has therefore been to use the word 'annexation'³¹ in place of occupation. Boriss Cilevičs, in an article on the HC website states:

Of course, in 1940 the independence of Latvia was forcefully liquidated as a result of the agreement between two superpowers... Never have I, in any way, tried to defend the desire of the USSR to incorporate and *annex* Latvia. However, it is doubtful that we can assess these events using contemporary standards. For this reason it is not entirely correct to talk of 50 years of occupation. (Emphasis added) (Harmony Centre, 2011)

This is seen as a compromise whereby Russian-speakers are able to acknowledge the harm done under Soviet rule by Stalinisation and Soviet Communism, while also distancing themselves from an outright condemnation of the role of the Soviet army in World War II. In light of our temporal helix model, this can be seen as an attempt to integrate into Latvian discursive positions while also being constrained by the discursive conditions which have facilitated their position of relative power in the first instance. It therefore represents an integrational discursive strategy.

However, the fact that HC are perceived as a 'Russian' party further facilitates the desires of a number of politicians to highlight the ethnic divide in Latvia. For example, numerous politicians often manifest a belief that Moscow is attempting to create a 'fifth column'

³¹ The impact of this strategy of using the linguistic sign 'annexation' in place of 'occupation' on public opinion among Russian-speakers will be analysed in chapters six and seven

comprised of Russian-speakers who are loyal to Russia and not to Latvia (see Golubeva, 2010: 167). As we have seen, in the political rhetoric of Latvia's nationalistic parties, Russian-speakers are often closely connected with Russia and Russian influences. Latvian politicians from the nationalistic blocs For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK (FF/LNNK) and All for Latvia (who in 2011 merged into a single political party: the National Alliance) refer to parties that claim to represent Russian-speakers as 'anti-Latvian' and 'pro-Russian'. For example, Mārtiņš Kālis, an All for Latvia candidate for the 2009 elections to the European Parliament, writes in his blog at *Diena's* internet portal:

Parties who represent Russian-speaking interests could find significant success in the elections...this time when we will elect only 8 members of parliament as many as 3 representatives could be from *pro-Russian* parties – FHRUL, Harmony Centre, and LFP/LW. (*Diena* 04/06/09 emphasis added)

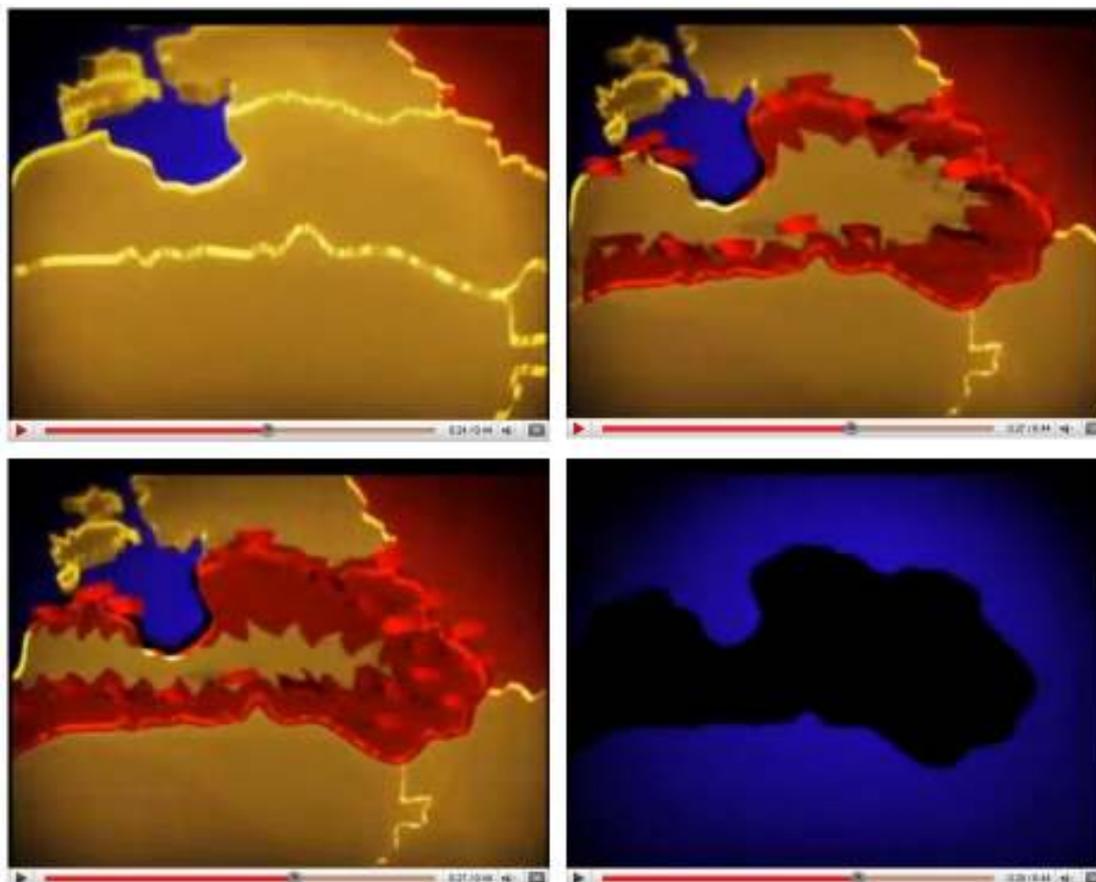
This 'pro-Russianness' is also extended to all Russian-speakers in Latvia. Kālis goes on to reassure the reader that 'a Latvian would not want to think anything bad about his Russian-speaking colleague or fellow student', but then goes on to justify why in fact Latvians *should* think bad about them:

However, the truth is such that it is in the interests of Russian-speakers to have two state languages, and for Russian to dominate the state and municipal structures in Riga – where Latvians are a significant minority, and for the law to guarantee proportional Russian representation in government. For the Latvian who doubts the relevance of the Latvian national standpoint, he should put himself in the skin of a Russian-speaker to understand what motives will influence Russian-speakers in these elections. Without doubt, if there are parties which propose giving Russian official language status, then they will not reject this offer. For exactly this reason we must elect at least one Latvian nationalist representative to the European Parliament. *There is no other way to stop Latvia's gradual Russification.*' (emphasis added)

Here it is clear that Russians are simply Russians – i.e. they will only be interested in securing their own, Russian-speaking interests, which Kālis defines as being synonymous with Russification. Indeed, in the political rhetoric of the more vocal and nationalistic 'Latvian' parties there is an unmistakable, underlying belief that Russian-speakers are more loyal to Moscow than to Latvia. Just as in the media discourses which we studied, a number of Latvian

politicians are equally keen to create a polemic discursive divide between ‘Latvians’ and ‘Russians’, with each group being defined by inherent characteristics.

Figure 4: Four stills from FF/LNNK's political advertisement



For example, this was seen in a series of controversial adverts produced by FF/LNNK which attracted much attention in the Russian-language media. The adverts first depicted a sinister-looking Russian-speaking couple who (in Russian) refuse to buy a Latvian Christmas tree from a kindly Latvian market tradesman. The advert concludes with the slogan ‘support your own’.³² Harmony Centre produced their own response to this advert in which the FF/LNNK advert is depicted through a series of animated frames. In this response, instead of the Russian-speaking couple refusing to buy the Christmas tree because it was Latvian, both they

³² The advert can be viewed on FF/LNNK’s YouTube channel: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYynwubZwKc> [last accessed 04/07/11]

and a Latvian mother and daughter decide that at 20 Lats it is too expensive.³³ FF/LNNK responded to this with another advert which asked ‘what is Harmony Centre targeting?’ and a sniper view-finder being focussed on Riga’s Freedom Monument. The narrator announces ‘Now Harmony Centre is re-drawing our video clips, laying scorn to our desire to support Latvian producers. Tomorrow they will re-write our language law, change the electoral procedure, and re-draw the map of Latvia’ – at which point a map of Latvia is shown being engulfed in a red wave emanating from Russia (see figure 4).³⁴

The adverts, which the Russian-language tabloid *Vesti Segondya* (Today’s News) compared to German propaganda in the 30s (26/02/09), clearly propagated the notion that, if not all Russian-speakers, then at least the ‘Russian’ party HC, is inherently disloyal to Latvia and loyal to Russia. This is naturally a strategy that allows Latvian nationalists to gain legitimacy for their harsh stances against non-Latvians in Latvia; as the external ‘other’ this portrayal is centrally important to the discursive placement and unification of Latvian nationalists and as such must be seen to form a central element in their hegemonising project.

However, this distrust of Russian-speakers is not limited to relatively small parliamentary parties. As Jaeger (2000) has noted, at the official, governmental level the Baltic states have often ‘securitised’ their non-titular populations as a potential security threat to the political integrity of the Baltic states, seeing them as a potential foreign policy tool in the hands of Moscow. For example, the *Latvian National Security Concept* of 1995 clearly linked Latvia’s external threats to internal ones: ‘Because Latvia’s external threats can be connected with the efforts outside of Latvia to destabilise Latvia’s internal situation, it is impossible to simply separate external threats from internal ones.’

Indeed, to this day, Baltic intelligence services are still very concerned with the potential for Russia to interfere in the domestic affairs of their countries by manipulating and cajoling Russian-speakers into political and social action. In its 2011 annual report, Latvia’s Constitutional Protection Bureau (CPS) states that ‘support for a diaspora does not necessarily

³³ This response can be viewed at Nils Ušakovs’ (Mayor of Riga and HC representative) YouTube channel: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mQ5ew6uslfA&feature=related> [last accessed 04/07/11]

³⁴ This final advert can also be viewed on FF/LNNK’s YouTube channel: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ox-I0iUK8GA> [last accessed 04/07/11]

contradict Latvian interests. However, threats to national security occur when the real aim of the operations of foreign institutions is to secretly manipulate the diaspora so as to influence internal socio-political processes, or to achieve their own foreign policy objectives' (Constitutional Protection Bureau of the Latvian Republic, 2011). The report goes on to name a number of instances of Russian attempts to interfere with Latvian affairs, notably a campaign to rename a street in Riga which had been named after former Chechen leader Dzhokhar Dudayev. According to the report, unsanctioned pickets were organised by Russian intelligence by publishing articles on the internet forum Riga.rosvesty.ru, which was timed to coincide with, the now disposed mayor of Moscow, Juri Luzhkov's visit to Riga. The CPS report also highlights various efforts of Russian intelligence agents to influence the course of Latvia's 2010 general election. While the report concludes that Russia was unable to influence the election result, it is nonetheless significant that the Latvian authorities are so wary of the Russian diaspora, and of the potential for Moscow to utilise Russian-speakers for its own means.

This section has revealed how Latvian politics is overtly ethnicised, and how certain politicians use ethnic issues in order to further their own political aims. We have thus seen how this ethnicisation is an integral aspect of Latvian politics and how it has been used in order to create discursive boundaries between competing political movements and groupings. It is clear that the strategy of overt ethnicisation is one which has allowed certain politicians to create and maintain some form of cultural hegemony. For this reason, from the perspective of Russian-speakers and their identity formation this ethnicisation is not simply a matter of symbolic concern. As has been discussed in previous chapters, perceptions and narratives of Latvian statehood have played a major role in determining many concrete policies including those relating to education, citizenship, and language. Therefore, while the interviewed politicians may point to the relatively harmonious relations between Latvia's ethnic groups on the ground level, it is important to examine the effects that these specific policies have had on Russian-speakers in Latvia.

Latvian state-building policies and their impact upon Russian-speakers

As we have seen throughout this research, the Latvian state, as one of the main foci of Brubaker's updated quadratic nexus, plays a significant role in the identity creation of Russian-speakers in Latvia. In many respects the activities of the Russian Federation which are aimed at sponsoring and supporting their 'compatriots abroad', such as defending their human rights and highlighting discrimination in the Baltic states, rely on certain state policies to have been initiated in the first place. Without restrictive citizenship, language, and education policies such accusations of human rights abuses would not be possible.

One of the most obvious state policies which has been salient to identity formation in Latvia is that of citizenship. In previous chapters I have outlined the content of this citizenship law and reiterated the main arguments which were used in order to justify the denial of citizenship to large sections of Latvian society (see chapter three). Because this issue has been discussed above there is no need to go into any great detail here concerning the form and content of the citizenship law. It is sufficient to say that the law successfully completed the institutional and discursive demarcation of Latvians from non-Latvians – a process which was already symbolically and discursively advanced in the *Atmoda* period (see chapter three).

By placing the vast majority of Russian-speakers outside of the officially proscribed, politically endowed nation, the authorities made it clear that the core nation was comprised primarily of Latvians. If a person could not trace their ancestry to the Latvia of 1940 then they could not be included in the core nation even if they supported Latvian independence, shared 'Latvian' values (however they might be defined), or spoke Latvian. In terms of creating hegemonic formations the citizenship law was a very effective means of ensuring that only 'Latvians' were able to wield political influence in Latvia through the right to participate in the democratic process. It meant that the empty space of power could be filled by a hegemonic and discursively constructed identity of Latvians which was in opposition to the 'other' of Russian-speakers: people deemed unfit to join the political nation. It was therefore simply a concrete manifestation of the overt ethnicisation of politics which was discussed above.

Another major policy area which has also been considered above is that of education. As has been discussed, in 2004 the Latvian government legislated to introduce a minimum of 60% mandatory instruction in Latvian in all state funded secondary schools. One of the consequences of this reform was the greater unification of Russian-speakers around the idea of a shared linguistic identity. As was discussed in chapter four, in the early years of Latvian independence the idea of Russian-speaking identity was still rather weak and was largely subordinate to Russian, Belorussian, Polish, Ukrainian, and Jewish identities. With the onset of these education reforms however, the process of forming a counter hegemonic formation built around the idea of being a speaker of Russian was aided considerably. In this respect Latvian state policy was an essential aspect in the formation and cementing of Russian-speaking identity in Latvia. Just as the citizenship law provided disparate individuals with the opportunity to conceptualise commonly experienced discrimination, so the education policies facilitated a shared sense of persecution and othering.

These education reforms must also be seen as a fundamental aspect of Latvia's language policies which have been pursued in the post-Soviet era. In Latvia there have been many efforts to ensure the survival of the Latvian language. A 2008 publication by the country's State Language Commission (2008: 128) notes that after Ukraine, 'The next country on such a scale of vanishing prospects of the primary nation's language vitality seems to be Latvia where the large number of Russian-speaking population [sic], with their habitual linguistic privileges, does not allow the Latvian language to take the role of the single full-fledged state (official) language.' As a result of this deep-seated fear that Latvian would be subsumed under the influence of Russian, a number of laws have been passed to regulate language use in Latvia.

Following elections to the Latvian Supreme Soviet in 1989 which returned a landslide victory for the Popular Front, the Soviet adopted a law requiring all state institutions to use Latvian both with the public and as their language of internal communication. In 1998 the Constitution (*Satversme*) was amended to include the provision that Latvian was the official state language of Latvia. Following heated debates and much political wrangling, the *Saeima* finally passed a new Language Law in 1999 (for an overview of these developments see Hansson, 2002).

One of the most controversial aspects of the language law was the requirement for graded proficiency tests for people working in any public capacity. This led to the further development of the role of language inspectors and graded proficiency tests for Latvian which were discussed in chapter four and highlighted by the media discourses which I studied. Although the State Language Inspection was inaugurated in 1992, it was with the adoption of the 1999 law that their role became far more prominent as they were able to inspect the language use of people working in the both the public sector and also many areas of the private sector. Based on the 1999 Language Law there were six levels of language proficiency which were required to find employment in different categories of employment (Hazans, 2010: 149).

Another concern for Russian-speakers was the stipulation that people's names be Latvianised in passports and official documents (State Language Law, 1999: article 19, paragraph 2). For a man this meant the fixing of an s at the end of a given name to correspond with the nominative singular masculine case ending stipulated by the rules of Latvian grammar. It also entailed a phonetic transcription of names into Latvian. For example, Ammon Cheskin would be rendered into Latvian as Amons Českins. As one Russian-speaker states in a publication produced by the Greens/European Free Alliance of the European Parliament (of which FHRUL was a member), 'I am quite offended by the distortion of my name. I don't know who Yurijs [sic] is, as my name is Yury! My son is Pavel, not Pavels' (The Greens/European Free Alliance, 2006: 71).

The language law served as a precursor to the education reforms of 2003/4 and also helped to delineate a linguistically defined group of people who primarily spoke Russian away from a group of individuals who primarily spoke Latvian. In 2000 FHRUL, at the time the largest 'Russian' party in the Latvian parliament, called for protests against the language law on the grounds that it was discriminatory against Russian-speakers and an abuse of their human rights (Hansson, 2002: 19-20). It can therefore be seen as an essential element in the solidifying of an identity centred around the Russian language, i.e. Russian-speakerness. It can also be seen as centrally important in facilitating an identity based upon common discrimination which has been identified throughout this research.

An interesting aspect of language policy in Latvia has been the high level of institutional accountability for a large number of institutions (Hirša et al. 2008). According to the State Language Commission:

‘Institutions responsible for the language policy in Latvia are the *Saeima*, the Cabinet, the Ministry of Education and Science (...), and the agencies under the supervision of the Minister... – the Translation and Terminology Centre, the State Language Agency, and the National Agency for Latvian Training as well as local governments, universities, schools, the Latvian Language Institute at the University of Latvia, and the institution established in 1992 specially for law enforcement – the State Language Centre of the apparatus of a State Minister.’ (State Language Commission, 2008: 80;82)

This extensive list brings to mind Althusser’s categories of repressive and ideological state apparatus which are used alongside one another to ensure people behave in ways that are deemed acceptable to the state (see chapter two). It also reminds us of Foucault’s conception of power being dispersed through multiple institutions (see chapter one).

In assessing the impact of these state policies on language and education there is strong evidence that the political sphere directly influences people’s opinions and attitudes towards the state language. A report by the Baltic Institute of Social Sciences concludes that in times of political tension surrounding the issues of education and language, Russian-speakers are most likely to have negative attitudes towards the Latvian language (Zepa et al. 2008b: 5). My media analysis also demonstrated that these issues still provide opportunities for the Russian-language press to pursue self-marginalising and anti-discursive strategies, portraying Russian-speakers as an oppressed political class.

However, official Latvian state policies have not always been negative in the sense of fostering non-porous boundaries between Latvians and Russian-speakers. In chapter four my media analysis revealed an increasing attachment and cooption of Latvian symbols among the Russian-speaking population of Latvia. One aspect of state policy which has arguably facilitated this attachment relates to national holidays and celebrations. For example, the *Līgo svētki*, the annual summer solstice event which is based on ancient pagan rituals and more modern Latvian traditions, is an event which has been able to bring together Latvians and

Russian-speakers both symbolically and in a literal sense. In chapter four it was noted that the media depictions of this holiday are positive in the Russian-language press. The organisation of events in Latvia's major cities has often been seen as a positive way to allow the country's Russian-speaking inhabitants to celebrate a festival that is traditionally marked in the countryside. Folklorist Ilga Reizniece, commenting on these festivities within the cities notes, 'It doesn't feel the same on concrete; you need to celebrate these festivals in nature. But there are a lot of people in Riga who don't have a place in the country, or who can't get to the country, so it's designed for them...and also for Russians who definitely have nowhere to stay [in the country]' (*Diena*, 23/06/11).

The celebrations of *Līgo svētki* should therefore be seen as a positive means whereby the state and local governments can create a sense of collective identity among Russian-speakers and Latvians. The fact that Russian-speakers are able to participate in an event which is uniquely 'Latvian' must be seen as important in allowing them to feel a sense of attachment to Latvia. In my interview with Inese Laizāne, member of parliament for the National Alliance, the politician talked of how important it was that Russians attend 'Latvian' festivals. In answer to the question of what Russian-speakers would need to do to integrate into Latvian society, she stated:

You speak Latvian, that's the first step. The second step, if you want to integrate, then you'll go to the song festivals, you'll celebrate our festivals, you'll want to find out about our culture and history... I think that in this area there is progress. Where we see regression is in the use of language in everyday life. For example, I know a lot of Russian people who celebrate Latvian festivals, participate in them and support them, but at the same time, in shops and on the street they speak Russian. So it's not the cornerstone.

We need to bear in mind, however, that the organisation of these large-scale celebrations for *Līgo svētki* is a relatively new phenomenon and has coincided with the emergence of Harmony Centre as the controlling party within Riga's municipal government. Therefore, the specific policy of organising such large-scale celebrations can perhaps be attributed more to the regional success of HC than to state policies per se.

A report by the Baltic Institute of Social Sciences (Zepa *et al.*, 2008a: 85) found that non-Latvians are often less likely than their Latvian counterparts to celebrate many of the country's official holidays such as the Proclamation of the Republic of Latvia (18 November) and Restoration of Independence Day (4 May). For example, of non-Latvians surveyed 64% stated that they never or almost never attended concerts on 18 November compared to 44% of Latvians (93). One reason cited for the lack of participation among Russian-speakers was that these dates are intrinsically linked with historical interpretations of the past, and that Russian-speakers often lacked a full knowledge of what was being celebrated (80-82). Nevertheless, even with fewer Russian-speakers participating in various Latvian holidays, we should still see such celebrations as a potential source of collective identity creation which is able to draw Russian-speakers closer to the Latvian state and to help them associate themselves more with Latvia (16). Russian-speakers experience of participating in such celebrations could also help to explain why Russian-speakers in Latvia consider themselves to be very different from Russians in Russia (see next chapter). Such positive experiences also potentially enable Russian-speakers to pursue integrational, as opposed to anti, discursive strategies as they are able to find common ground with official Latvian discourses and experiences

Conclusions

In this section we have examined the role of politics in the formation of Russian-speaking identity in Latvia, and in determining the main discursive contours which delineate 'Latvians' from 'Russian-speakers'. Laclau and Mouffe's theory of antagonistic relations is premised on the idea of the primacy of politics – that is the understanding that social relations occur within necessarily antagonistic parameters. They define politics, as opposed to the political, as the realm where political (i.e. antagonistic) relations are formalised and institutionalised.

Using Brubaker's triadic nexus we have been able to examine the role of formalised politics through a focus on the role of the Russian Federation, Latvian domestic politics, and the Latvian state in relation to Russian-speakers. There is much in our analysis to commend the idea that discursive identities are largely informed by processes which occur in the political sphere; that is within the realm of formalised politics. For example, the actions and discourses

of the Russian Federation towards its ‘compatriots abroad’ must have some influence over Russian-speaking identity in Latvia. While Russia has been largely unable to pull any ‘hard’ levers in the Baltic states, we have seen how many cultural and ‘soft’ power levers are utilised, and that a great deal of cultural production is consumed by Russian-speakers in Latvia.

It was argued that the discourses produced within Russia towards their ‘diaspora’ should be understood primarily as means by which to suture Russian domestic identity. This accords with Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory inasmuch as one’s internal identity is only able to become sutured with reference to the external ‘other’. For Russia this external ‘other’ is the three Baltic states whose historical interpretations run contrary to those of the Russian state. We must therefore assume that a great deal of top-down pressure from the ‘Russian’ sphere is placed on Russian-speakers in Latvia. For a fuller examination of the effects of this pressure I will later turn to data from focus group interviews with Russian-speakers (chapter six).

Within Latvia the political makeup of the country has undoubtedly had a number of consequences for identity formation. Politicians have found that ethnicisation is an effective strategy with which to garner votes and to sculpt willing electorates. The fact that ‘Russian’ parties have, to date, been largely marginalised by ‘Latvian’ parties is therefore testament to the boundaries which have been erected in Latvian politics. Of course, this ethnicisation is itself a consequence of Latvian state policies which have often served to demarcate the country’s two main communities. The citizenship law, along with policies on education and language have allowed Russian-speakers to solidify their group identity. This group identity could not have been so easily imagined without the shared sense of marginalisation and discrimination which were facilitated by such policies. If, for example, citizenship had been granted to all Russian-speakers then it is likely that large numbers of Russian-speakers would have been happy to vote for what are now perceived as ‘Latvian’ parties. As discussed above, a large proportion of Russian-speakers supported Latvian independence and participated in the activities of the Popular Front. The policies which denied these people a legitimate place within Latvian political life must therefore be seen as highly significant. Of course, not all of those who can be broadly categorised as ‘Russian-speakers’ have approved of the term. In chapter six, for example, we shall see that a number of native speakers of Russian are very uncomfortable with this term, especially for those of the older generations. Nevertheless, as

our media analysis has revealed, the term has gained popular acceptance in the fields of media and politics and has been increasingly employed as a dichotomising device.

In light of the ethnicisation of Latvian politics a comparison with Estonia is especially revealing. Although there are also ethnic tensions in Latvia's northern neighbour, a number of commentators have seen the nascent emergence of a more globalised, more 'European', and less ethnicised identity in Estonia (Vihalemm & Masso, 2003; Laitin, 2003). This development can be explained by the fact that politics is far less divided along ethnic lines in Estonia compared to Latvia and therefore gives weight to the argument that the field of politics is highly influential in forming national identities.

The findings of this chapter, however, need to be contextualised through reference to actual bottom-up process of identity construction and discursive consumption and decoding. It is clear that in the field of politics there is a sharp division between 'Russian' and 'Latvian' parties and interests. In order to understand the impact of this division more fully it is necessary to examine the actual positions of Russian-speakers, and to assess how they integrate elite discourses into their own perceptions of their identities.

