

Integration in the Shadow of Cultural Trauma: the Case of Latvia¹

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ABSTRACT:

The aim of the article is to analyse problems of integration of society in Latvia, first of all, in context of relations between Latvians and Russian-speakers as two main linguistic groups of society. In this connection objective and subjective preconditions and obstacles of integration are examined and conclusion is made that stability of society in Latvia is challenged by uneven rate of transformation of identities of the main groups of society. Russian-speakers move from “normality” to “minority” faster than Latvians are able to overcome “cultural trauma” and “minority complex” inherited from the Soviet past. During the years of renewed independence Latvian political elite largely limited itself to the reproduction of prejudices and illusions of everyday consciousness, therefore nationalistic sentiments expressed in the private sphere were transferred to the realm of public policy. It determined the main features of the integration policy during the years of renewed independence: integration policy in Latvia wasn't continuous, for the most part it was product of external pressure, it was inconsistent and paternalistic with respect to minorities.

It is pointed out that at present Latvia stands on the break point of the relations between two main ethnic and linguistic groups. Two options of further development still exist: the consolidation of previous achievements and deepening of the integration processes, on the one hand, and evolution towards escalation of ethnic discontent, on the other. Which path will prevail to great extent will depend on ability of political leadership to find reasonable political compromise.

1. Introduction

The term “integration” gained wide currency in academic discourse as well as in field of international and domestic policies during the last decades. In the report of the 1995 UN World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen the term „integration” in different contexts is mentioned 75 times. „Integration” is understood in this document as „the capacity of people to live together with full respect for the dignity of each individual, the common good, pluralism and diversity, non-violence and solidarity, as well as their ability to participate in social, cultural, economic and political life” (UN 1995). Since that social integration issue was one of the central at the several consequent UN summits and documents among them twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (2000) entitled “World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world” and publication of Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the UN „Participatory Dialogue: Towards a Stable, Safe and Just Society for All” (2007) have to be mentioned. In context of this article it is necessary to draw attention to inclusion, participation and justice as the three main “building blocks of social integration” (UN 2007), pointed out by the aforementioned document. The report goes on to claim that “participatory dialogue” is the core instrument to “promote the values and principles of social integration” (UN 2008: 61).

During the last decades Europe became a favoured destination for many migrants. Now Europe hosts the largest number of immigrants in the world - about one third of global 214 million (IOM 2010). The percentage of migrants as a share of the Europe's population is 6,3% - two times more than world's average (Vasileva 2011). Therefore European societies are faced with increasing diversity and immigrant integration comes to the top of the common freedom, security and justice agenda of the EU member states and European Union as a whole. In 2004, the Justice and Home

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Affairs Council adopted the “Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the European Union”. The first principle moves the focus of integration beyond immigrants alone, stressing that “integration is a dynamic two way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States” (CEU 2004).

Despite adoption of aforementioned documents, members of the EU retained a large degree of independence in integration issues, there is an active international debate in which different national approaches to immigrant integration are compared, where French republican assimilationist model, which refuse to group citizens into ethnic categories, appears on one side of view’s spectrum, while multicultural model of immigrant integration in different time periods carried out in the Netherlands and the UK - on the other. Growing public concerns in many European countries about levels of immigration and its effect on host countries brought German Chancellor Angela Merkel and British Prime-Minister David Cameron to express doubts about the future of multiculturalism. Clearly, the discussion on the nature of integration is far from a consensus between the different approaches.

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First of all, this approach contrasts integration to assimilation, on the one hand, and segregation as separate coexistence of ethnocultural communities – on the other. Secondly, it underlines mutuality of integration process, which involves minorities as well as majority population. As one of the leading researchers of the project N. Muižnieks states: „in our conception, social integration is a process of unifying society by strengthening participation, intercultural contact, and non-discrimination. However, each of these pillars has an important sub-component. In the case of participation, it is representation; for intercultural contact, it is intercultural competence; for non-discrimination, it is the promotion of equality. The three pillars are linked and all are essential for successful integration. Participation and non-discrimination alone can be implemented without substantial interaction between the majority and various minorities, thereby resulting in separation. At the same time, intercultural contact can also take place in non-democratic systems whose members may have acquired intercultural competence. Unless such contact is accompanied by participation and non-discrimination, it can lead to domination or forcible assimilation” (Muižnieks 2010). Official sources portray integration policy in Latvia as a topical realm for society in which Latvia can share its positive experience. For example, the home page of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia underlines „the success of the Society Integration Policy carried out in Latvia” (MFA 2012). One cannot doubt real achievements in peaceful coexistence in Latvia and spontaneous integration of people with different ethnic, language, and religious background. On the other hand, experience of the twenty years of renewed independence shows that Latvia is still far away from an integrated society, especially on political level. The aim of this article is to analyze objective and subjective reasons for the current situation.

