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(CES)

SMALL STATES IN A GEOPOLITICAL WORLD

A study of the relations between the Baltic states and Russia through an analysis of the countries' statements in the United Nations the last ten years

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Thesis:	Master thesis 30 hec
Program and/or course:	MAES - Master in European Studies
Semester/year:	Spring/2019
Supervisor:	Per Månson
Word count:	21.523

Abstract

The Baltic States and Russia share a historical relationship. These countries, sharing borders with one another, have linkages that have found their basis in economic, political and cultural relations in which they have been involved throughout the years. However, there is a substantial difference among the Baltic states and Russia: the former countries have been for most of their existence small states (apart for some limited historical period of expansion), while the latter has always played a dominant role in the Baltic region, being a powerful country. Therefore, these countries, due to the power asymmetry, have had troubled relations throughout their history.

This research analyses the relations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania with Russia. In particular, the thesis focuses on analysing the United Nations General Assembly statements of the Baltic states and Russia over a period of 10 years, from 2009 to 2018. The research aims is to discover the ways (positively, negatively, neutrally) in which these countries refer to each other and to determine the main themes mentioned in their General Assembly statements. The methodology chosen to conduct the research is a qualitative content analysis of documents, focusing on an analysis of the mentioned statements. In this way, the thesis gives a picture of the relations among the considered countries within the United Nations institutional framework. Finally, the results showed that the countries present features associated with the geopolitical theory and small states theory that are the theories driving the research.

Keywords: Baltic states, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, United Nations, geopolitical theory, small states theory

Acknowledgements

I would like to direct my gratitude to my supervisor Per Månson whose guidance made this thesis possible. I am really thankful to my family, that notwithstanding the distance, supported me in many ways and made this thesis a reality.

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1. Introduction

Russia¹ has always been a complicated state for European countries, an enemy but also an ally and a trade partner. Historically, many European countries have tried to win sovereignty over Russian territory but none of them has ever succeeded (Hirst 2016).

Many scholars who study the Baltic states-Russia relations have deep concerns about Russia's foreign policy and aggression towards the Baltics², as well as its attempts to influence the domestic policy of these states that have been used. Plenty of research has been done on Russian attempts to maintain leverage on former Soviet states using various tools, such as minority rights issues and energy policy (Clemens 1999, Grigas 2012 and 2013, Simons 2015, Kuczyńska-Zonik 2016, Corum 2018). However, very little research has focused on the institutional cooperation that the Baltic states have developed with Russia. This is particularly true for Russia-Baltic relations of the state after the events taking place in the Ukrainian crisis. After this, the majority of studies in this field focused, first, on border security and military employment of NATO forces in Baltics' territory (Raik 2016, Fedorov et al. 2016 etc.). And second, on the Russian minority disputes over Baltic countries (Grigas 2014, Simons 2015, Kuczyńska-Zonik 2016 & 2017, Corum 2018 etc.).

My interest in the Baltic republics began with my Erasmus study in Estonia. Spring 2013 was an incredible semester of my Bachelor's studies and one of my first experiences abroad. In Estonia, I met several people from the Baltic States that became my friends. During and after my Erasmus I travelled many times in the Baltic States, visiting them I had the opportunity to interact with many local communities. Travelling around from the North-Eastern border of Estonia with Russia to the South-Western border of Lithuania with Kaliningrad exclave I could catch a common concern on attitudes towards Russia. They were particularly worried about Russian aggressive 'behaviour'. The Ukrainian events increased their concerns to the point that the Baltic states seemed like threaten by imminent danger. A few years after my last trip in Lithuania, when I started my Master's in European Studies, I realized that the Baltic States are an interesting field of research. First, because it is not among the most popular field of studies among the European Union academic research and, secondly, because of its vicinity to the Russian Federation.

¹ Russia in the text is also indicated as the Russian Federation, the Russian state, Moscow and Kremlin.

² The Baltic states/countries, Baltic republics, Baltics, and the name of these states: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are used interchangeably in this text.

As a result, I decided to focus my Master's thesis on researching the institutional cooperation between Russia and the Baltic States. In particular, I narrowed down my examination to the relations between these countries in the United Nations (UN), as I consider it an interesting institution to analyse how the relations between the countries have evolved in the last years. The United Nations is a world-leading platform for political cooperation born out of the ashes of the Second World War. Indeed, this institution is built on peaceful dialogues among the countries in the world with the overarching goal not to repeat the horrors of earlier conflicts and instead cooperate on global issues to find common solutions. Therefore, in my master thesis, I decided to analyse the UN's General Assembly statements made by top political figures of the Baltic states and Russia over a period of 10 years, from 2009 to 2018, looking at the evolution of the narratives between these countries, using the small state foreign policy theory and the geopolitical theory to shed light on some features characterizing their relationship.

2. Research Questions

Thus far, scholars in the field of Russian-Baltic studies have focused on identifying the areas where Russia still can exercise influence on the post-Soviet space and explain in what way the Kremlin behaves to exercise this influence. Furthermore, the escalation of events in Ukraine gave researchers empirical examples of how a bad relationship with Russia could turn out. Together with the growing concerns of the Baltic states regarding the ‘aggressive behaviour’ of Russia, many researchers have used Ukraine as an example to portray a possible scenario that the Baltic State could end up with if this relation would deteriorate even further (Grigas 2014, Lamoreaux 2014, Raik 2016, Kuczyńska-Zonik 2016 & 2017).

Based on my analysis on the topic, I argue that contemporary research focus is mainly: 1) On the influence of Russia in the Baltic republics and how dangerous this influence can be for the latter states; 2) On the raising of tension for the employment of military in the Baltic Sea area. However, I identified a research gap in the current literature, in fact, there is no research that focuses on the evolution of relations among these countries at an institutional level. More specifically, I could not find any research that focuses on analysing how the relations have changed over the last 10 years. Therefore, I decided to analyse the United Nations relations among the considered countries. Consequently, I believe my thesis is academically relevant because it explores a diverse approach to studying the relationship between the Baltic states and Russia. Further on, it also shed light on the European dimensions of such relationship.

Therefore, the added value of this thesis rests on the identified research gap. Further, the thesis provides the reader with a (multilevel) comparative analysis, because it analyses contemporaneously the relations of four countries: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Russia.

The research questions (RQ) that guide the analysis of the research are:

- 1) *How did the representatives of Russia and the Baltic states talk about each other in the published statements of the United Nations?*
- 2) *What topics have the countries addressed in the UN General Assembly in the analysed period (2009-2018)?*

3. Previous research

In the following section, I present a literature review of scholars that have written about Baltic states-Russia relations which will point out the main talking points amongst academics in the field. First, the position of the Baltic States within the EU framework will be presented; second, the Russian influence over the Baltic territory; and lastly, a brief overview of the geopolitical situation in the Baltic Sea Region.

3.1 The Baltic states within the EU framework

Some authors have pointed out the position that the Baltic states (BS) have assumed within the EU framework after the independence from the Soviet Union.

Galbreath and Lamoureaux (2007) define the position of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as a block between Russia and Europe, not referring just to the geographical position but also to the role they take with regards to the interests of the Baltic states themselves, Russia and Europe. In this way, they point out three roles that the BS could play: *Bastion*, due to their position at the edge of Europe they come to represent the 'fortification' of the Union (us) against Russia (seen as the other). Acting as a bastion, the BS would limit their cooperation to assure regional stability and create beneficial economic channels. *Bridge*, because they present a united position to bring closer some post-Soviet countries (such as Ukraine, Belarus, and Georgia) to the West in order to promote reforms and inclusion in the Euro-Atlantic community. Moreover, they act as a bridge between eastern countries and the EU institutions. *Beacon*, because they represent a successful model of a triple transition (democratisation, marketisation and de-Sovietisation) to the countries that would like to join the Western alliance.

Galbreath, Lasas, and Lamoreaux (2008), referring to the Baltic republics, affirm that for such small states cooperation is necessary for their own existence. Foreign policies of small states like Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania work differently than for bigger states. Small countries present smaller bureaucracies, closer cooperation among different political elites and active participation of top political figures in daily foreign policy affairs. Thus, the domestic and foreign policy goes hand in hand in daily political work. The authors argue that the Baltic countries show decision-making features associated with instrumental and ideational logics. In the instrumental logic, a cost-benefit analysis of national interest drives the decisions to be taken. Essentially, with instrumental factors, the authors refer to factors that can be observed and measured, such as voting in an international organisation, economic embargoes, or troop movements. On the other side, ideational factors are not easily observable but have a relevant impact on the decision-making process of foreign policy. These factors are historical memory, national identity and the rhetoric of a country. When these two

logics interplay the ideational one will prevail. Thus, the BS are willing to suffer economic losses rather than compromise their identity or question their historical memories.

Furthermore, the scholars also analyse the BS foreign policy in the light of the post-colonial states foreign policy. The post-colonial state foreign policy presents three characteristics: first, the post-colonial foreign policy aims at restoring the independence of the state; second, these countries seek redress for the colonial period suffered; third, these states prevent a return to its colonial status. In line with this conceptualization, the BS show resentment towards Russia and are eager to avoid future domination. The Baltic republics foreign policy after independence from the Soviet Union were characterized by a focus on security and integration. However, following the accession to the EU they have been more focused on deepening European integration (ibid.).

Raik (2016) argues that Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania use the EU as an instrument to emphasize their national interests, especially with regard to Russia and other post-Soviet countries. In his analysis, Raik suggests that while the BS succeeded to strengthen their security vis-à-vis Russia through the EU, their view of Russia resisted pressure from the EU. On the top of the agenda of the BS, foreign policy has been supporting the democratic transitions in the neighbourhood of the EU and Russia, with the hope that such democratisation could contribute to the same process taking place in Russia. However, the EU efforts to promote democratic reforms in Russia were minimal and inconsistent compared to the same process in other countries such as for example Ukraine. As former Soviet states, Baltic countries have experienced the Russian attempts to exercise influence on their domestic policy.

Furthermore, the Baltic countries share other concerns regarding Russia, these being: the increasing authoritarianism, the rise in military expenditure and the aggressive behaviour towards them and other former Soviet countries. Nevertheless, the Baltic concerns about Russia were considered by other EU members as a mirror of their complex relationships with such a state, and thus had little impact on EU-Russia relations. However, in light of the Ukrainian crisis, the Baltics' concerns proved to be true and other member states started to take their claims seriously. This author portrays the current Brussels-Moscow relation as an ideological clash between a liberal and a realist view. The EU built its Eastern policies based on a liberal concept of shared norms and economic interdependence, in contrast to Russia who focused on exercising power over its sphere of influence (Raik 2016).

Nikitina (2014), on a critical stance of post-colonial theories, remarks that these theories are influenced by the idea of Orientalism developed by Edward Said (1978, 1993), where “*the West socially constructs the Orient by negatively inverting Western culture and creating a discourse of hierarchy and civilization versus barbarism*”. The Baltics during the Soviet period, and after, have

always been perceived as more culturally advanced, European and Western. In contrast, Russia has been (and still is) searching for its cultural and geographical identity, positioning itself sometimes inside Europe, other times inside Asia and sometimes somewhere in between. The author suggests that to apply the post-colonial theories to the Russian state is difficult because in this case it is the colonial power (Russia) that was culturally alienated, not the colonized states (the BS) (Nikitina 2014).

Moreover, post-Soviet states often blame Russia for the Soviet legacy, but these countries often overlooked the fact that Russia's population also suffered from the abuses of the Soviet regime. In the BS this resulted in ethnocentric domestic policy where the Russian minority and Russian speaking population often were discriminated because they were associated with Russia. This scholar states that the decision rests on Russia. If Russia acts like the Soviet successor and tries to continue to exercise influence and to exploit resources in the post-Soviet space, or if, as the post-colonial approach suggests, Russia will recognize its colonial guilt it will help the former colonies in their modernisation process (ibid.).

3.2 Russian influence on the Baltic states

A number of other authors have also highlighted the influence that Russia is able to exercise on the Baltic States.

Clemens (1999) identifies three main sources of control that Russia could exercise on the BS during the Soviet time. First, was energy dependency. In fact, the main infrastructure of the Baltic countries was built during the Soviet period and connected to Russia. Second, large parts of the Russian population moved into the Baltic territories which resulted in a high percentage of Slavic speaking people compared to other Soviet republics. Third, the huge military presence of Soviet troops assured the surveillance of the USSR territory.

Following the independence of the Baltic states, things have changed. The Baltic republics have increased cooperation with EU countries, something that assured them protection against a possible Russian invasion. Clemens (1999) points out two scenarios: 1) the closer the Baltic ties with Europe, the more reasons for Russia to cooperate with the Baltics in order not to be seen in a bad light by other European countries. 2) On the other side, the better ties there are between Brussels and Moscow, the more the latter would feel free to 'dictate' its influence on the Baltics. Furthermore, political and economic reasons might bring the Baltic countries and Russia to cooperate on energy matters, because despite the independence achieved by the former, both partners remain interdependent in energy and other fields. Finally, the outcomes depend on the willingness of the partners to cooperate to reach mutual gains or achieve unilateral gains at the expense of the other (ibid.).

Interestingly, Grigas (2012) makes similar conclusions to the ones of Clemens' analysis of the Baltic situation in a completely different period of time, years after they became members of NATO and the EU. She argues that Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania perceive Russia as a potential threat to their economy, energy sector and society. In the energy sector, the influence of Russia towards the Baltic region is explicit, due to the lack of domestic resources and to the low level of investment in the infrastructure dating back to the Soviet times. Another source of controversy is the Russian minorities, especially in Estonia and Latvia where they account for almost a third of the total population. In fact, Moscow regularly complains about the treatment of its citizens in the BS, using it as a powerful tool to exercise influence in the domestic policy of them (ibid.).

In her book *The Politics of Energy and Memory between the Baltic States and Russia* (2013) Grigas analyses the case of the Baltic energy and memory policies to discuss the foreign policies of the Baltic republics. The author draws attention to three main factors that characterize Baltic-Russian relations. First, the relations are affected by energy security matters and the BS' dependence on Russian oil and gas. Second, both parts share different and contrasting views regarding the Soviet occupation of the Baltic territory. Third, specific domestic political conditions make the BS vulnerable to Moscow influences. These factors still allow Russia to exercise influence in Baltic countries to pursue not only political, but also economic objectives (ibid.).

Russia's criticism of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania has been used to create a Russian 'European' identity of its own.

Morozov (2004) uses Neuman's terminological opposition of *true* versus *false* Europe. The *true Europe* depicts a friendly Europe in line with Russian values and priorities, in contrast to the *false Europe* that has lost the original European values and acts violating them (Neumann 1996). Following the fall of the Soviet Union, the BS were defined as *false Europe* because they were perceived as a threat to Russian national identity. This picture of the Baltic states was used intensively during 1998-2000 when the bilateral relations were really tense due to their wish to join NATO (perceived as a military threat) and the EU. Morozov analysis proposes that a 'desecuritization' of Russian identity could lead to better relations in the Baltic Sea region. However, this view does not fit well with Putin's opinion who perceives transnational and post-territorial cooperation detrimental for the national identity (Morozov 2004).

Simons (2015) uses the concepts of *public diplomacy* and *soft power* to analyse Russia's behaviour. He defines, mentioning Jowett and O'Donnell (2012), *public diplomacy* (PD) as a two-way interactive form of communication. PD refers to a message that originates from the government and is directed to the people, as opposed to the traditional diplomacy that consists of communication

between governments. In particular, Coombs and Holladay (2010) define it as a message from the government of one country to the people of another country. However, the message of PD does not aim just to spread news but more directly to influence the targeted public to benefit the state that sends it (Snow 2006, Farwell 2012). PD is associated with the idea of soft power in a sense that PD is a way of promoting a country's soft power. In turn, soft power refers to culture, values and policies of a country and consists of the power of attraction to perceive other outcomes than from coercion (Simons 2015).

Russian government under Putin is able to exercise soft power more effectively, due to a strong 'physical' as well as an online presence. For example, soft power is pursued actively through a number of organisations and foundations such as the "*Alexander Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Foundation*", "*the Russkiy Mir foundation*", and "*the Historical Memory Foundation*".³ Further, historical ties have been a tool to exercise influence in former Soviet countries through the Russian elites and the business class. In the case of the BS, Russia has been funding different bodies that allow Moscow to exercise influence such as NGOs, media outlets and political parties. These methods of persuasion are directed towards the Baltic decision-makers trying to change their behaviour more towards Russian preferences, but instead they have resulted in reinforcement of negative opinion and attitude towards Russia (ibid.).