Chapter 6:
Examining
Russian-speaking
identity from below

Methodology

One of the potential pitfalls of pursuing a discourse-analysis approach to the study of national identities is that it can be easy to get carried away with a narrow focus on selected discourses. For example, there might be a temptation to study media discourses in isolation from any consideration of how these discourses are actually integrated into the identities of those people who read (or even of those who do not read) the discourses in question. In many respects this brings us back to our discussion of media effects – i.e. how much impact do media discourses actually have on people's attitudes and behaviour. Most commonly a discursive approach will necessarily have to be based on the ontological assumption that discursive actors create meaning. This, in turn, would indicate that it is important to study the discursive content of specific discursive agents, be they journalists, politicians, academics etc. While my theoretical section has demonstrated my own preference for a constructivist position, I am also aware that the sheer number of potentially creative agents means that it would be impossible to conduct a comprehensive study of discourse for any given topic. It is precisely for this reason that CDA has traditionally focused on the areas deemed to be most discursively creative (powerful in the sense that I have elaborated upon above): the fields of politics and the media. This makes logical sense when we consider the outreach and exposure politicians and journalists enjoy. Nevertheless, this is not without its problems.

The major potential problem is that, by focusing solely on the moment of *production*, we can miss the importance of the moment of *consumption* – for Stuart Hall (1980b) encoding and decoding respectively (see chapter two). Moreover, by privileging the moment of production when trying to map out the contours of group identities, we effectively end up speaking on behalf of large groups of individuals without letting them have any input into our conclusions. In short, just because a group of people is written about or constructed in a particular way by a small group of 'powerful' individuals, this does not necessarily mean that this group actually shares the views and behavioural patterns ascribed to them.

In light of this potential pitfall I turned to focus groups in order to assess the process of consumption, or decoding, of media and political discourse by Russian-speakers in Latvia. The focus groups were conducted in Riga, with the assistance of the Baltic Institute for Social Sciences, and consisted of three groups of participants. The first group (n=10) were aged between 19 and 20 and were all undergraduate students enrolled on various degree courses in Riga. The second group (n=8) were post-graduate students from Riga, aged from 22-25 years of age. The third and final group (n=10) were aged 40-60 and were all permanent residents of Riga. All participants were native speakers of Russian, where Russian was considered as their first language.

Inevitably there is a certain amount of sample bias as a result of these group compositions. However, I felt that this sample bias was offset by the findings of my survey data which was able to cover a broader cross-section of Russian-speakers and revealed a number of similar trends among the population. Additionally, the parameters for these groups were deliberately chosen in order to focus primarily on younger Russian-speakers, especially those who had been school children during the mass protests against Latvia's education reform in 2003/4. During these protests the participants of the first group would have been aged 11-12 and those of the second group 14-17, meaning that this period of time could have been a formative one in their attitudes towards the Latvian state and language. The group of undergraduates would also have been more affected by the actual implementation of the education reforms in the classroom.

Another reason to focus on this younger and more educated cohort was that previous research has shown that younger Russian-speakers are more likely to possess advanced language skills in Latvian (Zepa *at. 2008*), and that language knowledge is positively correlated with a preference for integration (Pisarenko 2006). Russian-speakers enrolled on undergraduate and postgraduate courses at a Latvian university would necessarily have to possess a high level of competency in Latvian. In order to understand how Russian-speakers were, or were not, able to integrate Latvia and Russia's official discourses and narratives, it therefore made logical sense to focus on this group, who would theoretically have a great desire to integrate into Latvian society, and who were already in a linguistic position to do so. The older group of

respondents was also chosen in order to contrast the opinions of people who were already adults (aged, as they would have been between 20 and 40) when the Soviet Union collapsed.

In the course of these focus groups I asked a number of questions asking the respondents how they felt in relation to Latvia, Russia, and the Soviet Union, and to various aspects of their identity and sense of belonging. In general the questions arose from my discourse analysis and represent the main topics that I uncovered during this process. I felt it was important to compare the discursive content of the Russian-language press with the actual attitudes displayed by Russian-speakers.

Additionally, in an attempt to further examine the decoding process the participants were all presented with a series of five extracts from *Chas* which they were then asked to read and to then to make comments regarding the contents of what they had read (see appendix 1 for a full reproduction of all of the texts used). The participants were also asked to read and comment on an extract from a series of political proposals found on Harmony Centre's website (also included in appendix 1). I felt that this would be an ideal opportunity to experience first-hand the decoding process, and to see to what extent these groups of Russian-speaking people would or would not critically and unquestionably consume the presented discourses.

Focus groups

Кто Вы? Who are you?

The first question that was posed to all three of the Russian-speaking focus groups was how they would characterise their nationality (*kto vi po natsional'nosti?*). Before moving to an analysis of the answers that were given by the respondents, it is important to bear in mind the historical connotations and usage that have been sedimented within this linguistic sign 'nationality' (Russian *natsional'nost'*, Latvian *tautība*) in its Latvian context. During the Soviet Union, although everyone was a citizen of the USSR, 'nationality' was not defined by one's citizenship. Instead, in every Soviet citizen's passport the individual nationality of the bearer was recorded. The person could choose to record the nationality (sometimes translated

into English as ethnicity in this context) of either one of their parents, but could not chose to denote nationality based on their residence. Thus, even if a person was resident in, for example, the Soviet Republic of Moldova all their life, and felt a genuine attachment to that republic, yet their parents were both ‘Russian’, then they had no choice but to also be officially classed as Russian.

The complexities of this Soviet categorisation of nationality were clearly seen in the responses to my initial question, especially among the older generation of respondents:

You have to understand, it’s very complicated. For example, my bloodline (*rod*) is so mixed up that I can’t say what my nationality is. I have Poles in my bloodline, I have Russians. In spirit I’m a Russian insomuch as my language is Russian and I consider myself to be Russian. It’s complicated to say what my nationality is. (Respondent aged 40-60)

Well for me it was probably more complicated because my family was mixed. My mother was Latvian, my father Russian. But I went to a Russian school. When I was 16 and it was time to choose my nationality I chose Russian. (Respondent aged 40-60)

Nevertheless, even taking into account the complexities of describing their nationality, the vast majority of respondents in this age group (including the two examples given above) preferred to refer to themselves as Russian:

I’m Russian and very proud of it, although I have various mixed ancestry everywhere. But I consider my identity as Russian. For my child, whose father is 100% (*chistokrovni*) Ukrainian, we chose Russian nationality. We didn’t try to masquerade as this or that. (Respondent aged 40-60)

I’m half Russian, half Belarusian, but I also consider myself Russian. (Respondent aged 40-60)

However, one of the most interesting things about this identification within this age group, was that even with such an apparent affinity and attachment to being Russian, there was a near unanimous disapproval for the term ‘Russian-speaker’. When asked if they approved of the term ‘Russian-speaking community’ (*Russkoyazichnaya ili Russkogovoryashchaya obshchina*)

only one person indicated that they had no objections to the term. The other respondents in this age group expressed a great deal of unease at the term:

Because it's somehow offensive. Why Russian-speakers? Why not Polish-speakers or Latvian-speakers, why just Russian-speakers? (Respondent aged 40-60)

No, please tell me, there's the word 'non-citizen' right? That's the word they thought up for us, and here they thought up 'Russian-speakers'... They invented it that's all! (Respondent aged 40-60)

In the two groups of undergraduate and postgraduate students a small number of respondents expressed a similar complexity of being able to state their nationality. However, there was a lack of any in-depth discussion of family histories, bloodlines, or the different nationalities in the respondents' family trees, as witnessed in the older age group. Instead, the younger participants seemed to be far happier simply to state that they were Russian, with perhaps a fleeting indication that their genealogy was somewhat mixed:

I'm Russian, and my nationality is Russian. (Undergraduate respondent)

Russian is the generally accepted marker of identity because, in actual fact, most people have mixed blood. (Postgraduate respondent)

Russian yes. With all sorts of other roots (*so vcyakimi pomesyami*). (Postgraduate respondent)

What was also significant, from the perspective of this research, was that the younger groups of participants, in contrast to the older age group, did not voice any concerns with the term 'Russian-speakers' as a valid signifier. Not one person in either of the undergraduate or postgraduate sample groups stated any problem with this term when asked if they approved of it:

Well it's our term (laughter)! (Postgraduate respondent)

This contentment with the term Russian-speaker for younger generations of 'Russian-speakers' is highly significant. As I have stated in previous chapters, the term 'Russian-speakers' has been used with increasing frequency by the media and by political elites in

Latvia, who have invested a lot of effort into creating and strengthening this group. Based on the small sample of my focus groups, there is therefore evidence that this political and journalistic trend *has* had an influence on the way young, non-Latvian, Russian-speakers feel about and imagine themselves as a group of people. This concurs with Vladislavs Volkovs' research which revealed that 'the majority of Russian youth have a language identity. Their language identity appears to be the most significant national self-confidence factor, even more important than the factor of ethnic origin' (as cited in State Language Commission, 2008: 137)0

Along with this general acceptance of the term Russian-speaker, participants in both student groups used the term 'Balts' to describe themselves:

(Respondent 1) Baltic or Latvian (*latviiskii*) are practically the same. Simply the Baltic states; Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. So we're Balts (*pribalti*).

(Respondent 2) Yes, most likely we're Balts. (Two undergraduate students)

In general we're Balts (*baltiitsi*), those who are here are Balts (*pribalti*) because, at the end of the day, we live in Latvia, we live in this society, and we also communicate with the Latvian nation (*narod*). Nevertheless, it seems to me that they take things from us and we take things from them. (Postgraduate respondent)

However, even though the participants of my focus groups were happy to conceptualise themselves as Russians, or (primarily for the younger respondents) Russian-speakers, they also drew a sharp distinction between Russia and Europe, and interestingly placed themselves firmly on the side of Europe:

Here we have the contradistinction of Europe and Russia. This goes for Russians in Estonia and Latvia. We need to view Russians like the Baltic Germans who lived here at the start of the First World War. (Postgraduate respondent)

I was in Pskov, practically on the border with Latvia and I didn't really notice any great difference. But because Latvia is Europe and Russia isn't Europe, the standard of living naturally differs. (Undergraduate student)

It is interesting that the concept of Europe was used in a fundamentally different way from the way it was used in the Russian-language press. Instead of Europe being used as a benchmark with which to judge Latvia's claims to civility and enlightenment, the Russian-speaking respondents in my research used Europe as a *positive* means to distinguish between Latvia and Russia. In other words, instead of 'Europe' representing an anti-discursive mechanism, here it has an integrational-discursive function. Here, the Europe of Latvia's state-building project finds much greater accord with the actual discourse and understandings of Russian-speakers than found within the media. Indeed, in every instance where the words 'Europe' or 'European' occurred in all three focus group discussions (a total of 41 instances), never was this in connection with a negative, anti-discursive portrayal of Latvia. Instead, it was most commonly linked to an integrational discourse linking Latvia with Europe, and even an 'othering' function of depicting Russia, and Russians in Russia, as non-European and somewhat backwards.

(Respondent 1) I don't know, I think Russia has become outdated.

(Respondent 2) Sovietdom (*sovdepiya*)! (laughter)

(Respondent 3) Well it's different there. Europe is Europe. There are European standards and quality products. (Three undergraduate respondents)

It was among the group of undergraduates where the connection between Latvia and Europe was most pronounced. Thoroughly in line with the narrative of the 'return to Europe', one undergraduate stated that:

It's a straightforward fact that [Latvia] is a more modern country than Russia. Latvia was always more modern and that's why people came over here to live.

The postgraduate group also expressed an understanding that Latvia was far more European than Russia. One postgraduate related how customer service in Russian shops was of a very poor level:

- (Respondent 1) You go into a shop and people are very aggressive: “what do you want?” or “what are you standing around for?”...
- (Respondent 2) Well here we’re closer to the European level, but there it’s just Russia – which isn’t like anywhere else.
- (Respondent 1) Yes and all these manners come from Europe. (Two postgraduate respondents)

In contrast, the participants from the older group of respondents only mentioned Europe or European on five occasions and four of these were more neutral references to people moving to European countries. Admittedly these ‘neutral’ references could also be seen as significant – i.e. that Latvia is considered distinct from the ‘Europe’ of these instances. Nevertheless, among this group, there was again a distinct absence of any negative use of the term European in relation to Latvia. Tentatively then, we could say that, among younger respondents, the far higher frequency of instances of positive geographical alignment with Europe, points to an increasing integration of Russian-speaking discourse within official Latvian discourse.

The influence of Russia: politics, culture, and historical memory-myths

One thing we can say for sure, from all of the focus groups, is that Russian-speakers generally consider themselves to be fundamentally different from Russians in Russia. In all three of the groups this was a unanimously accepted position:

- (Respondent 1) We’re completely different; like they say and joke about ‘vodka and *vobla*’. They’re so different there...we’ve somehow become Europeanised ...When you arrive in Moscow everything is different.
- (Respondent 2) And they’re different.
- (Respondent 3) They’re different culturally. We’re more reserved, not like Russians in terms of temperament – they’re more emotional. (Three respondents aged 40-60)

This difference was unequivocally outlined in all three focus groups. Interestingly, alongside the geographical division of Europe-Russia, a number of additional stereotypes were invoked in order to further distance Russians in Russia from Russian-speakers in Latvia. In the above example respondent 1 makes mention of ‘vodka and *vobla*’. This is a reference to an infamous statement made by ex-Latvian president Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga. President Vīķe-Freiberga gave a radio interview in 2005 in which she discussed May 9 and the attitudes of a number of Russian-speaking people in Latvia, in which she stated: ‘Of course, we won't change the conscience of those old Russians who on May 9 will wrap their *Vobla* in newspaper, drink *vodka* and sing *chastushki* while remembering how they heroically conquered the Baltics’ (Baltic Times, 09/02/05).³⁵ Notwithstanding the conversation being in Latvian, President Vīķe-Freiberga purposefully used the words *vobla* (dried and salted Roach usually drunk with beer), *vodka*, and *chastushki* (traditional Russian folk songs) in Russian. However, these stereotypes are here turned around and used in reference to Russians *in Russia*. Another participant joked that the difference between Russians in Russia and Russians in Latvia was that:

We don't throw [sunflower] seeds³⁶ on the streets and bottles on the Metro (laughter). (Respondent aged 40-60)

Nevertheless, even with a clear distinction for most respondents between Russians in Russia and Latvian Russians, the abstract concept of Russia still exerted a meaningful attractive force. Within Brubaker's triadic nexus, which has been employed throughout this research, one of the main poles of attraction for national minorities is their ‘historical homeland’. For Russian-speakers in Latvia this is generally presumed to be Russia (although of course, there may exist numerous historical homelands; Belarus, Ukraine etc.). When asked what the respondents considered to be their homeland (*rodina*), they were unanimous in citing Latvia as their homeland. Then asked if Russia also represented some form of homeland, the participants agreed that it did. One undergraduate referred to Russia as their ‘secondary (*vtorostepeni*) homeland’, others as their ‘spiritual homeland’:

³⁵ I have tidied up the English translation used in the Baltic Times and also put the words *vobla*, *vodka*, and *Chastushki* back into their original Russian in the way that President Vīķe-Freiberga used them.

³⁶ In Russia sunflower seeds are a popular snack, often sold by street vendors. The reference here is to the shells of the seeds which are often spat out or thrown away onto the street – a practice often seen as uncouth.

As far as the question of [our] relationship with Russia goes, it's a question which in principle has two sides; because in the grand scheme of things there are two Russias. One Russia as a certain, you could say, *spiritual homeland* primarily because of the Russian language and literature which we've learnt at school from a young age – all the writers of Russian literature, and also our parents being from there. And then there's Russia as a modern state – the Russian Federation. I think that the majority of Russians in Latvia don't have any concrete ties with the state, with the Russian Federation, or with the political class. But the ties with Russia as, I don't know, the Russian hockey team, May 9 and so forth are much stronger and much deeper. (Postgraduate respondent, emphasis added)

This distinction between the two Russias: one a political entity, the other a historical, cultural, and symbolic entity, seemed to sum up the general attitude towards 'Russia'. This was underlined by the responses elicited by an excerpt from *Chas* which was distributed among the participants for discussion. In the article Konstantin Kosachev, the then chairman of Russia's Duma Committee on Foreign Affairs, was quoted as saying:

We should not restrict our campaigning for the Russian world simply to its cultural and historical aspects. It is all good and well if people love Russia, speak Russian, and play Russian folk instruments. But this is not enough.

Does not every diaspora lobby for the interests of its fatherland from the country of its residence? (*Chas*, 11/12/08 – see appendix 1:4)

The assertion that Russian-speakers in Latvia could be used as some form of lobbying group for the interests of the Russian Federation was generally met with a mix of amusement and derision:

It's incredible that such an educated person can say such funny things. (Respondent aged 40-60)

In all honesty I probably consider myself a Latvian (*latviika*)...Yes Russia is my historical homeland, but I have never been there, and if the truth be told I'm not going to fight for them. (Undergraduate respondent)

Nevertheless, in the same *Chas* article Mr. Kosachev refers to ‘the Russian world’ which for him clearly includes Latvia. Asked whether the respondents were in fact living in this so-called Russian world the answer came back that, yes, indeed they did inhabit such a space:

It’s our world, the world of Russians in Latvia. (Respondent aged 40-60)

Again, however, the distinction was clearly drawn between the cultural Russian world and the political Russian world:

The Russian world (*russskii mir*) but not the world of the Russian Federation (*rossiiskii mir*). (Postgraduate respondent)

In the previous section we discussed the potential impact of Russia on the identity formation of Russian-speakers in Latvia. Politically the responses of my focus group participants point to a negligible potential for the Russian Federation to have any meaningful impact on Latvian Russian-speakers. However, culturally there is an obvious link between the ‘historical homeland’ of Russia and the world inhabited by contemporary Russian-speakers in Latvia. As we have seen, one of the main stated areas of concern for the Russian Federation in respect to its foreign policy has been a desire to strengthen its historical interpretation of the Second World War. I was interested to see how the participants would respond to the question of the occupation. In truth there was a wide range of responses in answer to whether it was fair to talk of Soviet occupation in the Baltic states.³⁷ Some expressed a straightforward acceptance of the occupation:

It’s a political game. There was an occupation. What, in 1940 did someone invite [the Soviets] in? That’s all nonsense. (Respondent aged 40-60)

Others were more inclined to defend the actions of the Soviet Union:

Latvians think that the Russians should have liberated this country and then just left. In reality, if we think about it logically, what would have happened if the Germans had remained here all this time? They would have set up

³⁷ For further discussion of this topic see the section below based on my survey data from May 9 in which this question was directly addressed.

concentration camps and killed the Latvians in these camps. After all that it's just funny to hear that the Latvians aren't happy. (Undergraduate respondent)

On the other hand a number of people also adopted a fairly noncommittal stance towards the question of occupation, perhaps seeing it as an issue that should simply be put to rest:

There are always two sides to anything and so there's never one opinion. That's why people are never satisfied...and why it's completely senseless. In Latvia it's easier to keep quiet than to prove your point of view, or to prove that you're right. (Undergraduate respondent)

Generally however, even if the concrete question of whether or not there was a Soviet occupation was seen primarily as a 'problem of terminology' (postgraduate student), the respondents were far more eager to point out that the Soviet Union was not an entirely negative phenomenon for Latvia. Examples were given of factories that used to operate in Soviet times which have since been closed, and of a life that was, in many respects, better than at present.

The question of the occupation then was treated on two levels. On one level there was the academic question of a correct legal and moral definition for the events of World War II. On another level there was a discussion of the ways in which the acceptance of occupation was manipulated by certain political forces:

If we just look at the terminology [of the word occupation] then I'm completely tolerant of it and think it's fine. But for Latvians occupation is a real kind of hurt.

...well at the moment, I don't know, I think that now they only talk about it to turn Latvians against Russians. There's even the Museum of Occupation which is next to here. (Two undergraduate respondents)

Thus, even in the above example, when the Museum of Occupation was mentioned in connection with the desire to turn Latvians against Russians, the respondent, when asked whether they objected to the museum, stated that they did not. It would seem therefore, that the respondents were wary of the Latvian discourse of occupation, which is so observable in media and political discourse. According to the official discourse, as implemented in the

country's official policies on citizenship, and enshrined in, among other things, the Museum of the Occupation, the majority of Russian-speakers are a direct consequence of occupation. Therefore, for a majority of Russian-speakers, to admit to occupation is to admit to being an occupant:

Well it's not nice to be occupants of course, but you get used to it. (Respondent aged 40-60)

Latvians are always saying, and I hear it, "Russian occupants (*Krievu okupanti*)" and so on. (Undergraduate respondent)

In terms of placing themselves neatly within the official discourses of the Russian Federation or of Latvia, Russian-speakers are thus in a difficult position. If they were to adopt a fully integrational discursive approach to the question of occupation then it would only serve to further alienate them from the Latvian state and push them 'back' towards Russia – it would be tantamount to admitting that they have no morally or legally justified place in modern Latvia. On the other hand, as we have seen, the attraction of the Russian Federation is actually rather weak, even if the more abstract attraction of 'cultural Russia' is relatively strong.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding this tension, we can generally surmise that the official discourse of Russia, vis-à-vis its historical interpretation of the Second World War, is largely supported by Russian-speakers in Latvia. In many ways the memory-myths of the war have been passed down from parents and grandparents to the younger generations of Russian-speakers. For this reason the respondents related the great importance they attached to May 9. A number of people noted that their parents or grandparents participated in the war and that they had a duty to pay their respects for the sacrifices that were made for them. The discursive bonds of family should not be underestimated here. For Russian-speakers to integrate into the official Latvian discourse of occupation, this would necessarily entail admitting that the heroic achievements of their parents and grandparents were perhaps not as heroic as some have suggested:

My great-grandfather and great-grandmother, who are now in heaven, lived through the war. And my grandmother and grandfather both were alive at the time of the war. People lived and [May 9] is about remembering. They liberated us from fascism. They aren't occupiers but liberators! (Postgraduate respondent)

One has only to tune into Russian (*rossiiskii*) television for a few days to see how Red Army veterans are treated with the utmost reverence, and to note the sheer volume of broadcasts devoted to the theme of the Great Patriotic War including countless documentaries and feature-length films. As was evidenced in the Kononov Vs Latvia case in the European Court of Human Rights (see chapter three), even when there is evidence to suggest that an individual in the Soviet army committed heinous crimes during the war, that is not enough for everyone to doubt his heroism and honour, for they were fighting for a sacred cause.

It thus seems ‘natural’ that Russian-speakers would not wish to defile the sacred memory of their relatives by debasing their heroic achievements. For this reason a number of subsequent positions are also maintained. As we noted above, a number of respondents pointed to the positive achievements of the Soviet Union in Latvia, not least of course saving the country from the despotism of fascism, but also its positive achievements in Latvia’s social and economic development:

Yes in principle, almost all of what was built in Latvia was built when the Russians were here, when we had the Soviet Union. But they still whine about it today (laughter). (Undergraduate respondent)

Indeed, as we have already discussed, memory is a very different thing from memory-myths. In the context of Russian-speakers in Latvia, the memory of the Second World War has been (mostly) buried with the parents and grandparents of today’s Russian-speakers. In its place we now have a generally accepted collective *memory-myth* of the war. This memory myth, instead of representing a view from one point in time, contextualises and justifies the actions of a particular time within the understandings of the subsequent history which followed the war. Thus, the memory-myth of the Second World War would seem to be an extremely important nodal point in the suturing of Russian-speaking identity in Latvia.

To this end, the importance of the Russian Federation is significant in the maintaining of such memory myths. It is primarily in the mythscape of the Soviet Union and subsequently Russia where this memory has been cultivated (Weiner, 1996; Tumarkin 1987). Nevertheless, this is

not to say that there was not an observable influence also from the Latvian state and from various Latvian sources.

The influence of Latvia: integrational or anti-discourse?

The data gathered from my focus groups, just as with the data from my media analysis, reveals a complex relationship between Russian-speakers and the Latvian state. In both instances there were occurrences of both anti and integrational discourse in relation to Latvian state discourses and narratives. To deal with this complex issue I will firstly outline the ways in which Russian-speakers employed integrational discourse within the focus groups, followed by an examination of instances of anti-discourse. This analysis will later be compared to my media analysis in order to determine if there truly is a clear link between the discursive strategies found within the Russian-language media and the discursive attitudes of Russian-speakers.

In my media analysis of Latvian newspaper discourse I found a great deal of integrational discourse whereby Russian-speakers were linked into historically established Latvian discursive relations. In the course of the focus groups which I conducted there was also a high frequency of Russian-speakers integrating into Latvian discursive understandings. On the topic of May 9, as we have seen, although generally the respondents adhered to the standard official interpretation of historical events of the Russian Federation, there *were* nonetheless a few participants who were happy to say there was an occupation. Added to this, there were indications that the respondents were generally aware that the history of the Second World War was perhaps not as straightforward as it was often presented in either the Russian or Latvian official versions.

This was evident in our discussions of the March 16 marches in remembrance of the Latvian Waffen SS legionnaires. Instead of condemning the marches wholesale, the participants expressed an acknowledgement that history was complicated:

(Respondent 1) It's actually complicated. Everyone has their own truth.