2. Latvia as a special case of integration

Latvia has still comparatively low – referring to European criteria – standard of living. Actual individual consumption in 2012 was little above half of average (56%) in the EU. Probably it is the main reason why Latvia has not yet become target of mass migration. Yet more, net migration rate for Latvia is negative, it dramatically increased from -0,6 in 2007 to -7,9 in 2010 (CSB 2010). This number surpass neighbouring Lithuania (average -0,4 in 2006-2010), not speaking about Estonia which has modest

positive saldo (0,9). The numbers for the Baltic states are far behind respective numbers for Ireland (6,4), Sweden (6,6), Norway (8,0), Spain (9,5), and Switherland (10,0) (OECD 2012). Latvia do have a small population of recent imigrants (about 2,8 thousand immigrated to Latvia in 2010) but these numbers still are too small to have substantial influence on social and political processes in both countries although discussions on this issues have already started. Therefore this issues will not be covered here in details. On the other hand, despite very low level of immigration from outside Europe, Latvia together with Estonia have the highest in the European Union share of persons born in non-EU country (13,6% and 15% accordingly) (Vasilieva 2011). In addition Latvia and Estonia are two countries of the European Union with the highest specific weight of Russian-speaking population. As to 2011 there were almost 560 thousand Russians (27% of population) in Latvia (CBS 2012) and 340 570 (25,4% of population) in Estonia (Statistics Estonia 2012). Altogether Russian-speakers form up to one third of entire population of Latvia and Estonia – far ahead of another Baltic state Lithuania with 6,1% of Russians (Lithuania Demographics 2012). Significant share of citizens of Latvia and Estonia speaks Russian as their mother tongue (26% and 17% respectively). In accordance with Eurostat 2005 survey, Latvia and Estonia has the highest in the EU share of inhabitants, who mention languages which no official status in the EU as their mother tongue (27% and 18% respectively), followed by Bulgaria (11%), Germany (8%) and Lithuania (7%) (Eurobarometer 2006).

Situation in Latvia and Estonia is unique in the European Union. The vast majority of the migrant population in both countries is longstanding and arrived prior to 1991 as internal migrants from other parts of the Soviet Union. This created substantially different than in other European countries context for relations between majority and minority groups. In order to explain this in more detail I will turn to the ethnic history of Latvia. Latvia developed historically as an ethnically diverse society, and representatives of around 150 different ethnic groups live in the country. The most far-reaching changes in Latvia's ethnic structure took place during and after World War II. During World War II Latvia lost almost all members of two historical minorities, the Germans and the Jews. On the other hand, repressions of the 1940s, flight and emigration to the Western countries, as well as post-war deportations dramatically reduced the number of Latvians in Latvia. Consequently the proportion of Latvian residents in total decreased from approximately 84% in 1945 to 60% in 1953 (Misjunas, Taagepera 1993). In 1959 there were almost 180,000 fewer Latvians in Latvia than in 1935. On the other hand, the total number of inhabitants in Latvia in postwar decades significantly grew on account of migration from other republics in the USSR (CSB 2012).

Tab. 1. Total population and ethnic breakdown of Latvia's population, 1935-2009

	1935	1959	1970	1979	1989	2000	2009
Total (in thousands)	1950,4	2093,5	2364,1	2502,8	2666,6	2375,3	2261,3
incl. (%)							
Latvians	75.4	62,0	56.8	53.7	52.0	57.7	59.3
Russians	10.6	26.6	29.8	32.8	34.0	29.6	27.8
Belarusians	1.4	2.9	4.0	4.5	4.5	4.1	3.6
Ukrainians	0.09	1.4	2.3	2.7	3.5	2.7	2.5
Poles	2.5	2.9	2.7	2.5	2.3	2.5	2.4
Lithuanians	1.2	1.5	1.7	1.5	1.3	1.4	1.3
Jews	4.8	1.7	1.6	1.1	0.9	0.4	0.4
Germans	3.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2

Sources: 1935, 1989-2009: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia: <http://data.csb.gov.lv>
 1959-1979: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, Results of the 2000 Population and Housing Census in Latvia: Collection of Statistical Data, Riga: 2002

In 1959 the total number of inhabitants exceeded the 1935 total by 230,000. The majority of the increase was accounted for by Eastern Slavic settlers, whose share in the population grew rapidly. In the late eighties share of Latvians in the total population dropped to 52%.

3. Preconditions and obstacles for integration in the past and present

In the final decades of the Soviet rule, a situation developed in which two numerically almost similar groups had formed in Latvia – a Latvian language group and Russian-speakers – which differed in their sources of information, attitudes towards the situation in Latvia, value orientations and – generally speaking – structures of identity. In later years, with the transformation of Latvian society and the restoration of independence, when the issue of societal consolidation came to the forefront, these differences became very important in the context of creating an integration policy.