In nearly the same way, Kuczyńska-Zonik (2016) focuses on the diplomatic discourse of Moscow, but with a stronger accent on the anti-diplomacy that Russia uses against the Baltic republics. According to her, Russia is engaged in anti-diplomatic discourses to exert pressure on the Baltic States. Kuczyńska-Zonik refers to Bjola and Kornprobst (2013) who conceive anti-diplomacy as a set of practices, instruments and processes that challenge diplomatic dialogue. Using the concept of Bjola (2011), this author explains that the purpose of anti-diplomatic discourses is to undermine the sovereignty of political communities and, by doing so, challenge the security of these communities (Kuczyńska-Zonik 2016). Under Putin's presidential lead Russia's policies towards the Russian diaspora have become a tool to promote a positive image of the Russian state, and many times this issue was raised in International forums such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe and so on. In the case of the Baltic republics, Russia constructed a negative image of them, accusing their ethnic policy as discriminative towards the Russian population and speakers. However, the real intent of Russia was, according to the author, to undermine any integration or adaptation project of Russian communities living in the Baltics, because it is easier to exercise influence on a divided population compared to a united one (ibid.).

³ To find more information, please see: <http://gorchakovfund.ru/>; <http://www.ruskiymir.ru/en/>; <http://historyfoundation.ru/>.

The research of Kuczyńska-Zonik highlights three main conclusions: first, Russia uses anti-diplomatic methods to challenge diplomatic communication among states, relying on disinformation, falsification of history and discrediting Western values. Second, in the Baltic cases, the anti-diplomatic discourse aims to subvert their power in the international arena, delegitimize their sovereignty and authority over the populations. Third, anti-diplomacy influenced international relations in the Baltic region. Even though the Russian aggressiveness proved to be effective against the Baltics (causing more than one problem) it is insignificant on the international arena (ibid.).

During the Soviet period, many Russians workers were brought to Estonia and Latvia to work in the industries there. Therefore, this period witnessed mass deportations of Baltic peoples and resettlement of ethnic Russians, mainly in Latvia and Estonia. Subsequently, while the Baltic's population at the beginning of 1940 was indigenous, in 1990 a consistent percentage of ethnic Russians lived in the Baltic countries. Many of them remained there, after Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania regained their independence, even though they were not recognized as Baltic citizens.⁴ As a consequence, this created difficulties to integrate Russian citizens with the BS populations (Corum 2018).

The BS independence achieved during Boris Yeltsin's government marked a period of good relations between Russia and the BS. Indeed, after the independence of 1991, in 1994 Russia's military forces were withdrawn from the Baltic countries and the military bases were handed over to the national governments. This scenario severely changed with the election of Vladimir Putin as the new leader of the Russian state, resulting in any sort of positive development in Russian-Western relations being hampered. The new Russian government's line was characterized by aggressive nationalism. For example, Moscow portrayed many times the BS as Nazis and recognized as legitimate the Soviet occupation of their territory. Furthermore, the Kremlin started an anti-Baltic campaign targeting ethnic Russians living in the Baltics as well as the general population of Russia. Thus, ethnic Russians living in the Baltic countries generally are used to weaken the Baltics authority from within and legitimize Russia claims concerning several issues (ibid.).

3.3 Geopolitics in the Baltic Sea Region

Lastly, there is also another group of scholars that focus on discussing the position of Russia in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR).

⁴ The Baltic states after regaining independence from Russia recognized Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian citizenships just to a limited number of Russians that continued living in their territory due to restrictive ethnic-nationalistic legislation (Kuczyńska-Zonik 2017).

Fedorov et al. (2016) talk about the Baltic Sea area as a location of economic integration and international cooperation where people and countries are brought together to create mutual benefit. The region presents a certain internal unity due to its geographical position and the cooperation in different fields from the economy, education, science, and culture. This has been shown by a number of close cross-border cooperation with projects in the mentioned fields. The potential for large scale cooperation could be further exploited for the development of multinational and cross border projects beneficial to all countries for socio-economic development (Fedorov et al. 2016). In the last years, due to the geopolitical events happening in Eastern Europe, tension has raised hinders for socio-economic development. As a consequence, in 2014-2015 the Russian trade with the Baltic Sea countries decreased more in comparison to the other EU countries and the world (ibid.).

Hirst (2016) points out that by using the regional level of analysis opposed to the international one it is possible to shed light on several issues that challenge the definition of identity as European or Russian. In his paper, Hirst considers Neumann's (1994) definition of regions as an *imagined community*: a social construction brought into being by political actors. He uses this definition to identify the Baltic Sea Region as an *imagined community*, greatly influenced by the EU because the majority of the countries in the region are members of the Union (Hirst 2016). This author provides a historical overview of the cooperation initiatives undertaken in the BSR.

The Council of the Baltic Sea States was the first form of cooperation established among the Baltic Sea States, followed by Euroregions Baltic in the mid-1990s and the EU's Northern Dimension initiative. Subsequently, the first EU's macro-regional strategy, the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region together with the South Baltic and the Central Baltic cross-border cooperation were launched under the INTERREG programme. As these platforms of cooperation started to be enacted, Russia worried about the expanding regionalization project of the EU happening around its borders. Thus, since the 1990s Russia positioned itself ambiguously: inside, outside and anywhere at all in this region (Hirst 2016).

The EU's distinction between 'us' and 'other' built its image as opposed to the image of Russia. Hence, as Russia came to represent the *other* from an EU perspective, the EU represents the *other* for Russia, which the latter used to build its own image. For the same reason, in the BSR Russia is seen as the *other* from the EU member states. However, the marginalisation of Russia in the BSR is not due just to the majority of European countries present in the region and the EU foreign policy, but it is also a conscious choice of Moscow government because it regards it as beneficial to be marginalised. Indeed, this marginalisation is an integral part of the Russian policy in the BSR (ibid.).

Makarychev and Sergunin (2017) observe that Moscow has preferred to build relations with other states in the BSR through bilateral or multilateral agreements, shown by the presence of Russia in the Northern Dimension (ND) Partnership, the Council of Baltic Sea State (CBSS), the Baltic Seas States Sub-Regional Cooperation (BSSSC), and the Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC) instead of using EU as a platform for dialogue and partnership. These scholars use a counter-hegemonic concept to explain Russia's behaviour in the BSR. This concept is defined as the use of *'discursive, communicative, normative and institutional resources in an attempt to counter-balance the existing hegemonic project'*, that is being a part of International relations framework. Thus, in the BSR Russia acts as a counter-hegemonic actor challenging EU's predominance.

Moreover, the authors maintain that Russia failed to be effective in playing a counter-hegemonic role in the region and give the example of the Russian CBSS Presidency in 2012-2013. In this case, Moscow was unable to find a balance between multilateral and bilateral/trilateral diplomacies. The Kremlin is aware that a deeper involvement of sub-national actors is needed for the successful development of cross-border cooperation, but is afraid to lose control of its territories. For this reason, Russia continues to exercise a state-centric approach to regional cooperation. Accordingly, the Russian strategy in the BSR, while promoting regional networks, focused on addressing several issues moving them from the national level to the regional one, trying to impose its own agenda. Nevertheless, the success of this strategic-approach is doubtful. Furthermore, the Russia-Ukraine conflict has seriously challenged regional institution and cooperation practice with Moscow within the BSR and so further marginalised Russia (ibid.).

4. Institutional cooperation

Listed below and briefly explained are the Institutions where the Baltic states and Russia currently cooperate, including cooperation as single states or as a part of another institutional framework.

The **United Nations (UN)** is an international organisation founded in 1945. It has 193 Member States. The mission and work of the UN are guided by the purposes and principles contained in its Founding Charter. The UN strives to maintain international peace and security, protect human rights, deliver humanitarian aid, promote sustainable development and uphold international law (United Nations 2019a).

The **Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS)** is an overall political forum for regional cooperation. The CBSS is composed of eleven Member States: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden. Founded in 1992 to create a platform of dialogue among countries in the Baltic Sea area, the organisation focuses today on themes related to sustainability, innovation, education, and security (CBSS 2019).

The **Northern Dimension (ND)** is a joint policy of four equal partners: the European Union, Russian Federation, Norway and Iceland. It is a result of the Finnish initiative from 1997 that brought to the approval of the related policy in 1999 and it was renewed in 2006 (Danish MFA 2019). The ND policy objectives are to support stability, well-being and sustainable development through cooperation in the Nordic region. It works through four partnerships each one with different strategic focus (ND 2019).

The **Council of Europe (CoE)**, established in 1949, is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It includes 47 member states; among them 28 who are members of the EU. All Council of Europe countries have signed the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The Council of Europe promotes freedom of expression and of the media, freedom of assembly, equality and protection of minorities and it helps member states fighting corruption, terrorism and undertakes judicial reform. (CoE 2019)

The **Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)** is composed of 57 member states and is the world's largest regional security organisation. The OSCE traces its origins back to the early 1970s, to the Helsinki Final Act (1975) and the Creation of the Conference on Security and Cooperation (CSCE). The Organisation provides a forum of political dialogue that works for stability, peace and democracy. It has a comprehensive approach to security that takes into account the political, economic, societal and environmental spheres. Member countries cooperate on

conflict-prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. The Chairmanship of the organisation rotates among its members (OSCE 2019).

The **World Trade Organization (WTO)**, founded in 1995, is the international organisation regulating the trade market between 164 countries all over the world. The Organisation works as an International forum to solve trade problems. It allows Members to negotiate trade agreements, to settle trade disputes and to elaborate trade rules. The WTO agreements are the core documents of the organisation and pose the foundation of the multilateral trading system. They are negotiated and signed by the member countries and ratified in their parliament (WTO 2019).

The **Helsinki Commission (HELCOM)** is a platform of cooperation that focuses on the protection of the Baltic Sea marine environment. Members of the Commission are the countries surrounding the Baltic Sea: Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Germany, Poland, Russia, plus the European Union. The core document of HELCOM is the 1992 Helsinki Convention which regulates the purposes of the Commission. HELCOM sets common environmental objectives and actions, provides information on the state of the marine environment, works as a supervisory body for all parties and provides a coordination body in case of environmental incidents. Every two years the Chairmanship of the Commission rotates among the Members (HELCOM 2019).

Besides these organisations there exists a number of other initiatives, projects, programmes and partnerships that are active between the BS and Russia, but for the purpose of the thesis, they are not relevant and therefore not discussed here.

5. The United Nations

Since the focus of my thesis is on the United Nations, in the following I will provide an overview of this organisation.

The United Nations is an international organisation founded in 1945. It is the largest and most powerful intergovernmental organisation in the world. At its founding the UN had 51 member states, nowadays it represents 193 countries. Within the UN framework, member states exchange their views and dialogue to find common solutions to existing problems. Throughout the years the UN has become a worldwide leading Organisation to find areas of agreement and address global challenges. The mission and work of the UN are guided by the purposes and principles contained in its founding Charter signed in San Francisco in 1945. The UN strives to maintain international peace and security, protect human rights, deliver humanitarian aid, promote sustainable development and uphold international law (United Nations 2019a). The Organisation headquarter is located at Manhattan, New York City. Other main offices are located in Geneva, The Hague, Vienna and Nairobi. The UN is financed by the contribution from its member states (ibid.).

The UN is composed by six principal organs: The General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice and the Secretariat (United Nations 2019b). Below, I give a brief description of the main organs:

- The **General Assembly** is the main deliberative, policymaking and representative body of the Institution. The General Assembly is the only body of the Institution where all member states are represented. The annual General Assembly session held in September takes place in the headquarter with the participation of all members, many heads of states take part in the Assembly and address it. The decision on important matters, like the ones on peace and security, admission of new members and budget issues, require a two-thirds majority of the General Assembly. Other kinds of decisions are made by a simple majority.
- The UN Charter envisaged the **Security Council** as the main guarantor of international peace and security. The Council is composed by 15 members: 5 permanents, France, United Kingdom, United States,⁵ Russia and China; and 10 non-permanents, elected for two years terms by the General Assembly. Each member of the Council has one vote. The Presidency of the Council rotates over its members every month. The UN Charter provides that all member states comply with the Council decisions. The Security Council takes decisions on

⁵ In the thesis, the acronym USA or U.S. is used for referring to The United States of America.

determining the existence of a threat to peace or act of aggression and works together with the conflicting parties to find a peaceful resolution. In some cases, the Council can impose sanctions or even makes use of military forces to restore international peace.

- The **Economic and Social Council** serves as a central forum of discussion for economic, social and environmental issues and elaborates policy recommendations for the UN countries and the UN system. The Council is a core platform to foster debate and innovative thinking on sustainable development and implementation of agreed development goals. Further, it provides overall guidance among the UN entities working in the economic, social and environmental fields. It has 54 Members, elected by the General Assembly for three years terms.
- The **Trusteeship Council** was established to provide international supervision for 11 Trust Territories that had been placed under the administration of seven member states: United Kingdom, France, Italy, Belgium, United States, New Zealand and Australia. The UN members had the responsibility to assist the Territories with adequate administrations and prepare them for the process of independence. The Trusteeship Council supervised reports concerning social, political, economic matters and undertook special missions in the Territories. The Council suspended its activities in 1994 when all 11 Territories achieved successfully the independence. Thereafter, the Council's member decided to amend the Council obligations to meet annually and meet if required.
- The **International Court of Justice** is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations established in 1945 by the UN Charter. It is located in The Hague (Netherlands). The role of the Court is to resolve legal disputes submitted to it by States in line with the provision of the international law and provides advisory opinions on legal questions presented by authorized UN's organs and specialized agencies. It is formed by 15 judges elected for a period of 9 years by the General Assembly and the Security Council. The Court's official languages are English and French.
- The **Secretariat** carries out the daily work of the Organisation. It is divided into departments and offices working cohesively to bring a united response globally, with each having its own focus area of actions. The Secretary-General is the chief administrative officer of the United Nations, appointed, for a period of 5 years (renewable), by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Security Council. The Organisation staff members are recruited and employed worldwide, working in duty stations and peacekeeping missions, sometimes at the cost of their lives (United Nations 2019b).

Furthermore, other famous specialized agencies, funds and programmes are part of the United Nations system, such as the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and so on (United Nations 2019c). The Organization is currently led by the Secretary-General António Guterres since 1 January 2017.

6. The reasons behind the choice of the United Nations

In the following section, I briefly explain what the initial focus of my research was and then, I point out the reasons for my final choice to focus exclusively on the UN as an institutional platform to analyse the relations between the countries in study.

My initial interest was to analyse the relations of the countries in three institutions: the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), the Council of Europe (CoE) and the United Nations. Such interest was due to the fact that I saw in each of them a different level of analysis (regional/national, European, and global levels) beneficial to investigate the evolution of the relations between the considered countries. I thought it would be interesting to analyse and compare the statements of the chosen countries among these institutions looking at if the cooperation have changed at different levels in the studied time. However, after extended research on the materials available on the website and linked sources of the CoE and the CBSS I realized the analysis I would have liked to pursue was not possible. My original research plan was challenged by restrictions on the documents available to compare the positions of the countries within these institutions. Furthermore, being different institutions, the countries cooperate with each other in different institutional settings, resulting in diverse meeting methods, diverse sessions of meeting/plenary/assembly, different reporting methods and so on. All in all, these factors made the initial analysis I would have liked to pursue difficult, if not impossible for a single researcher.

Therefore, I decided to focus exclusively on the relations of the chosen countries in the United Nations. In this regard, I found it relevant to analyse the statements made during the UN annual General Debate. The annual General Debate of the United Nations General Assembly is the moment for world leaders to gather and discuss global issues. In the last General Debate, the 73rd session, all the 193 UN Member States delivered statements in the Organisation headquarter. Among them, 126 Heads of State and Government participated in the debate, which testifies the salience of the event as well as the importance held by the Institution in the International politics (United Nations 2019d).

The issues raised during the statements are of course related to issues that concern the countries. The statements need to be prepared strategically for the General Debate since each country has a limited amount of time available to address the Plenary Session. Thus, each word contained in the statement is carefully drafted, as well as the themes that are presented to the audience. Indeed, the next opportunity that the countries would have to address such wide and high political audience would be, most probably, the following Session of the General Assembly; taking

place in a year. Therefore, the first reason for my choice rests on the salience of the events as well as the relevance of the political figures of the countries in addressing the Debate.⁶

A further reason is that the United Nations is a worldwide leading Organisation where all countries are equal and their interests are equally important because they represent the interests of the global population. In the Institution it does not matter that Russia is a big country and a major power globally, while the BS are among the smallest group of countries worldwide. In the General Debate, all States have one vote: one country, one voice, one vote. Therefore, the UN institutional framework allowed me to treat and to compare the countries 'equally'.