- (Respondent 2) It's their right [to march]. We can't condemn these old men who participate. They were alive back then.
- (Respondent 1) They have their rights, they see things in their own way. They were on the other side. It's really complicated when we judge them on various grounds. But those people have it stuck in their minds. They were on the other side, and they see things completely differently.
- (Respondent 3) We can't condemn them. (Three postgraduate respondents)

There were also many other instances where the Russian-speaking participants of my focus groups expressed opinions which could be categorised as integrational discourse. Firstly there was a deep affection for Latvia as a beautiful and good place to live:

Well personally I like it in Latvia; it's a beautiful place Riga, and Latvia.
(Undergraduate respondent)

Moreover, in response to the question 'Do you identify more with Russia or Latvia?' everyone responded that they identified more with Latvia:

[I identify more] with Latvia most likely. Russia is somehow far away and there are so many people there that you don't have any real place. But in Latvia you feel needed. (Postgraduate respondent)

Added to this there was not a single instance of any respondent in any of the three groups who expressed a negative opinion towards Latvian culture or towards the Latvian language in and of itself. Instead there was a widely accepted belief that everyone in Latvia should learn Latvian, and should also respect Latvian culture.

This is an extremely beautiful country and without the Latvian language it wouldn't be Latvia. And I would have thought that, in principle, most people sitting here also wouldn't want Latvian to disappear. (Undergraduate student)

The state language is Latvian and we should know Latvian. (Respondent aged 40-60)

One of the main state mechanisms which has been utilised in order to secure the status of the Latvian language has, of course, been Latvia's education reforms which came into force in 2004 (see chapters three and five). A very interesting thing which transpired from the focus groups was that, contrary to my personal expectations, the respondents did not condemn the 2004 education reforms which affected Russian-speaking schools. It should be remembered that the respondents from both the undergraduate and postgraduate group were of an age that they would have been pupils in 2003-4 during the furore surrounding the education reforms – indeed, many of them recalled attending the protests. However, when questioned about their views on the reforms, most people were actually rather stoical about the effects of the reforms, and even viewed them positively:

When the reforms happened, it was mostly secondary school pupils who were affected by them; people who in many schools hadn't been learning Latvian from an early age...But now people learn Latvian from the first year of school, and even from pre-school. So here there's practically no problem for the majority because from childhood they know Latvian. (Postgraduate respondent)

It's good like it is now. Even if we've been coerced then at least we've been coerced. And if I know Latvian then it's thanks to this coercion which is set out by this law. (Undergraduate respondent)

However, before getting carried away with the extent of Russian-speakers' identification with Latvia, Latvian culture, and Latvian language, we should also consider the numerous instances where Russian-speakers had great difficulty integrating into Latvian discourse. In the Russian-language press my analysis revealed three main discursive strategies, one of which I categorised as anti-discourse. Within this strategy Russian-speakers are often depicted as highly discriminated against and journalists spend a great deal of time highlighting just how marginalised Russian-speakers are (Golubeva et al, 2007).

However, notwithstanding the tendency for Latvia's Russian-language press to focus on personal stories and narratives in pursuit of this goal (Zelče & Brikše, 2008: 92) the data from my focus groups revealed a particular nuance of Russian-speakers' existence in Latvia that was not so evident in my media analysis. In the Russian-language press the action of drawing attention to the discrimination of Russian-speakers serves a useful 'othering' function: 'look how *they* treat *us*!' However, for the participants of my focus groups, when they talked of

instances where they have felt excluded from certain of Latvia's social and political spheres, they did not necessarily link this with an attempt to depict the monstrous Latvian 'other'. Instead there was often simply sadness that at some level they did not quite belong in Latvia:

I'm appalled by the words of my son, who, in a way, represents young people. He returns home and says "Mum, at university in England, I talk with the guys from different European countries. They tell me about their homeland and I get the impression that they love their homeland". And maybe he and others from Latvia miss certain things from home; they return home and "Oh this is where I used to play" "This is where I went to pre-school". But they don't have that feeling of homeland and they find that hard. (Respondent aged 40-60)

I think that Russians feel more at ease abroad than Latvians...I'm saying this based on my friends and acquaintances, because this is our home country, but still it's not quite like that. The Latvian language and all the rest, and many people know Latvian, but still it's a little different. Latvians abroad miss Latvia. For them it's more of a homeland than for us. (Postgraduate respondent)

Of course, on one level it is rather sad to hear such sentiments. However, it is also encouraging that they were not accompanied by any vitriol directed towards Latvians or any other group. In fact the respondents showed a great deal of empathy towards the position of Latvians – a phenomenon almost wholly absent from the pages of the Russian-language press:

Well because in Riga it's roughly 50% Russian and 50% Latvian. You walk along the street and only hear Russian. It's not nice for Latvians which is why they make a fuss about it. Put yourself in their position – imagine I live in England and when I walk down the street there's only Latvians instead of people from England. Well it wouldn't be nice. (Undergraduate respondent)

A very telling example of this empathy was displayed by one postgraduate who evidently had strong feelings on the issue of non-citizenship. However, even though he was able to convey his displeasure at this phenomenon, he was also at pains to bring attention to the plight of 'the Latvian nation' which he presumably felt went some way to explaining the current situation:

The thing is that we were born in the Soviet Union and ended up in Latvia. So the Union fell apart and we, kind of, it's kind of our homeland – I was born here but still we don't feel it...Recently I saw a TV programme where they were talking with our president Zalters, and for the Latvians, for the Latvian nation (*latishskii narod*) it was much harder in the Soviet Union. He mentioned

that they lived a double life, i.e. the Soviet Union, Russian language, I mean when they left their homes it was a Russian community, and they could only live a normal life at home, i.e. in Latvian.

But there's still this old, completely worn-out and tarnished thing – the fact that noncitizens don't have 'non-citizen' written in their passport, but 'alien'.³⁸
(Postgraduate respondent)

Therefore there *were* cases where the focus group participants cited discrimination against them for being Russian-speakers. Sometime this was more subtly expressed (as in the above quotation), sometimes it was more explicit. However, the anger expressed in the pages of *Chas* was notably toned down. Instead Russian-speakers generally expressed a sense of miscomprehension rather than anger at certain phenomena, not least the status of 'non-citizens' for a large proportion of the population:

My dad categorically refuses to learn Latvian because he thinks that he was born here – he will soon be 50. He pays a crazy amount of tax, but for some reason he's not considered the same citizen as, I don't know, the majority of people. And so he has this anger, he has his principles and so that's where the enmity comes from. *Well not enmity, rather miscomprehension.*
(Undergraduate respondent, emphasis added)

Certainly it is significant that the respondent in the above quotation chose to qualify her father's position from 'enmity' to 'miscomprehension'. Indeed, in response to this statement another undergraduate student stated:

If I'm honest, then if he thinks like that, then I couldn't disagree more with him. It's just that I think it's a problem of the state. I'm also a non-citizen of Latvia but I'm going to take the exam, you know I want to be a citizen of this country and I don't really want to leave here. (Undergraduate respondent)

Here it is interesting that the problem is ascribed as a state problem rather than resulting from the discriminatory actions of certain nationalistic Latvians (as it is often portrayed in the Russian-language press). Moreover, the respondent above was more than willing to accept the state's conditions for naturalisation and had a real desire to have a meaningful and legitimate place in Latvia and the Latvian state.

³⁸ The words 'noncitizen' and 'alien' were used here in English

Certainly one potential reason why Russian-speakers seem to be more phlegmatic in assessing their perceived discrimination in Latvia is that they are able to differentiate between interpersonal and intergroup relations. Studies have often found a link between positive interpersonal contacts across groups and improved intergroup relations. The most developed literature in this regard comes from social psychology and intergroup contact theory. Indeed, in Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) meta-analysis of 516 studies which employed such an approach, as many as 95% reported a negative relationship between intergroup contact and prejudice. Additionally friendships which transcend group boundaries have also been found to negatively correlate with prejudice (Hewstone et al., 2006; Van Dick et al., 2004). In the course of my focus group research the respondents indicated that they had a fairly high level of contact with Latvians either at work or in a social setting, and that they had little or no problems interacting with Latvians:

In my opinion it depends on the individual. So, like it or not, the general feeling between Russians and Latvians has formed like it has. However, when we're talking about an individual, when you take a concrete person, then in principle it's really easy, in my opinion, to talk with Latvians...I have some acquaintances, not like super-good friends, just good acquaintances and we study together, relax, i.e. we all get on without any problems. There are jerks among Russians and among Latvians. (Postgraduate respondent)

Therefore, because of the relatively high level of contact between Russian-speakers and Latvians, the respondents were able to openly acknowledge that the intergroup distance between Latvians and Russian-speakers was most visible in the media and political spheres, and in everyday life the two communities were far closer. In terms of interpersonal relations, Russian-speakers were thus much more inclined to suggest that, on the whole, relations were not too bad (or at least not as bad as the press would have us believe). This is a vitally important point to consider for our study. It would suggest that the distinctness of the two discursively proscribed communities seen within the country's media and politics is perhaps not as visible in the everyday interactions of Latvia's inhabitants.

However, even though the focus group respondents were more balanced in their opinions than journalists, a number of them nonetheless expressed their displeasure at the way Russian-speakers were sometimes treated in Latvia:

Come on, let's be honest. It's simply that they have cast aside the Russians who voted for their homeland, for independence. They just took them and then cast them aside rather than giving everyone citizenship to everyone who had come here. (Respondent aged 40-60)

The most common gripe among the focus group participants was this issue of citizenship. For many people it would seem that the idea of non-citizenship is degrading and insulting. One man in the older age group joked that Russians were no longer lowly 'occupants' in Latvia:

Now Russians have lessened that to the grand status of....non-citizens!
(Laughter) (Respondent aged 40-60)

It would seem that the reason why the issue of non-citizenship is so offensive to Russian-speakers, is that it represents the most visible and actual sign that they have no legitimate place in Latvia. A discussion of the citizenship issue led one respondent to ask:

Why do we always have to be second class people? (Respondent aged 40-60)

Also, for the sake of balance, it should be pointed out here that there were a few occasions when, more in line with the media discourse, Latvian nationalists were singled out for criticism:

Of course we need to know Latvian. That's indisputable. It's just that among Latvians there are people who think that Latvia is just for Latvians, that if you're a Russian, then you should go to live in Russia...nationalists probably.
(Undergraduate respondent)

Moreover, there was a generally accepted notion that the Russian-speaking community, as a community, was indeed separate from the Latvian community. One undergraduate participant was particularly forceful in voicing their opinions. Asked whether the Russian-speaking community was very different from the Latvian community, they replied:

They are completely different. For example, I study at the University of Latvia and a majority of people there are Latvians, so in a way there is a lot of pressure on Russians. For example, if we don't know Latvian then we're somehow obliged to learn it. That's why since 1991, when Latvia became a separate state, there's been a war between Russians and Latvians. You know, it's complicated for Russians in Latvia. (Undergraduate respondent)

Nevertheless, generally (as discussed above) the participants of the focus groups saw interpersonal relations in a relatively positive light. Indeed, while there was an abstract understanding that the two (imagined) communities were very separate, there was still a great deal of empathy, open-mindedness, and collectedness displayed by the respondents in the face of potentially very emotive issues. Perhaps one respondent summed up the general mood:

There are only two nationalities: a good person and a bad person. (Respondent aged 40-60)

In search of homeland: finding a legitimate place for Russian-speakers in Latvia

In my media analysis the third major area that I examined was constructive discourse. In the Russian-language press this was employed as an increasingly important discursive strategy which allowed Russian-speakers to preserve many discursive connections with their 'Russian' heritage and cultural belonging, while also acknowledging their loyalty and belonging to Latvia. In the media discourse this was achieved by presenting Russian-speakers as an economic, cultural, and political bridge between Russia and Latvia (Europe). Certainly this was a strategy that was also evidenced in my focus group discussions. However, it was also accompanied by a counter-strategy – that of indicating that Russian-speakers were *neither* Russian *nor* Latvian, and that they were a group of people stranded without a culture to call their own. On the one hand this could be perceived as a destructive, rather than constructive, discursive strategy. However, the discursive process of self-marginalisation can also be seen as constructive, inasmuch as it has potential to unite a group of people around the idea of marginalisation and differentness. When asked if they considered Latvian culture part of their culture, a number of postgraduate students replied:

- (Respondent 1) No. It's Latvian culture
- (Respondent 2) As regards the culture of Latvia, we hardly, I mean, we don't try to penetrate it. It's there and that's fine.
- (Respondent 1) Just like they don't penetrate [Russian culture].
- (Respondent 2) It's not our [culture]. I mean from the outset we don't relate to Russia, although we relate to the Russian nation (*narod*). But we don't relate to Russia, and neither do we relate to Latvian culture. So that's the sort of community we have here. (Two postgraduate respondents)

This lack of belonging to either Russian or Latvian culture is linked to the sense that many of Latvia's Russian-speakers seem to have of lacking a homeland, or of not feeling completely accepted in Latvia as legitimate citizens. Nevertheless, although many Russian-speakers may well feel at the margins of, or excluded completely from, Latvian culture, they still displayed a desire to maintain and cultivate links with *both* Russian and Latvian culture.

It's best if you know Latvian and Russian. If you're a Russian, a Russian-speaker, and you were born in Latvia, then it's desirable to know two cultures. (Postgraduate respondent)

I think that if there are Russians here then they shouldn't forget their own culture, and, how can I say this, well they should honour their traditions. But still they should know the Latvian language and shouldn't ignore it, like, I don't know, the majority of people over 40 who lived here in the Soviet Union who completely ignored it. (Undergraduate respondent)

If a family is planning on continuing to live here then I think that they simply need to know a bit about Latvian culture, some basic understandings, but also, of course of their own culture. And so when the question is asked "What is your culture?" we can talk about "our culture in Latvia". (Postgraduate respondent)

The last two comments highlight an important point that younger Russian-speakers want to be more integrated into Latvian culture than their parents. Here (as we have already seen) young Russian-speakers are willing to acknowledge that Latvian language and culture were largely ignored during Soviet times, and wish to reverse that trend. Therefore there is evidence of a fairly strong desire to integrate into and learn Latvian culture. On the other hand, there is also a widespread feeling that Latvian culture is 'Latvian' i.e. for 'Latvians' and not really their

culture which is compounded by the fact that Russian-speakers often do not feel like Latvia is their genuine homeland. Further, there is an equally strong feeling that Russian-speakers, while learning about Latvian culture, should not neglect their own Russian cultural heritage.

These three factors lead logically to the creation of a new discursive and symbolic position for Russian-speakers in Latvia – the construction of a new identity which straddles both Russian and Latvian discourses, but which also creates a new identity. In the media discourse this was evident in the desire to point out the value of Russian-speakers in Latvia, who could function as a bridge between Russia and Europe. In the focus group discussions the respondents were presented with a quote from *Chas* which championed the use of Russian as an economic resource for Latvia to build relations between the west and Russia (see appendix 1:1). The respondents agreed entirely with this sentiment:

Because [language] is a resource. If you don't use a resource then someone else will use it...But in principle Latvia has traditionally not utilised at all the resources which are here. So there's nothing surprising in this. (Postgraduate respondent)

As the conversation progressed from this quotation, one respondent agreed that Russian-speakers were a bridge between Russia and Latvia:

[Russian-speakers] are a bridge. All business relations are based on acquaintance, on family ties (*rodstvennie svyazi*). All Russians work with Russia. (Respondent aged 40-60)

Admittedly, although the focus group participants were agreeable to the idea of Russian-speakers functioning as a bridge between Russia and Latvia/Europe, they were not necessarily forthcoming in expressing this idea explicitly. Rather, the idea was somewhat elicited by me. In the above example, for example, I had asked outright if Russian-speakers could be considered as a bridge between Russia and the west. Nevertheless, the idea still had resonance with the focus group participants. For most people it was desirable for Latvia to start to utilise its perceived geographical and linguistic advantages vis-à-vis Russia, and to put more efforts into developing economic ties with Russia:

It would be better for Latvia and relations with Russia would be much better. That would be ideal.

Latvia would have contact with Europe and would be a bridge to Russia. Yes, and in terms of geography it's also in a good position. (Two undergraduate respondents in response to the question '*What do you think of the idea that Russian-speakers in Latvia can become a bridge between the west and Russia? Have you heard of this idea?*')

It was also significant that almost the exact same sentiment was similarly expressed by the postgraduate group of respondents:

Yes, the geographical position [is advantageous] – I mean Latvia as a bridge from Europe to Russia, i.e. through Latvia, i.e. talking about freight, connections, and logistics – in that respect. (Postgraduate respondent in response to the question '*Would you say that Latvia was in an advantageous geographical position?*')

Thus, in the first example from the undergraduate group, the prompt of a bridge between the west and Russia elicited an explanation that Latvia was in an advantageous geographical position. In the second example the prompt was the advantageous geographical position and the elicited response was that Latvia was a bridge between Europe and Russia.

However, in terms of national identity, Russian-speakers seemed to be more concerned with 'concrete' issues such as economics and social cohesion rather than ethnicity or language:

For people now, well in our country in our situation it's important to solve all these economic problems. Language is already, I don't know, it's an anachronism. (Undergraduate respondent)

For this reason the bridge between Russia and Europe is perceived less as a symbolic device which gives meaning and legitimacy to Russian-speakers in Latvia, and more as a pragmatic approach to dealing with Latvia's largest neighbour. This was largely confirmed by the respondents' reaction to the second of the *Chas* excerpts (see appendix 1:2). The quote talked of how 'the so-called ethnic problems' were no longer so important for Latvia's inhabitants, as economic concerns were far more important:

- (Respondent 1) We're used to it now.
- (Respondent 2) We're used to it and we know the [Latvian] language
- (Respondent 1) About five or six years ago [ethnic issues] were very salient. It all happened when there were these [education] reforms.
- (Respondent 3) Yes, and we even played an active role in them.
- (Respondent 2) Yes, we did then, but now we've become accustomed to it, we've got used to it, and we've come to terms with it. Well what can you do? It's just the way it is. But Latvians (*latishi*) are also such a phlegmatic nation.
(Three postgraduate respondents)

In this respect perhaps Harmony Centre's Riga mayor, Nils Ušakovs, is right to contend that the financial crisis in Latvia 'has brought Latvians and non-Latvians closer' (*Diena* 20/04/11). Whether this is or is not the case, it would appear that Russian-speakers in Latvia are at least coming to terms with their government's policies on education and citizenship. This potentially allows them to integrate much deeper into 'Latvian' discourses. Moreover, although Russian-speakers (as of now) do not necessarily see the bridge function in all of its symbolic, and potentially identity-creating glory, the idea nevertheless still seems to hold great appeal to them.

This pragmatic approach to ethnic relations within Latvia must therefore be understood as a useful means for Russian-speakers to find their place in contemporary Latvia. There would seem to be a realisation that the state policies on language, education, and citizenship are hardly likely to change. As such Russian-speakers are increasingly learning to accept them. Indeed, we may posit that the more 'ethnic issues' are removed from the political agenda, the less Russian-speakers will feel estranged from all things 'Latvian'. To this end, a pragmatic and stoical approach to ethnic relations, with an increasing focus on the economic and social issues which affect all of Latvia's inhabitants equally, holds much potential for Russian-speakers.

This can be seen in the new optimism of Russian-speakers. The discourse of self-marginalisation, which has traditionally been a staple of Russian-language media discourse since Latvia regained independence in 1991, stresses how hard it is to be a Russian-speaker in Latvia. However, as we have seen in the media discourse, Russian-speakers are increasingly pointing to their advantageous position in Latvia.

(Respondent) Well if you take any job advertisement then it will have requirements for Latvian, Russian, and English for example. So Russian is always there now and employers want to have Russian workers, which means they won't pay full attention to whether or not you speak Latvian.

(Interviewer) So, in terms of economics, in Latvia it's better to be Russian?

(Respondent) Yes. (Undergraduate respondent)

In response to the question of whether it was difficult to be a Russian in Latvia, the group of postgraduate respondents immediately pointed out that it was, in fact, more difficult for Latvians in many respects:

It will probably be more difficult for Latvians.

Because of this policy which has been carried out...then with their Latvian language, in principle, there's nowhere for them to go except for Latvia. Those who've learnt English are lucky, but many haven't even learnt English. If Russians can at least reorient themselves towards Russia, then Latvians can't.
(Two postgraduate students)

This optimism with regards to the economic standing of Russian-speakers stood in contrast to the resignation and concern the respondents expressed regarding their difficulty of finding symbolic acceptance and belonging in Latvia. Indeed, one thing that this optimism does enable is the partial disavowal of the self-marginalisation strategy that we have identified within Russian-speaking discourse. The idea that Russian-speakers are able to forge their own future instead of being held back by discrimination appeared to be an empowering concept. This was shown when the focus group participants were shown an excerpt from *Chas*, in which the author railed against the people who have introduced Latvian language requirements for most professions (see appendix 1:3). In the article the author, somewhat dramatically, links these

language requirements with eventual homelessness: ‘What follows is simple: no language, no job; no job, no income. That means poverty which means the street’ (*Chas*, 26/02/09). However, as one postgraduate participant responded:

I would say that here it’s actually pretty debatable. Firstly, because if you look where it was published – in the newspaper *Chas*, which is a radical enough Russian newspaper. Secondly, it also seems a little far-fetched that for twenty years Russians have been screaming that we haven’t been given any opportunities. If it was 1995, then it would be understandable, but this is 2011, and 21 years have now passed. And it’s worth saying that Latvians are forcing us to learn, but we forget that in this time Russians could have already learnt Latvian. And for the many people who haven’t in this time period, in actual fact, it’s their problem. I would say that because for pupils, students, and everyone else it’s no longer an inherent problem.’ (Postgraduate student)

So, do the media matter?

In the discussion with focus group participants it was clear that there was both disagreement and agreement with various aspects of the media discourses which were presented to them. In some respects the respondents were categorical in rejecting certain arguments relating to the discrimination of Russian-speakers as being hyperbolic and out of date. This would therefore potentially point to the fact that media do not possess the kind of influence that we might have expected.

On the other hand, my media analysis of *Chas* (chapter four) revealed the evolution of certain media discourses. The increased levels of optimism and assertions that Russian-speakers were in an advantageous position appeared to be mirrored in the focus groups. The obvious question here is to what extent these changes are in response to bottom-up changes in attitudes, or to what extent media discourses have led Russian-speakers to adopt certain positions. The argument could be made either that media discourses have effected this change among Russian-speakers, or that the media discourses are reflecting changing attitudes among Russian-speakers.

This is perhaps, alas, an impossible question to answer. The Russian-speakers who participated in these focus groups did, however, demonstrate a relatively high level of

uniformity in their assessments of various positions. While there was not necessary unanimity on all issues discussed, the level of homogeneity of opinion was quite high. This can be explained by the sample bias, comprised as it was of Russian-speakers who were all undergraduates or postgraduates in Rigan universities. It could also point to the fact that stable positions have been somehow cultivated which are shared by large groups of individuals. In light of our previous discussions of top-down and bottom-up identity pressures, I would argue that the media do have a significant influence over identity formation. Nevertheless, it is a constrained influence as was theorised in chapter two.

One important thing to note is that younger Russian-speakers reported that they rarely read newspapers at all and were much more likely to access information via television, and more commonly the internet. If the press have any influence over young people then we may assume that it is through the mediated interpellation and actions of elites who do pay attention to such discourses. This, as discussed in chapter two, corresponds to the two-step model of media influence proposed by Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955). Within this model the public are influenced by opinion leaders who pay attention to media discourses and transmit these perceptions to the wider public.

Therefore, for a media message to be successful in cultivating an audience and in creating group identities, it is not necessarily essential that these messages be directly consumed by all members of this imagined community. Rather, it is important that these messages become embedded within commonly accepted group consciousness either through direct interaction with a readership, or through the mediated actions of people who consume such discourses and then are able to transmit them to wider audiences.

Additionally, as our discussion in chapter two demonstrated, media effects are often brought about through long-term exposure to certain dominant themes and points of view. In line with Gerbner's cultivation theory (1985: 14, see also chapter two), I would suggest that direct contact with a piece of information is not as important as 'the awareness that a certain item of knowledge is publicly held (i.e. not only known to many, *but commonly known that it is known to many*)'. For Gerbner this makes collective action and collective thinking possible. This, of course, is one of the major insights of Benedict Anderson's work on imagined

communities (Anderson, 2006; see also chapter two): Anderson notes that the emergence of the printing press enabled the emergence of patterns of identification which were previously impossible on such a large scale. Media effects can therefore be brought about simply by their widespread existence and through their messages being popularly disseminated and embodied by opinion leaders and other influential individuals – perhaps notably politicians.

Conclusions

This section has allowed us to take a bottom-up perspective on identity formation for Russian-speakers in Latvia. The findings of this research are noteworthy and reveal a number of the nuances of identity formation which were not apparent from my analysis of political and media discourses which were discussed in the previous chapters.

One thing of particular note was the fact that the younger two groups of Russian-speakers were far more likely to identify themselves as Russian-speakers than the older generation. This indicates that the discourses discussed in chapter four relating to the construction of Russian-speakers by media and political elites are more than plausible.