One of the main obstacles in the way of successful integration are dramatic differences in images of history of Latvia, especially concerning fifty years from signing of Molotov-Ribbentrop pact until “singing revolution” in the end of eighties – beginning of nineties. One may speak about existence of parallel ethnically coloured collective memories and images of history where there are conflicting views almost on all important issues of history (incorporation of Latvia in the Soviet Union, Second World war, postwar socio-economic development, issue of “occupation” and “occupiers”, dissolution of the USSR etc.). Dramatic difference in the understanding of history becomes evident in the annual “calendar riots” that begins in early spring with controversial commemoration of Latvian soldiers who fought in the Waffen SS Latvian Legion and ends with Victory Day celebrations where over one hundred thousand people, mostly Russian-speakers, gather at the Victory Monument in Riga. It has to be pointed out that coexistence of two information spaces - Latvian and Russian - with different agenda, often different representations of the same events and lack of dialogue also substantially hinder integration of society.

On the other hand, with regard to preconditions for successful integration of society there were several social, economic, and demographic factors which, in certain aspects, created in Latvia a more benevolent environment for the implementation of integration policy in comparison with neighbouring Estonia, which in other respects faced situation very similar to Latvia.

To start with, historical strength and “deep-rootedness” of Russian-speaking community has to be mentioned. During the pre-war independence years the Russian share of the total population of Estonia and Latvia were quite similar. Before World War II the Russians accounted for 8% in Estonia and 10.5% in Latvia. On the other hand, about half of Russians in pre-war Estonia lived in territories which were added to Estonia territory according to the 1920 Peace of Tartu but were transferred to the Russian SFSR in 1945. In 1944 Latvia also lost part of its territory for the benefit of the Russian Federation, however, on this territory lived only about one fifth of the pre-war Latvian Russian population. Consequently, the share of descendants of pre-war settlers (so-called “old Russians”) among Latvia’s Russian-speaking population is substantially higher than the respective figures for Estonia.

In demographic terms, one may mention the peculiarities of settlement patterns of Latvia’s inhabitants and the related differences in cultural and economic processes in comparison with Estonia. In contrast, for example, to North-eastern Estonia Latvia historically has not witnessed the emergence of whole regions (certain parishes in the eastern province of Latgale are the exception) in which minorities live compactly and in isolation from titular nation. Minorities in Latvia are rather evenly spread throughout the whole of Latvia’s territory, particularly in the cities.

Latvia traditionally has had a rather high rate of ethnic inter-marriage: about 20% of all Latvian males entering marriage in 2008, married outside their ethnic group, while the same holds true for 19.8% of Latvian women². In Estonia, by contrast, only 9-10% of Estonians enter exogamous marriages.

As the next, degree of social and economic differences between communities has to be mentioned. M. Hazans states that „as Latvia has an unusually large (more than 40%) minority population with a substantial geographical dispersion that is mostly locally born but lives in a different language environment, comparisons with the labour market situation of minorities in other countries are difficult” (Hazans 2010). Nevertheless the conclusion may be made that Russian population in Estonia is not only geographically but also socially more separated from titular nation than in Latvia. Ethnic pay gap between minority and Latvian workers fluctuated between 90 and 95 percent points reaching in 2007 98,4% by males working in private sector. In Estonia unexplained ethnic gap between Estonians and non-Estonians decreased in 2000-2005 from 20% to 10%, nevertheless it is substantial higher than in Latvia (Hazans 2010: 142). The same relates to unemployment rate, which almost all years of renewed independence among non-Estonians was about two time higher than among Estonians, while in 2004-2006 ratio reached 2,4 (Pavelson, Luuk 2002). In Latvia in accordance with data of M. Hazans, gap between ethnic Latvians and minorities in labour force participation was substantially smaller. For male, for example, it fluctuated from 1,8 in 1997 to 1,4 in 2005, 1,6 in 2008, and 1,3 in 2009 (Hazans 2010).

At last, but not least, „climate” in society with respect to minorities may be mentioned. In accordance with EU MIDIS (European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey) carried out in 2008, 27% ethnic Russian respondents in Finland and 17% in Estonia felt discriminated against in the previous year because of their ethnic Russian background. The respective numbers for Latvia and Lithuania were 5% and 4% (EAFR 2009).

4. Modes of identity. “Cultural trauma”, “normality” and “minority”

Socio-political processes in Latvia during the last twenty years were significantly affected and continue to be affected by the structure of identity of the main ethno-linguistic groups as key actors of integration. The last moment is especially important because of frequent attempts in social and political discourse in Latvia to treat the Latvian and Russian identity in Latvia in a primordial way as something unchangeable over time.