Last but not least, the UN official website offers comprehensive material useful for a comparative analysis like the one I intended to make. The website provides for each country an individual page dedicated to the UN statements, containing a variety of multimedia materials available: statement's transcripts, statement's summaries, videos, photos and audio files (*ibid.*). In this manner, I could collect all the countries' statements relying trustfully on only one source.

Finally, the research focus shifted to analysing the statements made by key political figures of the considered countries during the UN General Assembly over the last 10 years, from 2009 to 2018. Indeed, the UN General Assembly statements create the bases for interesting comparative case studies of the relations between the Baltic countries and Russia.

⁶ Among the key political figures of the Baltic States and Russia who made the statements are: Russian President Vladimir Putin; Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey V. Lavrov; Estonian President Kersti Kaljulaid; former Latvian President Andris Bērziņš; Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė.

7. Theoretical framework

This chapter will look at literature concerning the small state definition, the small state foreign policy theory, the geopolitical theory and the geopolitical theory applied to the study of Russia. I will return to the theoretical concepts illustrated below in the discussion section and match them with the results of the analysis.

7.1 Small state definition

Small states definition in literature has been a concept much discussed because the adjective ‘small’ has been interpreted in multiple ways.

Vital seminal works on small states highlight the limit of their sovereignty. Small states are characterized by limited defence resources, economic disabilities, dependence on foreign trade and on foreign strategic supplies; all of which could be exploited by major powers for their own purposes (Vital 1967). Rothstein on a similar stance defines a small power as a country that needs to rely on the aid of other states and institutions to guarantee its own security; in contrast to the definition of a great power which is a country who has a strong military defence and institutional capabilities (Rothstein 1968).

Vital also suggests that small states administrative, economic and military limitations leave the options for three kinds of national policies: an *active* policy, trying to influence the international environment to achieve their objectives, such as building alliances with powerful states; a *defensive* policy, preserving the status quo while reinforcing the internal resources of a state, for example, strengthening military defences; or a *passive* strategy of renunciation (Vital 1967). Later, Vital puts a stronger emphasis on the inequality of states researching the policy options left to smaller and weaker states which differ from the ones of the major (nuclear) powers. The latter are constrained in their relations with each other by the risks of nuclear war, but can exercise influence on the former without a backlash on their territory, while the opposite is not true. This later work of the author delineated the increased vulnerability of small states in the international scene (Vital 1971).

In the nineteenth century, small states were those countries that were not great powers in a period when European empires were dominant. In the twentieth century, at the beginning of the break-up of the major empires and, later, following the decolonisation period the number of independent countries gradually rose, together with the number of small states (Neumann and Gstöhl 2004). The Baltic States are among these countries. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are considered small states due to their limited populations of 1.319.133, 1.934.379, 2.808.901 inhabitants respectively and their modest territorial surface (Eurostat 2018).

7.1.1 Small states foreign policy

At the turn of the 21st century, small states enjoyed ample security guarantees subjected to international law, a more interventionist United Nations and an almost completed decolonization process (Hey 2003).

Hey (2003) tries to elaborate a unifying theory on the behaviour of small states foreign policy based on previous research. He notices that in previous studies small states are mainly depicted as insecure, limited in foreign policy resources, and seeking to maintain the status quo in a world dominated by great powers. Discordance prevails among researchers trying to explain the behaviour of small states, with different casual factors attributed to such an explanation. However, Hey (2003) identifies a shared belief among scholars which is the relatively limited influence that small powers can exercise within the international institutions; in fact, they will act in a passive and reactive mode rather than a proactive one.

Generally, all members of international institutions have to observe the same rules and if they fail to respect them, they have to face the same sanctions (Neumann and Gstöhl 2004). The institutions restrict the power of bigger states, facilitate peaceful conflict resolution, and give voice as well as a place to raise concerns, to smaller countries. Thus, international organisations regulate the use of force which reduce the importance of power asymmetries among countries (Wivel 2005). In fact, in such organisations, states are 'equal', so small states tend to favour institutionalisation of interstate relations in regional and world politics (Neumann and Gstöhl 2004). For the same reasons, small states are also considered to be the main beneficiaries of international organisations (Wivel 2005).

Even though they are more dependent on international institutions compared to bigger countries, due to their limited institutional capabilities and resources, small states encounter difficulties to influence the organisations decision-making process (Thorhallsson and Wivel 2006). A result of this is that great powers are interested in how they can use the institutions to revise the status quo of a regional or a global order in accordance with their preferences, while small powers tend to accept the order created by the stronger actors in return of the benefit originating from the organisations (Morrow 1991). Furthermore, small states try to influence the actions of bigger and powerful states to pursue their security interests by means of such institutions; but in order to do so, they have to give up some of their political autonomy (Goetschel 1998).

According to Galbreath and Lamoreaux's (2007) version of the small states theory these countries have two main alternatives: 1) to remain autonomous, doing so at the risk of losing their autonomy because they are threatened by bigger and more powerful states; or 2) to join alliances with other states delegating a part of their autonomy. Small states would try to join successful

'entities' in order to benefit from the alliances and contribute to the positive achievement of their objectives. Thus, in the case of Eastern neighbourhood countries, the choice is between Russia and the Euro-Atlantic community. The Baltic republics have opted for the latter. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are constantly cautious not to fall back into Russia's geopolitical 'game'. Indeed, constant prudence towards Russia continues to characterize the Baltic foreign policies (Galbreath, Lasas, and Lamoreaux 2008).

Furthermore, the authors write that the core of the Baltic foreign policies continues to stem from their domestic interests. After the EU enlargement of 2004, which saw the membership of the Baltic countries and their subsequent membership in NATO, the Baltic republics have gained important hard and soft security guarantees. As a consequence, even if their foreign policy focus has remained on national security, economic growth has played an increasingly significant role (ibid.). To sum up, the BS are small states due to their 'physical characteristics', but with great potentials regarding the system of alliances they managed to build up. However, the vulnerability of the Baltic States rests on their limited armed capabilities, population and geopolitical position between West and East.

7.2 Geopolitical theory

The geopolitical concept originates from the two disciplines geography and politics. The concept has been used in a variety of empirical social scientific disciplines, but for the aim of this study geopolitics would be analysed primarily through the lenses of research in International Relations (IR). In this field of study, the geopolitical theory has been used to understand the foreign policy behaviour of countries based on geographical factors. Although the meaning of the geopolitical concept in IR has changed over time, in my research, I have analysed Russia following the conceptualisation of the theory after the Cold War period.

Deudney (1997) emphasizes that geographical factors, especially control over certain territories and resources, is a relevant concern for many states. Dalby (1998) defines geopolitics as the general analyses of international affairs in terms of competition between superpowers. The definition of geopolitics has meant different things at different times and it is still a debated concept. However, Dalby has noticed that several authors agree on the relevance of power expressed in terms of military capabilities and sphere of influences over territories (ibid.).

Following this conceptualization, the geopolitical theory used in my research is primarily based on the concept of sphere of influences that states could 'exercise' in specific territories.

7.2.1 Russian geopolitics

Russian foreign policy has been described by several scholars with the help of the concept of geopolitics (Averre 2005, Gomart 2006, Galbreath and Lamoreaux 2007, Trenin 2007). According to Averre (2005), Russian political leadership views the world through realist lenses. Indeed, any other country that is trying to influence territories under the leverage of Moscow is regarded as a threat to Russia's national security (ibid.). On the same way, Gomart (2006) argues that the Russian logic stems from a geopolitical mindset shared by the ruling elite in the country. Indeed, for Russia sovereignty and territorial integrity are of primary importance. Thus, while the EU approach to the neighbourhood bases on regionalism, the Russian approach relies on geopolitics (ibid.).

The Russian 'near abroad' nations are considered the primary focus of Russian foreign policy. The 'near abroad' comprises those countries which have had strong ties with Russia for several centuries. For historical as well as strategic reasons Russia is hesitant to relinquish influence in these countries (Galbreath and Lamoreaux 2007). Therefore, the post-Soviet space is seen as crucial to defend Russia's political and economic interests, as well as to guarantee national security (Averre 2005). The Baltic States are among those countries considered by Moscow as part of its sphere of influence. Russia disapproved the 2004 Baltic integration into NATO and the European Union (Trenin 2011). Indeed, the Baltic new institutional memberships proved the definitive alignment of such countries with the Western alliance. Since that moment, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania came to form a block of states essentially anti-Russian, able to raise their concerns within the international institutions they become a part of. Similar to other countries who are parts of the Atlantic 'community', the BS are sceptical towards Russia's foreign policy (Galbreath, Lasas, and Lamoreaux 2008).

Russia's geopolitical ambition has been challenged by the expanding projects of the Western alliance. In particular, the EU has been playing an increasingly important role over the last 20 years in the post-Soviet space. From a Russian perspective, these 'moves' represent a threat to its security and a diminishing control over its sphere of influence ('the near abroad').

8. Methodology

This chapter presents an overview of the methodological approach to the research, including: the material, qualitative content analysis, analysis, coding, limitation and finally, the validity and reliability. The aim of the chapter is to create the basis of an understanding of the following chapters focused on the findings.

8.1 Material

The material used to conduct the research were the transcripts of the statements made by key political figures of the countries in the analysis during the UN General Assembly. The General Assembly transcripts (statements) are available on the UN's website, where each country has its own page in which the statements are reported, including their audio, video and transcripts. Therefore, to find the documents I looked at the General Assembly webpage,⁷ searched for the name of the country and downloaded the statements from the pages (organised by countries' name). The General Assembly is held annually, therefore each country has one statement per year. This resulted in totally 40 statements analysed for the countries in study over a period of 10 years. Each statement ranges from 2 to 15 pages. For example, in the Russian statements I encountered always more than 5 pages. While the Baltic states statements varies with Lithuania presenting mostly 2 pages and Estonia and Latvia generally around 5 pages. The number of the pages changes in relation to the number of themes addressed during the statement. Generally, the statements containing more themes presented a higher number of pages.

8.2 Qualitative Content Analysis

Qualitative content analysis (QCA) is a method useful to describe the meaning of qualitative data (Schreier 2014). This methodology can be used to analyse a variety of sources: written, visual and audio. As a first step, the elements to be examined are chosen: words, sentences, images, symbols etc. Then categories are created to group the elements during the analysis (Payne and Payne 2004). After the categories have been created, the researcher proceeds through the successive elements of the materials assigning them to the categories of frame coding. The coding framework is the core of the method of analysis.

Three features characterize the QCA: the method *reduces data*, it is *systematic* and it is *flexible*. First, this methodology helps to reduce the numbers of elements analysed, focusing on certain aspects of the elements in the analysis that relate to the research questions. These elements are then grouped in categories with the help of the coding. Second, qualitative content analysis is highly

⁷ To find more information, please see: <https://gadebate.un.org/en> (United Nations 2019d).

systematic. In the beginning, an examination of the material is performed to identify the parts that are relevant for the research questions. Then, the elements which are regarded as relevant are assigned to the categories. Third, the methodology is flexible because it can combine in each category different portions of concept-driven analysis and data-driven analysis. A part of the category should always be data-driven in order to match with the data, in other words, in a way that the coding frame provides a valid transcription of the material (Schreier 2014).

The mentioned key features (reduce data, systematic and flexibility) were crucial reasons for my methodological choice. The categorization of the references allowed me to organize each statement discovering in what way the countries mention each other and the recurring themes. Through examining in detail the documents I could identify relevant information to answer the research questions. In addition, the method allowed me to analyse and compare 40 statements in total. As a result, creating the bases for interesting comparative case studies of the relations between the Baltic countries and Russia giving me the possibility to analyse the position of the countries on several themes. Apart from the initial categories created (*Negative, Positive, Neutral*) the majority of them were created during the analysis. Therefore, the coding follows a data-driven logic which allowed me to get deeper in each of the category in subcategories and look at the specificity of the information given.

8.3 Analysis

My research analyses the relations between the considered states within the United Nations Institutional framework, in order to discover how these relations evolved in the timespan from 2009 to 2018. The methodology I chose to conduct the research is a qualitative content analysis of documents, based on an analysis of the UN statements of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Russia. The selected statements were made in the UN General Assembly by the countries' Presidents and Ministers of Foreign Affairs addressing important issues for the analysed states. I evaluated QCA as the most efficient method to perform my analysis. Its methodology allowed me to examine the contents of the documents carefully and organize them in categories via the coding.

In the case of the BS, I analysed the documents looking for when the countries mentioned Russia, paying attention to in what way they talk about Russia (good, bad, neutral). Vice versa, in the case of Russia, the focus was on the references made to the BS. Moreover, during the analysis, I also tried to identify recurring themes.

Thus, this methodology helped me to shed light on the RQs that drive this study:

- 1) *How did the representatives of Russia and the Baltic states talk about each other in the published statements of the United Nations?*

2) *What topics have the countries addressed in the UN General Assembly in the analysed period (2009-2018)?*

The categories created before starting the analysis were: *Negative*, *Neutral* and *Positive*. Each category includes two subcategories:

- The ***Negative*** category includes references made by the states referring to the other countries in a Negative way. *Negative* was divided into *Negative to the Baltic states*, that include all the negative references made by Russia towards Baltic states, and *Negative to Russia*, that vice versa comprehend all the negative references made by the Baltic states towards Russia. Following an example of a *Negative* reference to the Baltic states is provided.

*Political correctness and slogans of freedom of speech cannot serve as a cover when in certain European countries some people who stained themselves by cooperation with the Nazi are talked and written about in a more and more elevated tone.*⁸ (Russia 2011)⁹

- The ***Neutral*** category includes references made by the states in an impartial manner towards the other countries. This node includes references to institutions in which the analyzed countries are members or to situations and events where the states are/have been involved. *Neutral* was divided into *Neutral to the Baltic states*, that include the neutral references made by Russia towards the Baltic states and *Neutral to Russia*, that include the neutral references made by the Baltic states towards Russia. Following an example of a *Neutral* reference to Russia is provided.

The agreement reached by the United States and Russia on the framework to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons should be reflected in a UN Security Council resolution, with a clear indication that the Chapter Seven of the UN Charter would be invoked in case of non-compliance. (Latvia 2014)

- The ***Positive category*** includes the references that states made about each other talking positively. *Positive* was divided into *Positive to the Baltic states*, that include all the references made by Russia towards the Baltic States in a positive manner, and *Positive to Russia*, that include all the positive references made by the Baltic states towards Russia. Following an example of a *Positive* reference to Russia is provided.

The New START Treaty between the United States and Russian Federation sets a powerful and remarkable example of real steps to reduce the threat of strategic arms and engage other powers in fulfilling the goals of the NPT. (Latvia 2010)

⁸ For further information about Russian's accusation of Nazi propaganda in the BS, see: Corum, J.S. (2018). A view from Northeast Europe: the Baltic States and the Russian regime. *South Central Review*, 35(1), pp. 127-146.

⁹ The acronym and year in brackets indicate the country and year of the statement to which the reference belong.

So, I proceeded by reading through the statements made by the countries each year and I coded the references in the mentioned categories.

Other categories including the recurring themes were created during the analysis. Thus, these categories were created by a data-driven analysis, hence their importance. This means that they were not pre-set categories, but were created based on the frequency in which they occurred in the documents. These categories are *Security, Social issues, United States, Development, Economy, Ukraine, Syria, and Environment*. Moreover, subcategories were created to narrow down the general themes to even more specific topics (they will be showed in detail in the results chapter). These subcategories are also called child nodes because they stem from the main categories, also called nodes.¹⁰

After I had gathered the documents from the UN's website, I proceeded to import them in *Nvivo 11*.¹¹ *Nvivo* is a qualitative data analysis (QDA) computer software that allows the researcher to analyse multiple materials (text, audio, video etc.) at the same time. It is a comprehensive programme for qualitative data analysis that facilitates the research process and provides a number of tools useful to perform the analysis and possibly identify patterns in the data. It allows the researcher to organise data in categories, called *nodes*, and subcategories, called *child nodes* (Nvivo 2019).¹² This software was used to organise the UN General Assembly statements and code them. Afterwards, at the end of the coding part other tools were used for a further analysis of the data, such as *Word frequency*, that is, words or concepts which occurred frequently; *Text search*, search in the text of words, phrases or concepts; *Charts*, allow the researcher to create charts based on selected sources, nodes. Overall, the programme itself and the diverse tools that it offers supported the analysis of the statements and it helped me to build up the findings, which are reported in the next chapter.