The fact that this category was unwaveringly accepted as a valid marker of identity backs up the thesis that Russian-speaking identity has been constructed by media and political elites. It also corroborates the thesis put forward in chapter five that state policies such as those relating to citizenship, language, and education have served to define and demarcate the two largest imagined communities in post-Soviet Latvia.

An interesting insight from this chapter has been the attitudes displayed towards Russia. The focus-group outputs backed up previously conducted research which has shown that Russian-speakers in Latvia and the other Baltic states often feel a sense of estrangement from the geographically and politically defined Russian Federation (Zepa, 2005; Vihalemm & Masso, 2003). This research therefore supports David Laitin's (1995) work which has drawn attention to the nascent emergence of a Russian-speaking nationality in the Baltic states which is distinct from Russian identity.

What this research did reveal, however, was a distinction between the culturally and politically conceived ideas of Russia. Whereas the Russian Federation was deemed to be far removed from the experiences of Russian-speakers in Latvia, cultural Russia was cited as an important element of their identity. Of course, as our discussion in chapter five highlighted, it is impossible to separate entirely culture from politics. Nevertheless, even if we are unable to separate these two abstract concepts, the respondents maintained the distinction between two Russias – the *rossiiskii* world and the *russkii* world. In returning to our discussion of the political influence of the Russian Federation we may surmise that Russia's greatest influence over its 'compatriots abroad' lies in the realm of soft power and 'culture', which is reflected in the policies adopted by the Russian authorities.

The other main conclusion to be taken from this section is that young Russian-speakers displayed a great deal of optimism regarding their opportunities in Latvia. It was acknowledged that official state policies have effectively enabled them to attain high levels of bilingualism in both Latvian and Russian, and that this has placed them in an advantageous position economically. While there were instances where the respondents relayed their frustrations and difficulties as members of the Russian-speaking community, these were, in fact, far less frequent than I had personally expected.

Naturally we must bear in mind the selection bias of this research, which focused on educated people who were linguistically advantaged. More work would need to be carried out on a far more representative sample of Russian-speakers if we were to extend our extrapolations beyond this sample. Nevertheless, even with this small sample of educated Russian-speakers we are able to see the effects of various discourses on Russian-speakers in Latvia.

Of particular interest were the respondents' responses to the media excerpts which were distributed during the discussions. While most of the media excerpts found congruence with the attitudes and assumptions of the respondents, a number of articles did not. Articles which cited overt discrimination against Russian-speakers were challenged and contrasted to the actual experiences of Russian-speakers. We can see, therefore, that the discursive *being* underpinning Russian-speaking identity is shifting. Discrimination and self-marginalisation

have been important aspects which have allowed for the formation of Russian-speaking identity in Latvia. The participants of these focus groups, however, displayed a desire to move on from these issues.

Chapter 7: The 'democratisation of history' and generational change

A tale of two histories?

As we have seen in chapter three, the theme of historical tension and antagonism has been much researched in the Baltic context between the three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania on the one hand, and Russia on the other. For the Baltic states it is commonly accepted that between these three countries and Russia ‘two narratives of the recent past perennially conflict with one another’ (Kattago, 2010: 383). According to the official Baltic narrative of the past the Baltic states are portrayed as victims of merciless Soviet and Nazi occupations, each of which was equally horrific. The Soviet-Russian narrative, rejects the label of occupation and instead highlights the heroic efforts of the Soviet Union in liberating Europe from the evils of fascism.

However, based on the finding of my research this chapter will argue for a more nuanced understanding of actual collective memories of Russian-speakers in Latvia. Although the data point to differing and distinct memory positions of the two constructed ‘Latvian’ and ‘Russian-speaking’ communities, I will argue that it is necessary to examine people’s perspectives on history in much more detail in order to reveal the complexities inherent in ‘learning to remember’. This chapter therefore challenges the commonly accepted view that the majority of Russian-speakers in Latvia ‘have accepted the vision of history as cultivated by Russia as their own and take it as the basis for their historical vision of Latvia’ (Zelče, 2009: 54).

While there can be little doubt that Russia plays a very significant role in the creation and perpetuation of collective memories for Latvia’s Russian-speakers (as demonstrated in previous chapters), this assertion nevertheless needs to be challenged on two counts: firstly, it smooths out any differences that exist *within* the constructed group of Russian-speakers; secondly, it creates an overly simplified dichotomy between ‘Latvian’ and ‘Russian’ history with no democratic space between the two opposing poles. For example, the above quotation from Vita Zelče continues ‘...this is a crisis situation for efforts to achieve tolerance in regard to history and memory in Latvia. Its outcome will be determined by the identity values of

Latvia's Russians, by their choice of affiliation – Latvia or Russia – and the motivation for this choice.'

This chapter therefore represents an attempt to move away from a strict reliance on elite discourses and the analysis of such discourses. As the previous chapter has highlighted, the views of individual Russian-speakers are often diverse and do not always correspond entirely with the discourses produced in the media and political spaces. In line with the democratisation of history thesis which was discussed in chapter three, I will aim to demonstrate that there is a need to move away from the idea of two, and only two, possible histories. Not only is this dichotomy inherently intolerant – demanding as it does that Russian-speakers choose between right (Latvian) and wrong (Russian) histories, but it is also unproductive as it manages to ignore the subtle but perceptible moves away from a rigid adherence to Russia's official history that can be increasingly evidenced among Latvia's Russian-speakers. These changes in attitudes need to be examined in some depth as they will allow us to come to a fuller understanding of both the impact of political and media discourses, and of the bottom-up and top-down factors which bring about discursive change.

As discussed in chapter three, the 'democratisation of memory' occurs when individuals are able to view historical events from a critical and objective viewpoint. Instead of history being used to anchor contemporary identities and political stances, it is seen as a topic which can be examined dispassionately from various viewpoints. In essence it corresponds very closely to Halbwachs' idea of 'formal history' as opposed to 'collective memories' (see table 1). Within this 'democratisation' there is common acknowledgement that history is complicated and ambiguous, and alternative views of history are tolerated or accepted and are not seen as inherently antagonistic to current identity positions.

Through an examination of data from a survey conducted on 9 May 2011 at the site of the Victory Day celebrations in Riga's Victory Park, it will be suggested that a tendency to move towards a democratisation of history is starting to become visible among Russian-speakers in Latvia. It will be argued that this is most evident when we analyse the data by age groups, with younger Russian-speakers generally displaying views which would suggest increasing openness for constructive debates and the opening up of history within Latvia. This therefore

points to temporal changes in the discursive nodal points which anchor Russian-speaking identity in Latvia, the implications of which will be discussed below.

Observing Victory Day in Latvia

For us, the descendents of those who saved the world from fascism, this is a day of pride for our fathers and grand-fathers.

Harmony Centre Press Release (08/05/11)

When discussing or analysing questions of national identity in Latvia the issue of Soviet occupation is never far away. This has been demonstrated throughout the course of this study where the issues of education, language, citizenship etc. are often linked with Latvia's post World War Two history. In politics the occupation question has long been a stumbling block for 'Russian' parties, especially HC, who have tried (to date unsuccessfully) to take their seat within Latvia's numerous governing coalitions. However, from my focus group discussions it was clear that Russian-speakers' attitudes towards this emotive question were not fully universalised. In order to gain a more representative snapshot of Russian-speaking opinion on the issues of history and Latvia's Soviet past I therefore decided to canvass opinion of people in attendance of the Victory Day celebrations.

Victory Day is a holiday of great importance within the Russian Federation, which coinciding with the rise of Putin's nationalism, has become increasingly important in recent years (Forest & Johnson, 2002; Schleifman, 2001). However, it is also widely marked in Latvia where each year thousands of people gather for unofficial celebrations in Riga's Victory Park. The sheer scale of the event would seem to confirm the sacredness of the historical myths of Soviet victory over fascism and the liberation of Europe for those in attendance. In one survey approximately 59% of Latvia's Russian-speakers stated that they had celebrated Victory Day in the last five years (Zelče, 2009: 21). The celebrations in Riga's Victory Park include fireworks, musical and cultural performances, political speeches, tents selling food and drink, a large screen showing live broadcasts from Russia and other cities in Latvia, and tents with exhibits from political parties and non-governmental organisations relating to the Second World War.

These annual events are organised by the non-governmental organisation 9may.lv. On their official website 9may.lv refers to itself as a 'social organisation' whose main aims are: 'to help veterans who live in Latvia' and 'to maintain and preserve memories of Victory Day in Latvia' (9may.lv, 2011). Nevertheless, the organisation has strong ties with the political party Harmony Centre. Vadims Baraņņiks, the head of 9may.lv is also a member of HC and is an elected member of the Rigan municipal government. The other main organisational partner for 9may.lv is the youth organisation *Mums pa ceļam/Nam po puti* (We're going the same way). The organisation claims to be a non-political, youth organisation with the stated aim of 'helping pupils in Russian-language schools to find their place in life and achieve success...With our help we want young people to become successful members of Latvian society' (Mums pa ceļam, 2011). However, there does again seem to be a political overlap between the social aims of this organisation and the political participation of HC. For example members of HC (including Vadims Baraņņiks) are also members of the *Mums pa ceļam* board. Indeed, on their official website there is even a link to the official website of Nils Ušakovs, Riga's HC mayor.

It would therefore be fair to say that 9 May in Latvia has a fairly political character. Within the confines of Victory Park this meant that only sanctioned voices were allowed to be heard during the 2011 Victory Day celebrations. For example, I witnessed one man being forcibly escorted away from the park by police after he displayed a poster detailing criticism of Russia's Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and President Dmitry Medvedev. I was also asked to leave the park by security staff when I had initially started handing out my surveys, and so was forced to stand on the road leading up to the park.

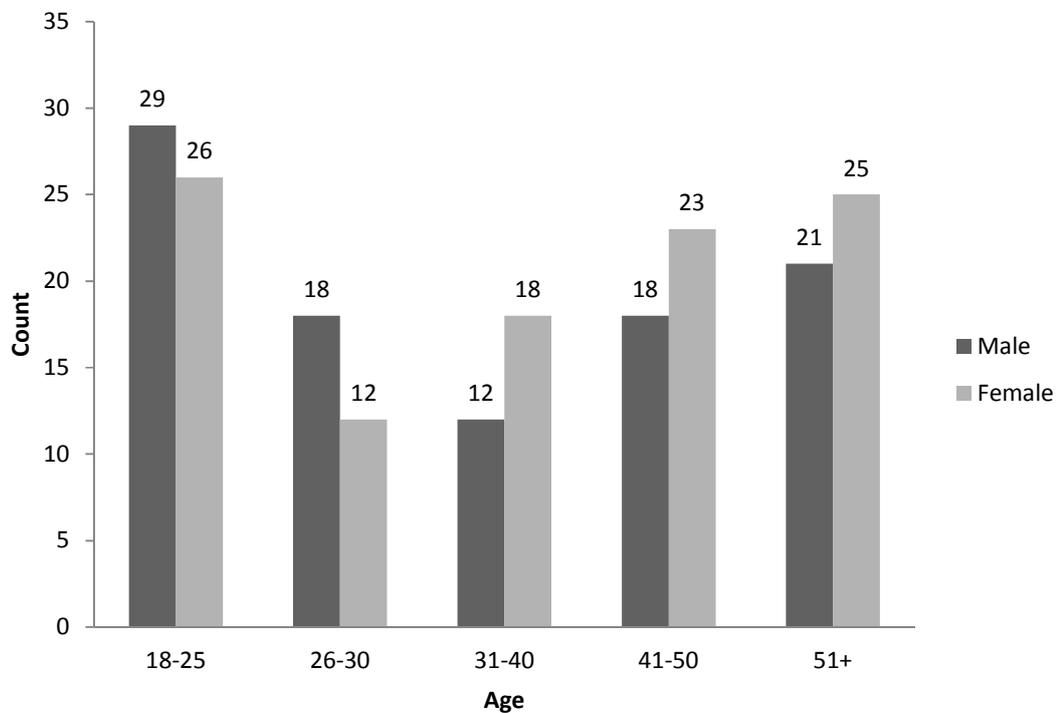
Bearing in mind the sensitivities of an event celebrating Soviet 'liberation' in Latvia we should perhaps not be surprised at the extent of the security presence, nor of the desire to prevent unsanctioned protests or actions. However, it is significant that the contents of the celebration would appear to be very much informed by the politics which lie beneath its organisation.

In order to collect meaningful data on Russian-speakers' attitudes towards history and toward the 9 May celebrations I conducted a survey on 9 May 2011 during the Victory Day celebrations in Riga. On this day I stood just outside of the main designated area of Victory Park (I was told by security that I could not conduct my research on the main square where the celebrations were being held). I asked passers-by to fill out a questionnaire with fifteen questions, marking each question 'agree' 'disagree' 'partly agree' or 'difficult to say' (the questionnaire is included as appendix 2, along with English translations of the questions).. The data were divided into five age groups: 18-25 (n=55), 26-30 (n=30), 31-40 (n=30), 41-50 (n=41), 51+ (n=46) bringing the total number of participants to n=202 (see figure 5). Specifically the questions from this questionnaire tackled the issue of history and historical interpretation which were discussed in chapter three.

Survey results: occupation and liberation

In the course of the 12 hours that I spent collecting survey data and observing proceedings I was able to collect a total of 202 completed surveys (see figure 5). The topics broached in the questionnaire ranged from questions of historical interpretation to the issue of why those questioned thought it was so important to attend the celebrations, and also what their views were on alternative historical interpretations. All of the 202 surveys were completed by people who described their first language as Russian. In fact, in the whole course of the day I only stopped four individuals who said that their first language was not necessarily Russian, although two of these individuals were not sure if they considered Russian as their first language or Latvian. I chose not to include their completed surveys in my final analysis.

One of my primary aims in constructing the questionnaire was to trace any trends in the historical interpretation of the events of World War II among different age groups. Both my media analysis and focus group research had shown that Russian-speakers seem to be increasingly integrating into 'Latvian' narratives and discursive positions. If this truly was the case then we would expect that the views of younger generations of Russian-speakers would increasingly be compatible with the state's officially proscribed views on history, and the history of Soviet occupation. As such five questions directly addressed the issues of historical interpretation: questions 5, 7, 9, 12, and 15 (see appendix 2).

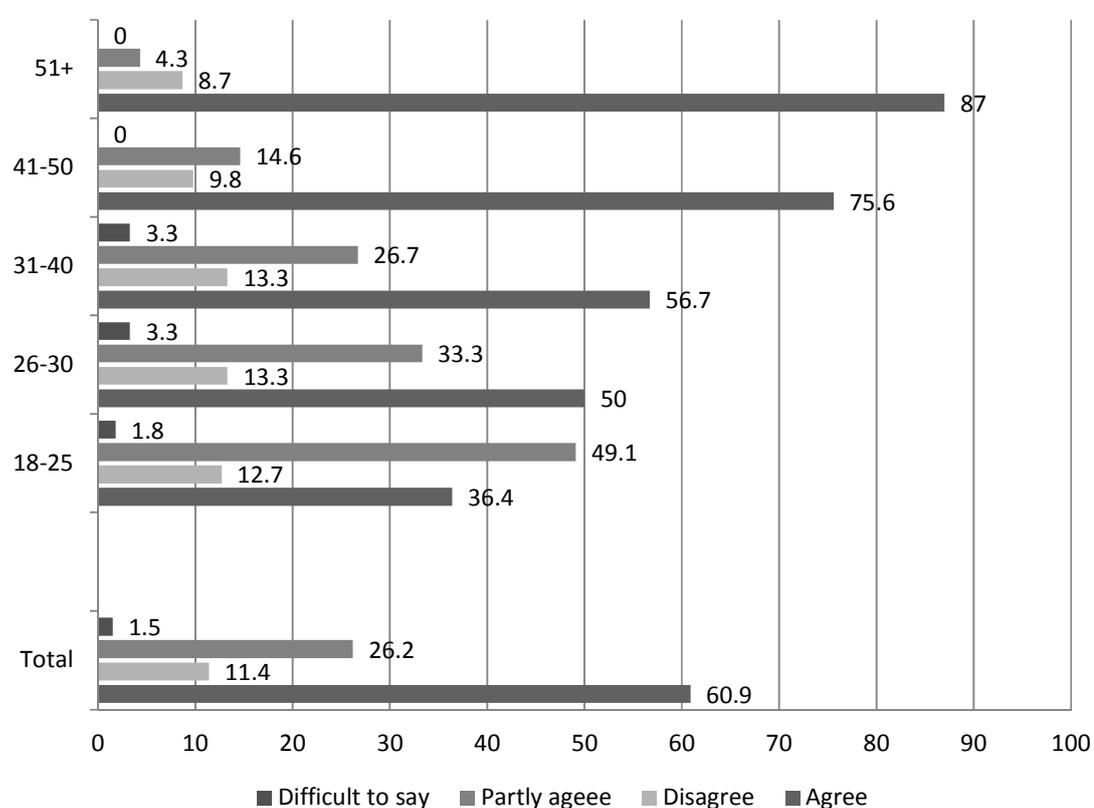
Figure 5: Survey respondents by age and sex

On the question of whether or not it was correct to refer to a Soviet occupation the majority of respondents answered that it was wrong to say there was such an occupation. In total 60.9% of respondents agreed that it was wrong to talk of Soviet occupation while only 11.4% disagreed with this view. However, if we examine the data by age groups (see figure 6) then we can see that it is within the 41-50 and 51+ age groups that respondents were most likely to say that there was no occupation (75.6% and 87% respectively). Among the three younger age groups the figures were considerably smaller: 36.4% (18-25), 50.3% (26-30), and 56.7% (31-40). Moreover, the percentage of respondents who answered that they ‘partly agreed’ trends downwards within each age group. So while as many as 49.1% of those surveyed within the youngest age group partly agreed that there was no occupation only 4.3% of those within the oldest age group shared this opinion.

This therefore highlights the markedly different understandings that younger Russian-speakers have in comparison with older age groups. The respondents aged 18-25 were over 50% less

likely to agree entirely that there was an occupation than respondents aged over 51. This would seem to be very compelling evidence that Russian-speakers are increasingly being influenced by Latvian narratives and discourses, not least the Latvian memory-myths pertaining to the Second World War. Nevertheless, there were still a large number of young respondents who *did* think it was wrong to refer to a Soviet occupation; in total 85.5% of respondents in the youngest age group either agreed or partly agreed that it was wrong to talk of Soviet occupation.

Figure 6: It is not right to talk of 'Soviet occupation'. There was no Soviet occupation (by age group and %)



This figure, however, needs to be contextualised within the backdrop of young Russian-speakers attempts to integrate into both Latvian and Russian discourses. As we have discussed, it is very difficult for Russian-speakers in Latvia to accept wholesale the idea that the Red Army simply occupied Latvia. Memory-myths passed down from family members,

and cultivated within the Russian (especially *rossiiskii*) media have had a significant impact on Russian-speaking perceptions of the Second World War.

At the same time Latvian influences have also increasingly brought to bear on Russian-speaking perceptions, especially within schools. In 2004, Latvian education reform stipulated that a minimum of 60% of teaching in any state school would have to be conducted in Latvian. Moreover, there have been great efforts to ensure that history is taught from Latvian textbooks and not Russian ones (Guidelines for National Identity, 2011: 21). While there is evidence that teachers in Russian schools, i.e. schools which have instruction in Russian, often supplement the official, top-down curriculum with their own bottom-up insights (Golubeva, 2010: 322-325; see also Onken, 2010: 287-288), it is nonetheless true that these same pupils must have had extensive bottom-up and top-down exposure to various ‘Latvian’ narratives and myths. Some people may claim that Russian-speakers live in an entirely separate, ‘Russian’ information space. The reality is, however, that Russian-speakers have an increasing sense of loyalty to Latvia, and often see Russia as far removed from their actual experiences (Rodins, 2005; Zepa *et al.*, 2005).

For this reason the most common answer among Russian-speaking respondents aged 18-25 was that they *partly* agreed that there was an occupation (49.1%). In other words these respondents were able to see that the question of occupation was not necessarily clear cut. They were able to recognise that there were aspects of occupation such as the long-term stationing of soviet troops on Latvian territory or the removal of Latvian sovereignty, but they also saw the positive aspects of Soviet military action in the Baltic region. This partial agreement therefore allows Russian-speakers to focus on the Red Army’s liberation of Latvia from the evils of fascism, but it also allows for a certain amount of space for Latvian discourses of occupation and victimhood to be heard. The actions of the Soviet Army are not seen entirely as representing occupation because they ultimately prevented a much greater evil – i.e. occupation and decimation at the hands of the Third Reich.

Indeed, the acceptance of the liberating role of the Soviet Army must be understood as a vitally important nodal point for many Russian-speakers in Latvia. Thus, in Makarov and Boldāne’s survey of Latvian school children as many as 65.1% of children from schools with

Russian as the language of instruction said that in 1944/5 Soviet forces ‘liberated Latvia’ (see table 4). It would seem therefore that one of the most difficult things for young Russian-speakers to accept is that the Soviet Army simply occupied Latvia. If occupation is accepted then it is most commonly accepted in tandem with the understanding that the Red Army *simultaneously liberated* Latvia from a far greater evil. For this reason in Makarov and Boldāne’s survey only 4.7% of respondents from Russian schools felt able to answer that the Soviet Army simply occupied Latvia, whereas 25% of surveyed school children answered that the Red Army ‘both liberated and occupied Latvia’.

Table 4: School children’s assessment of Soviet liberation/occupation by school’s language of instruction

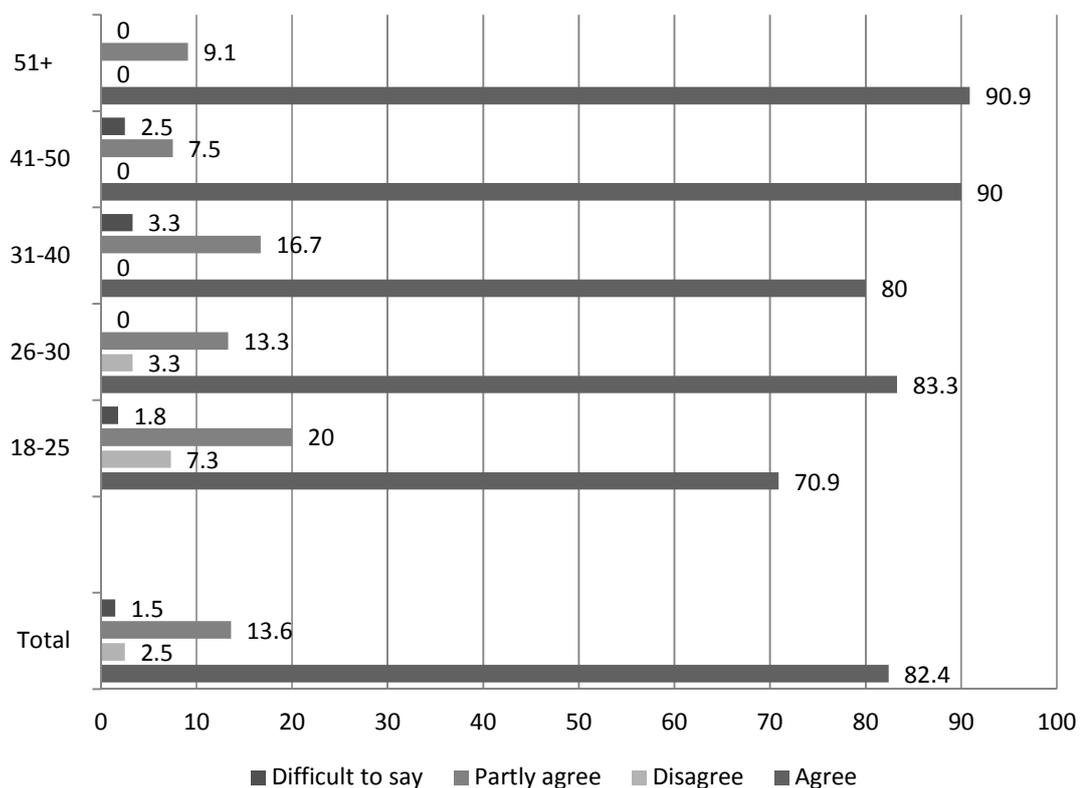
In 1944/5 the Soviet Army...						
<i>Answers divided by school language of instruction (%)</i>						
School's language of instruction		Liberated Latvia	Occupied Latvia	Both liberated and occupied Latvia	Difficult to say	Total
	Latvian (n=207)	12.1	61.7	20.4	5.8	100
	Russian (n=193)	65.1	4.7	25.0	5.2	100
	Total	37.7	34.2	22.6	5.5	100

Source: Makarov & Boldāne, 2008: 10

This therefore points to the increasingly visible discursive strategy displayed by Russian-speakers in Latvia of integrating into Latvian discourses while maintaining certain Russian/Soviet discourses that are considered ideationally salient to their national identity. To say that the Red Army *both liberated and occupied* Latvia is to embed oneself into both Latvian and Russian discursive positions and narratives. The fact that within my survey 49.1% of those questioned within the youngest age group answered that they partly agreed that it was not right to talk of Soviet occupation is thus highly significant; it allows for both the discourse of liberation and the discourse of occupation. That this figure decreases greatly between age groups (33.3% for 26-30 year-olds, 26.7% for 31-40 year-olds, 14.6% for 41-50 year-olds, and 4.3% for people aged over 51) is also telling. It would appear that this strategy is one which is increasingly gathering momentum and being employed by the younger generations of Russian-speakers in Latvia.