When it comes to postsocialist collective identity of Latvians, it was substantially affected by two phenomena which may be called „cultural trauma” and „hope for return”. „Hope for return” here is understood as the widespread intention to return where Latvia have been already, namely, return to the Western world. As Estonian researcher Marju Lauristin wrote in 1997, „the Baltic people expect that the self-evident outcome of political liberation will be their *Return to Europe*. The cultural will to preserve Western tradition was for them a matter of national survival. Their wish to be accepted again by the West and to be recognized as an integral part of the Western cultural realm is a more substantial driving force in their development than mere economic or political motivation could ever be” (Lauristin 1997: 29). The desire to return to Europe was an important factor in the consolidation of society, especially its Latvian speaking part, it expressed itself as readiness to make certain sacrifices in order to achieve this goal, and at the same time - the openness of society for pressure from the Western democracies (Muižnieks, Brands Kehris 2003). Asking the question

² For these data and those from other years, see the home page of the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia at www.csb.gov.lv.

what did "return to Europe" with respect to its political aspect mean for Latvia and Eastern European societies as an idea and as a goal, it seems necessary to distinguish between two interconnected, but nevertheless different moments which deserves conceptual distinction. First of all, the transformation of legal norms and political institutions in accordance with criteria formulated by the 1993 European Council meeting in Copenhagen has to be mentioned. Candidate states were required to develop what may be called legal and institutional framework of democracy, respect for human rights, develop a viable market economy and the ability to face up to the pressure of competition and the market forces within the Union, and undertake obligations in connection with movement towards political, economic and monetary union. This process will be referred to in this article as "EU-ization". Furthermore, a deeper level of transformation may be pointed out. Here one may speak about "Europeanization" as a transformation of the basic attitudes toward the outer world and other members of society, making patterns of political behaviour compatible with humanistic traditions of Europe. "Europeanization" in this sense cannot be imposed by any outer authority and in Latvian case it was substantially hindered by traumatic recollections of the Soviet past.

The concept of „cultural trauma” as formulated by Piotr Sztompka (2000: 449-466), seems to be very useful for conceptualization of collective negative experience of Latvians during Soviet time, namely, occupation, repressions, deportations, ideological pressure, massive inflow of migrants from other Soviet republics, especially, Russia, and, at last but not least - *rusification* as substantial part of political line of the Communist party and the Soviet state. Social changes occurred in Latvia during almost fifty years of Soviet occupation correspond to all interconnected characteristics, mentioned by P. Sztompka: these changes were sudden and rapid, radical, deep, touching the core, they were perceived as imposed, exogenous, coming from the outside, they were perceived as shocking and repulsive, and – at last but not least – it resulted in cultural disorientation (Sztompka 2000: 452). Even more, during the last twenty years the collective consciousness of Latvians showed clear signs of what Sztompka called as „vicious cycle of cultural destruction... [which] occurs...when parametric changes aggravate traumatic situation people resort to ineffective (or even counter-effective) coping strategies, and the obsolete culture is supported and kept doing by obsessive cultivation of memories” (Sztompka 2000: 464). This manifested in Latvia, as a domination of retrospective approach to society and Latvia’s relations with other countries. Combined with idealization of pre-war independence era and mostly black-and-white historical memory of the “real socialist past” (vs. more nuanced picture in Lithuania and Estonia), it created intention to understand solution of the current political and social problems mainly in terms of overcoming the injustices performed in the past.

Secondly, relating to responsibility for the injustices of the Soviet occupation, collective consciousness often confused under label „Russian” collective responsibility of the Soviet communist state and individual responsibility of people (mainly Russian-speakers) who migrated to Latvia after the Second World war.

Thirdly, the belief may be pointed out about the uniqueness of Latvia's situation that in its turn interrelated with the idea about Latvians as negatively marked chosen people, that they had suffered more than any other nation in the 20th century. Consequently, the assumption was widespread that the Western countries had some specific obligations with regard to Latvians and Latvia, and in the name of overcoming the injustice of the past, Latvians have no obligation to act only in conformity with the standards of political behaviour accepted in the Western world.

On the basis of these popular attitudes, an exclusive political culture became widespread. It presupposed that post-war settlers were not entitled to make decisions

on strategic issues of development of Latvia. Consequently, in 1993 52% of ethnic Latvians (compared with 44% of Estonians and only 12% of Lithuanians) supported idea to grant citizenship of the renewed state only to prewar citizens and their descendants. Comparison with Estonia and Lithuania clearly showed that there were a clear correlation between specific weight of titular nation and support for restrictive approach to citizenship policy (Rose, Maley 1994). Such orientation of the everyday consciousness proved to be very persistent. As 2010 survey of citizens of Republic of Latvia shows, 57,8% of ethnic Latvian respondents support statement that in Latvia preservation and strengthening of minorities' identities must be supported. At the same time, only 29,1% of ethnic Latvian citizens agree that broader participation of minorities will contribute to development of Latvia (TNS Latvia 2010).