8.4 Coding

The coding framework before starting the analysis simply consisted of three category: *Negative, Neutral* and *Positive*. Later on, the coding framework was expanded by data-driven analysis creating further categories and subcategories. Therefore, I created the categories per each of the most recurring themes and coded the associated references in them. The categories were created by me, as well as the selection of the references coded under these categories. The programme facilitated the

¹⁰ **Appendix 1** shows a photo of the categorization used for the analysis.

¹¹ The number 11 stands for the version of the software.

¹² In the paper, the **node** and **category** terms are used interchangeably. Therefore, **category** and **node** are used to indicate the **main category**, while **subcategory** and **child node** are used to indicate a **subcategory** that derived from the main category. For example, the *Economy category (node)* has two *subcategories (child nodes)*: crisis and trade.

operationalization of the coding. Indeed, allowed me to have all the documents in one place and work on multiple documents at the same time.

The references to be coded in a certain category need to be composed by at least one phrase or multiple phrases that express the same concept. Therefore, in the analysis there are not coded references composed just of single words. For example, when I found in the documents the word *Security* this alone does not constitute a reference. In fact, the phrase or a number of phrases would constitute a (one) reference under the category *Security*.

An example of a reference coded under Security:

Mr. President, Stability and security situation in a number of regions in the world is of particular concern to the global community. (Latvia 2009)

The references, under a specific category (such as *Security*), that presented (further) specific themes recurring in several statements were also coded in subcategories.

For example:

Second, the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons will never be halted outside of an international consensus to do so. (Lithuania 2009)

The reference above was coded under the category *Security* and in its subcategory *Weapons*.

Moreover, a reference could be coded under different categories/subcategories at the same time; because it raised several recurring themes. That means that the reference was counted (as one) per each of the categories/subcategories where it was coded. For example:

Gender equality on a global scale will only become possible when a certain level of security and economic development is achieved. (Lithuania 2010)

The reference above was coded under the categories: *Security*, *Social issues* and *Economy*. As well as, in the subcategory *Gender equality* which belongs to the category *Social issues*. The decision of coding a sentence under a certain category was based on my knowledge on the topic and on further research performed during the analysis process, in order to understand the topic discussed in the statement.

The references coded in one of the category referring to the states take into account the situation where the states were mentioned *directly* and *indirectly*. *Direct references* refer to coded references where the name of the state is explicit. *Indirect references* refer to coded references where the reference to the state was considered implicit, meaning not explicit. The latter references were counted when the states was considered involved in a situation or part of the alliance in discussion.

Following an example of *direct reference* coded under the category *United States* and its subcategory *Positive to United States* :

Latvia praises the role of United States as the mediator. (Latvia 2013)

An example of *indirect references* is the following:

The instant switch of NATO to hostile rhetoric and to the drawdown of its cooperation with Russia even to the detriment of the West's own interests, and additional build up of military infrastructure at the Russian borders — made obvious the inability of the alliance to change the genetic code it embedded during the Cold War era. (Russia 2014)

The latest reference was coded under the categories *Negative, United States* and *Security*, as well as in the respective subcategories *Negative to the Baltic States, Negative to the U.S., Conflict*. This reference in the analysis was considered as an *indirect reference* to the Baltic States because in such a situation they have been at the frontline of promoting the reinforcement of NATO military infrastructure in their territory; which is at the border with Russia (Raik 2016). Further, the references was considered an indirect reference to the United States because U.S. actively contributes to NATO's defence reinforcement on Russian's border (USDS 2019).

8.5 Limitation of the chosen method

The qualitative content analysis also has a number of limitations. There are two practical limits to content analysis. First, content analysis can study just what is recorded, if the content is not recorded it cannot be analysed. Second, the methodology can miss important 'real-time' features of a communicative message such as *body language, eye contact, inflexion, and the like*. This could imply excluding important aspects of the message that would be relevant to consider in the analysis (Allen 2017).

Qualitative content analysis also presents other limitations. Firstly, finding a representative sample of the case to be studied might be difficult and time-consuming. Certain kind of data might be restricted to researcher and so the selected materials could lack key-data relevant for the research. Secondly, the same content might be coded differently by different researchers. Subsequently, coding in different ways and creating different categories might create difficulties to generalize the results across the studies. Thirdly, this methodology can be very time-consuming, complex and hard-working. Depending on the kind of material to be used, a researcher might occur in one of the difficulties mentioned before, for example, an audio record could be time-expensive, transcriptions might not be accurate, study samples might be large and complex to analyse (Allen 2017). Furthermore, it is also relevant to mention that often the *message* which is analysed presents a

difference between explicit content (the actual word) and implicit content (the hidden message that can be interpreted from it). For these reasons, it becomes extremely important to understand the significance of the text and give an unbiased interpretation of the message it contained (Payne and Payne 2004).

The limitation of the methodological approach in this research consisted mainly in the difficulty to analyse the collected statements. The content was not always explicit and difficult to analyse because of the lack of knowledge on certain themes. In particular, the Russian statements resulted more complex to analyse due to the variety of themes addressed. However, this difficulty was also encountered for some statements made by the BS. To address such issue I performed ad hoc research on the topics I had limited knowledge so to understand what were the themes raised before to code the references in the appropriate categories. Generally, this meant that on average for analyse a Russian statement could take as much the time as to analyse the three statements made by the Baltic states of the same year. Further, related to such issues, the message expressed in the documents was not always explicit and sometimes created difficulty to code a reference under a certain category. I tried to be as much unbiased as possible in my evaluation to assign a reference to a specific category but I do not neglect that I could have misinterpreted some hidden messages. Therefore, I am conscious that my analysis if performed by a different researcher could have had slightly different outcomes. However, I do not expect that the main findings would be overly different.

8.6 Validity and Reliability

The Quality of research rests on the reliability of its results and the measuring instruments applied. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) wrote that is important to clearly define the approach to be used in content analysis. Indeed, a detailed description of the research method (measuring instrument) and its application to the case study result to be useful for future research. Applying the same or a similar method to other samples future researchers could test/improve/confirm the findings of the research. Therefore, the concept of quality is strictly related to the one of validity. Qualitative research can confirm its validity throughout the time if other researchers can understand the methodology used and are able to replicate the research (ibid). Furthermore, to reduce the definition of validity at its purest level, it can be defined as the process of measuring what the researcher aimed to measure. It is important to assure the validity and reliability of the research so that the findings can be compared with other research, and that the method used is not just applicable to the original sample analysed but transferable to other levels of analysis or other groups (samplings).

The reliability of the study was tested through a new coding conducted on two selected statements. The new coding is done to verify if the results match the references, categories and subcategories identified in the previous coding analysis (for the same statements). The chosen statements to run the new coding are the ones of Estonia 2010 and Lithuania 2010. The categories and subcategories stemming from the new coding were the same, while a small variation occurred in both the statements regarding the number of references per different categories.¹³ However, the overall findings for the considered statements did not change. Thus, a minor variation in the number of references is possible as long as it does not affect the general purpose of the study. Moreover, being the number of coding references for the statements analysed almost the same, based on the reliability test performed, it is possible to affirm that the results of the thesis are reliable.

¹³ **Appendix 2** shows a picture of the original coding and reliability coding. From the picture it is noticeable that the coding references between the 'original coding' and 'reliability coding' changes of some units. However, the categories and subcategories remain unvaried.

9. Results

This chapter lists the different categories stemming from the coding analysis. Following, the research findings are reported and a summary of them is provided at the end.

9.1 Negative

The *Negative* category presents all together 204 coding references. The references were found in 33 statements out of 40. The highest number of negative references was found in the Russian Statements of 2018 with 17 negative references to the Baltic states. The lowest number of negative references (one), was found in the statements of Estonia (2013), Latvia (2010), Lithuania (2018) and Russia (2011).¹⁴ Further, the two subcategories, *Negative to RU* and *Negative to the BS*, makes it possible to distinguish the number of negative references made to the BS and Russia. There are 128 negative references to Russia, in contrast to a much lower number of negative references to the Baltic states which are 76.

Chart 1 reports the negative references made by the single states to each other.

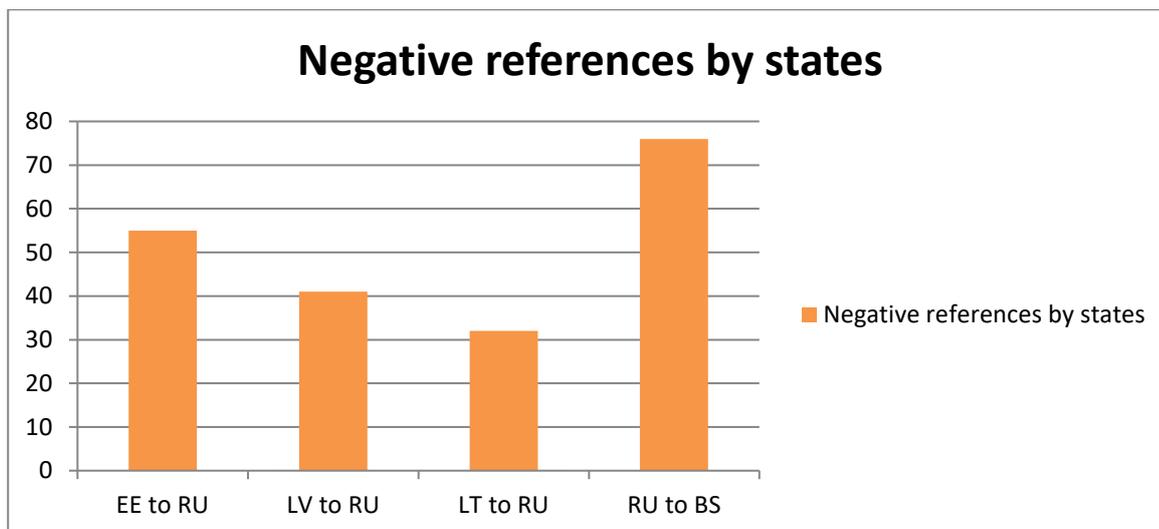


Chart 2 In the case of the Baltic states, the negative references of the states to Russia are reported. In the case of Russia, the negative references to the BS as a group are reported. **EE to RU** indicates the negative references made by Estonia to Russia. **LV to RU** indicates the negative references made by Latvia to Russia. **LT to RU** indicates the negative references made by Lithuania to Russia. **RU to BS** indicates the negative references made by Russia to the BS.¹⁵

¹⁴ The years in brackets refer to the years of the statements.

¹⁵ The same explanation is valid also for the charts 2, 3 and 12.

9.2 Neutral

The **Neutral node** presents a total of 150 references from 33 sources (statements). The *node* was organised in two child nodes: *Neutral to Russia* and *Neutral to the BS*. The highest number of references was found in the 2016 statement of Russia with 11 references. The lowest number is one reference, found in the statements of Estonia (2009, 2010) and Lithuania (2012). Further, the division of the *Neutral* node into two child nodes shows that there are 91 neutral references to Russia, while there are 59 neutral references to the BS. Therefore, the majority of the neutral references in this category are to Russia.

Chart 2 reports the neutral references made by the single states to each other.

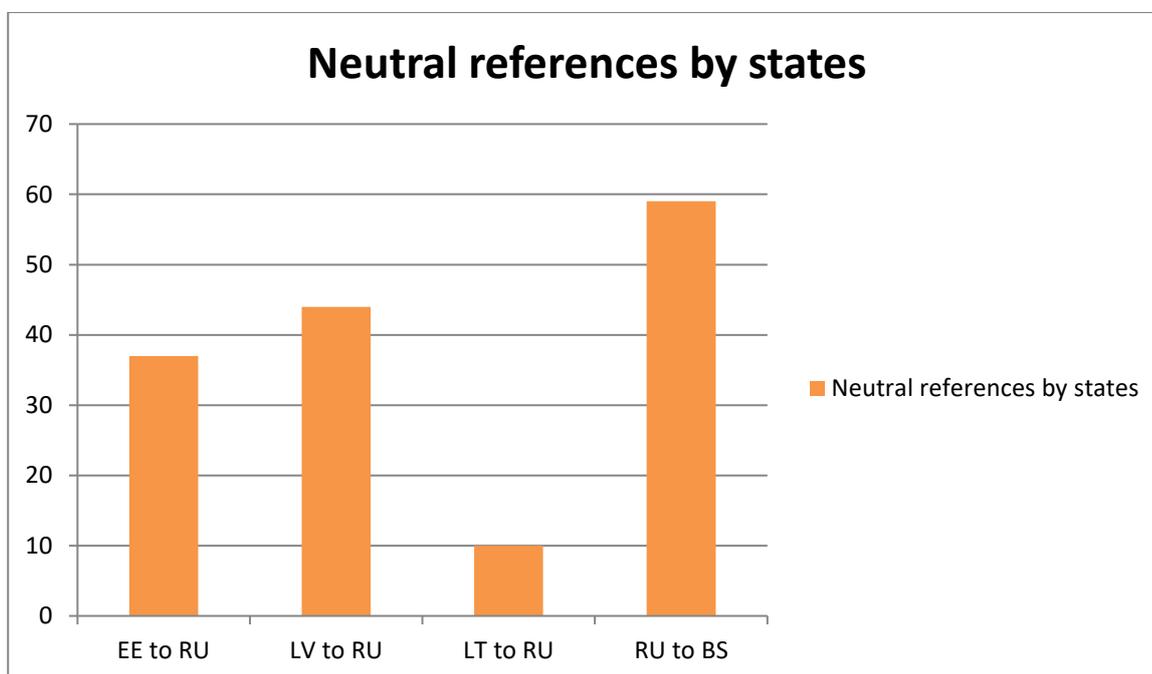


Chart 2 For the explanation look at **Chart 1**.

9.3 Positive

The **Positive category** contains a total amount of 27 references, found in 18 sources. These numbers are really limited considering that the first four categories present at least 200 references each (*Security, Social issues, United States and Negative*). The subcategories *Positive to RU* and *Positive to the BS* present respectively 16 and 11 references. The statement that presents more positive references is the one of Latvia in 2010 with 4 references, while a number of statements present just one reference in this category: Estonia (2014, 2015), Latvia (2009, 2012, 2017), Lithuania (2009) and Russia (2009, 2011, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018). The interesting fact is that, over a period of 10 years, Lithuania presents in total just one positive references to Russia, while Estonia refers twice positively to Russia. Latvia is the country that refers most positively to Russia with 13 references in

total. However, it is important to keep in mind that such numbers are really limited considering the ample spectrum of time in the analysis (10 years). Therefore, the Baltic states and Russia very seldom talk positively about each other.

Chart 3 reports the positive references made by the single states to each other.

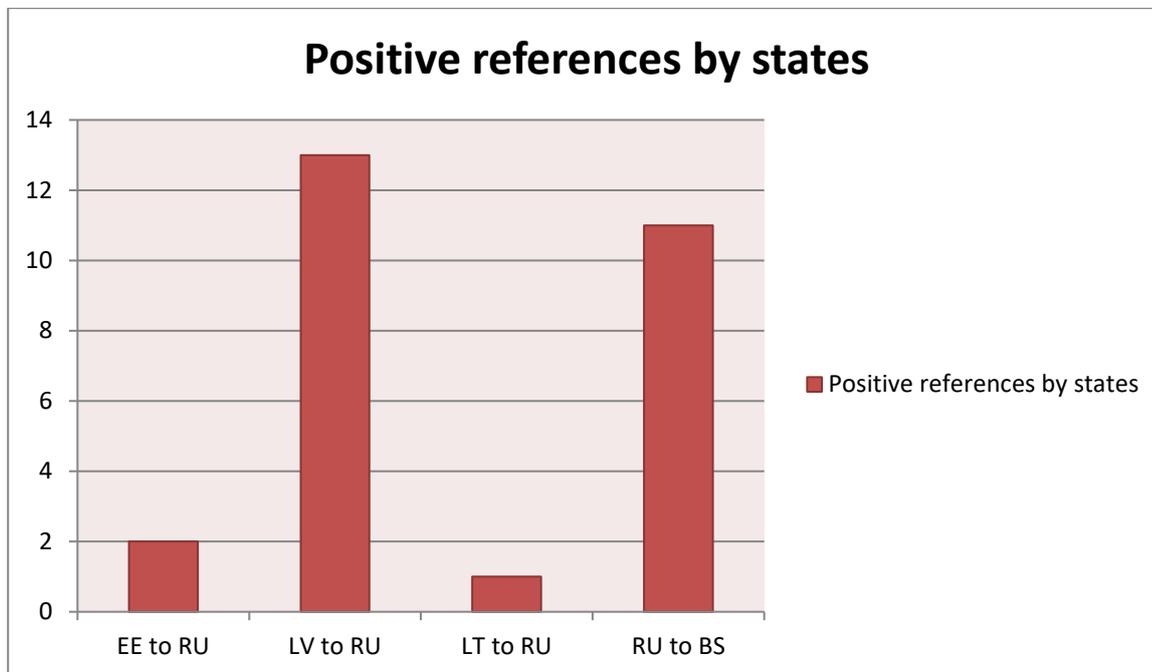


Chart 3 For the explanation look at **Chart 1**.