The fact that the moment of liberation is widely held onto by Russian-speakers was also evident in the survey data. In response to the statement ‘In 1944 Latvia was liberated by Soviet troops’ a total of 82.4% of respondents agreed while only 2.5% disagreed and 13.6% partly agreed (see figure 7). While there were differences within age groups (70.9% agreed within the 18-25 age group, as opposed to 90.9% within the 51+ age group). What is clear, however, is that, even among the youngest respondents, the memory-myth of Soviet liberation is held onto to a far greater extent than the memory-myth of Soviet occupation is denied. Based on the survey data here it would be fair to say that Soviet liberation is still a prime nodal point in suturing Russian-speaking identity in Latvia.

Figure 7: In 1944 Latvia was liberated by Soviet troops (by age group and %)



In the realm of Latvian politics we have seen how the issue of Soviet occupation constantly looms large over the so-called ‘Russian’ parties, and how it has even been used as a means to exclude HC from joining the ruling coalition in parliament. Leading representatives from HC

have often expressed the view that it is difficult to say whether there was an occupation from a legal point of view. However, they have also stated publicly that they accept that Latvia was forcefully *annexed* by the Soviet Union (for example see *Diena* 20/06/11; *Diena* 09/09/11).

The linguistic signs *occupation* and *annexation* may, on first inspection seem rather similar. However, the discursive sedimentation that has been built up around these two signifiers varies greatly in the Baltic context. One of the most significant reasons why the word *occupation* is so unpalatable to Harmony Centre and many Russian-speakers, is its immediate connection to the term *occupiers*. As this research has discussed at some length, Russian-speakers have often had to deal with exclusionary discourses which cast them as *occupiers* in Latvia. HC's decision to start referring to Soviet *annexation* can therefore be interpreted as a willingness to accept (to a certain extent) official Latvian accounts of the Second World War and its consequences, while not accepting the position that Russian-speakers are *occupiers* and alien to the country. It is therefore perhaps a stance which aims to depoliticise history (or at least this particular history) and to detach it from contemporary identities.

In order to determine if there was any discernible difference in Russian-speakers' attitudes towards the signifiers 'occupation' and 'annexation', respondents were asked to respond to the statement: 'Latvia was forcefully annexed by the Soviet Army against the will of a majority of its inhabitants'. The results of this question were striking (see figure 8). Whereas only 0% and 2.2% of the 41-50 and 51+ age groups respectively agreed with this statement as many as 27.3% of respondents from the youngest age group agreed. This would seem to indicate that the idea of forceful annexation is increasingly gaining acceptance among younger Russian-speakers in Latvia. Indeed, young people within the 18-25 year-old cohort were over two times as likely to fully accept that Latvia was forcefully annexed than to fully accept that Latvia was occupied (see figure 9).

This leads to the conclusion that there is a strong link between the change in political discourse over the last few years and the evolving attitudes of Russian-speakers in relation to the question of annexation. Whether politicians have been able to start using the term *annexation* because attitudes of Russian-speakers have been changing, or if vice versa, the changing rhetoric of politicians has caused attitudinal shifts, is hard to say. However, there

does appear to be a strong correlation between the two moments. What is important, is that these changes have been occurring not in the Russian political sphere, but within the Latvian political mythscape; Latvia's largest 'Russian' party has been forced to adopt certain positions precisely because it seeks to find legitimacy within the Latvian political system; in a purely Russian context there would be no such top-down or bottom-up pressures.

Another main area which my survey was designed to address was the question of empathy and understanding of other people's views within Latvia. In the previous chapter I discussed the findings of my focus groups and outlined a possible link between intergroup contacts between Russian-speakers and Latvians, and increased empathy towards to position of the 'other group'. If, we could find a relatively high level of empathy among Russian-speakers towards the historical positions of the Latvian state and "the Latvians", then this would bode well for increased understanding between Latvia's two largest (imagined) communities, and could tentatively point towards a democratisation of history.

Accordingly there were a number of questions within my questionnaire which set out to trace the level of empathy among Russian-speakers to various 'Latvian' positions relating to the history of the Second World War. One such question was designed to allow Russian-speakers the opportunity to sympathise with the plight of Latvia and its inhabitants as a result of the actions of the Soviet Union, while at the same time not detracting from the importance of Victory Day: 'When celebrating Victory Day we should also take into account the fact that the incursion of Soviet troops into Latvia in 1944 had many terrible consequences for the country and its inhabitants'. The results to this question show a fairly high level of uniformity across all age groups, with a total of 46.8% of those questioned disagreeing, 18.9% agreeing, and 27.9% partly agreeing (see figure 10). This means that while 46.8% of respondents disagreed that there was a need to take into account the 'terrible consequences' of the incursion of Soviet troops, an equal number of respondents (46.8% i.e. 18.9% agreeing + 27.9% partly agreeing) *did* have at least a degree of sensitivity to the negative consequences of the Soviet incursion into Latvia.

Figure 8: Latvia was forcefully annexed by the Soviet Union against the will of a majority of its inhabitants (by age group and %)

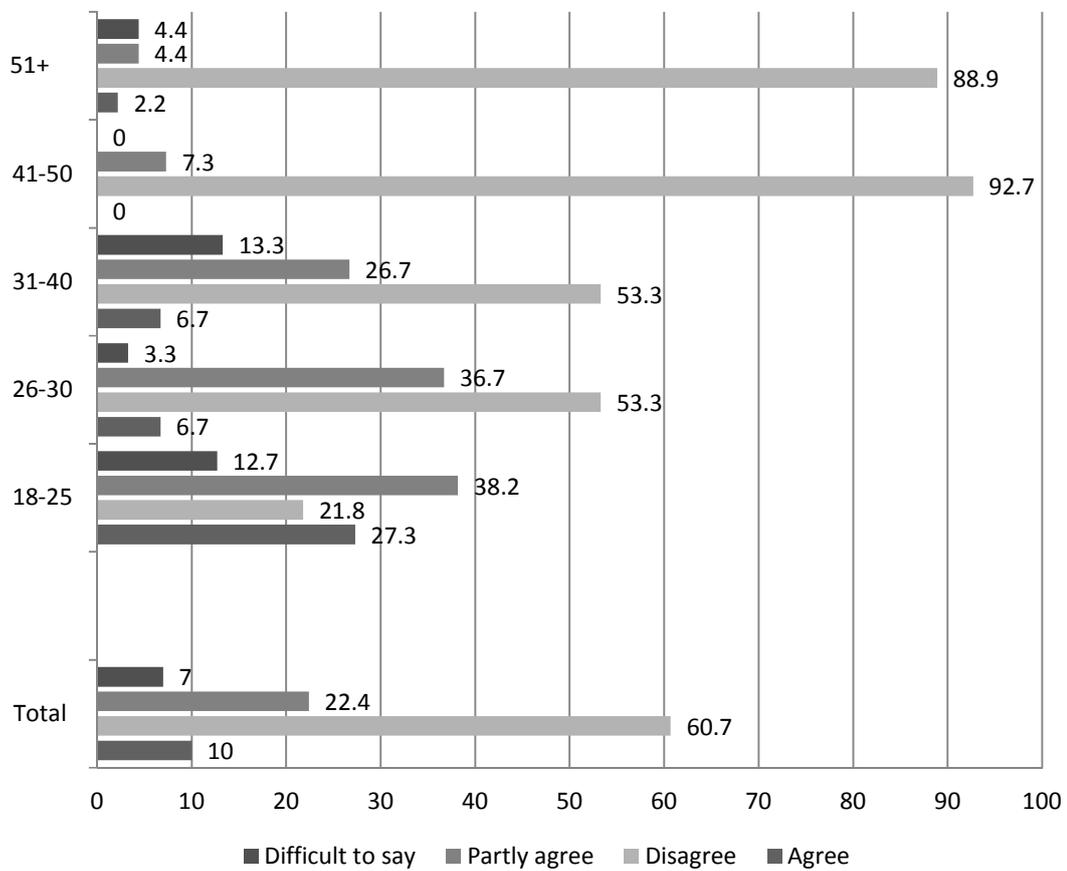
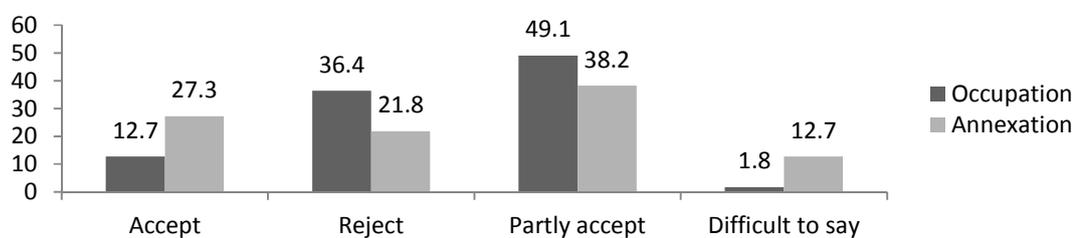
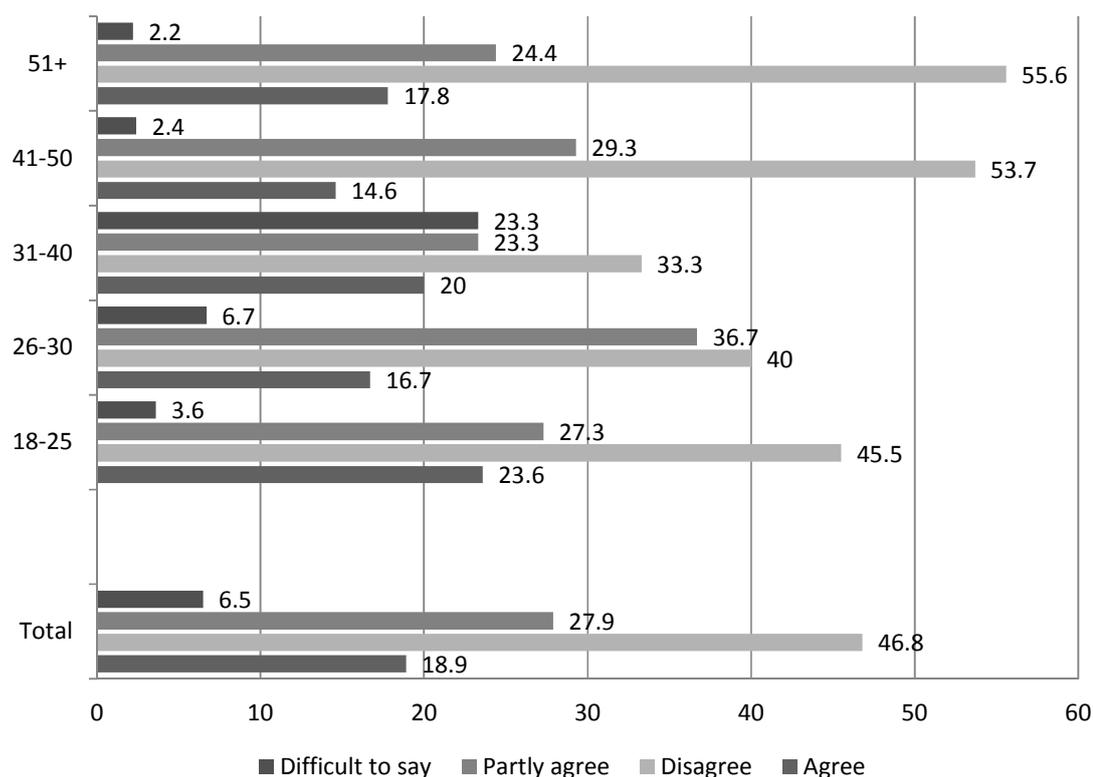


Figure 9: Acceptance of Soviet 'occupation' and 'annexation' within age group 18-25 (%)



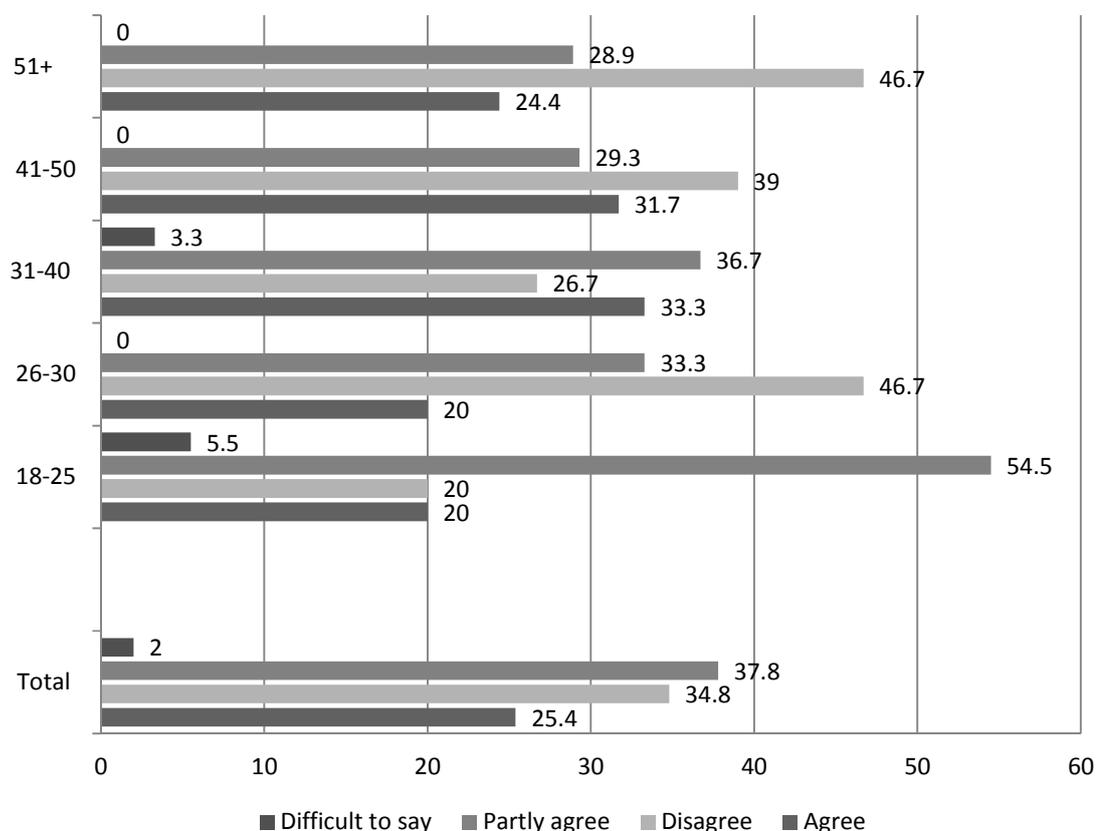
Nevertheless, the answers to this question would perhaps point to a general *lack* of empathy towards the plight of the Latvian people following Latvia's incorporation into the Soviet Union. Even though the percentage of young people aged 18-25 agreeing with this statement is higher than for all other age groups, it is only marginally higher. However, this might be explained by the wording of the question which did not ask the respondents to assess whether there were real and terrible consequences of the Soviet incursion. Rather, the question could have been interpreted to mean was it appropriate to spend time contemplating these terrible consequences on Victory Day itself – 'When celebrating Victory Day'. Certainly my focus groups had revealed a great deal of empathy towards the difficulties faced by the 'Latvian nation' and Latvian people during Soviet rule.

Figure 10: When celebrating Victory Day we should also take into account the fact that the incursion of Soviet troops into Latvia in 1944 had many terrible consequences for the country and its inhabitants (by age group and %)



One thing we can perhaps take from the results to this question, however, is the general level of empathy towards the challenges faced by Latvia and its inhabitants as a result of the incursion of Soviet troops into Latvia. In the two oldest age groups this is most striking when we compare the results of this question to the answers given to the question regarding Soviet occupation. On Soviet occupation only 13% of respondents aged 51+ and 24.4% of respondents aged 41-50 agreed or partly agreed that there had been an occupation. However, as many as 42.2% (41-50) and 43.9% (51+) of respondents fully or partly agreed that it was right to take into account the terrible consequences of the Soviet incursion into Latvia. This indicates that while the vast majority of these people were unwilling to concede the title of occupation, a number of them were nonetheless willing to display a level of empathy towards the difficulties faced by Latvia and its inhabitants.

Figure 11: I can understand why some people do not like to see 9 May being celebrated in Latvia (by age group and %)



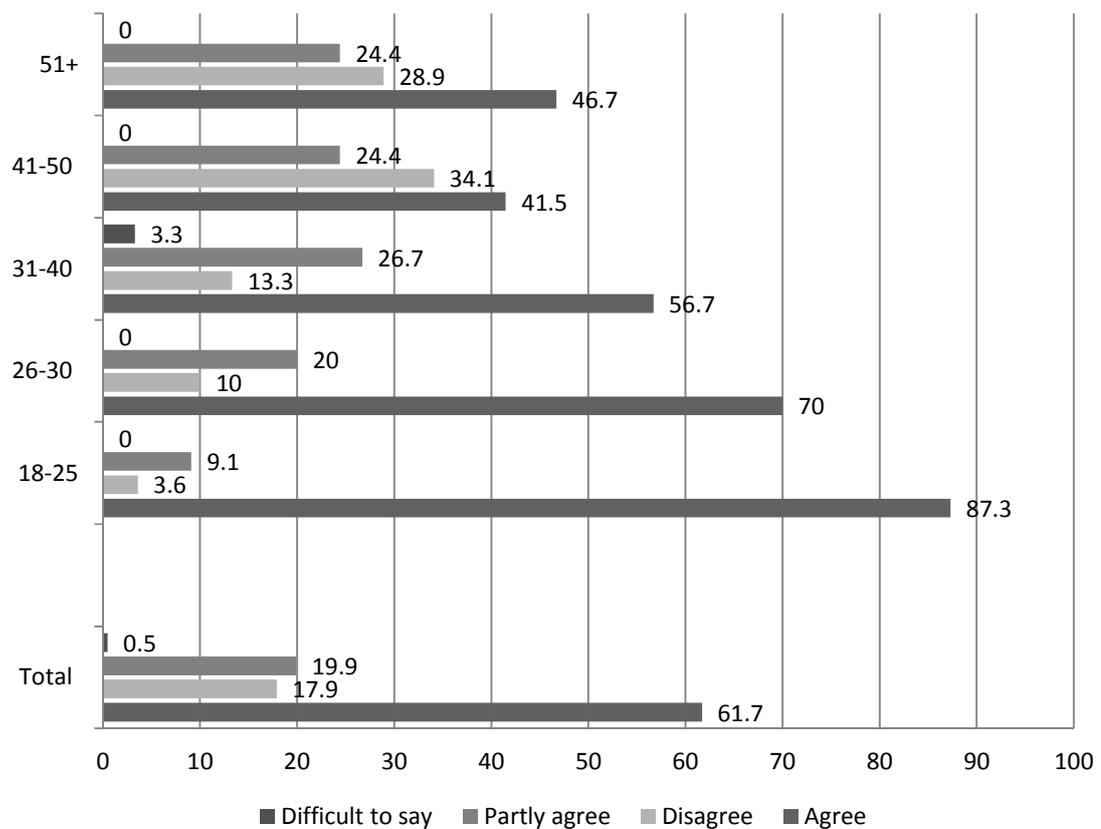
Two further questions were designed to indirectly measure some form of empathy by Russian-speakers towards the position of the people who did not agree with their own historical interpretations: 'I can understand why some people do not like to see 9 May being celebrated in Latvia' and 'History is never straightforward. For this reason I can come to terms with the fact that different people have different interpretations of the Second World War and its consequences'. In answer to the first question, a majority of respondents, across all age cohorts, either agreed or partly agreed that they could understand why some people do not like to see 9 May being celebrated in Latvia (see figure 11). Moreover, for the youngest age group as many as 74.5% of respondents were able to agree or partly agree with this statement. This would indicate that Russian-speakers, irrespective of their own views on the importance of 9 May (which, taking into consideration their attendance of the Victory Day celebrations, we would have to assume were generally positive), are able to see things from the point of view of other, less positive perspectives.

In answer to the second question the results showed an even higher level of empathy, or at least openness to the possibility of the existence of different versions of history. Unlike for the previous question which was fairly uniform across all age cohorts, the answers to this second question showed a great deal of difference between age groups. Nevertheless, even in the oldest two age groups 75.6% of respondents in both groups were able to either fully or partly accept and come to terms with the existence of different historical interpretations (see figure 12). Nevertheless, there is a marked increase in the number of respondents being fully able to come to terms with this difference in the two youngest age cohorts, and especially the youngest. For the youngest cohort the percentage of respondents able to fully or partly accept different historical interpretations stood at 96.4% and the percentage of those questioned able to fully accept such differences was almost two times the corresponding figure for the oldest cohort (87.3% against 46.7%).

This willingness to accept the existence of different histories and historical interpretations was evident in my focus groups, and has also been reflected in the recent political strategy of HC, whereby the party has called for a three year moratorium on the question of occupation in order to focus on, what they see as, the more pressing issues of Latvia's economic development and social wellbeing. As *Saeima* deputy and HC representative Boriss Cilevičs

said in his interview to me, this strategy was necessary because it would allow people in Latvia ‘to agree to disagree’ and then move on. Again, it is significant that it is within the youngest age groups that the respondents displayed the greatest levels of empathy and openness to different points of view.

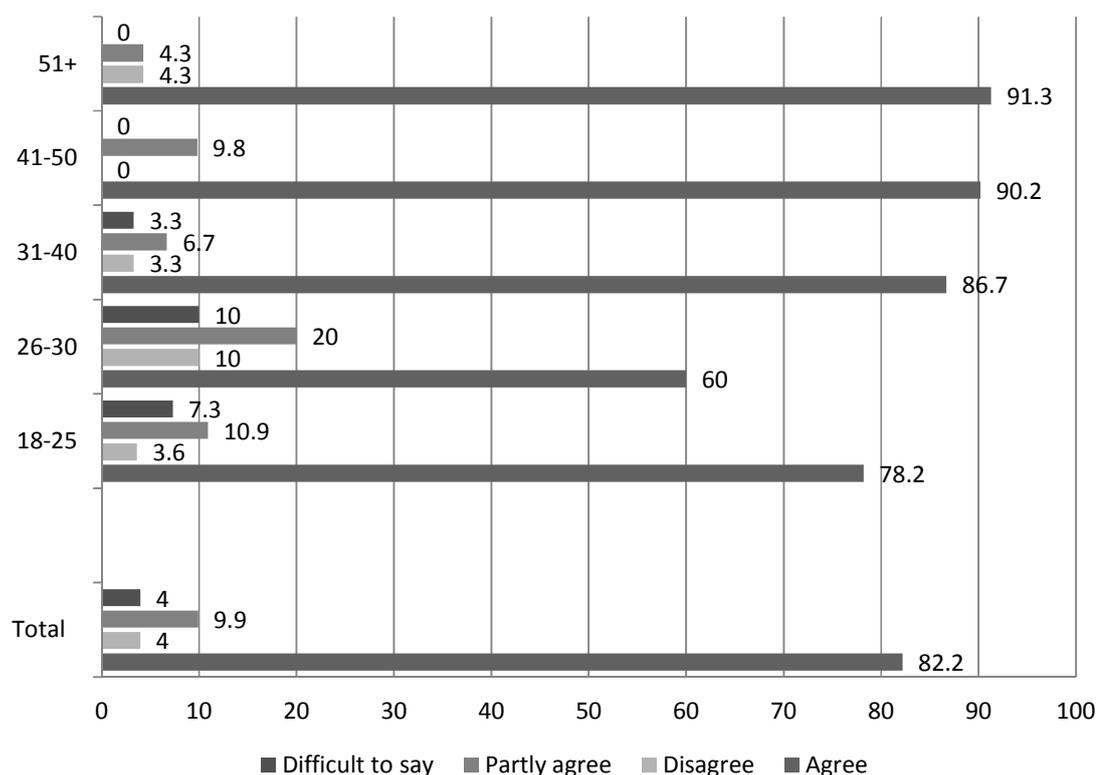
Figure 12: History is never straightforward. For this reason I can come to terms with the fact that different people have different interpretations of the Second World War and its consequences (by age group and %)



However, notwithstanding the fact that there would seem to be a large proportion of respondents able to accept different histories, when presented with the history of the Latvian Waffen SS Legions, most people questioned condemned the 16 March parades as bringing shame to Latvia (see figure 13). Indeed, in the three oldest age cohorts as many as 86.7% (31-40), 90.2 (41-50), and 91.3% (51+) of respondents agreed that the marches covered Latvia in shame. Although this figure is lower for the two youngest age cohorts, especially for the 26-30

age group, the majority of respondents in both age groups agreed with the statement that the marches brought shame to Latvia.

Figure 13: The parades of the Latvian legionnaires cover Latvia in shame (by age group and %)



The fact that 78.2% of the youngest respondents agreed with this statement was especially surprising given that so many young people had expressed a number of empathetic positions regarding alternative historical interpretations. However, it is important to bear in mind that a fairly large number of ‘Latvians’ also have negative opinions regarding the annual March 16 processions. For example, in Makarov and Boldāne’s (2008: 11) survey of school children in Latvian-language and Russian-language schools only 67.5% of children from schools where the main language of instruction was Latvian viewed the marches positively or mostly positively. To put this figure into context 94.8% of children from schools with Russian as the main language of instruction viewed the May 9 celebrations positively or mostly positively.