When it comes to interplay between identities of ethnic Latvians and Russian-speakers in Latvia, distinction between „normality” and „minority” as two modes of identity seems to be useful. The notion of “normality” as used in social sciences is connected with multiplicity of understandings (Eglitis 2002: 228), here „normality” will be understood as belonging to the dominant culture. The group which identifies itself with the dominant culture and uses language dominant in political, social, cultural and economic life usually understands this situation as “normal” and differ itself from “minorities” (or “abnormalities”) – other ethnic and cultural groups claiming their language, cultural, sometimes also – political and economical rights and recognition. The „normality” not necessary represents majority of the population: more important is privileged position in context of various types of power (political, economic, symbolic). The “normality – minority” distinction is closely connected with the structure of identity. Within “normal” identity ethnic questions such as language rights, protection of ethnic culture, education in a native language etc. are matter-of-course and therefore play less important role compared to social and economic questions, or identification with the state.

The history of Latvians is that of a centuries-long minority experience (with historically short period of independent statehood before the Second World war) which was boosted by traumatic experience of the Soviet time. It created, on the one hand, the real basis for the extremely high level of the mass participation during the years of the "singing revolution", and, on the other hand, it produced deep distrust of possibility to ensure that basic interests of Latvian ethnos may be fulfilled by democratic means.

The identity of Russian-speaking inhabitants of Latvia in the last years of Soviet power may be characterized, unlike the identity of Latvians, as an example of "normal" identity, partly due to the historical tradition of prevalence of self-identification with the state ("empire") over ethnic components of identity, partly due to objective social preferences of Russian-speakers (education, usage of Russian language) in any corner of the former Soviet Union. It has to be taken in account that great majority of post-war Russian-speaking migrants to non-Russian republics of the former Soviet Union didn't think of themselves as “immigrants” to another country or “minority”. Instead of them, as Will Kymlicka states, they saw themselves as moving around within a single country – a country in which the Russians formed a majority throughout the USSR as a whole (Kymlicka 2001: 76). Therefore the questions which dominated in self-understanding of Russian-speakers were not ethnic, but social and economic ones. Attitudes of the majority of the Russian – speaking population were on a different “level” in comparison with the demands of Latvians for the preservation of Latvian language and culture as well as the independence of Latvia or, at least, were not in direct contradiction with them. As D. Laitin states in his book „Identity in Formation”, Latvian Russians in beginning of nineties were more open for nationalizing efforts than Russians in Estonia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan (Laitin 1998). All aforementioned avoided the emergence of

ethnic conflict in the *beginning* of the nineties and produced (so to speak) “momentum of normality”, which played an important role in ensuring the peaceful nature of the renewal of independence of Latvia.

Changes of identities of Latvia's main ethnic groups during the years of renewed independence of Latvia may be described as the mixture of two processes. On the one hand, one may speak about transformation of Russian identity from “normality” to “minority” - sometimes a rather painful process of recognition of a new nonprivileged situation, that, in its turn, strengthens the ethnic identity of the Russians. On the other hand, there are changes of Latvian identity from “minority” to “normality”, which were slowed down by various subjective and objective factors. Here some of them may be mentioned: first of all. reaction to “EU-ization” efforts, especially because the argument of “Europe's pressure” was widely used in nineties by the political elite in order to justify sometimes rather painful consequences of adopted policies, lack of clear understanding of the prospects for distinctive Latvian identity within the enlarged European Union, and, at last but not least, reaction to strengthening of ethnic identity of the Russian-speaking part of population. In accordance with 2010 survey 51,5 % of Latvians still after twenty years of renewed independence agree that Latvian language in Latvia is endangered (FSS 2010).

The conclusion could be made that stability of society in Latvia is challenged by uneven rate of these two processes. Russian-speakers move from “normality” to “minority” faster than Latvians are able to overcome their “minority complex”. Therefore the dangerous possibility of the collision of minority feelings exists. As it is known, one of the most important cultural presuppositions of tragic ethnic conflicts in Balkans was situation when all main ethnic groups of former Yugoslavia simultaneously perceived themselves as endangered, although sometimes on clear mythological and irrational basis. As Stuart J. Kaufman states, “one result of Yugoslavia's history is that every group has a history of having been dominated and repressed” (Kaufman 2001: 177).