9.4 Security

Security is the most mentioned theme in the considered period of time with a total of 737 references.¹⁶ Indeed, this theme is found in all the analysed statements, which results in it being the most relevant topic. The statement that makes most references to security is the 2011 Russian statement with 46 references. The least references are found in the statement of Lithuania (2013) containing 2 references.

- During a second phase of the analysis, the *Security node* was divided into 4 child nodes: *Conflicts*, *Weapons*, *Terrorism* and *IT*. The *Conflicts child node* includes all the references made in the statements about wars and conflicts. For example, there are references to the Second World War, the Ukrainian conflict, the War in Afghanistan etc. This is the child node that has

¹⁶ The child nodes if summed up do not always account for the total references of the node which they are part of. For example, in the *Security node*, the total number of references are 737, while the child nodes (*Conflicts*, *Weapons*, *Terrorism*, *IT*) if summed up account for 501. This is due to the fact that a number of references were not coded in the child nodes, such as the references to the security of general nature. Thus, such kind of references are found just in the *Security node* but not in its child nodes. This note is valid also for the other nodes.

most references under the security categorization with 241 references.¹⁷ The *Weapons child node* includes references made directly to weapons such as nuclear weapons, weapons used in wars and conflicts (like guns), and other references made in a figurative sense such as references to energy consider as a tool (weapon) to exercise influence, as well as references to institutions that work close to the weapon issues. The *Weapons subcategorization* contains 116 total references. The *Terrorism child node* includes references to terrorist threats and terrorist attacks and contains 98 total references. The *IT child node* contains references to Information and Technology, such as the Internet, cyber threats, cyber-attacks etc. This latter subcategorization includes totally 46 references.

In **Chart 4** are reported the number of references made by the BS and Russia to security divided into child nodes.

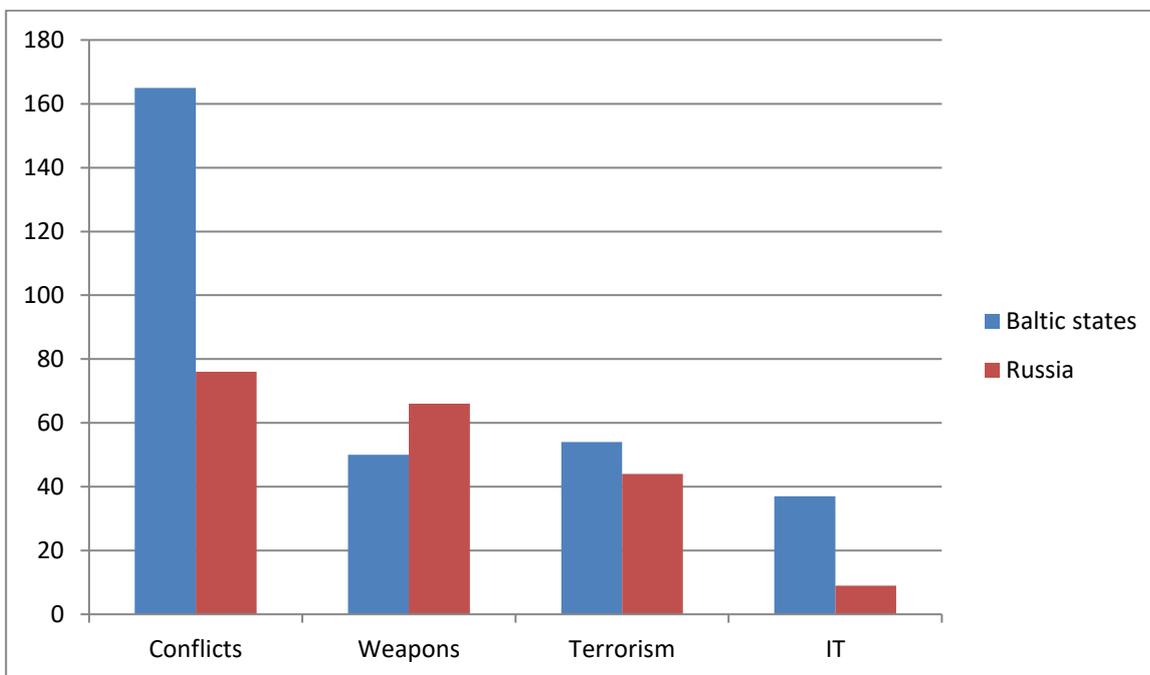


Chart 4 The *Security node* presents 4 child nodes: *Conflicts*, *Weapons*, *Terrorism* and *IT*.

9.5 Social issues

Social issues are the second most discussed theme after security, with a total of 558 references. The *Social issues node* has a number of child nodes, most of them show that wide-ranging topics are included in this category. The statement with most references under this node is one of Estonia (2012) with 31 references, the lowest in the rank is one of Lithuania (2014) with one reference.

¹⁷ The number of references mentioned in the description are the total references per each subcategory, while the number of references in the chart are the references per each subcategory divided for the BS and Russia. This note is also valid for all the other following subcategories.

- In the second phase of the analysis, the *Social issues category* was divided into subcategories: *Human rights, Humanitarian, Gender equality, Crimes, IT, Migration, Discrimination, and Religion*. The subcategory of *Human rights* includes all the references to the fundamental rights of people, and it has 136 references. *Humanitarian* includes references to humanity, humanitarian crisis, humanitarian help and donor countries. This child node have 136 references. *Gender equality* refers to gender balance and phrases that mention the equal opportunity for women, and it includes 61 references. *Crimes* refer to mass atrocities and crimes against humanity. This child node has 49 references. The *IT child node* includes references to the social aspect of modern technologies, and it contains 45 references. *Migration* refers to migration, immigration, the refugee crisis and similar matters, and it includes 44 references. *Discrimination* contains references to discriminatory behaviours and accusations (such as Nazi propaganda accusation); it comprehends 31 references. *Religion* comprehends all the references to religion, but with just 17 references it is the least important of all the other subcategories under the *Social issues node*. The Baltic states references to social issues are considerably higher in number compared to Russia. Indeed, the BS references account totally for 431, in contrast to the 127 references made by Russia. The difference is significant for each of the subcategories apart for the *Discrimination* and *Religion nodes*.

In **Chart 5** are reported the number of references made by the BS and Russia to social issues divided into child nodes.

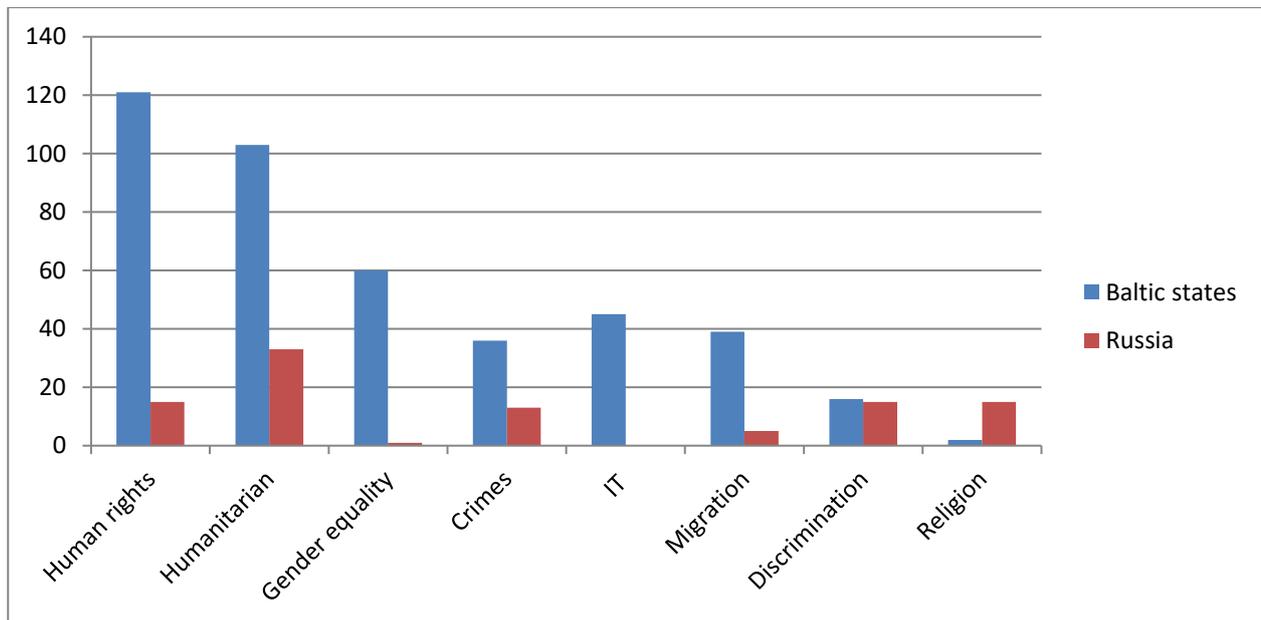


Chart 5 The *Social issues node* presents 8 child nodes: *Human rights*, *Humanitarian*, *Gender equality*, *Crimes*, *IT*, *Migration*, *Discrimination*, *Religion*.

9.6 United States

The *United States node* is the third among the most referenced categories, with 338 references. The number of references proves the importance of this actor to the countries in the analysis. The Russian statement of 2014 with 27 references presents the highest number of references under this category. It is also relevant to note that all of the 10 statements of Russia occupy the first 10 positions for the number of references in the *United States node*. Russia is, therefore, the country that made the most references to the U.S.A. The statements with the lowest number of references are one of Estonia (2009) and some of Lithuania (2010, 2012, 2014, 2018), with one reference each.

- The *United States node* was organised in three child nodes: *Neutral to the U.S.*, *Negative to the U.S.* and *Positive to the U.S.* Each of these subcategories contains Neutral, Negative and Positive references made by the countries about the United States. Looking at what way the countries mention the United States the results show that *Neutral to the U.S.* contains 201 references, *Negative to the U.S.* 90 references, and *Positive to the U.S.* 49 references.

Chart 6 shows the number of references made by the BS and Russia to the United States divided into child nodes.

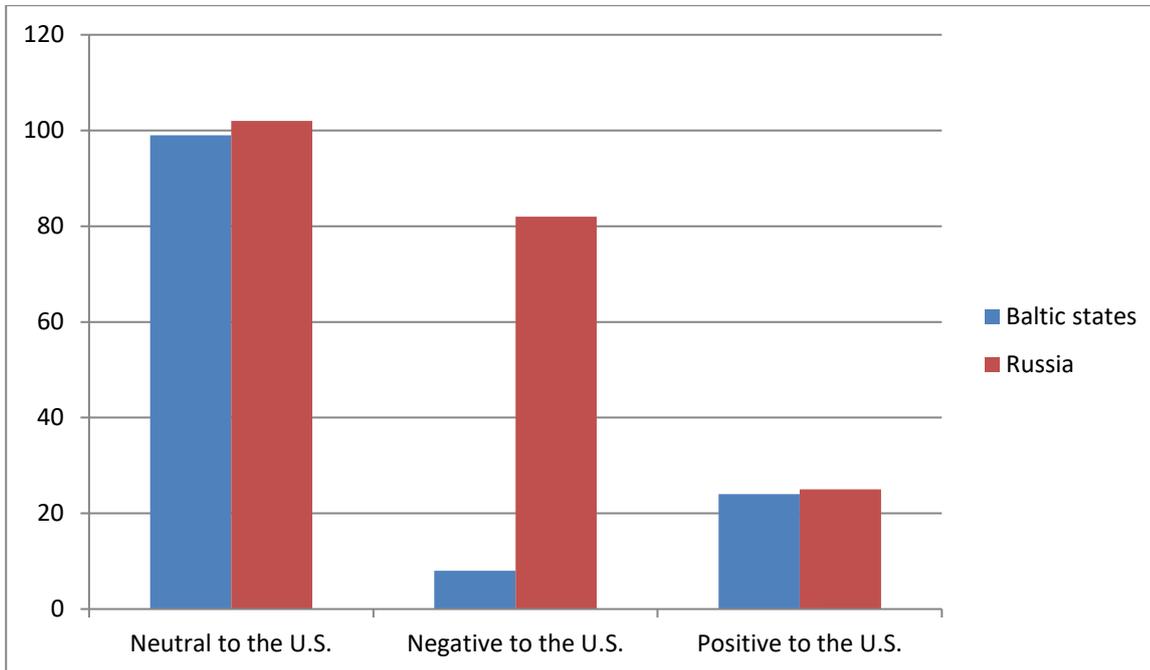


Chart 6 The *United States* node has 3 child nodes: *Neutral to the U.S.*, *Negative to the U.S.* and *Positive to the U.S.*

9.7 Development

The *Development node* contains all the references to development goals, sustainable development situations and to specific developing countries. It has a total number of 178 references. The Lithuania statement (2013) contains the highest number of references, 13. The lowest number of references are found in the statements of Lithuania (2014) and Russia (2015, 2018) with one reference each. Russia is the country that overall made fewer references to the development theme.

- The *Development node* was coded in three child nodes: *Millennium Development Goals & Sustainable Development Goals (MDGs & SDGs)*,¹⁸ *Sustainable development* and *Developing countries*. Among those, the most cited in the statements are the development goals, coded in the *MDGs & SDGs child node* which presents 49 references. References under the child node *Sustainable development* account to 37. In the last place are the references to *Developing countries* with just 14 references.

¹⁸ MDGs & SDGs are objectives set by the UN to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. In 2015 the MDGs' agenda was reviewed and implemented resulting in the SDGs (United Nations 2019e).

Chart 7 shows the number of references made by the BS and Russia to development divided into child nodes.

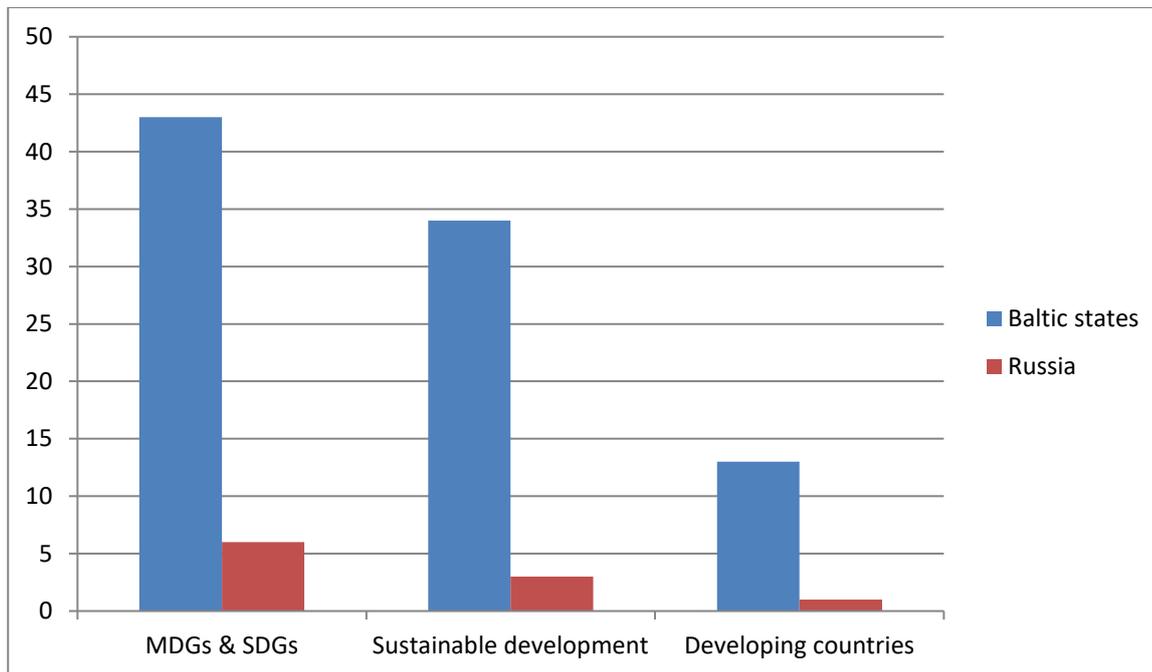


Chart 7 The *Development node* presents 3 child nodes: *MDGs & SDGs*, *Sustainable development* and *Developing countries*.