Therefore even a number of ‘Latvians’ have difficulty in accepting the March 16 processions.³⁹

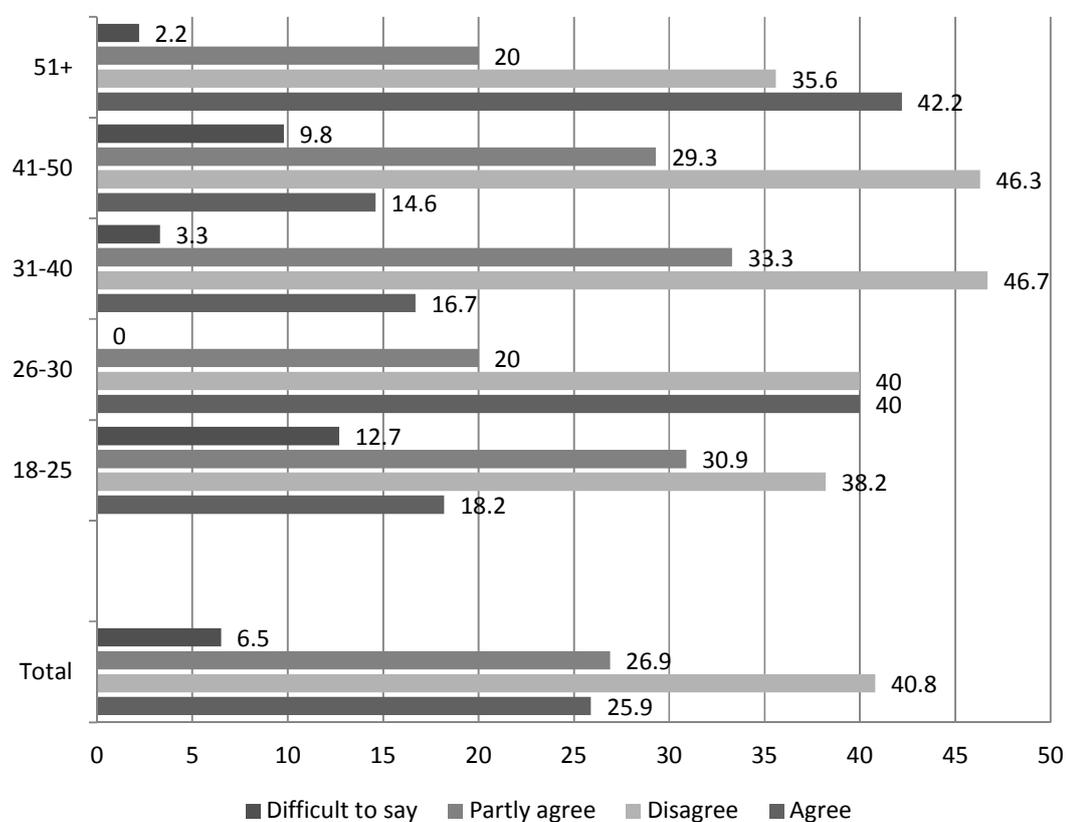
From the results to the other questions in this survey we can perhaps suggest that even though Russian-speakers are increasingly more likely to try to integrate ‘Russian’ discourses into ‘Latvian’ ones, there nevertheless exists a line which for them is hard to cross. For example, while Russian-speakers are increasingly likely to say that there was *both* a liberation *and* an occupation, for there to have been a liberation in the first place there must needs have been an outright enemy that Latvia needed liberating from.

Therefore, although Russian-speakers are gradually becoming used to, and partially accepting the idea of Soviet occupation, it is more difficult to accept events which they perceive as glorifying fascism. The idea of occupation can be accepted because at least there was preceding liberation, and had it not been for this liberation, the other option (permanent occupation by Nazi Germany) would have been far worse (so the reasoning goes). The understanding that fascism was worse than Communism has perhaps therefore become (or is becoming) a new, centrally important, nodal point for Russian-speakers in Latvia. Without this it would be almost impossible to celebrate Victory Day in any form.

For this reason Russian-speakers were much less likely to condemn the individual veterans who fought in the ranks of the Waffen SS than they were to condemn the annual marches. Thus 52.8% of all respondents agreed or partly agreed that it was wrong to harshly condemn the individuals who served in the Waffen SS legions (see figure 14). There is somewhat of an anomaly here in terms of the answers when analysed by age. If we total the percentage of people agreeing or partly agreeing with the question then the youngest cohort, who we would expect to have the highest levels of empathy and tolerance, actually show less empathy towards the individuals who served in the Waffen SS legions than any other group with the exception of the 41-50 age group.

³⁹ I shall admit however, that we do not know what percentage of these children would identify themselves as Latvian or Russian. It may be that there are a number of pupils in ‘Latvian’ schools who would identify themselves as Russian-speakers.

Figure 14: We should not condemn too harshly those who served in the 'Waffen SS' legions (by age group and %)



Nevertheless, it is clear that the respondents generally showed a far greater level of empathy towards the individuals who served in the Waffen SS legions than they did for the marches which 'glorified fascism'. Again, there would seem to be a distinction of sorts between the ideology on the one hand, and the individual soldiers on the other, that the Red Army fought against. Therefore fascism and Nazism can be seen as unequivocal evils, but the people who made up the armies of the Third Reich can largely be seen as victims of these evils.

Another possible explanation for the relatively low levels of tolerance towards the 16 March parades is that the increasing tolerance that has been observed in this survey towards 'Latvian' perspectives can be explained by its abstraction. In the abstract people are happy to say that they are tolerant of other views, but when faced with more concrete manifestations of these views such as the 16 March parades, this tolerance is often not so visible.

The fact that young people seem less tolerant of the individual veterans than older generations would, on the face of it, seem to contradict our thesis of generational effects and increasing democratisation of memory for younger generations. However, if the Latvian mythscape, and especially the realm of the school, are increasingly influencing Russian-speaking memory-myths, then we should bear in mind that the role of Waffen SS veterans is not glorified in official Latvian narratives of the war. While the nationalist *National Alliance* party support the parades, many other ‘Latvian’ politicians neither condemn nor condone them. For this reason the top-down and bottom-up processes which influence young Russians-speakers’ views of the Latvian Legions come primarily from Russian-language media sources and personal transmissions of memory-myths. On this particular question there is little pressure (either top-down or bottom-up) to take account of alternative views.

Conclusions

There is a tendency, when examining the so-called ‘memory war’ between the Baltic states and Russia, to adhere to the idea of two diametrically opposed memory narratives. However, the results of this survey suggest a far more complex picture. Contrary to the view that Russian-speakers simply adhere to the official memory-myths of the Russian Federation, the data show that there is an observable shift in attitudes among the younger generation of Russian-speakers in Latvia.

Through an analysis of the data by age groups it is clear that on many issues young people express views which do not correspond fully with the official Russian narratives and myths of the Second World War and its consequences. This small-scale survey is perhaps only the first step in investigating this phenomenon in more depth. Nevertheless In this respect I would imagine (although further research would need to be carried out) that young Russian-speakers are not only moving away gradually from the views of their parents, and the older generations of Latvia’s Russian-speakers, but that they are also moving away from the views of their contemporaries in Russia on the Soviet history of the Baltic states.

The explanations for this shift in perspective may be complex. However, we can begin to understand this phenomenon by considering both top-down and bottom-up pressures on the creation and maintenance of collective memory-myths. The fact that Russian-speakers live in Latvia and not the Russian Federation means that they are exposed to top-down articulations of memory-myths which come from the Latvian state.

Perhaps the most obvious example of this top-down pressure can be evidenced in Latvia's education reforms. Efforts by Latvian governments to ensure the 'correct' teaching of history in Latvian schools must, at the very least, lead to a situation where it is almost impossible for young Russian-speakers to completely ignore 'Latvian' perspectives of history. Even if Russian-speakers decide to disagree with these perspectives, their exposure to them must be significant at some level. Indeed, the evidence from this study suggests that there has been an observable generational shift for people who received their education in an independent, as opposed to Soviet, Latvia.

Additionally, a great deal of research on the identities of Russian-speakers outside of Russia has demonstrated that these individuals, while maintaining certain elements of cultural 'Russianness', increasingly feel estranged from the Russian political space (Zepa, 2005; Vihalemm & Masso, 2003) and that they are creating an identity of their own which is neither fully 'Russian' nor that of the titular nationality (Kolstø, 1999; Pisarenko, 2006; Laitin, 1995). It therefore seems logical that the Latvian top-down mythscape is becoming more significant for young Russian-speakers in Latvia, even if the Russian cultural mythscape still exerts considerable influence (as the previous chapter demonstrated).

Therefore, while there are undoubtedly top-down pressures from Russia which advocate an antagonistic collective memory-myth of the Second World War, their direct political influence is increasingly undermined by this political estrangement, allowing Latvian top-down pressures more leverage. These top-down pressures have also been of growing significance in Latvia's political mythscape. In recent years we have witnessed a change in the political rhetoric of the leading 'Russian' political parties, i.e. parties whose main electoral base is comprised of Russian-speakers. Whereas the Interfront movements of the late Soviet period adhered to the Soviet myth that Latvia had experienced its own socialist revolution, the post-

independence parties have necessarily softened their rhetoric. Indeed, although, to date, HC have been unable to publicly use the o word, they have nevertheless been willing to accept that Latvia was annexed by the Soviet Union and that this led to horrific consequences for many of Latvia's inhabitants. As the party state in their proposal for a parliamentary declaration on interethnic trust:

...an earnest expression of respect for the interests, values, and historical experience of various groups is an essential condition for improving interethnic trust. In particular:

...

- An expression of gratitude for the huge sacrifices which have been borne by preceding generations of Latvia's inhabitants during the World Wars in the fight against tyranny and injustice, so that freedom, democracy, and human rights triumphed in Europe;
- compassion towards the victims of the Hitlerite and Stalinist regimes which took away thousands of lives, decided the fate of the people, and split the country in two – the consequences of which we are living with to this day. (Harmony Centre, 2012)⁴⁰

This is very likely a political strategy, with the aim of gaining access to political power, as much as it is a noble attempt to reconcile two groups of people with conflicting views of history. Nevertheless, the stress on empathy for victims of *both* Hitler and Stalin is significant. It is important to note that if these politicians were operating in Russia, that again there would be no top-down pressures on them to modify their views of history. However, because HC wish to access political power in Latvia, they have adopted more conciliatory positions which find greater accord with the official memory-myths of the Latvia state.

While these top-down processes are arguably leading to more of a democratisation of history, there also exist bottom-up processes which prevent Russian-speakers from abandoning certain memory positions. As we have seen, even amid the top-down pressures of the modern Latvian

⁴⁰ This quotation was used as the template for question 4. 82% of respondents agreed with this sentiment (see appendix 3).

school curriculum, teachers often supplement the official teaching materials with their own insights and opinions when the two moments are not congruent.

Additionally, the bottom-up views of parents and grandparents should not be underestimated. When memories and memory-myths are transmitted from one generation to another, they necessarily mutate to fit within the changing understandings of different generations. As Halbwachs understood, autobiographical memory is distinct from historical memory. Nevertheless, transmissions of memory most likely persist in relatively consistent forms. As the data from this and other surveys have shown, the soviet Army's victory over Nazi Germany is widely understood by the older generations of Russian-speakers as a positive achievement which liberated Latvia. It is therefore very difficult for the younger generations of Russian-speakers to reject this assessment, especially when their grandparents may have fought in the war.

The competing top-down and bottom-up cultural and political influences appear to be leading young Russian-speakers to increasingly adopt a position which simultaneously celebrates Soviet liberation, while also begins to acknowledge that the actions of the Soviet Union had severe and negative consequences for the Baltic states. This is a position which allows Russian-speakers to maintain the most salient aspects of their parents' and grandparents' memory-myths whilst also taking into account 'Latvian' memory-myths.

For this reason it is still possible to talk of generational changes. Even when nodal points are created from important memory-myths, there is still room for younger generations to alter these memory-myths and adapt them to their contemporary understandings. For example, Maria Golubeva argues that, the maintenance of divergent historical narratives by Russian-speakers is "a form of compensation for a sense of deep political disenfranchisement" (2011: 325). Golubeva finds convincing evidence that Russian-speakers are disenfranchised by Latvia's state-sponsored political narratives 'that associate their group, however indirectly, with negative moments of history' (328). However, from the perspective of our survey we may suggest that while young people may indeed be disenfranchised, they are nonetheless *less disenfranchised than their parents*, and therefore more able to accept, at least partially, certain state narratives. Because young Russian-speakers have grown up in an independent Latvia, are

more likely to speak Latvian, and are more likely to feel a sense of attachment to Latvia than their parents, we may suggest that these factors temper the bottom-up and top-down pressures which promote a thoroughly undemocratic and unwaveringly 'Russian' version of history.

However, we should not get too carried away by the results of this survey. Young Russian-speakers do appear to be gradually shifting their commonly accepted collective memory-myths. At the same time there is still a sizeable distance between their newly reconfigured beliefs and those of the Latvian state. On the one hand we may therefore be optimistic about the prospects of Russian-speakers being able to better integrate into Latvian discourses and narratives and for the prospects of a democratisation of history. On the other hand, we should be cautious about these findings and bear in mind that the views of young Russian-speakers still diverge greatly from their 'Latvian' counterparts. In order to achieve societal harmony it is necessary for both groups to make concessions, and listen to the other group's point of view. There therefore is need for further research on this topic including the position of the younger generations of ethnic Latvians. If they too are increasingly able to see the complexities of Latvia's 20th century history from the complex perspective of the 'other' group, just as Russian-speakers are gradually and increasingly seeing history from a 'Latvian' perspective, then surely it will only be Latvian society which will benefit.

Conclusions

Temporality

This research has explored Russian-speaking identity in Latvia from a discursive theoretical approach. However, it has also been an attempt to add substantially to the media and political analyses which have previously been carried out in Latvia. While discursive-theoretical approaches to identities in the Baltic states are starting to become more popular, the tendency has been to study a set of discourses from a particular time with reference to the concurrent circumstances that underlie those discourses in question. My approach, on the other hand, has been to study contemporary discourses in relation to previously created meanings and realities, and to map how these change over time.

This approach has allowed us to examine how identities can mutate and be manipulated temporally, and also how identities can survive in relatively robust forms over long periods of time. One of the main conclusions we can draw from the data presented is that the current ethno-political situation in Latvia did not emerge in a vacuum. As my analysis of *Atmoda* revealed, many of the conceptions which underpin a great deal of Latvia's post-Soviet state-building policies had their genesis in the Soviet period.

The fact that Latvia's post-Soviet project has been so tied to historical interpretations of the past (see chapter three) means that when we analyse contemporary identities in Latvia, we must take account of these historical interpretations. As this research has demonstrated, history and collective memory-myths of the past remain centrally important in the discursive strategies employed by elites who claim to represent Russian-speakers. Just as our material/discourse helix suggested, primary discourses will be largely informed by the secondary discourses which underpin them. The abstraction and manipulation of collective memory-myths represents one of the most explicit applications of this phenomenon and has thus constituted a central element of this research.

However, while it is true that previously sedimented discourses largely inform current processes, the discursive meanings which emerged in the late 80s and early 90s were not the exact discourses of the Soviet period. Instead, they were augmented, altered, and destroyed to

various degrees in order to facilitate their usefulness in creating political and cultural hegemonic blocs. This changing process has continued in the post-Soviet era and we may suggest that it will continue to occur as long as there is gain to be made from such discursive practices.

In order to understand these processes better, drawing on the work of Laclau and Mouffe, I distinguished between the *being* of an object and its *existence*. As Laclau and Mouffe suggest the *being* of the object is changeable – it is the object as seen through the discursively mediated eyes of humans. This is why every object should be seen as being constituted discursively. The actancy of the Real also plays an important role in allowing meanings to be created, but these meanings are never fixed and are contingent upon the constrained actions of discursive agents. Moreover, with each publicly shared utterance of a linguistic sign which signifies a particular object (that is the *being* of an object), a new layer of meaning is introduced and sedimented within the *being* of that object.

This understanding has allowed us to consider the actions of potentially key agents – in our case journalists and politicians, in their attempts to manipulate sedimented discourses for their own ends. In this respect I have departed from Foucault and his lack of any space for human agency. Instead of viewing the creation of discourses as being structured simply by the *epistemes* which run through certain periods of time, I have preferred to refer to nodal points. Unlike the *episteme*, nodal points can be single linguistic units with their accompanying *being*. These meanings which have been built up over time create a set of stable understandings for us to understand the world around us and also to create new /alter existing/destroy old meanings.

Therefore, instead of Foucault's 'author function' I have viewed the construction of primary discourses (i.e. discourses which are uttered in the present) by discursive agents in terms of discursive strategies. Certainly an author will be constrained by the existing nodal points which surround him/her. However, because the *being* of an object can always change, there is always the possibility to create new meanings. In the *Archeology of Knowledge* Foucault (1972: 28) argues that 'Discourse must not be referred to the distant presence of the origin, but treated as and when it occurs'. While I agree that it is important to treat discourse 'as and

when it occurs', I have also provided my rationale for adopting a temporal approach. Within my approach it is not necessary to go back to the distant origins of a primal baptism. Instead we can examine discourse in the recent past and map out discursive strategies based on this process of mapping.

Discursive strategies

In order to examine contemporary journalistic discourses in relation to the nodal points of the past I employed a tripartite division between discursive strategies: *anti-discursive strategies*, *integrational-discursive strategies*, and *constructive-discursive strategies*. With the use of these categories it has been possible to explore contemporary discourses in relation to historically sedimented ones. Additionally, it has revealed how elites are able to utilise previously sedimented discourses in order to form new identities and hegemonic groupings. In fact without recourse to one of these three categories it would be impossible for discursive agents to effect any change in the discursive relations with which linguistic signs are bound.

Naturally, the vast majority of politicians and journalists are hardly likely to consider their articulations in such academically abstracted terms. Nevertheless, this approach allows us to understand contemporary discourses with reference to those of the past. It also facilitates the possibility of predicting future discourses relating to the status of Russian-speakers in Latvia. New nodal points have been integrated into the commonly understood and articulated discourses of elite, Russian-speaking discourse in Latvia. A number of these have been adopted as a result of the reigning hegemony's official (and largely unwavering) positions. For the Latvian state we have seen how Soviet occupation has been a central nodal point in Latvia's post-Soviet state-building project. For the time being the mainstream 'Russian' media and political parties have been unwilling to use the term occupation. However, they have made a number of concessions to the 'Latvian' position

As long as there is no organic rupture in the hegemonic position of 'the Latvians' as the core-nation at the centre of the 'empty space of power', then we may safely predict that Russian-speaking discourse will continue to move tentatively towards further integration within

Latvian discourses and narratives. There may occur short-term and singular attempts to employ strategies of anti-discourse in order to delegitimise certain positions which are associated with the Latvian state and the Latvian hegemonic position. These attempts may even be relatively successful if they can find resonance with external discourses of influential organisations, not least the EU. In general, however, Russian-speaking elites are more likely to pursue integrational and constructive strategies which are not seen to contradict the discursive positions of the Latvian state.

This is because if they wish to access the empty place of power then there are three options available. The first option is to enforce a new political hegemony through a ‘war of manoeuvre’, i.e. through militant force. This is a situation which is (fortunately) beyond belief and more than improbable as demonstrated in chapter five. The second option is to form a new cultural hegemony through a ‘war of position’, i.e. through the formation of an ideologically (discursively) centred moral legitimacy. The problem with this is that this hegemonic bloc would have to move beyond one wherein Russian-speakers form the central hegemonic pole of attraction. In Latvia people who have Russian as a first language are numerically fewer than those with Latvian as a first language. It therefore follows that this group will always be in a subordinate position vis-à-vis any group constructed around ‘Latvianness’. To some extent Harmony Centre and other ‘Russian’ political parties have also attempted to form a hegemonic pole of attraction around left-wing ideological preferences. However, as chapter five demonstrated, in Latvia such political leanings are discursively associated with Russianness and therefore encounter the same problem.

The third option for Russian-speaking elites is to try to find a place within Latvia’s existing hegemonic order by demonstrating that they represent a legitimate part of the Latvian nation and as such deserve representation within this hegemony. In Latvia this would only be conceivably possible if Russian-speaking elites were to reject fully a number of nodal points which currently underpin Russian-speaking identity in Latvia. The Latvian state is largely premised on a number of narratives and discourses which we outlined in chapter three. A large part of these narratives currently contradict many aspects of the constructed *being* of Russian-speakers as presented by political elites. One of the most important of these fundamental narratives for the Latvian state is the officially cultivated memory-myths of the Second World

War. In the long-term it is perhaps feasible that Russian-speaking elites will be able to reject their current collective memory-myths and accept those of the Latvian state. This may occur as the generational effects which we have observed in this research become more apparent. In the short-term however, as we have seen, it has proved very difficult for Russian-speakers to detach themselves entirely from such discourses. This is largely because their hegemonised position as a cultural and political bloc with a collective identity is still largely based upon their distinctness from the Latvian hegemonic bloc. It therefore remains an antagonistic relationship.

Russian-speaking elites thus find themselves in a paradoxical situation; their legitimacy as 'representatives' of the Russian-speaking community is facilitated by the hegemonic and discursive construction of a group of Russian-speakers. As discussed in chapter four, the discursive construction of Russian-speakers was made possible through reference to the external 'other' – the Latvian. At the same time, however, Russian-speakers are now seeking to find a place within the ruling Latvian hegemonic order. This order is precisely the discursively externalised and 'othered' order which has been used with which to define Russian-speakers. The task of joining with this hegemony therefore logically requires an erosion of the hegemonic, non-porous boundary which sets Russian-speakers apart as a distinct entity.

Russian-speaking politicians are therefore employing a careful strategy of tentatively moving towards Latvian discursive positions while concurrently being acutely aware of the need to uphold certain 'Russian' positions. This is most clearly evidenced in Harmony Centre's refusal to use the word occupation. While they have, to date, refused to utter the word, they have nonetheless sounded a conciliatory note by using the alternative signifier 'annexation', and by publicly acknowledging the difficulties and hurt which resulted from the Soviet period.

This tentative reconciliatory strategy is mirrored in journalistic discourse, as revealed by my media analysis in chapter four. In the two periods of analysis of the Russian-language *Chas* it was clear that, during the second period of analysis, there was an increase in the use of integrational and constructive strategies at the expense of anti-discursive strategies. One

reason for this increase is the process detailed above, of political representatives seeking access to the power enjoyed by the Latvian hegemonic order.

Another explanation is that anti-discursive strategies are most effective when they are able to find congruence with the discursive understandings of external actors who have legitimate influence. For example, in the 90s Russian-speakers were able to turn to various international organisations such as the EU, the OSCE, and the Council of Europe. (Galbreath, 2006a) The argument was put to them that Latvia's citizenship policy was far removed from the 'civilised' and 'European' norms and values of these organisations. Because these organisations largely agreed with this assessment, pressure was brought to bear on the Latvian authorities, with demands for the country to draft a workable citizenship law and to pay greater attention to the status of national minorities within its borders (Kelley, 2004). Following EU accession in 2004, and the successful drafting of a citizenship law which is similar to a number of other citizenship laws in other European Union member states, the potential for anti-discursive strategies has diminished. Thus, even when journalistic elites persist in arguing that Latvia falls well short of 'European' norms of tolerance and multiculturalism, the impact of these arguments is largely determined by the resonance such arguments have with international bodies, and the degree to which the Latvian state has a vested interest in listening to their council.

As we have seen in chapter five, the main potential external backer of the rights of Russian-speakers in Latvia – the Russian Federation, has very limited direct influence over Latvian domestic politics. Before 2004 Latvia was forced to listen to the EU and related international organisations in order to gain access to the potential social and economic benefits of EU membership. Russia, on the other hand, can offer no such incentives. While Russia is a centrally important pole of identity for the Latvian hegemonic bloc, its role is more as an external 'other' rather than as a partner for dialogue with any meaningful levers to pull in Latvia.

The primacy of politics

All in all then the evidence of this study seems to point to the primacy of politics in forming national identities, and in facilitating discursive strategies which relate to identity construction for Russian-speakers in Latvia. This primacy is understood in the Gramscian sense of the struggle to form hegemonic blocs which can gain political legitimacy. The emergence and creation of an imagined 'Russian-speaking community' out of a diffuse set of individuals and previously constructed groupings was perhaps the most important step in creating a Russian-speaking hegemonic pole. The insistence that individuals within this group share common values, collective memory-myths, challenges, and discrimination has been vital in moulding expected behavioural patterns for Russian-speakers. Additionally, it has shaped the political conflicts that we witness today between 'Latvian' and 'Russian' parties. 'Latvian' parties, for example, are able to argue that Russian-speakers, and parties that represent them are not loyal to the Latvian state, and do not share the values of the Latvian state or *tauta*. This has been made possible because the *being* of Russian-speakers is commonly understood as a relatively stable construction with specific nodal points.