5. Flows and Ebbs of the Integration Policy in Latvia

In the previous chapters of this article primarily objective preconditions of integration, including main features of the collective consciousness, were discussed. Now it's time to focus on the role of political elite in the integration process. In this connection it would be useful to mention the idea of the irony of democracy as formulated within tradition of democratic elitism. As Thomas Due and Harmon Zeigler put it in the fourteenth edition of their seminal book *The Irony of Democracy*, “Democracy is the government “by the people”, but the survival of democracy rests on the shoulders of elites. This is the irony of democracy: elites must govern wisely if government “by the people” is to survive” (Due, Zeigler 2009: 1). This seems to be true for great extent also with regard to integration issues in Latvia.

Latvia's political elite has been very divided on issues of integration as such and particular measures for promoting integration. Majority of prominent Latvian politicians were not able to effectively fulfil the role of society's leaders in this strategically important and at the same time very 'hot' issue and largely limited itself to the reproduction of prejudices and illusions of everyday consciousness. Instead of strategic approach amateurism and myopia prevailed. As a result the following features of the integration policy since the beginning of “singing revolution” in the end of eighties may be pointed out:

1. integration policy in Latvia wasn't continuous – „flows” were followed by „ebbs”.
2. it always was product of external pressure, although sources of the pressure

- changed over time;
3. it was inconsistent – successes in some fields were usually followed by fallbacks (*revanche*) in others.
 4. it was paternalistic with respect to minorities.

The first „flow” of integration policy covers years of the „singing revolution” when the first generation of leaders of the Popular Front of Latvia (PFL) were well aware of the complicated nature of ethnic relations in Latvia and implemented a moderate and realistic policy which took into consideration post-war demographic changes and stressed the consolidation of all inhabitants of Latvia on the road to sovereignty. During the years of the “singing revolution,” the realistic platform of the PFL predominated - to great extent due pressure from the central structures of the USSR and imperialistic forces within Latvia. Although even progressive Russian-speakers had serious misgivings about the policy of the PFL, which had at its core liberal nationalism and an emphasis on the priority of the Latvian nation (Muižnieks 1993: 196). Some sociological surveys demonstrated that in 1990 39% of all minority respondents supported Latvian independence (Zepa 1992: 22). This was demonstrated also by referendum on Latvian independence which took place in March 1991 as a mean to outmanoeuvre the USSR central authorities, who organized a referendum on saving the Soviet Union. In the Latvian poll the share of voting age persons in the entire population who voted for independence (64.51%) was significantly (around 12%) greater than the share of Latvians in the total population (52.05% in the 1989 census), which suggests that a significant segment of the minority population voted for Latvia’s independence.

It should be acknowledged that the beginnings of integration created during the „singing revolution” were not developed further. On the contrary, much of what had been attained was lost in the first years after the restoration of independence, when Latvia did not have at all a coherent integration policy. Rapid decrease of external and internal pressure due to weakness of Latvia’s eastern neighbour and the defeat of the pro-imperial forces in Latvia became one of the most important factors that furthered the political elite’s rapid resort to solutions deriving from the „legalistic” approach which emphasized legal continuity of the state of Latvia despite the years of Latvian SSR and, accordingly, the illegal nature of the Soviet occupation. Thus, all persons who settled in Latvia after 17th June 1940 were regarded as illegal immigrants. Clearly, in the context of this approach, the very idea of integrating post-war “colonists” was unacceptable in principle. There was no room for the creation of a long-term integration policy in such an atmosphere, even more so as citizenship, language and education policy in the early and mid-1990s were all created in line with this spirit. As indicated by Estonian researcher Priit Jarve, one of the additional goals of strict language and citizenship policy in both Estonia and Latvia was to promote the departure of Russian-speakers (Jarve 2003: 82). Thus policy towards minorities in the early and mid-1990s embodies the coexistence of overcoming the injustices created by Soviet rule with the abandonment of the preconditions for social consolidation that were created during the years of the „singing revolution”. Even more – abandonment of the promises that were generously given before restoration of independence, created among Russian-speakers a sense that they have been deceived which transformed to persistent distrust of the Latvian state.

Return to the integration path could only be accelerated through the intensification of external pressure that would make Latvian politicians more responsive to the recommendations of Western partners. This happened in 1997 and 1998 when crisis situations emerged in several of Latvia’s external and internal policy realms. Latvia was not invited to European Union membership negotiations because of problems with social integration, Russia accused Latvia of serious human rights