9.8 Economy

Economy includes all references to economic factors. This category contains totally 174 references. The Latvia statement of 2012 has the highest number of references, that is 12. In contrast, the lowest number of references are found in the statements of Estonia (2010, 2011), Latvia (2017) and Russia (2010) with one reference each.

- Two further subcategories were identified as relevant within the *Economic node*: *Crisis* and *Trade*. The first contains mostly the reference made to the economic and financial crisis that broke out in 2008. Indeed, the majority of references are made in the statements from the year 2009 to 2012. The *Crisis child node* includes 32 references. The second includes references to trade aspects as well as trade sanctions/bans. The *Trade child node* contains 27 references.

Chart 8 reports the number of references made by the BS and Russia to economy divided into child nodes.

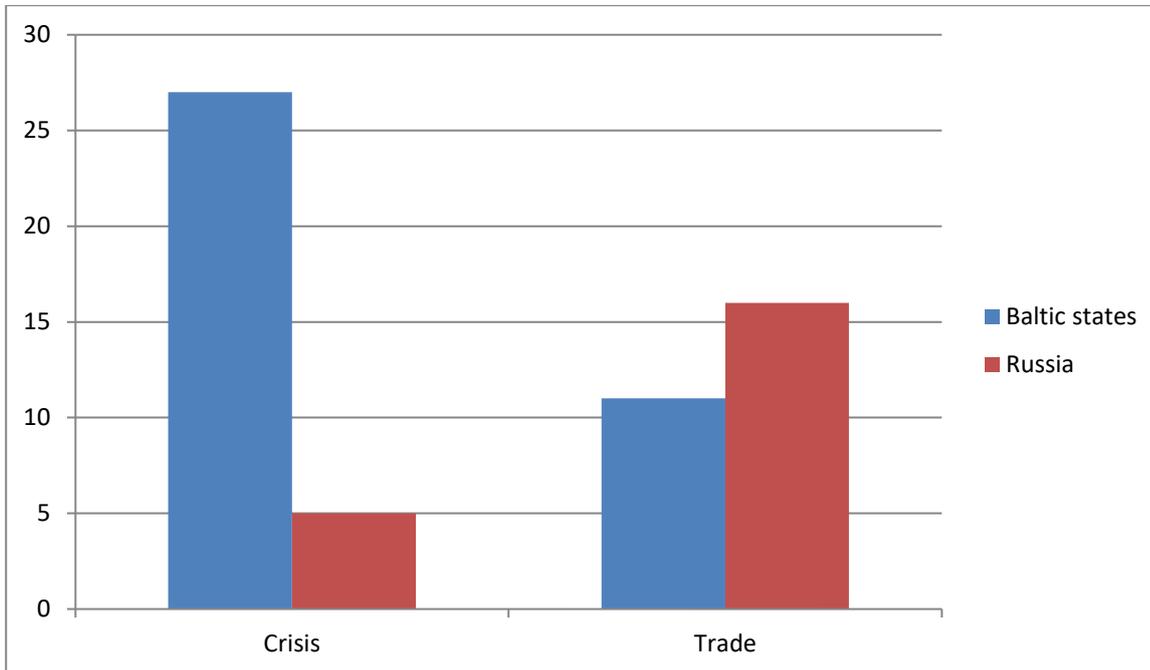


Chart 8 The *Economy node* presents 2 child nodes: *Crisis* and *Trade*.

9.9 Ukraine

The *Ukraine node* contains all the words, phrases and concepts mentioning Ukraine, the Ukrainian territory and the Ukrainian crisis. Interestingly, the only reference to Ukraine before 2014 is made by Estonia, mentioning the ‘*Crimean War of 1850*’ in its statement of 2012. All the other references under this node appear from the year 2014 onwards. Since that year, the Ukrainian theme is present in all the statements of the following years, apart for the Lithuania statement of 2016. Therefore, the *Ukraine node* is mostly composed of references to the Ukrainian crisis. This node contains 92 total references. The Russian statement of 2014 presents the highest number with 12 references, followed by the Estonian statement of 2014 with 10 references. The lowest number of references are found in the statements of Estonia (2012) and Lithuania (2018) with one reference each.

Chart 9 reports the number of references made by the BS and Russia to Ukraine.

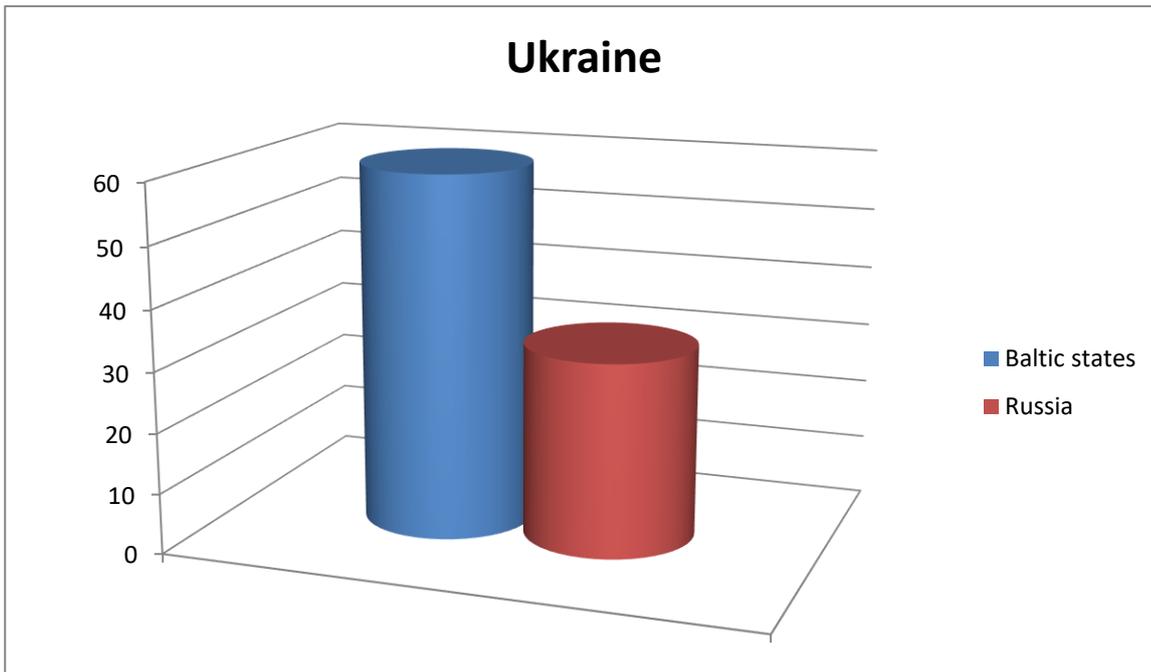


Chart 9 The *Ukraine node* does not have child nodes.

9.10 Syria

The *Syria node* is mostly composed of references made to the Syrian War. Indeed, apart from one reference made by Russia in 2010, all the others appear from 2011 onwards; the year in which the conflict started. This node contains 87 references in total. The Russian statement in 2013 presents the largest number of references, accounting for 13. The lowest number of references are found in the statements of Estonia (2014, 2016, 2017), Lithuania (2017, 2018) and Russia (2010) with one reference each. Overall, Russia is the country that referred the most times to Syria.

Chart 10 shows the number of references made by the BS and Russia to Syria.

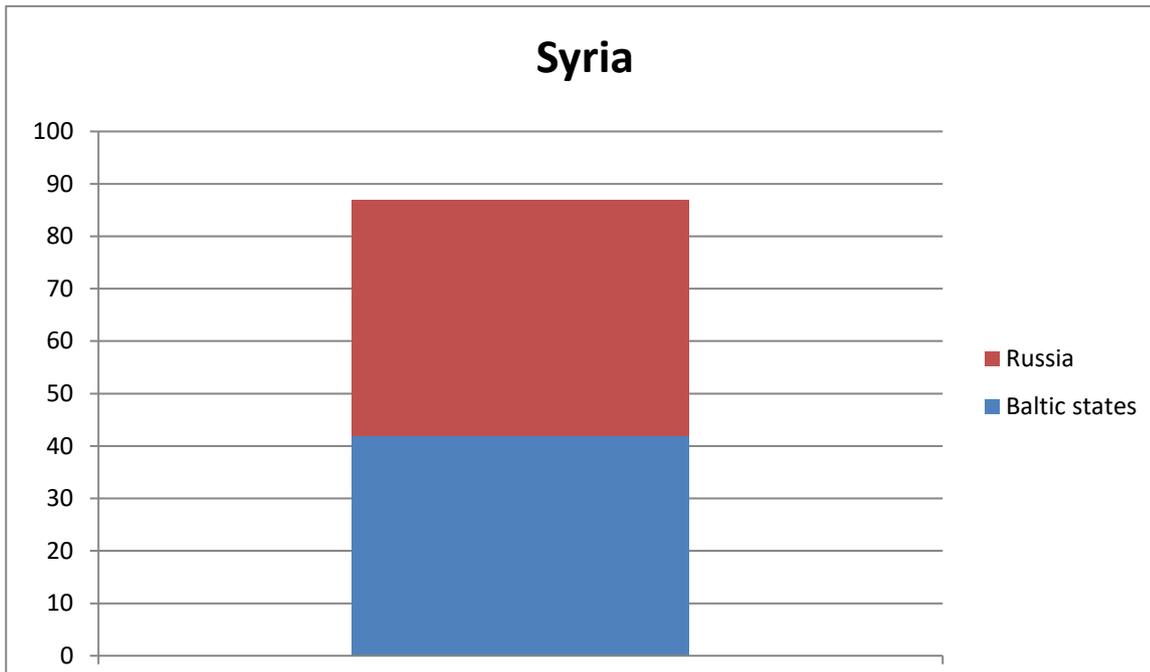


Chart 10 The *Syria node* does not have child nodes.

9.11 Environment

The *Environment node* contains the references made by the states regarding the environment and environmental issues. It contains 79 references in total. The Estonian statements of 2009 and 2018 present the highest number of references accounting for 7 each. The lowest number of references are found in the statements of Estonia (2012, 2013), Lithuania (2016, 2018) and Russia (2009, 2010, 2017, 2018) with one reference each. This node together with the *Positive node* is the one that presents the least number of references made by the countries in the analysis.

- The *Environment category* was further divided into three subcategories: *Climate change*, *Pollution* and *Energy*. *Climate changes* results to be the most mentioned topic regarding the environment. In fact, it is mentioned in 25 statements and it accounts for 55 references. It is followed by the *Pollution child node* which is found in 8 statements, with 10 references. In the last place comes the *Energy child node*¹⁹ which is found in just 4 statements, with 7 references. Overall, Russia refers less to the environment and environmental issue compared to the Baltic countries.

¹⁹ In this category, *energy* refers just to the environmental-energy references like renewable energy sources.

Chart 11 illustrates the number of references made by the BS and Russia to the environment divided by child nodes.

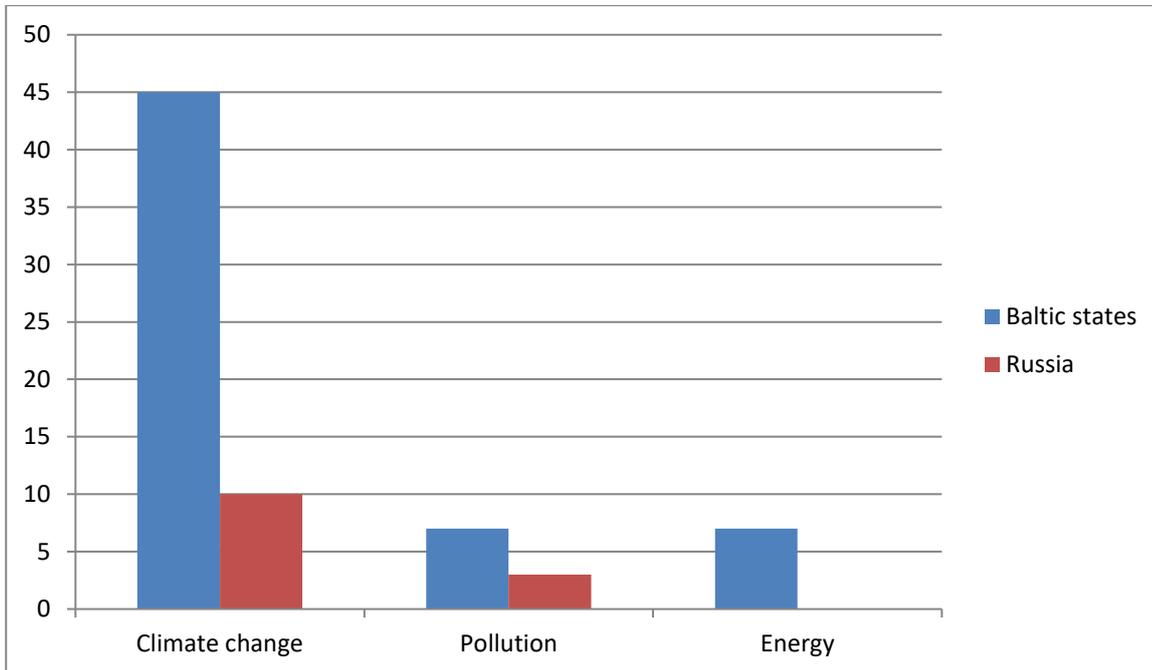


Chart 11 The *Environment* node presents 3 child nodes: *Climate change*, *Pollution* and *Energy*.

9.12 Results overview

The categories *Negative*, *Neutral* and *Positive* help to answer the first research question: *How did the representatives of Russia and the Baltic states talk about each other in the published statements of the United Nations?*

A visual comparison of the mentioned categories is useful to understand the research data.

Chart 12 illustrates a comparison of the total number of references made in each of the mentioned categories divided by states.

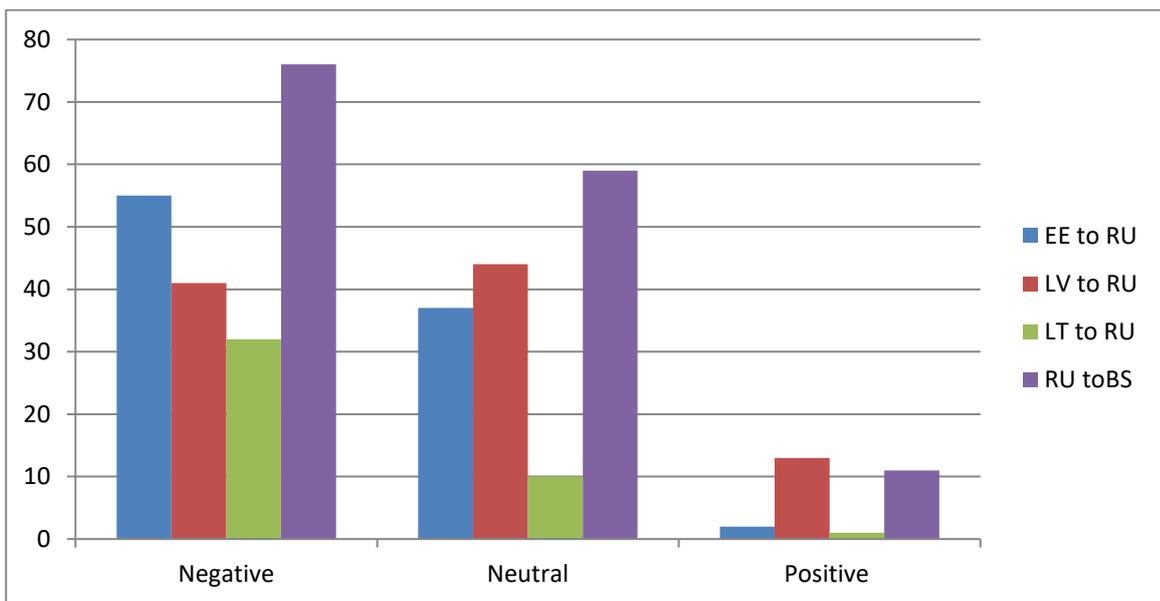


Chart 12 In the case of the Baltic states are reported the references of each of the states to Russia. In the case of Russia, the reported references refer to the BS as a group.²⁰

Thus, *Negative* is the category with the highest number of references, accounting for a total of 204. This is followed by *Neutral* with 150 references. On the last place is *Positive* with just 27 references. It is relevant to mention that generally, the references that Russia made to the Baltic states are higher in number in contrast to the references made individually by the BS to Russia. However, if the references of the BS are counted together, the results are higher in each of the categories. Finally, the *Negative* category comes first in terms of references meaning that the countries mostly mention each other in a negative way.