The tentative moves by Harmony Centre in presenting a more reconciliatory party line must therefore be understood in this context of the primacy of politics. As the hegemonic bloc of Russian-speakers has now been largely cemented, it is the power of the main, ruling hegemonic order which Russian-speaking elites now wish to access. In the media this more moderate and reconciliatory stance is reflected in the decline of anti-discursive strategies and the increase in integrational-discursive strategies. Certainly in Latvia, as this research has suggested, the overlap between political representatives and journalists is very apparent. Therefore, the direct correlation between political and media discourse may well be more clearly visible in Latvia than in other countries.

The primacy of *external* politics is also important in this respect. Russian-speaking elites have had to take into account the internationally defined hegemonies of the international order. Just as nation-states rely on the formation of a hegemonic bloc, so must international bodies such as the European Union rely on their own hegemonised order. If the values and discourses of the Russian-speaking hegemonic project can find accord with those of the European project

then there will be great latitude to champion those values and discourses which find commonalities. This is especially the case if the discourses and practice of the Latvian hegemonic project are at odds with these shared by Russian-speaking and European discourses. If the Latvian state had no interest in wanting to integrate itself into European discourses then this would not be problematic. However, because ‘the return to Europe’ has been a vital nodal point in Latvia’s move from the Soviet to the European Union, this has proved to be a complicated issue. As stated above, the thorniness of this issue has been somewhat ameliorated following the effects of EU conditionality and recommendations which have been implemented in Latvia, thereby reducing the difference between EU discourse and Latvian practice.

These developments in the evolving discursive positions of Latvians and Russian-speakers are therefore more nuanced than the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe would suggest. Laclau and Mouffe pay great attention to antagonistic relations between competing hegemonic groups. Without doubt we have seen plenty of evidence for such antagonism. However, we have increasingly seen evidence for integration, at least with the subordinate political group (Russian-speakers) moving towards and adopting positions associated with the reigning Latvian hegemonic order. From this research it would appear that when two opposing hegemonic blocs are formed and one has what Gramsci calls ‘the upper hand’, the subordinate bloc will have great incentive to integrate into this reigning hegemonic bloc if there are potential channels for this to occur. This would appear to be the case even if it threatens to erode some of the concreteness and non-porous nature of their subordinate, but hegemonised bloc. The question, however, remains to what extent these politicians would be willing to erode their identity as Russian-speakers in their goal to access the power of the Latvian hegemonic position.

As the evidence suggests, Russian-speakers in Latvia are generally happy to pursue integrational strategies of adaption which embrace Latvian values, culture and language. However, they have very little interest in adopting assimilatory strategies which fully embrace Latvian discourses at the expense of their Russian-speaking identity (Pisarenko, 2006). It is hoped that this case-study of Russian-speakers in Latvia therefore adds to our understanding of hegemonic formations and the interactions between hegemonic blocs. While there may be

conflict there is also a great deal of latitude for compromise and integration. This is an insight that merits greater exploration as it has potentially positive value as a factor which can mitigate conflict between two opposing groups. Through an examination of the centrally important nodal points which anchor a given group's identity and comparing these nodal points with those of the 'other' group, it may be possible to find commonalities and to construct new nodal points which allow the two groups to find common ground.

Top-down and bottom-up influences

The discursive factors which demarcate Russian-speakers from other groups are best understood as nodal points. As Laclau and Mouffe suggest, nodal points allow for stable discursive formations to persist through time. Language has proven to be a nodal point of increasing value as the hegemonic bloc of Russian-speakers has become more solidified. Moreover, the self-marginalising strategy of unifying Russian-speakers on the basis of commonly perceived discrimination at the hands of the Latvian 'other' has proved to be very successful. Memory-myths, especially centring on the experience of the Second World War, form the other major nodal points which anchor Russian-speaking identity in Latvia. In fact the issue of how to refer to the period of Soviet occupation following the end of the war is now the issue which dominates Harmony Centre's attempts to become a governing partner within the Latvian parliament.

The maintenance of certain nodal points needs to be studied in relation to both bottom-up and top-down pressures. Although it may be right to talk generally of a primacy of politics, there are nevertheless pressures which also come from below in the formation and maintenance of identities. In terms of memory-myths Russian-speakers are affected by the top-down mnemonic practices of both the Latvian and the Russian states. In the Latvian case this involves measures to ensure that 'true' history is taught from officially approved textbooks. The impact of this was evidenced in my survey data, where young people who have experienced schooling in post-Soviet Latvia were more likely to agree with certain 'Latvian' perceptions of history than those people who received their education in Soviet Latvia.

The Russian top-down influence also should not be underestimated. The Russian Federation's influence is, however, tempered by its inability to determine scholastic curricula. Instead the top-down, *cultural* influence of Russia is important. Films, television documentaries, and other cultural outputs figure as important top-down stimuli which transmit collective memory-myths to Russian-speakers (Kucherenko, 2011). Because the Russian state is so closely linked to these 'cultural' productions, for example in the provision of film funding and the monitoring and control over the state media (Hutchins & Rulyova, 2009), it is perhaps wise to bear in mind that the division between the cultural and political realms is not so clear-cut. Nevertheless, even with this understanding, it is still primarily in the cultural sphere that the Russian Federation is able to influence Russian-speaking discourse in Latvia.

A major cultural event which creates top-down pressures to adhere to certain memory-myths is the 9 May celebrations of Victory Day. Although these celebrations are not officially sanctioned by the state and are not an official Latvian holiday, Russia has invested a great deal of time and resources into sponsoring activities around 9 May in Latvia. As the scale of the celebrations in Latvia suggests, these celebrations are an important aspect of Russian-speaking identity in Latvia.

Alongside these top-down pressures there are bottom-up pressures which affect the collective memory-myths of Russian speakers. The transmission of memories and memory-myths from family members is especially important in determining the memory-myths which are maintained in Latvia. Very often family members will have fought in the Second World War and their experiences, as presented in their discursively shrouded accounts, will have a real impact on the memory-myths which are maintained by subsequent generations. Nevertheless, because autobiographical memories are not the same as historical ones (Halbwachs, 1992, see also table 1), they become altered according to the perceived realities (*being*) of the world surrounding the person to whom the memories are transmitted. Therefore, memory-myths are liable to change generationally and temporally.

This was also evidenced in my survey data which demonstrated that certain perceptions of the Second World War are perceived differently among different age cohorts. This suggests that while bottom-up pressures are important in maintaining particular memory-myths, they are

altered and tempered by the top-down pressures which young Russian-speakers encounter in their experience of life in post-Soviet Latvia, especially within the school. It also suggests that younger Russian-speakers may be less disenfranchised than their parents in Latvia. The evidence has shown that these younger Russian-speakers possess greater proficiency in Latvian than their parents, largely as a consequence of the schooling system and the greater economic expediency of learning Latvian now compared to during the Soviet period.

One of the pitfalls of discursive approaches to social phenomena generally is that they can often focus on top-down projections and articulations at the expense of bottom-up ones. While there is much evidence for the primacy of politics, i.e. a top-down primacy in determining much of the form and content of current identity issues in contemporary Latvia, this does not mean that we should neglect bottom-up considerations. The data gathered from focus groups with Russian-speakers have allowed us to acquire a more complete picture of Russian-speaking discourses in Latvia firstly by facilitating a dialogue with bottom-up, non-elite perspectives, and secondly by assessing the receptive, or decoding, function that Russian-speakers engage in when they encounter certain top-down discourses.

When presented with selected excerpts from *Chas*, the focus-group respondents demonstrated that they were not always liable to simple and direct manipulations and were inclined to disagree with certain perspectives and sentiments. Most often when they disagreed with certain viewpoints presented to them they justified their disagreement based on their own personal experience in Latvia. This therefore highlights the limits of a singularly top-down approach to identity formation. Just as with collective memory-myths, elite articulations have to find some congruence with bottom-up perceptions if they are to gain common acceptance.

For this reason, while it is still valid to posit the primacy of politics, it is nonetheless a tempered primacy, and not an absolute one. Elites are able to construct groups and imagined communities but they are unable to create them out of nowhere, and they are certainly not able to create them instantly. Instead it is much more sensible to view their discursive strategies temporally, and based in certain times. As our material/discursive helix suggested, discursive agents are limited by both the *existence* and the *being* of the objects which surround them, and

by the discursive sedimentation of *being* which lies beneath them. That is to say that politics does have a primacy, but it is a constrained one.

In Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory antagonistic relations between groups are essential in determining 'the political'. However, the universalisation and particularisation of the external 'other' can be largely undermined when members of the two antagonistic groups are able to interact. As the focus-group participants demonstrated, Russian-speakers' interaction with members of the constructed 'Latvian' group means that it is impossible for Russian-speakers to believe fully the universalisations and particularisations which are ascribed to 'Latvians'. As a number of the participants suggested, everyday relations between Latvians and Russian-speakers were generally conflict free. It was in the realms of the media and politics that the greatest tensions were observed.

This gives extra weight to the primacy of politics thesis. Bottom-up interactions are important. However, they cannot explain why Russian-speaking identity has become solidified in the post-Soviet era. If bottom-up, everyday interactions between the two imagined communities were more antagonistic then this could point to a bottom-up process of identity creation and the formation of hegemonic blocs. What we actually see is that interactions are viewed much more positively than articulations which are presented from the political stage. Indeed, this was a sentiment that was even echoed by a number of the politicians who were interviewed for this research (see chapter five).

Media effects

Another potential top-down source of meaningful discursive articulation which was examined in this research was Latvia's media. As has been discussed in chapter two, there are a number of competing theories concerning the ability for mass media of communication to create audiences and to dictate personal and group preferences. Naturally, the media composition of every country will differ to a certain extent and Latvia has a number of its own peculiarities which characterise the domestic media landscape. One of these peculiarities is the extent to which there is an obvious overlap between the political aims of certain leading 'Russian-

speaking' political parties, and the content of leading Russian-language daily newspapers (see chapter four).

This means that the primacy of politics, which has been discussed above is cemented and largely sponsored by Latvia's Russian-language press which champions the political aims and ambitions of Harmony Centre and For Human Rights in a United Latvia. Nevertheless, it was clear from the focus group research that not all of the articulations and discursive strategies found within the pages of the Russian-language press are successfully integrated into the personal opinions and understandings of every Russian-speaking individual. Again, as stated above, this highlights the limited, constrained situation wherein top-down discursive agents find themselves.

It is very unlikely that top-down articulations will be able to obtain mass acceptance if they seem to contradict explicitly actually experienced interactions and realities (that is not to say Real interaction but rather interactions as they are experienced through the prism of discourse). Thus, while discursive agents will have creative power to create discursive meanings and *being*, we must not think that they have unlimited power.

Admittedly, this research has only focused on the printed medium of daily newspapers. There is good evidence that young people are far less likely to read newspapers compared to older generations (chapter six). Young people in Latvia are more likely to use the internet and television as sources of information (Zelče & Brikše, 2008). Because of the overlap between political discourses and press discourses it has been useful to study the Russian-language press in order to understand political strategies. However, more research on the much neglected areas of internet and TV use among Russian-speakers in Latvia is needed in order to understand better some of the processes whereby identity is constructed or negotiated for younger Russian-speakers in these media spaces. Unfortunately it has not been possible for me to examine these discourses in any detail simply because of the 'Real' constraints relating to a lack of time and resources. In light of the generational effects which were uncovered during this research, the need for such additional research is all the more apparent.

That is not to say that the perceptions and opinions of young Russian-speakers are entirely, or even largely, different from the discourses produced in the media which I examined. The focus group participants displayed a notable level of agreement with a number of discursive positions which were identified in the media discourse. In chapter six I concluded that the media does have a significant impact upon Russian-speakers in Latvia, even when younger Russian-speakers may not directly consume the media messages that are produced by the Russian-language press. This was evidenced by the similarly evolving tendency observed among focus group participants and the media discourses which I analysed, of moving away from anti-discursive strategies which have focused on discrimination and marginalisation and instead adopting constructive discursive strategies which highlight the improving conditions for Russian-speakers in Latvia.

I can suggest therefore, that the fact that media discourses become widely known is a more important factor than the level of their direct consumption. In many respects this brings us back to the primacy of politics. As we have seen, in Latvia it is very difficult to separate media from politics. The direct involvement of political actors in the country's journalism has meant that the Russian-language press have proven to be a pliable canvass for Latvia's 'Russian' parties. The implications of this are that politicians and representatives of HC and FHRUL are able to produce media discourses, but also to reproduce media discourses in their performative roles as politicians and public figures. For this reason it is perhaps incorrect to judge the impact of media discourse in isolation. Just as Foucault understood, power is dispersed through all social institutions and is therefore an interrelated phenomenon.

A study of the Russian-language press has therefore been very useful even when large sections of young Russian-speakers do not directly consume press discourses. As I have noted, this research has further highlighted the need to examine media discourses on the internet and TV. A more comprehensive analysis of media influence over the identity of Russian-speakers in Latvia would necessarily attempt to include an analysis of such media.

Final conclusions and predictions for the future

Through the use of a temporal approach to studying discourse we have seen the changing position of Russian-speakers in Latvia. By going back to the *Atmoda* period it has been possible to trace the evolution and emergence of certain nodal points which have been vital in securing the identity positions necessary for the maintenance of a relatively stable group identity. We have seen how this group has solidified around the concept of Russian-speakerness, i.e. the construction of qualities associated with permanent residents of Latvia whose first language is Russian. We have also seen how Latvian state policies, Russian state policies, Russian cultural production, and media discourses have all exerted various pressures on the numerous identity positions of Russian-speakers.

This approach has allowed us to see how contemporary identities are rooted in the past but are not stuck there. The seismic changes which occurred in Latvia following the collapse of the Soviet Union led to an organic crisis which, in many respects, demanded the formation of new hegemonic formations. More than twenty years down the line, however, we have seen how these formations are now relatively stable as poles of identification. Just as Laclau suggested (interview with Laclau in Worsham & Olsen, 1999: 18-19), ‘If you are living in “an organic crisis period”, in the Gramscian sense, obviously many more areas of social life are susceptible to political construction’. Because the need to create new hegemonic formations is no longer so great, and because Latvia’s nationalising state has largely been nationalised, we can expect further evolution in the position of Russian-speakers ahead.

Based on this research, which has traced various positions from the Soviet era, it can be posited that Russian-speaking elites are much more likely now to pursue integrational and constructive discursive strategies than anti-discursive strategies in the long-run. Having consolidated a political and social bloc of Russian-speakers around the logic of equivalence, there is now great incentive to integrate into the main ‘Latvian’ discourses. For the political elite a central incentive is the desire to acquire a place in government. For the general public the incentives include being accepted as legitimate members of the Latvian Republic and cultivating a sense of belonging to Latvia which is not denied by other groups.

Temporally speaking 2012 may well be too early for Russian-speaking political representatives to start talking freely of occupation. This linguistic sign still has too much sedimented *being* which continues to anchor Russian-speaking identity in Latvia. Nevertheless, as this research has shown, a process is occurring whereby the word occupation is gradually being excavated and separated from the other nodal points which underpin identity. For example, young people are now more willing to accept that there was an occupation but still insist that the Soviet Army played a vital role in defeating fascism in Europe. This means that in the future (but not the near future) it is likely that Russian-speakers will be more likely to start integrating into Latvian discourses by using the sign of occupation.

We have seen in chapters three and seven that Harmony Centre have tried to sound a more reconciliatory note with the use of the linguistic sign annexation in place of occupation. In fact, Riga's incumbent major and leader of Harmony Centre, Nils Ušakovs, took this one step further. Talking in English at a conference attended by a number of foreign diplomats Ušakovs used the phrase 'after 50 years of Soviet occupation'⁴¹ (*Diena*, 17/09/11). As Imants Lieģis, then member of parliament for the Civil Union party, observed, Ušakovs was able to deliver this speech because those in attendance were not from his electorate (*Diena*, 17/09/11). In response to the interest raised by his use of the word occupation Ušakovs is quoted by *Diena* as saying:

Harmony Centre has never used historical questions regarding what happened in 1940 in order to influence today's political situation. The position of HC is clear – there are no occupiers in Latvia and we are not about to make any demands against any single country (*Diena*, 17/09/11).

Knowing the fraught history of Latvia as we do, and having some understanding of the multifarious factors which have influenced identity formation in this country, this must be seen as a clever and politically expedient strategy. Certainly it is a strategy which we should expect to see more of in the future. Not only does this potentially allow Russian-speakers (and importantly; their self-ascribed 'representatives') the chance to integrate into Latvian

⁴¹ Although Ušakovs' speech was originally in English I have had to retranslate this phrase back from Latvian, where it was reported in the Latvian press.

discourses, it also has the potential to maintain certain discourses which are salient to their own national identities. The biggest question, however, remains how this strategy will be received by the 'Latvian' hegemonic formation. With far less to gain from this strategy for 'Latvian' political elites there may well be continued resistance to Russian-speakers as the group which has been essential in the suturing of Latvian identity. On the other hand if Russian-speakers can convince enough people that they are not a threat to the core values and integrity of the Latvian nation, then perhaps 'Latvian' parties will attempt to attract political support from the large Russian-speaking electorate.

Writing in 2000 Eduard Ponarin (2000: 1538) wrote that assimilation into Estonian and Latvian societies was 'a question of a race between intergenerational assimilation and increasing political power of the Russophone population.' In many ways this still holds. However, the binary which is presented here is not as clear-cut as one might have first imagined. The successes and failures of HC have revealed how difficult it is to simultaneously integrate and increase their political power. Nevertheless, there are signs that it has, to date, been a relatively successful in pursuing this strategy.

On the other hand, recent agitation surrounding the call for a referendum to introduce Russian as a second official language (see BBC, 2012), revealed that there are still plenty of simmering ethnic tensions in Latvia. While the great fuss connected with this issue died down pretty rapidly following the unsuccessful referendum, this nevertheless highlights the potential for ethnic tensions to be further utilised by skilful politicians in the future. Based on this research, I would view the agitation surrounding the referendum as an inevitably occurring peak in ethnic tensions on a generally downwards trend.

The signs, on the whole, seem to point to increased integration of Russian-speakers into Latvian discourses. This does not mean, however, that the process of integration will continue indefinitely in the future. As always the (constrained) role of human agency will be vital in determining the course of Latvian politics and of group relations and identities.

In terms of predicting the future identity positions of Latvia's Russian-speakers, one thing we can be certain of is that only time will tell.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Materials presented to focus group participants for discussion (with English translations)

1: Chas: 20.09.10

- Присутствие русского языка является особенностью, которую нам в Латвии нужно использовать...

Латвия, которая лучше понимает особенности России, следует воспользоваться этим преимуществом и стать посредником в деловых контактах и формировании отношений между западными странами и Россией.

- The presence of the Russian language is a peculiarity which we in Latvia need to utilise.

Latvia, who best understands the peculiarities of Russia, should make the most of these advantages and become a mediator in business contacts and in forming relations between western countries and Russia.

2: Chas: 06.10.10

Для русскоязычных уже не столь остры и, кажется, уже просто неактуальны т. н. этнические проблемы - языка, образования на родном языке, избирательное право для неграждан и т. д. Безусловно, это раздражающие факторы, они вносят дискомфорт в наше существование, но уже не являются определяющими. В стране обострились социальные, экономические проблемы, которые и отодвинули конек «пчел» - права нацменьшинств - на задний план.

For Russian-speakers the so called ethnic problems are no longer so heated, and it seems simply not relevant: language, education in ones native language, voting rights for non-citizens etc. Of course they are annoyances; they bring discomfort into our existence. But they are no longer so defining. In Latvia social and economic problems have worsened, which have moved FHRUL's hobby horse – the rights of national minorities – into the background.

3: Chas: 26.02.09

Парадокс - правительство ужесточает требования к знанию госязыка и вместе с тем сокращает бюджет организации, от которой зависит получение жизненно важной «аплиецибы». Тут и политологом не надо быть, чтобы понять, что искусственно создаются препоны и рогатки для русскоговорящих, желающих получить нужную для профессии категорию. Далее все просто: нет языка - нет работы, нет работы - нет доходов. Значит, нищий, значит, на улице.

Кому это выгодно? Тем, кому не нужно сдавать экзамен и кто в свое время устроился на «кофейную» должность в госструктуре и самоуправлении.

It is a paradox: the government is toughening up its requirements for knowledge of the state language while consecutively reducing the budget of the organisation which is responsible for the issuing of the vital 'aplicības'⁴². Here one does not need to be a political scientist to understand that they are artificially creating impediments and obstacles for Russian-speakers who wish to acquire the required [language] category for their profession. What follows is simple: no language, no job; no job, no income. That means poverty which means the street.

Who does this benefit? It benefits those who don't need to sit an exam and who have, in the mean time, managed to secure a plush position in the state structure and local government.

4: Chas: 11.12.08

В Брюсселе завершился Европейский русский форум «ЕС и Россия: новые вызовы». Его главной задачей было продолжить прерванный кавказскими событиями диалог. Одним из участников форума был председатель Комитета Госдумы по иностранным делам, вице-председатель ПАСЕ Константин Косачев. «Час» задал ему несколько вопросов.

Какова роль русских диаспор разных стран в выстраивании отношений между Россией и ЕС?

- Надеюсь, тема Русского мира будет приобретать все большее значение в Европе. Но тут важно иметь в виду, что Россия совершила бы большую ошибку, если бы попыталась примитивным образом использовать русские диаспоры за рубежом как «пятую колонну». Это не так!

⁴² In the original text the author uses the Latvian word 'aplicības' (certificates), written in Cyrillic. This refers to the graded language tests in Latvian which are required in order to find employment in most professions.

...Мы как государство обязаны оказывать всемерную поддержку тем, кто живет за рубежом. И эта поддержка не должна сводиться лишь к громким заявлениям и моральному одобрению.

...И еще одно, очень важное. Мы не должны сводить наши усилия лишь к тому, чтобы агитировать за Русский мир в его культурно-историческом аспекте. Очень здорово, если люди любят Россию, владеют русским языком и играют на русских народных инструментах. Но этого недостаточно.

Ведь любая диаспора лоббирует интересы своего отечества в странах проживания. Достаточно посмотреть, как евреи по всему миру работают в пользу Израиля, армяне радуют о благе Армении.

...Прежде всего речь идет о том, чтобы очистить образ России, существующий сейчас в мире, от различных наслоений и часто намеренных искажений.

Не дать свою Родину в обиду, добиться того, чтобы к ней, как к любой другой стране, было справедливое отношение, - вот естественная и посильная для Русского мира задача.

The European Russian forum ‘The EU and Russia: New challenges’ was held In Brussels. Its main aim was to restore the dialogue which was broken by the events in the Caucasus. One of the participants of the forum was the chairman of the State Duma Committee on Foreign Relations, and vice president of PACE Konstantin Kosachev. ‘Chas’ put a number of questions to him.

What role does the Russian diaspora have in various countries in the estranged relations between Russia and the EU?

- I hope the subject of the Russian world will have all the more meaning in Europe. But here it's important to stress that Russia would make a serious mistake if it tried to use the Russian diaspora in a primitive way as a 'fifth column'. It is not like that!

...We as a state are obliged to provide world-wide support for those who live abroad. And this support does not necessarily have to consist of loud proclamations and moral approval.

...And another thing which is very important. We should not restrict our campaigning for the Russian world simply to its cultural and historical aspects. It is all good and well if people love Russia, speak Russian, and play Russian folk instruments. But this is not enough.

Does not every diaspora lobby for the interests of its fatherland from the country of its residence? One just needs to look at how the Jews, throughout the world, work for the good of Israel, or how the Armenians rejoice in the wellbeing of Armenia.

Firstly we are talking about how to clean up the image of Russia which exists right now in the world and remove the various and often purposefully accumulated distortions.

Do not disrespect your homeland. Work so that, as for any other country, attitudes towards it are fair. This is the natural and feasible task for the Russian world.

5: Chas: 06.09.10

Мне нравится гулять по Риге и ловить звуки сегодняшнего дня

«Виням ир байги тупойс имиджс!» - слышу за соседним столиком на площади Ливу, напротив Русского театра... Рядом муж заискивающе спрашивает у жены, поглядывая в сторону цветастых зонтиков: «Может быть, по алыне?» ... Телефонные разговоры - вообще песня! «Виньш, типа, гриб ар мани уз кинчику... Ну, окей. Лаби. Давай!».

I like to walk round Riga and catch the sounds of today

“Viņam ir baigi myной-s image!”⁴³ – I hear this on the table next to me on Līvu Square, next to the Russian theatre... Next to me a husband ingratiatingly asks his wife, who is looking at some garish umbrellas: “Maybe we could have a beer?”⁴⁴ ... Telephone conversations are like songs! “Viņš, muna, grib ar mani uz кинчику... Ну, okay. Labi. Давай!”⁴⁵

6: Harmony Centre website: <http://www.saskanascenrs.lv/ru/o-nas/> [last accessed 14/07/11]

Приложение к Меморандуму о «Центре согласия»

Проект

Декларация Сейма Латвийской Республики о межэтническом доверии

Сейм Латвийской Республики считает, что необходимым условием укрепления межэтнического доверия в латвийском обществе является убедительное выражение уважения к интересам, ценностям и историческому опыту различных этнических групп, в частности:

- признание того, что Латвия есть единственное место в мире, где латыши могут рассчитывать на получение государственной гарантии сохранения и развития своего языка и культуры;

⁴³ Latvian, English, and Russian are all mixed into this sentence. The Russian Word тупой is Latvianised by adding an –s at the end. In essence the sentence means ‘He has a really stupid image!’