violations and urged the international community to intervene to regulate the situation in Latvia, particularly with regard to the situation of Russian-speakers. In this context Latvia's western partners – both influential countries and international organizations – sought to soften the consequences of Russia's reaction, but also to intensify the pressure on the Latvian political elite by urging it to take real steps towards the consolidation of society. In this situation, the Latvian political elite understood that absent a change in policy, Latvia could lose the political support of western countries. In 1998 Citizenship Law was softened and changes were supported by referendum, as well as number of other significant steps linked to integration issues were taken at the legislative level. The response of nationalist political forces for this development demonstrates the inconsistency of Latvian integration policy. In the last working day of outgoing Parliament a new Education Law was adopted. Article 9 of the law stated that "in state and local government education establishments education is acquired in the state language"³, pushing the implementation date for this controversial provision to the seemingly distant date of 1st September 2004. As is known, the implementation of this provision close to six years after its adoption evoked unprecedented protests on the part of Latvia's Russian-speaking population. Regardless of the very divergent attitudes in society and the attempts of nationalist political forces to torpedo the adoption of the integration programme the first National programme on „The Integration of Society in Latvia” was adopted in 2001, in 2004 a position of Special Assignments Minister for the Social Integration Affairs was created.

The conceptual basis of the first integration programme contains certain contradictions and inconsistencies which were determined by the diverging interests of various political forces and their influence on the preparation of the programme. As a result, the document is a political compromise. The programme's diagnosis regarding Latvia's various cleavages is precise (differences in values and interpretations of history, threat perceptions, mistrust, an unwillingness to link one's future to the state of Latvia), but the programme does not indicate how to address these controversial issues. The basic ideas of the programme are based in the normative tradition, which sees social cohesion as being based on common norms, ideals and values and stresses the importance of institutions of socialization, such as the education system, the army, cultural institutions, etc. Implementation would reflect the tendency to impose a preconceived set of values (primarily understood as ethnic Latvian values), neglecting the process of negotiation between proponents of divergent values.

Next „ebb” in integration policy started after the onset of the global economic crisis. In 2008 integration Secretariat was eliminated ostensibly to economize on resources. This downward curve of the state integration policy has continued by adoption of "Guidelines on National Identity, Civil Society and Integration Policy for 2012-2018" in October 2011. This document clearly earned critical attitude of the minorities and majority of experts because of its paternalistic and assimilationist approach as well as abusive treatment of non-citizens of Latvia as „immigrants” and „foreigners”. Latvian language and Latvian culture is understood as the basis for integration, and so understood integration is seen as a prerequisite for civic participation. The understanding of the basis and ways of integration of society formulated in „Guidelines” is far away from principles of inclusion, participatory dialogue, and mutuality proclaimed by the documents of UNO and EU mentioned in the beginning of this article. Civic values and civic inclusion plays a subordinate role in the policy of Latvian authorities with regard to minorities despite the fact that representatives of the main ethnic groups are united in their support of civic values like observing laws (87,7% of Latvians and 86,6% of Russians), paying taxes (76,6%

³ See Latvijas Republikas Izglītības Likums. <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=50759>

and 76,7% respectively), being aware of events in society (77,6% and 71,6%) (LU SZF 2010). Clearly paternalistic approach of the last „Guidelines” is nothing new for Latvian politics. Since the beginning of the 1990s, the notion that only Latvian politicians know what Russians should want has dominated the thinking of the Latvian political elite. From this flows the conviction that Russian-speakers should accept unconditionally the rules of the game being offered to them (Rozenvalds 2002). A chronic problem in Latvian politics became the inability and lack of desire of the power holders to create and maintain dialogue with minorities and ensure the effective participation.

6. The uncertain fate of integration in Latvia

Taking in account all aforementioned with regard to integration policy in Latvia, it is not surprising that in the beginning of 21st century Latvia faced massive protest actions of Russian-speaking minority. The biggest political demonstrations in Latvia since the beginning of 1990s organized in 2003-2004 to protest against school reform were already mentioned. It has to be pointed out that these protest actions were caused not only and not even so much by the language requirements as such but – first of all – by the way and style how the reform was prepared and implemented. To great extent it reflected the Soviet legacy of „top-down” politics (Galbreath, Galvin 2005).

The same applies to referendum on the Russian as a second state language held in Latvia on February 18, 2012. Language referendum attracted wide attention in Latvia and abroad and initiated debate about its causes and consequences. What language referendum was about? Was language really a central issue? Can very active participation of Russian-speaking citizens (which became a surprise even for the initiators of the referendum) be explained only by the poor state of Latvian language knowledge among non-titulars even after twenty years of renewed independence?⁴

First of all, it has to be pointed out that the pretext of the referendum was collection of signatures (even though it failed due to insufficient public support) initiated by nationalistic National Alliance in support for changes to the Latvian constitution in order to determine access to free primary education only in Latvian. The protest moods were accelerated by the fact that Harmony Centre – the first pro-Russian party – winner of parliamentary elections (29% of votes) since renewal of Latvia's independence, was left out of the ruling coalition and instead the far-right nationalist National Alliance was included.