Moreover, as mentioned in the *Analysis paragraph (8.3)*, other categories were created during the coding process due to the relevance that such topics cover in the statements of the considered countries. The process of coding the material in the main themes was useful to deepen the analysis to a further 'level'. Apart from looking at how do they talk about each other (negative, positive,

²⁰ For the acronyms explanation look at Chart 1.

neutral), this further categorization and subcategorization were useful to identify the most recurring themes addressed by the states during the UN General Assembly. In this way, the nodes and child nodes stemming from such analysis helped to answer the second research question:

What topics have the countries addressed in the UN General Assembly in the analysed period (2009-2018)?

The main categories, as already seen, were divided into subcategories in the second part of the analysis. This subcategorization was useful to narrow down the general themes even further (to specific themes). Some categories come at the forefront in terms of references, these are *Security*, *Social issues*, *United States* and *Negative*. *Security* is the node that contains most references with a total of 737 references. Then comes *Social issues* with 558, followed by the *United States* with 338 and *Negative* with 204. In contrast, the categories that present the least references are *Environment* and *Positive*. The former has 79 references, the latter only 27 references.

The most relevant topics appear to be *Security*, *Social issues* and *Development*. A visual comparison of the mentioned categories is useful to understand the research data.

In **Chart 13** are reported the total number of references per each of the themes.

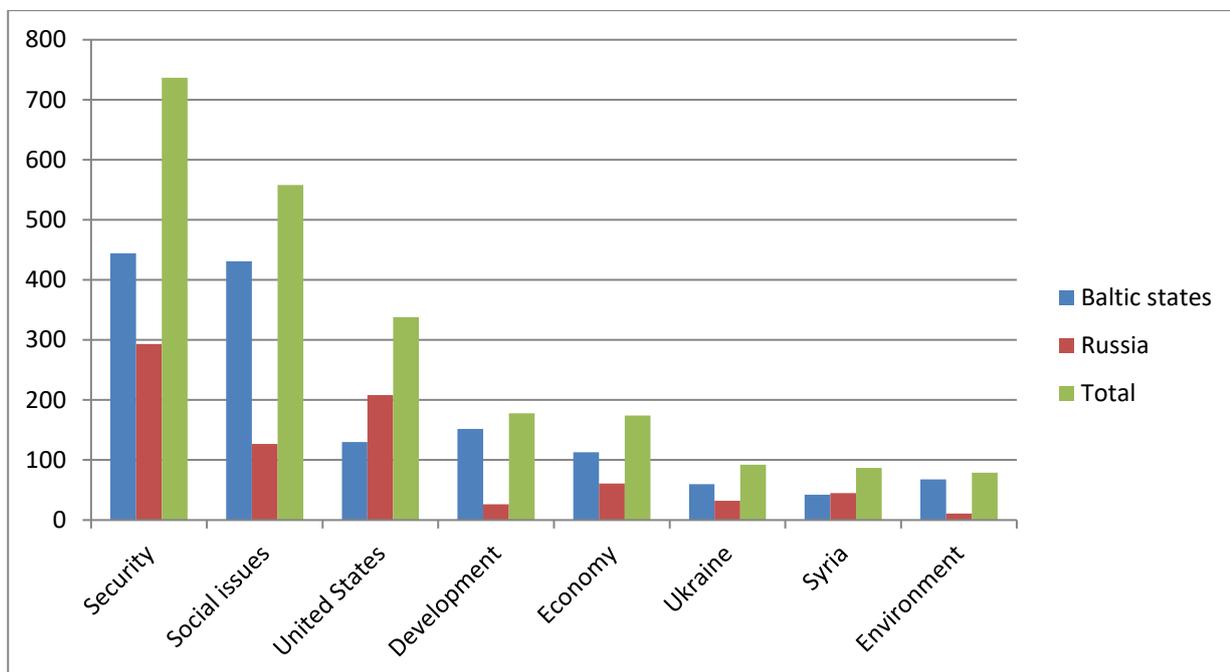


Chart 13 Total number of references²¹ for the Baltic States and Russia divided by category.²²

²¹ The total number of references correspond to the total number of them per each category, but this number does not necessarily correspond to the total number of references of the subcategories. For further clarification see footnote 16.

²² In the case of the Baltic states, the references are not reported divided per each of the state (like in the previous chart) because, due to the substantial amount of categories illustrated, otherwise the graph would results too confusing.

Therefore, the results give an overview of 1) how the relations between the countries evolved during the analysed period and 2) what themes Russia and the Baltic states are most concerned about. Clearly, these results are valid just for how the countries addressed the themes in United Nations General Assembly, but considering the importance of such institution as a forum for the international political debate, they testify that countries are particularly concerned with the themes stemming from my analysis. Indeed, the relevance of the topics is highlighted by the number of times they appeared in the statements. In the next chapter, some of the findings are further discussed because useful to underline the characteristics of the countries in analysis in light of the theories considered in this research.

10. Discussion

The results presented in the previous section already give a partial answer to the RQs in this thesis. However, in this chapter the research questions are taken back and further explained in the light of some of the findings. Moreover, a number of coded references will be used to discuss several of the assumption of the small states foreign policy theory and geopolitical theory. Indeed, the theories together with the results are useful to shed light on some features distinguishing the countries under study.

10.1 How did the representatives of Russia and the Baltic states talk about each other in the published statements of the United Nations?

The findings showed that BS and Russia talk about each other mostly in a negative way. The analysis highlighted that the majority of negative references started in 2014. Dividing the statements into two periods of time it is possible to detect an important trend in the relations between the countries. Russia presents all together 76 negative references to the BS. The statements from 2009 to 2013 present only a total number of 9 negative references, in contrast, the statements from 2014 to 2018 present 67 negative references. The Baltic States total number of negative references to Russia accounts for 128. Among these, the statements from 2009 to 2013 present a total number of 40 negative references while the statements from 2014 to 2018 have 88 negative references. Thus, 2014 seems to be a crucial year for the worsening of the relation between the states. From this year and after, the number of negative references in both cases (Baltics and Russia) increased.

This trend is supported by the *Positive category*. The total positive references to the BS made by Russia are 11: from 2009 to 2013 they are 4, from 2014 to 2018 they are 7. Positive references to Russia made by the BS totally account for 16: from 2009 to 2013 they are 9, from 2014 to 2018 they are 7. The *Positive category* ‘indirectly’ supports the worsening trend in the relationship between the countries observed in the *Negative category*. In the sense that, even though the *Positive category* does not present a big difference between the two period in comparison, the countries throughout the considered period of time barely talk positively to each other. Therefore, further highlighting the negative trend of the relation.

The worsening relation observed from 2014 can be explained by the devolvement of the Ukrainian crisis. The first protest in Ukraine started in late 2013, while the Russian invasion of Crimea took place in March 2014 (The Guardian 2014). The relation between Russia and the Baltic states has deteriorated since then. The first General Assembly following the Ukrainian events was held in September 2014. Indeed, the trend observed in the UN statements proves the deteriorated relation,

starting from this year. Further, the relevance of such an event for the countries' relationship it is sustained by the number of references that the BS and Russia made to Ukraine, which during the analysis turned out to be a recurring topic.

10.2 What topics have the countries addressed in the UN General Assembly in the analysed period (2009-2018)?

In this part, relevant categories stemming from the coding would be reported again and discussed in light of the theories that are used. Indeed, The reader could have already noticed the most recurring topics that answer the second question in the results section. However, in this paragraph I will develop certain themes that are particularly relevant to shed light on the features of the countries in study based on the theories considered for the analysis.

10.2.1 Small states foreign policy theory

The small states foreign policy theory highlights important features characterizing the Baltic states. From this theory a number of assumptions are verified: 1) security is one of the primary concerns for smaller countries; 2) smaller countries actively use international institutions to protect their sovereignty; 3) smaller countries try to build alliances with powerful states.

1) Security concern

In line with the small states foreign policy theory, security appears to be a relevant issue for the BS. Indeed, references from the BS in the Security category account for 444. This is a relevant number, considering that the total references under the category are 737.

Examples of references coded under this category are:

We believe that the nuclear security summit in Korea next year will provide an excellent platform for discussing nuclear safety and security issues. With a view to this forthcoming summit, Lithuania is ready to contribute to the practical measure set forth in the 2010 Nuclear Security Summit Work Plan. (Lithuania 2011)

Latvia, together with the international community, will continue to stand for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. The illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation will not be recognized and must end. (Latvia 2016)

Furthermore, the subcategorization helped to identify specific categories within the *Security node*, highlighting some of the themes under *Security*, with which the BS are more concerned. *Conflict* is one of the child nodes that stems from *Security*. Here the BS's references account for 165 on a total of 241 coded under the *Conflict node*.

Example of *Conflict* references:

The fact that we are still protecting the core values is well illustrated by the voting result at the UN General Assembly concerning the armed conflict in Ukraine. One hundred different states supported Ukraine and condemned the occupation of Crimea by the Russian Federation. An overwhelming majority of this assembly shall never recognize the illegal acts of aggression. (Lithuania 2014)

Under this subcategory, the BS refer many times to the violation of territorial integrity made by Russia. Therefore, several of their references mention the situations in Georgia and Ukraine. In particular, they point out how these occupations of territories are a breach of international law and should be condemned by all the states. Also, the War in Afghanistan and Syria are mentioned several times in the *Conflict node*. The BS also make many references to Russia in the categories *Terrorism* (54) and *Weapons* (50).

Example of *Weapons* references:

Energy blackmail has long become Russia's weapon of choice. In Belarus, just forty kilometres from Lithuania's capital, it is building the unsafe Astravets nuclear power plant as a geopolitical weapon that fails to comply with basic international nuclear standards. (Lithuania 2017)

Finally, the *IT child nodes* is a less relevant subcategory under the *Security node*, due to the limited number of references accounting totally to 46, among which 37 are made by the BS, even though Estonian references solely account for 26. The higher number of references made by Estonia in this category can be explained by two facts: 1) Estonia is at the forefront in the IT sector and E-governance; 2) Estonia was damaged by a number of dangerous cyber-attacks in 2007, which damaged several times key websites of the government, political parties, firms etc. The attacks came after Estonians moved a Soviet war memorial to another place. Estonia claims that the cyber-attacks were done by Russia, while Russia has denies the accusations (The Guardian 2007). Therefore, both facts can explain the Estonian highest number of references in this category compared to other countries. A number of references coded in the *IT subcategory* can be linked to Russia acknowledging the event above mentioned.

Example of *IT* references:

Cyber-threats cannot be underestimated as they not only endanger vital IT-systems, but whole communities. Concurrently with the rapid development of computer technology we are witnessing alarming signs of more sinister developments: cyber-attacks are growing more complex and their use is increasing in frequency. (Estonia 2009)

All in all, security is the primary topic addressed by the BS in the UN General Assembly. Russia is the country that has the first place among their security concerns. This fact is demonstrated by the references made to Russia under the *Security category* and subcategories, and further.

2) International institutions as a means to protect the sovereignty

The analysis shows that the BS are keen to protect their sovereignty using the United Nations as a platform of political dialogue and a place to raise their concern about different issues and themes. A number of references coded under different categories show how important the BS think that the United Nations and other international institutions are to maintain the global order. Examples of references are:

The UN together with NATO, European Union, other regional organisations and their member states should fulfil their duty and do everything possible to stop armed conflicts, redrawing the borders of sovereign states and creating one frozen conflict after another. (Lithuania 2014)

The United Nations is, and will be, the central forum for multilateralism and a rules-based global order. This is the place where all nations come together to carry our shared responsibility to deliver peace and security, advance human rights and sustainable development, and cooperate for a better future. (Latvia 2017)

The first reference presented was coded under the categories and subcategories: *Negative, Negative to RU, Security, Conflict, Ukraine, United States, Neutral to US*. The second reference was coded in the categories and subcategories: *Development, Security, Social issues and Human rights*. Therefore, in these statements Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania often refer to International institutions to raise their concern about different issues and themes relevant in their national agenda. Indeed, when they mention such institutions, their references finished being coded in different categories and subcategories. Furthermore, these institutions remain crucial to form alliances and protect their sovereignty, as well as to raise concern when there are perceived threats.

3) Powerful alliances

Small states foreign policy theory claims that small countries will try to ally with bigger and powerful states. The assumption made by small states scholars is verified in the case of the BS in the first stance by the system of alliances in which they are involved like the EU and NATO. Secondly, the references found in the General Assembly statements, which often mention the U.S., EU, NATO and similar organisations, show their importance for the BS in order to find a solution to global issues. The United States is definitely considered by Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as a significant agent in the global arena, as well as a powerful ally. Due to the relevance that such country came to represent in the statements of the Baltic states and Russia, a category was created to group these references to the United States. Indeed, the Baltics refer to USA 130 times. This category includes 3 subcategories: *Neutral, Positive and Negative*.

Neutral references to the USA accounts for 99 of a total number of 201 in the category. Among these references, just 18 of them come from Lithuania, while the rest are shared between Estonia and Latvia. Here, a sample of these references is given:

This year we commemorate 10 years after the tragic terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. We express our solidarity and sympathy with the victims of “Nine Eleven” and others who have been affected by terrorism all over the world. (Latvia 2011)

Positive references to the USA account for 24 of the total number of 49. These references are shared between Latvia and Estonia because Lithuania does not have any references in this subcategory. Here is an example of *Positive* references:

In this regard, we applaud steps made by the United States and Russia towards global disarmament and transparency. (Latvia 2012)

Negative references to the USA accounts for 8 of the total number of 90. *Negative* references to the USA are really limited in the case of the BS, they are mostly divided between Estonia and Latvia. Indeed, Lithuania has just one reference in this subcategory. Furthermore, negative references to the USA made by the BS are never direct (mentioning the name of the country) but always indirect (mentioning institutions or situations where the USA are involved). An example of these references is:

A primary criticism directed at the UN today is grounded on the Security Council's lack of ability- or willingness - to respond to major crises. Estonia cannot speak from first-hand experience; we so far have not served in the Council. (Estonia 2016)

The above reference was coded as *Negative* to USA, because Estonia in this case is criticizing the efficiency of the Council, and thus its members. The United States is one of the member of the UN Security Council the reference was accounted as a criticism toward the U.S. as well.

With the help of the results of the analysis, I can say that the United States is seen as a relevant agent and an important ally for the BS. Moreover, the USA is one of the two countries that is mentioned directly so many times (the other is Russia). The BS positive references to the USA account for almost half of this subcategory. On the contrary, the negative references under the *United States* node pertain almost exclusively to Russia. However, it is also relevant to highlight how the three Baltic countries have an unequal number of references under the *United States* category. As a matter of fact, Estonia and Latvia share most of the references in each of the subcategories, while Lithuania holds a total number of solely 19 references to the USA.

10.2.2 Geopolitical theory

Several features of Russia emerging from the analysis can be explained by the Geopolitical theory. The geopolitical theory argues that the world can be divided into spheres of influence where countries compete with each other in order to maximise their power, and as a result of this competition conflict over territories often arise. In the case of Russia, the focus to exercise such ‘power’ remains in the post-Soviet space (Raik 2016). Listed below in bullet points are reported key features emerging from the analysis of Russia:

- Russia in its statements negatively portrays the BS through indirect references to the alliances they are part of. In a number of statements, it is noticeable that Russia feels accused and attacked by these alliances. Indeed, Moscow feels that its sphere of influence is being damaged by the NATO expansion and the EU plans for the Eastern neighbourhood. These facts are shown by references like the following:

The instant switch of NATO to hostile rhetoric and to the drawdown of its cooperation with Russia even to the detriment of the West's own interests, and additional build-up of military infrastructure at the Russian border —made obvious the inability of the alliance to change the genetic code it embedded during the Cold War era. (Russia 2014)

The reference presented was coded in three categories: *Security, Negative and United States*. Overall, a negative trend was noticed in the references made by Russia to the BS following the Ukrainian crisis. As noticed above, the Negative references to the Baltic States increased in number starting from 2014. This shift is relevant to understand how the relationship has worsened throughout the years. From the analysis of the General Assembly statements, the Ukrainian crisis stems out as the main factor affecting the worsening relationship between the BS and Russia.