⁴⁴ Here the Latvian ‘aliņa’ (diminutive of ‘alus’ – beer) is Russianised.

⁴⁵ ‘He wants to go to the cinema with me. Well, okay. Good. Let’s go!’

- осознание всеми латвийцами независимо от этнической принадлежности ответственности за сохранение латышского языка и признание за латышским языком статуса единственного государственного языка Латвийской Республики;
- выражение признательности за огромные жертвы, которые предшествующие поколения жителей Латвии понесли в мировых войнах, в борьбе против тирании и несправедливости для того, чтобы в Европе восторжествовали свобода, демократия и права человека;
- сострадание жертвам гитлеровского и сталинского режимов, унёсших тысячи жизней, поломавших судьбы людей и расколовших страну надвое, следствие чего мы переживаем до сих пор;
- признание того, что все жители Латвии независимо от их этнической принадлежности, родившиеся или поселившиеся здесь в советское время, принадлежат Латвии и составляют её ценность;
- признание за русским языком значения языка межэтнического общения жителей Латвии наряду с латышским, на которых говорят в семьях большинство жителей страны.

Attachment to the Memorandum on ‘Harmony Centre’

Project

Declaration of the Saeima of the Latvian Republic on interethnic trust

The Saeima of the Latvian Republic considers that an earnest expression of respect for the interests, values, and historical experience of various ethnic groups is an essential condition for improving interethnic trust. In particular:

- *Acknowledgement of the fact that Latvia is the only place on earth where Latvians can expect to receive state guarantees for the preservation and development of their language and culture;*
- *The recognition by all Latvians, irrespective of their ethnic roots, of their responsibility to preserve the Latvian language, and the acknowledgement for the Latvian language of the status of the sole state language of the Latvian Republic;*
- *An expression of gratitude for the huge sacrifices which have been borne by preceding generations of Latvia’s inhabitants during the World Wars in the fight against tyranny and injustice, so that freedom, democracy, and human rights triumphed in Europe;*
- *compassion towards the victims of the Hitlerite and Stalinist regimes which took away thousands of lives, decided the fate of the people, and split the country in two – the consequences of which we are living with to this day.*
- *Acknowledgement that all inhabitants of Latvia, irrespective of ethnic belonging, who were born here, or who resettled here in Soviet times, belong to Latvia and are of value to Latvia;*

- *Acknowledgement that the Russian language, alongside Latvian, is an important language for interethnic communication for the inhabitants of Latvia which is spoken in a majority of families within the country.*

Appendix 2: Victory Day questionnaire as presented to respondents in Russian (with questions translated into English below)

Просим Вас помочь мне в исследовании, ответив на следующие вопросы. Я пишу кандидатскую диссертацию по теме национальной идентичности в современной Латвии.

Я получаю полную научную стипендию от Совета экономических и социальных исследований (Economic and Social Research Council), которая является независимой финансовой организацией в Великобритании.

Результаты будут строго конфиденциальны.

Пол:	Мужчина	<input type="checkbox"/>	Женщина	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Возраст:	18-25	<input type="checkbox"/>	26-30	<input type="checkbox"/>	31-40	<input type="checkbox"/>	41-50	<input type="checkbox"/>	51+	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Оцените утверждения с позиции «Да» (согласен) «Нет» (несогласен) «частично» (частично согласен) или «?» (затрудняюсь ответить)

№	Содержание утверждений	Да	Нет	частично	?
1	Главная причина я сегодня пришел – засвидетельствовать свое почтение всем тем, кто воевал в Второй мировой войне.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	9. мая должно стать официальным праздником в Латвии.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Я могу понять причины, по которым некоторым людей в Латвии неприятно видеть празднование 9. мая.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Мы должны проявить сострадание к жертвам гитлеровского и сталинского режимов, унёсших тысячи жизней, поломавших судьбы людей и расколовших страну надвое, следствие чего мы переживаем до сих пор.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	В 1944 г. Латвия была освобождена советскими войсками.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	9. мая является символичным днем, когда нелатыши могут выразить свое неудовольствие по поводу несправедливости государства.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

№	Содержание утверждений	Да	Нет	частично	?
7	Это неправильно говорить о советской «оккупации». Никакой советской оккупации не было.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	История никогда неоднозначна. Поэтому я могу смириться с тем, что у разных людей существуют разные интерпретации о Второй мировой войне и ее последствиях.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Празднуя День Победы мы одновременно должны принимать в внимание тот факт, что вторжение советских войск на Латвию в 1940 г. привело к многим ужасным последствиям стране и ее жителям.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Шествия латышских легионеров покрывает Латвию позором.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	Было бы лучше, если бы в 9. мая больше латышей участвовали в праздновании.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	Несмотря на то, что в 9. мая отмечается великая победа над фашизмом, для Латвии также отмечается лишение ее государственной свободы.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13	Мы не должны слишком строго осудить всех тех, кто служил в легионах «Waffen SS».	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	Мне не нравится большая суeta вокруг празднования 9. мая. Было бы лучше сосредоточиться на памяти павших.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15	Латвия была насильно аннексирована советской армией, против желания большинства ее жителей.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- 1: The main reason that I came here today is to pay my respects to those who fought in the Second World War.
- 2: May 9 should become an official holiday in Latvia.
- 3: I can understand why some people do not like to see 9 May being celebrated in Latvia.
- 4: We should show compassion towards the victims of the Hitlerite and Stalinist regimes which took away thousands of lives, decided the fate of the people, and split the country in two – the consequences of which we are living with to this day.

- 5: In 1944 Latvia was liberated by Soviet troops.
- 6: May 9 is a symbolic day when non-Latvians can voice their dissatisfaction with the unfairness of the state.
- 7: It is not right to talk about Soviet 'occupation'. There was no Soviet occupation.
- 8: History is never straightforward. For this reason I can come to terms with the fact that different people have different interpretations of the Second World War and its consequences.
- 9: While celebrating Victory Day we should simultaneously bear in mind that the incursion of Soviet troops into Latvian, in 1940, led to many horrific consequences for the country and its inhabitants.
- 10: The marches of the Latvian Legionnaires cover Latvia in shame.
- 11: It would be better if more Latvians participated in the May 9 celebrations.
- 12: Irrespective of the fact that May 9 marks a great victory over fascism, for Latvia it also marks the loss of its state freedom.
- 13: We should not condemn those who served in the 'Waffen SS' legions too strongly.
- 14: I do not like the big fuss which surrounds May 9. It would be better to concentrate on the memory of the fallen.
- 15: Latvia was forcefully annexed by the Soviet army against the will of the majority of its inhabitants.

Appendix 3: Full results of May 9 survey

1. The main reason that I came here today is to pay my respects to those who fought in the Second World War					
	Agree	Disagree	Partly Agree	Difficult to say	Valid answers
18-25	50 (91%)	0 (0%)	5 (9%)	0 (0%)	55
26-30	28 (93%)	0 (0%)	2 (7%)	0 (0%)	30
31-40	27 (90%)	0 (0%)	3 (10%)	0 (0%)	30
41-50	41 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	41
51+	42 (93%)	0 (0%)	3 (7%)	0 (0%)	45
Total	188 (94%)	0 (0%)	13 (6%)	0 (0%)	201

3. I can understand why some people do not like to see 9 May being celebrated in Latvia					
	Agree	Disagree	Partly agree	Difficult to say	Valid answers
18-25	11 (20%)	11 (20%)	30 (55%)	3 (5%)	55
26-30	6 (20%)	14 (47%)	10 (33%)	0 (0%)	30
31-40	10 (33%)	8 (27%)	11 (37%)	1 (3%)	30
41-50	13 (32%)	16 (39%)	12 (29%)	0 (0%)	41
51+	11 (24%)	21 (47%)	13 (29%)	0 (0%)	45
Total	51 (25%)	70 (35%)	76 (38%)	4 (2%)	201

5. In 1944 Latvia was liberated by Soviet troops					
	Agree	Disagree	Partly agree	Difficult to say	Valid answers
18-25	39 (71%)	4 (7%)	11 (20%)	1 (2%)	55
26-30	25 (8%)	1 (3%)	4 (13%)	0 (0%)	30
31-40	24 (80%)	0 (0%)	5 (17%)	1 (3%)	30
41-50	36 (90%)	0 (0%)	3 (8%)	1 (3%)	40
51+	40 (91%)	0 (0%)	4 (10%)	0 (0%)	44
Total	164 (82%)	5 (3%)	27 (14%)	3 (2%)	199

7. It is not right to talk of Soviet "occupation". There was no Soviet occupation					
	Agree	Disagree	Partly agree	Difficult to say	Valid answers
18-25	20 (36%)	7 (13%)	27 (49%)	1 (2%)	55
26-30	15 (50%)	4 (13%)	10 (33%)	1 (3%)	30
31-40	17 (57%)	4 (13%)	8 (27%)	1 (3%)	30
41-50	31 (76%)	4 (10%)	6 (15%)	0 (0%)	41
51+	40 (87%)	4 (9%)	2 (4%)	0 (0%)	46
Total	123 (61%)	23 (11%)	53 (26%)	3 (15%)	202

2. May 9 should become an official holiday in Latvia					
	Agree	Disagree	Partly agree	Difficult to say	Valid answers
18-25	48 (87%)	1 (2%)	6 (11%)	0 (0%)	55
26-30	24 (80%)	4 (13%)	0 (0%)	2 (7%)	30
31-40	21 (70%)	5 (17%)	2 (7%)	2 (7%)	30
41-50	35 (88%)	1 (3%)	3 (8%)	1 (3%)	40
51+	43 (93%)	2 (4%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	46
Total	171 (85%)	13 (6%)	11 (5%)	6 (3%)	201

4. We should show compassion towards the victims of the Hitlerite and Stalinist regimes which took away thousands of lives, decided the fate of the people, and split the country in two – the consequences of which we are living with to this day					
	Agree	Disagree	Partly agree	Difficult to say	Valid answers
18-25	48 (87%)	1 (2%)	6 (11%)	0 (0%)	55
26-30	26 (87%)	0 (0%)	4 (13%)	0 (0%)	30
31-40	26 (87%)	1 (3%)	2 (7%)	1 (3%)	30
41-50	28 (72%)	4 (10%)	7 (18%)	0 (0%)	39
51+	35 (76%)	2 (4%)	8 (17%)	1 (2%)	46
Total	163 (82%)	8 (4%)	27 (14%)	2 (1%)	200

6. May 9 is a symbolic day when non-Latvians can voice their dissatisfaction with the unfairness of the state					
	Agree	Disagree	Partly agree	Difficult to say	Valid answers
18-25	0 (0%)	38 (70%)	16 (29%)	1 (2%)	55
26-30	1 (3%)	23 (77%)	6 (20%)	0 (0%)	30
31-40	7 (23%)	12 (40%)	7 (23%)	4 (13%)	30
41-50	18 (44%)	14 (34%)	5 (12%)	4 (10%)	41
51+	29 (64%)	10 (22%)	5 (11%)	1 (2%)	45
Total	55 (27%)	97 (48%)	39 (19%)	10 (5%)	201

8. History is never straightforward. For this reason I can come to terms with the fact that different people have different interpretations of the Second World War and its consequences					
	Agree	Disagree	Partly agree	Difficult to say	Valid answers
18-25	48 (87%)	2 (4%)	5 (9%)	0 (0%)	55
26-30	21 (70%)	3 (10%)	6 (20%)	0 (0%)	30
31-40	17 (57%)	4 (13%)	8 (27%)	1 (3%)	30
41-50	17 (41%)	14 (34%)	10 (24%)	0 (0%)	41
51+	21 (47%)	13 (29%)	11 (24%)	0 (0%)	45
Total	124 (62%)	36 (18%)	40 (20%)	1 (0%)	201

Incursion of Soviet troops into Latvia in 1944 had many terrible consequences for the country and its inhabitants					
	Agree	Disagree	Partly agree	Difficult to say	Valid answers
18-25	13 (24%)	25 (45%)	15 (27%)	2 (4%)	55
26-30	5 (17%)	12 (40%)	11 (37%)	2 (7%)	30
31-40	6 (20%)	10 (33%)	7 (23%)	7 (23%)	30
41-50	6 (15%)	22 (54%)	12 (29%)	1 (2%)	41
51+	8 (18%)	25 (56%)	11 (24%)	1 (2%)	45
Total	38 (19%)	94 (47%)	56 (28%)	13 (6%)	201

10. The parades of the Latvian legionaries cover Latvia in shame					
	Agree	Disagree	Partly agree	Difficult to say	Valid answers
18-25	43 (78%)	2 (36%)	6 (11%)	4 (7%)	55
26-30	18 (60%)	3 (10%)	6 (20%)	3 (10%)	30
31-40	26 (87%)	1 (3%)	2 (7%)	1 (3%)	30
41-50	37 (90%)	0 (0%)	4 (10%)	0 (0%)	41
51+	42 (91%)	2 (4%)	2 (4%)	0 (0%)	46
Total	166 (82%)	8 (4%)	20 (10%)	8 (4%)	202

11. It would be better if more Latvians participated in the 9 May celebrations					
	Agree	Disagree	Partly agree	Valid answers	
18-25	45 (82%)	0 (0%)	9 (16%)	1 (2%)	55
26-30	20 (67%)	1 (3%)	3 (10%)	6 (20%)	30
31-40	21 (70%)	1 (3%)	7 (23%)	1 (3%)	30
41-50	37 (90%)	1 (2%)	3 (7%)	0 (0%)	41
51+	43 (93%)	0 (0%)	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	46
Total	166 (82%)	3 (1%)	24 (12%)	9 (4%)	202

12. Irrespective of the fact that 9 May marks a great victory over fascism, for Latvia it also marks the loss of its state freedom					
	Agree	Disagree	Partly agree	Difficult to say	Valid answers
18-25	14 (25%)	26 (47%)	12 (22%)	3 (5%)	55
26-30	4 (13%)	16 (53%)	8 (27%)	2 (7)	30
31-40	1 (3%)	9 (30%)	11 (37%)	9 (30%)	30
41-50	9 (22%)	20 (49%)	6 (15%)	6 (15%)	41
51+	8 (17%)	26 (57%)	6 (13%)	6 (13%)	46
Total	36 (18%)	97 (48%)	43 (21%)	26 (13%)	202

13. We should not condemn too harshly those who served in the 'Waiffen SS' legions					
	Agree	Disagree	Partly agree	Difficult to say	Valid answers
18-25	10 (18%)	21 (38%)	17 (31%)	7 (13%)	55
26-30	12 (40%)	12 (40%)	6 (20%)	0 (0%)	30
31-40	5 (17%)	14 (47%)	10 (33%)	1 (3%)	30
41-50	6 (15%)	19 (46%)	12 (29%)	4 (10%)	41
51+	19 (42%)	16 (36%)	9 (20%)	1 (2%)	45
Total	52 (26%)	82 (41%)	54 (27%)	13 (6%)	201

14. I do not like the big fuss which surrounds the 9 May celebrations. It would be better to concentrate on the memory of the fallen					
	Agree	Disagree	Partly agree	Difficult to say	Valid answers
18-25	14 (25%)	26 (47%)	14 (25%)	1 (2%)	55
26-30	9 (30%)	14 (47%)	7 (23%)	0 (0%)	30
31-40	7 (23%)	18 (60%)	3 (10%)	2 (7%)	30
41-50	16 (40%)	17 (43%)	5 (13%)	2 (5%)	40
51+	12 (28%)	24 (55%)	5 (12%)	2 (5%)	43
Total	58 (29%)	99 (50%)	34 (17%)	7 (35%)	198

15. Latvia was forcefully annexed by the Soviet Army against the will of the majority of its inhabitants					
	Agree	Disagree	Partly agree	Difficult to say	Valid answers
18-25	15 (27%)	12 (22%)	21 (38%)	7 (13%)	55
26-30	2 (7%)	16 (53%)	11 (37%)	1 (3%)	30
31-40	2 (7%)	16 (53%)	8 (27%)	4 (13%)	30
41-50	0 (0%)	38 (93%)	3 (7%)	0 (0%)	41
51+	1 (2%)	40 (89%)	2 (4%)	2 (4%)	45
Total	20 (10%)	122 (61%)	45 (22%)	14 (7%)	201

Appendix 4: Latvian political parties and alliances represented in the 10th and 11th Saeimas

Results of 10th Saeima elections		
Political alliance and constituent parties	Number of seats won	Official website addresses
Unity (<i>Vienotība</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Era (<i>Jaunais Laiks</i>) • Civic Union (<i>Pilsoniskā savienība</i>) • Society for a Different Politics (<i>Sabiedrība Citai Politikai</i>) 	33	www.vienotiba.lv/ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.jaunaislaiks.lv • www.pilsoniska-savieniba.lv/ • www.scp.lv
Harmony Centre (<i>Saskaņas centrs</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Democrat Party ‘Harmony’ (<i>Sociāldemokrātiskā Partija „Saskaņa”</i>) • Socialist Party of Latvia (<i>Latvijas Sociālistiskā partija</i>) 	29	www.saskanascents.lv <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No official website • www.latsocpartija.lv
Union of Greens and Farmers (<i>Zaļo un Zemnieku savienība</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Latvian Farmers’ Union (<i>Latvijas Zemnieku savienība</i>) • Latvia’s Green Party (<i>Latvijas Zaļā partija</i>) 	22	www.zzs.lv <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.lzs.lv • www.zp.lv
The National Alliance (<i>Nacionālā apvienība</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All for Latvia! (<i>Visu Latvijai!</i>) • For Fatherland and Freedom /LNNK (<i>Tēvzemei un brīvībai/LNNK</i>) 	8	www.visulativijaidodu.lv <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.visulativijai.lv • www.tb.lv
For a Good Latvia! (<i>Par labu Latviju!</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The People's Party (<i>Tautas Partija</i>) • Latvia’s First Party/Latvia’s Way (<i>Latvijas pirmā partija/Latvijas ceļš</i>) 	8	www.parlabulativiju.lv <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.tautaspartija.lv • www.lpplc.lv

Results of 11 th Saeima elections		
Political alliance and constituent parties	Number of seats won	Official website addresses
Harmony Centre (<i>Saskaņas centrs</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Democrat Party ‘Harmony’ (<i>Sociāldemokrātiskā Partija „Saskaņa”</i>) • Socialist Party of Latvia (<i>Latvijas Sociālistiskā partija</i>) 	31	www.saskanascents.lv <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No official website • www.latsocpartija.lv
Zatlers’ Reform Party (<i>Zaltera reformu partija</i>)	22	www.reformupartija.lv
Unity (<i>Vienotība</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Era (<i>Jaunais Laiks</i>) • Civic Union (<i>Pilsoniskā savienība</i>) • Society for a Different Politics (<i>Sabiedrība Citai Politikai</i>) 	20	www.vienotiba.lv/ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.jaunaislaiks.lv • www.pilsoniska-savieniba.lv/ • www.scp.lv
The National Alliance (<i>Nacionālā apvienība</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All for Latvia! (<i>Visu Latvijai!</i>) • For Fatherland and Freedom /LNNK (<i>Tēvzemei un brīvībai/LNNK</i>) 	14	www.visulatvijaidodu.lv <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.visulatvijai.lv • www.tb.lv
Union of Greens and Farmers (<i>Zaļo un Zemnieku savienība</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Latvian Farmers’ Union (<i>Latvijas Zemnieku savienība</i>) • Latvia’s Green Party (<i>Latvijas Zaļā partija</i>) 	13	www.zzs.lv <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.lzs.lv • www.zp.lv

Glossary

<i>Atmoda</i>	(Latvian) Lit: the awakening. Refers to the period of national awakening in the late Soviet period. Also the title of the Latvian Popular Front's newspaper
<i>Chas</i>	(Russian) Lit: the hour. Russian-language, daily newspaper
<i>Demokratizatsiya</i>	(Russian) Democratisation
<i>Diena</i>	(Latvian) Lit: the day. Latvian-language daily newspaper
<i>Dom Moskvi</i>	(Russian) Lit: The Moscow House: cultural centre largely funded by Moscow's municipal government promoting cultural and business links between Riga and Moscow
<i>Interfront</i>	(Russian) Abbreviated form of: <i>Internatsional'nii front trudyashchikh sya Latviiskoi SSR</i> (International Front of the Workers of the Latvian SSR). Similar organisation to <i>Interdvizhenie</i> (Intermovement) in Estonia: a reactionary political movement which sought to maintain the Soviet status quo
<i>Korennaya natsiya</i>	(Russian) Titular nation; lit. root nation
<i>Korenizatsiya</i>	(Russian) The Soviet practice of using of local cadres in the ranks of the Communist Party within the separate Soviet republics
<i>Krievvalodīgie</i>	(Latvian) Russian-speakers: from <i>valoda</i> (language)
<i>Latishsk/ii -aya</i>	(Russian) Latvian: referring to people, places, or things which are ethnically or culturally Latvian, as distinct from <i>latviiskii</i> which refers to objects from Latvia regardless of ethnic considerations
<i>Latviisk/ii –aya</i>	(Russian) Latvian: see <i>latishsk/ii -aya</i>
<i>Līgo svētki</i>	(Latvian) Traditional pagan festival which marks the summer solstice and is widely celebrated in Latvia
<i>Natsional'nost'</i>	(Russian) Nationality, often translated into English as ethnicity
<i>Nācija</i>	(Latvian) Nation: this however, differs from <i>tauta</i> which signifies more of an ethno-cultural nation. Generally (although not exclusively) <i>nācija</i> refers to a political or cultural nation

<i>Narod</i>	(Russian) Nation: Russian equivalent to the Latvian <i>tauta</i>
<i>Neatkarīga Avīze</i>	(Latvian) Lit: Independent Newspaper. Latvian-language, daily newspaper
<i>Pamattauta</i>	(Latvian) Core nation: derived from the Latvian <i>pamats</i> (foundation) and <i>tauta</i> (see <i>tauta</i>)
<i>Pamatnācija</i>	(Latvian) Core nation: derived from the Latvian <i>pamats</i> (foundation) and <i>nācija</i> (see <i>nācija</i>)
<i>Pribaltika</i>	(Russian) The Baltic: the Russian word which refers to the three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania
<i>Riigikogu</i>	(Estonian) The Estonian Parliament
<i>Rossiisk/ii -aya</i>	(Russian) Russian: see <i>russk/ii -aya</i>
<i>Rossiiskaya diaspora</i>	(Russian) Russian diaspora
<i>Russk/ii –aya</i>	(Russian) Russian: referring to people, places, or things which are ethnically or culturally ‘Russian’, as distinct from <i>rossiisk/ii –aya</i> which refers to objects from Russia regardless of ethnic considerations
<i>Russkogovoryashie</i>	(Russian) Russian-speakers: from <i>govorit</i> ’ (to speak)
<i>Russkoyazichnie</i>	(Russian) Russian-speakers: from <i>yazik</i> (language)
<i>Saeima</i>	(Latvian) The Latvian Parliament
<i>Satversme</i>	(Latvian) The Constitution of the Republic of Latvia
<i>Sootechestvenniki za</i>	(Russian) Compatriots abroad: term used by the Russian <i>rubezhom</i> Federation to refer to Russian-speakers outside of Russia
<i>Tautība</i>	(Latvian) Nationality: derived from the Latvian <i>tauta</i>
<i>Tauta</i>	(Latvian) Nation: see <i>nācija</i>
<i>Vesti Segodnya</i>	(Russian) Lit: today’s news. Russian-language daily tabloid

Latvian political parties and alliances

All for Latvia!	<i>Visu Latvijai!</i>
Civil Union	<i>Pilsoniskā savienība</i>
For a Good Latvia!	<i>Par labu Latviju!</i>
For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK	<i>Tēvzemei un brīvībai/LNNK</i>
For Human Rights in a United Latvia	<i>Par cilvēka tiesībām vienotā Latvijā</i>
Harmony Centre	<i>Saskaņas centrs</i>
Latvian Farmers' Union	<i>Latvijas Zemnieku savienība</i>
Latvia's First Party/Latvia's Way	<i>Latvijas pirmā partija/Latvijas ceļš</i>
Latvia's Green Party	<i>Latvijas Zaļā partija</i>
National alliance	<i>Nacionālā apvienība</i>
New Era	<i>Jaunais laiks</i>
People's Party	<i>Tautas partija</i>
Social Democratic Party 'Harmony'	<i>Sociāldemokrātiskā partija „Saskaņa”</i>
Socialist Party of Latvia	<i>Latvijas Sociālistiskā partija</i>
Society for a Different Politics	<i>Sabiedrība Citai Politikai</i>
Union of Greens and Farmers	<i>Zaļo un Zemnieku savienība</i>
Unity	<i>Vienotība</i>
Zatlers' Reform Party	<i>Zatlera reformu partija</i>

List of interviewed Latvian politicians

Cilevičs, Boriss	Harmony Centre
Dombrava, Jānis	National Alliance
Kabanovs, Nikolaijs	Harmony Centre
Laizāne, Inese	National Alliance
Lācis, Visvaldis	National Alliance/Independent
Sakovskijs, Aleksandrs	Harmony Centre

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