Referendum showed high level of mobilization of both main ethno-linguistic groups – Latvians and Russian-speakers and the turnout of voters reached 71,1%. Results were overwhelmingly negative, 74,8 % of participants (53,19% of entire body of citizens) voted “against” and distribution of votes was close to the ethnic composition of the citizenry. On the other hand, it was far from victory of pro-Latvian forces as it was claimed by some leading Latvian politicians. As UNO expert on minority issues, Rita Izsák correctly states, “this referendum should not be considered as a victory for one community over another, rather it should mark an opportunity for enhanced dialogue on minority rights in Latvia” (UNHR 2012). More than two hundred seventy thousand citizens who voted in favour of Russian as the second state language was a significant number for country with entire population little more than 2 million people (CSB 2012). This number becomes even more impressive if summarized with

⁴ This article is not intended to cover international context of Latvia's language referendum although it clearly was not only an internal matter of the small Baltic state. At least in one aspect it was significant on all-European level, especially in connection with EU – Russia relations, Russia's interest to have more influence on processes within the European Union and, at last but not least – intention of Russia to use Russian compatriots for its own purposes. Positive vote on Latvia's referendum would open gate for Russian language to become the official language of the European Union.

more than three hundred thousand non-citizens of Latvia who predominantly are Russian-speakers. In this case one may calculate with protest potential of the more than one fourth of permanent residents of Latvia.

There is no doubt that the language policy issues and securing of status of Latvian language are vitally important for sustainable development of Latvia. Soviet rule created situation of asymmetrical bilingualism which reflected dominance of Russian language on all – union level. In accordance with 1979 USSR population census 56,7% of Latvians in Latvia, 52,1% of Lithuanians in Lithuania and 24,2% of Estonians in Estonia had command of Russian language. Respective numbers for Russians were much lower – 37,4% for Lithuania, 20,1% for Latvia and 13,0% for Estonia (Misjunas, Taagapera 1993: 253). In accordance with Eurobarometer data even thirty years later Russian language remains widely known in Latvia. 70% of respondents in Latvia responded to Russian, 39% to English, and 23% to Latvian as language what they know excluding mother tongue (Eurobarometer 2006). As Population census of 2000 showed, the number of people who can speak Russian in Latvia is greater than that of those who can speak Latvian (94% vs. 91%) (CBS 2010). Thus, the situation comfortable for Russian-speakers continues (one where a greater percentage of people living in Latvia speak a tongue other than the national language). Such self-sufficiency of Russian language in Latvia disprove claim that Russian speakers suffer discrimination in Latvia. Moreover it reduces the motivation to learn Latvian and hence have a negative impact on the integration process.

On the other hand, command of Latvian language among Latvian Russians substantially increased during the years of renewed independence due to state policies in support of the Latvian language and strong regulation of language usage in public sphere. As data of Baltic Institute of Social Sciences shows, the share of non-Latvians who don't know Latvian at all decreased from 22% in 1996 to 7% in 2008 (BISS 2008). As survey conducted in 2010 shows, majority of inhabitants of Latvia regardless of their ethnicity agree that all people in Latvia must speak Latvian. This statement was supported by 93,1% of Latvian and 72,2% of Russian respondents. At the same time there is a clear division between Latvians and non-Latvians in answer to question, if the only foundation for unity of society should be Latvian language and culture. The agreement with this statement confirmed 89,1% of Latvians and only 46% of Russians. In other word it means that great majority of non-Latvians in Latvia agree on privileged status on Latvian language and at the same time reasonably ask for some status for other languages used in Latvia which, in its turn, clearly comes in contradiction with 1999 Law on the State Language which places minority languages on the same level as foreign languages and do not regulate in any way the use of these languages in public sphere. Therefore, for example, Russian as mother tongue of almost forty percent of inhabitants enjoys in Latvia the same status as, for example, Spanish or Suahili.

The above mentioned provides a basis to assert that the main cause of the language referendum was lack of recognition. This applies both to language status, major ignorance of majority and Latvian political elite concerning existing ethnic problems as well as dramatic shortage of dialogue between Russian-speaking minority and ruling elite, as well as between main ethnic and linguistic communities. As one of initiators of referendum - very controversial Vladimir Linderman stated immediately after the event: "I think the dialogue has already started... Yes, it started with hysteria and a little panic, but even hysteria is better than the silence that has lasted for 20 years." (Guardian 2012).

At present Latvia stands on the break point of the relations between the main ethnic and linguistic groups. Two options of further development still exist: the consolidation of previous achievements and deepening of the (often elemental) integration processes, on the one hand, and evolution towards escalation of ethnic

discontent, on the other. Which path will prevail to great extent will depend on ability of political leadership to promote dialogue and find reasonable political compromise in this way.

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