- The Russian’s security concerns stemming from the analysis are in line with the assumption of the geopolitical theory that the world is divided into sphere of influence.

For Russia *Security* results the most referenced topic of all with 293 total references. Security is regarded as a crucial aspect for Russia to protect its national interests and maintain sovereignty. A further categorization helped to narrow down the topic addressed during the General Assembly under this category. As seen, under *Security* are found four subcategories: *Conflict, Weapons, Terrorism, and IT*. The *Conflict child node* has 241 total references, among which 76 are made by Russia. The *Weapons child node* has 116 total references, the Russian references are 66. *Terrorism* has 98 total references among which 44 are made by Russia. *IT* has a total of 46 references, but those from Russia are only 9. An example of a reference of this type is:

This, however, has not been reciprocated by our Western partners, overexcited by the illusion of the 'end of history' and still trying to accommodate rudimentary institutions of block-to-block confrontation era to the modern day realities. NATO aspires to recreate the Cold War climate and refuses to bring to life the principle of equal and indivisible security across the OSCE area, solemnly declared in the 1990s. (Russia 2017)

The above reference was coded under the *category Security* and its *subcategory Conflict*. Therefore, stemming from the analysis on Russia's agenda the security theme is very important. In particular, the *Security category* shows that Russia's relation with the BS is based on a logic of a *block opposition*, West versus East. From one side the Western alliance, the USA, the EU, from the other side Russia and its Eastern partners. Generally speaking, the logic of opposing blocks is a distinctive feature of the Russian statements. This logic can be noticed in all the sub categories pertaining to *Security* apart for the *IT node*. Russia claims that the Western alliance is trying to come back to the *opposition period* typical of the Cold War, but in reality, mentioning continuously such *block opposition*, it contributes to the revival of such logic. Furthermore, Russia is keen to reaffirm its position on international politics, opposing with its actions the West 'initiatives'.

- The United States proves to be a significant counter 'actor' for Russia.

The references that Russia makes to the USA accounts for 208 out of 338 references under the *United States node*. Indeed, there were more Russian statements than from the BS together of this kind of reference. Moscow regards Washington as its principal antagonist. I mentioned in the *Security node* that a number of references can be found in the Russian statements referring to the Western alliance. The United States is the main 'player' of such alliances and hold a primary position in the worldwide geopolitical arena. Russia is concerned about the increasing influence that such a state could exercise in several territories close to the Russian sphere of influence.

The negative references, under this category, show Moscow's concern towards the United States. Indeed, Russian negative references to the USA are much higher (82) compared to references from the BS (8).

An example of a *Negative* reference to the US:

The US and EU supported the coup d'état in Ukraine and reverted to outright justification of any acts by the self-proclaimed Kiev authorities that opted for suppression by force of the part of the Ukrainian people that had rejected the attempts to impose the anti-constitutional way of life to the entire country and wanted to defend its rights to the native language, culture and history. (Russia 2014)

The Negative references to the USA appear in higher number from 2014 onwards. In fact, the number of references from 2014 to 2018 account for 69, in contrast, the references from 2009 to 2013 account for 13. Thus, also under this category, it is confirmed that the year 2014 witnesses a negative shift in the relationship with the USA and more in general with the Western alliance.

Two other subcategories are present under the *United States node: Neutral* and *Positive*. The neutral references are four times higher (102) than the Positive references (25). Underlining the fact that Russia barely talk positively about the US.

Example of *Neutral* reference:

..as well as our proposal to universalize the Russian-American Treaty on the Elimination of the Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles. (Russia 2010)

Example of *Positive* references:

This is also a result of positive changes in the relations between Russia and the USA allowing us to bring the Russian-American interaction in world affairs to a qualitatively new level. (Russia 2010)

The negative trend starting from 2014 observed in the negative references is confirmed by the positive references, because from 2009 to 2013 the references account for 17, while from 2014 to 2018 they account only for 8. This means that after 2014 Russia decreased the positive references to the USA. The Neutral references do not express an ‘opinion’ about the USA but are important to the overall count of references for such category. After 2014, they decreased compared to the previous period. Therefore, the results show that the United States after the Ukrainian crisis is portrayed mostly negatively by Russia. Furthermore, this category is also characterized by the West and East division (block opposition) as seen in the examples pertaining to the *Negative’s subcategories*. Even, in the case of the positive references the West and East (the United States and Russia) dimension is mentioned (though not negatively).

- The *Ukraine category* also shows references that can be associated with the geopolitical theory.

Ukrainian references account for 92 in total, found in half of all the Statements analysed. Russia refers to Ukraine 32 times. Below some examples of these references are given:

First, they continued their policy of expanding NATO and its military infrastructure. Then, they offered the post-Soviet countries a false choice—either to be with the West, or with the East. (Russia 2015)

Ukraine, a country close to us, has also fallen victim of those who enjoy zero-point games. (Russia 2016)

Like the references presented above, several of the references found in this category testify to the interest of Russia to retain its influence over Ukraine. On one hand, Russia accuses the Western alliance of the escalation of events in Ukraine. On the other hand, the BS references to Ukraine mainly accuse Russia of its actions. The geopolitical theory argues that states compete in order to maximise their power so to exercise their influence over certain territories, with the result that conflicts over territories often arise (Raik 2016). Using the geopolitical ‘lenses’, the Ukrainian events can be seen as the result of such competition, which brought Ukraine to a crisis. Russia clearly regards the attempts made by the EU to bring Ukraine ‘closer’ to its alliance as a threat to Russian power, undermining the Kremlin influences over the post-Soviet space. The negative perception that Russia has of the Western alliance, and so of the Baltic states,²³ is also noticeable under this category as the references above showed.

- On the same stance, the *Syrian node* and the *Economy node* demonstrate that Russia wants to maintain a relevant place on the international scene and that it counteracts to the actions of the West in diverse ways/field.

The *Syrian node* presents 87 references in total, Russia references account for 45. The *Economy node* presents 174 references, of which 61 are made by Russia. Both categories help to shed light on the Russian’s attitude towards the West.

Example of *Syria* references:

The use of chemical weapons is inadmissible. This does not mean, however, that one can usurp the right to accuse and pass verdicts. All the incidents associated with the use of chemical weapons by whoever that might be in Syria must be investigated in a professional and unbiased manner and then examined by the UN Security Council exclusively on the basis of facts, rather than allegations and assumptions. (Russia 2013)

Example of reference coded under the category *Economy*:

A significant contribution to the reform of the global economy and finance is being made by BRICS – a global scale association of five major rapidly growing economies that reflects the realities of the evolving multipolar world. (Russia 2011)

Both references represent cases of Russian counter action to the initiatives of the Western alliance. The first reference on the use of chemical weapons in Syria (implicitly) accuses the West of the biased UN investigation over the chemical attack in Syria (The Guardian 2013). The second

²³ The Baltic states have played an important role to support the membership of Ukraine in the EU. For example, Ukraine has received, over the years, substantial finances from the BS in order to help the country in the process of institutional reform and development programmes in the economic and social fields (Hilmansson 2014).

reference shows how Russia tries to retain an important position in the economical field. As well in these categories as for the *Ukraine node*, Russia takes a defensive stance in its statements and several times portrays the West negatively, mentioning it as a counter actor on the international scene. As mentioned before, this revival of the two blocks opposition, typical of the Cold War period, is characteristic for the Russian statements, which often demonize the figure of the opponent's parties. The Syrian War 'allows' Russia to counterbalance the action of the Western alliance and to enhance its role in the international scene. For example, within the UN framework, Russia actively uses *veto power*²⁴ on several issues to block the initiatives of the West. In the case of the Syrian War, the *veto* has been used several times by Russia, in agreement with China, to inhibit the will of other Western states to proceed against Bashar Al-Assad's government, such as the blocked investigation in 2014 for War crimes following the chemical attacks in Syria, to which the first statement above make reference (Al Jazeera 2017). In the economic sphere, Russia is just partly involved in the economic framework shared by the majority of the Western states. Therefore, in order to retain an important position in such a sphere, Moscow had to counteract creating other type partnerships such as the BRICS or the Eurasian Economic Union.²⁵ Thus, Russia as a major power wants to retain a major role in international politics and counteract to the 'actions' of the Western alliance in several fields.

10.3 Summary

The analysis of the UN General Assembly's statements of Russia and the Baltic States in a ten years period showed that the relationship has worsened and that this development started in 2014. A particular event directly related to this declining relation is the Ukrainian crisis. Based on the results it can be argued that such an event signifies a shift in West-East relations. The block opposition between West and East, typical of the Cold War, is brought back several times by Russia and used as a tool to demonize the countries being part of the Western alliance, and so the BS. However, this block opposition is not apparent in the BS statements. Indeed, the Baltic countries did not refer to Russia using a dividing line between East and West. That means that only the Russian behaviour can be explained by the geopolitical theory. Moscow feels threatened by the further expansion by the West towards the East and its eager to re-assert its position. The events in the Ukrainian crisis are an example of that. Thus, the analysis demonstrates that Russia is reluctant to relinquish its sphere of influence in the post-Soviet space. On the other hand, the BS are constantly worried by

²⁴ A veto is a tool at disposal of the 5 permanent members of the Security Council that can block a resolution to be adopted within the UN institutional framework.

²⁵ BRICS is the acronym for five major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS 2018). The Eurasian Economic Union is an international organization for regional economic integration composed by Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and the Russian Federation (EAEU 2019).

the Russian aggressive behaviour. In line with the small states foreign policy theory, the analysis showed that the Baltics rely on international institutions to raise their concern and ally with bigger and powerful states, such as the USA. From the analysis of the Baltics statements, Russia is portrayed as an enemy, while the USA is a friend. This fact is evident observing the *negative references to Russia* which are much higher compared to the *negative references to the USA*. The same trend (in opposite direction) is observed in the *positive references*, but with a much lower value. On the whole, over the years Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have managed to build a strong system of alliance which give them a powerful tool to confront a major player and an aggressive state like Russia.

Further considerations could be done regarding the statement and the categories that stand out from the analysis. For example, it would be interesting to further analyse why Russia presents much fewer references in the *Social issues*, *Development* and *Environment categories* compared to the BS. However, I limited my analysis to discuss the themes which shed light on the characteristics of the countries in study in light of the considered theories.

11. Conclusions

This thesis contributes to the European Union field of study due to its geographical and political focus of the analysis. In particular, it contributes to the Baltic states studies which are an under-researched area compared to other major countries. A further contribution is given to the literature in the field of small states foreign policy theory and the geopolitical theory adding a sample of comparative study with a particular focus on the institutional level. Future researchers could benefit from such study, firstly, taking it as a departure point for future similar studies comparing the relation of countries at an institutional level, secondly, using it as reference for understanding the evolvement of the relation between the Baltic states and Russia over the last 10 years. Moreover, it would be academically relevant to perform the same kind of analysis taking in consideration other international institutions such as the Council of the Baltic Sea States or the Council of Europe. In this way, it would be possible to compare the results of this thesis with the new findings, so to further expand the empirical study of the relationship between the Baltic states and Russia at an institutional level.

The findings of the research show that the BS and Russia have not had a friendly relationship in the last 10 years. Indeed, the Baltic states and Russia are unfriendly neighbours, and the rising tension between the Western alliance and Russia is well reflected in the pursued analysis of the UN General Assembly statements. However, the wrong for the worrying feeling I perceived from the local communities in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, while I was travelling there, cannot be attributed just to Russia. The Western alliance since the fall of the Soviet Union tried increasingly to exercise influence around Russia territory. This fact directly contributed to the rising of tensions with extreme consequences in Eastern Europe, like the illegal annexation of Crimea made by Russia in 2014.

As seen from the literature on the topic, the Russian influence in the post Soviet space is not something new. It could be argued that such a fact is simply the 'normal status' of Russia's relationship with the former Soviet states. The EU and NATO expansion toward East significantly challenge the dominant role of Russia around its own borders. Therefore, the Kremlin 'simply' tries to counter act the initiatives of the Western alliance in the last fifteen years; in order to remain influential in territories surrounding its borders and on the international political arena. As a result, the Baltic Sea Region fall under these territories.

The results of such geopolitical challenge between 'West' and 'East' on the Baltic Sea Region is the increased militarization of the border and the overall worsening relations between the EU countries and Russia. The Russian illegal annexation of Crimea have worsened the overall

relationships among the countries in study, but proclaim an imminent attack in the Baltic territory seems to me unreal. Considering that, the Baltic countries throughout the years managed to build a strong system of partnerships which assure them high security guarantees. Lastly, the global dimension of the relationship of the Baltic states and Russia needs to be remembered. Indeed, their relations is not merely dependent from their 'own will' but different external factors can influence such relations. The analysis showed that one of the most relevant factor is the system of alliances in which they are involved. Therefore, future scenarios among the West and East, EU and Russia, USA and Russia, EU and BRICS could be relevant to determine the outcomes of their future relationship.

Finally, the findings in the thesis are evidence of the events that occurred in the worldwide political scenario and confirmed the outcomes of previous scholars.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1

The categories and subcategories of the analysis with the number of total references. An example of subcategories can be seen under the category *Security*.

The screenshot shows the NVivo Pro interface for a project named 'UN Statement (2009-2018).nvp'. The 'Nodes' pane on the left shows a tree structure of nodes. The main window displays a table of nodes with columns for Name, Sources, References, Created On, Created By, Modified On, and Modified By. The 'Security' node is expanded, showing sub-nodes like Conflicts, Weapons, Terrorism, and IT.

Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By	
Security		40	737	15/05/2019 13:24	DAN	28/05/2019 16:57	DAN
Conflicts		35	241	24/05/2019 11:45	DAN	25/05/2019 14:46	DAN
Weapons		27	116	24/05/2019 11:51	DAN	28/05/2019 16:57	DAN
Terrorism		31	98	24/05/2019 11:57	DAN	25/05/2019 14:42	DAN
IT		20	46	24/05/2019 14:28	DAN	25/05/2019 14:49	DAN
Social issues		40	558	15/05/2019 15:26	DAN	27/05/2019 11:59	DAN
United States		38	338	19/05/2019 11:46	DAN	28/05/2019 17:35	DAN
Negative		33	204	15/05/2019 13:14	DAN	18/06/2019 16:26	DAN
Development		36	178	16/05/2019 09:27	DAN	22/05/2019 17:42	DAN
Economy		36	174	15/05/2019 15:09	DAN	20/08/2019 15:59	DAN
Neutral		33	150	15/05/2019 13:14	DAN	18/06/2019 17:20	DAN
Ukraine		20	92	15/05/2019 13:21	DAN	28/05/2019 11:00	DAN
Syria		25	87	15/05/2019 13:22	DAN	29/05/2019 10:41	DAN
Environment		29	79	15/05/2019 14:35	DAN	29/05/2019 12:18	DAN
Positive		18	27	15/05/2019 13:14	DAN	18/06/2019 17:39	DAN

Appendix 2

The original coding and new (or reliability) coding.

The image displays two screenshots of the NVivo Pro software interface, showing search results for the year '2010'.

Top Screenshot: UN Statement (2009-2018).nvp - NVivo Pro

Search criteria: Look for [] Search In [] 2010 Find Now Clear Advanced Find X

2010 Original coding

Name	Nodes	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
2010 EE_UN General Assembly Statement	20	86	15/05/2019 11:46	DAN	15/05/2019 11:46	DAN
2010 LT_General Assembly Statement_en-converted	15	45	15/05/2019 13:10	DAN	16/05/2019 09:29	DAN
2010 LV_General Assembly Statement_en	24	88	15/05/2019 11:46	DAN	15/05/2019 11:46	DAN
2010 RU_UN General Assembly Statement	22	118	15/05/2019 11:46	DAN	15/05/2019 11:46	DAN

Bottom Screenshot: Reliability.nvp - NVivo Pro

Search criteria: Look for [] Search In [] 2010 Find Now Clear Advanced Find X

2010 Reliability coding

Name	Nodes	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
2010 EE_UN General Assembly Statement	20	97	13/06/2019 10:08	DAN	13/06/2019 10:08	DAN
2010 LT_General Assembly Statement_en-converted	15	56	13/06/2019 10:08	DAN	13/06/2019 10:08	DAN