# 'Between Commonality and Particularity'
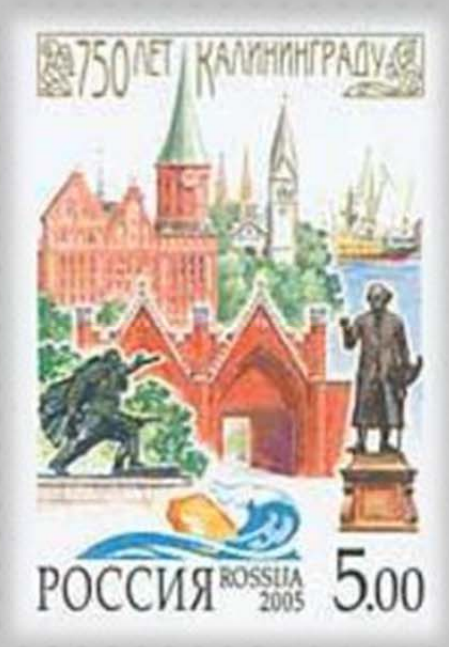
## The nation-building practices of Russian officials in Kaliningrad

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**Pictures on front page (From left above clockwise)**

Photo 1: Russian military exercise in Kaliningrad , 2014

*Source*: http://mogadishujournal.com/?p=34354 (accessed 24-06-2015)

Photo 2: Victory Day (9 May) parade in Kaliningrad, 2013

*Source*: http://www.demotix.com/news/2037342/victory-day-parade-kaliningrad-marks-68th-anniversary-wwii/all-media (accessed 24-06-2015)

Photo 3: President Vladimir Putin's speech at 750th anniversary Kaliningrad, 2005

*Source*: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/33670 (accessed 24-06-2015)

Photo 4: Russian stamp to celebrate 750th anniversary of Kaliningrad, 2005

*Source*: http://colnect.com/en/stamps/stamp/85519-750th_Anniversary_of_Kaliningrad-Jubilees_of_cities-Russia (accessed 24-06-2015)

# 'Between Commonality and Particularity'

## The nation-building practices of Russian officials in Kaliningrad

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**Figure 1 - map of Central/Eastern Europe with Kaliningrad in the middle**

Source : http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4645447.stm (accessed 24-06-2015)

# Foreword

The renewed tensions between the 'West' (as in, NATO and the EU) and Russia, which have especially become heated since the annexation of Crimea and the war in Eastern Ukraine, have been a central topic for many experts, scholars and students of Russia and the Eurasian region in recent years. Focusing on countries such as Belarus, Moldova, Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine, the possible 'choice between East and West' was often the main point of focus of their articles and analysis. Besides these countries, the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad was also often portrayed as a region 'in-between' two blocs, namely the European Union and the Russian Federation. In comparison to these other countries, this small region does not have a real choice (going beyond the question on the *need* to make a choice): it is part of Russia and it does not seem that this situation will change any time soon. However, looking at the map of Eastern Europe, one sees that the Kaliningrad region is actually closer to Western Europe than the 'choice-facing' countries which I named earlier. This makes the exclave into a very interesting topic for any student of Russian and/or Eurasian studies.

My own interest in the Kaliningrad region also comes from its geographical position: I wondered on multiple occasions why this small piece of land was part of Russia, while it did not even bordered the country. Reading on about the region, I even became more interested in Kaliningrad's special position. The coming thesis combines this interest with my theoretical interest in the concepts of nationalism and national identity. The result is a story about the way in which Russian officials try to use Russian national identity to make the people of the Kaliningrad region feel a part of the Russian Federation. I would like to thank everyone who helped me while writing this thesis, both on academic level and in the way of supporting me during the past months. In particular I would like to thank my supervisor dr. Matthew Frear, who pointed me to the right direction and critically reviewed my analysis. I hope this story will ultimately interest the reader as much as it has interested me.

# Introduction

"For Russia – with its wide range of languages, traditions, ethnicities, and cultures – the national question is, without exaggeration, of fundamental importance."[1]

Vladimir Putin, (then) prime minister of the Russian Federation

Due to globalizing forces, the concepts of nationalism, nations and national identity are under pressure in the contemporary world. Although some scholars argue that the relevance of these concepts will decline in the near future due to globalization, they are still relevant nowadays (Thompson & Fevre 2001; Kaldor 2004; Eriksen 2007). This thesis will use the case of Russia as an example to elaborate on this remained significance. Before 1991, Russia had always been part of a wider empire or union in the shape of the Russian empire and the Soviet Union. Although Russians were the dominant national group in both cases, they never experienced independent nationhood as for instance West-European countries did (Hosking 2012). After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia suddenly did become an independent country. In light of this independency, the issue of Russian national identity became important again for both scholars and Russian elites. The question on what it means to be Russian is named as the 'Russian Question' (Simonsen 1996; Tolz 1998). For Russian politicians, the question of nationality is also a significant one. Several important scholars of nationalism, such as Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson, have argued that it is primarily a 'political' concept: nationalism and politics are quite related to each other. In this light, the statement by president Putin on the top of this page is exemplary. Although several politicians already acknowledged the importance of this question in the 1990s, the economic and social problems that the country was facing during those years needed more attention. Under the presidencies of Vladimir Putin and Dmitri Medvedev in the 2000s, Russia managed to regain its economic and geopolitical power. The question of Russian national identity thereby became part of the country's political agenda again (Kolstø & Blakkisrud 2004). This thesis will focus on these different concepts in the specific case of Kaliningrad, the most-western region of Russia.

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[1] 'Integration of Post-Soviet space an alternative to uncontrolled migration', RT, 23-01-2012, http://rt.com/politics/official-word/migration-national-question-putin-439/, accessed 16-06-2015

**The case of Kaliningrad**

"Russians have every reason to be proud that Königsberg is a Russian city"[2]

Feliks Lapin, (former) head of administration of Kaliningrad

In the light of the 'Russian Question', it is interesting to analyze the case of Kaliningrad. The region is part of the Russian Federation, but has both a distinct history and geography. Kaliningrad has not always been a part of Russia: until 1945, it was a German city and was named Königsberg. At the end of the Second World War, the Soviet Red Army took control of the region and in 1946, it was renamed and became part of the Russian Soviet Republic (Oldberg 2000:271). Repopulating and rebuilding the city and the region in Soviet style, the authorities tried to get rid of its German traces. Although they succeeded in giving Kaliningrad more of a Soviet/Russian character, the 'European' roots of the region never disappeared completely (Zielinksi 2005). These roots never posed any real threat for the Soviet Union, because Kaliningrad was separated from Western Europe by Soviet satellite states Poland and East Germany. However, after 1991 the region suddenly found itself located in-between countries which were focused on joining the EU instead of remaining in the Russian 'sphere of influence'. The enlargement of the European Union in 2004, in which Poland and the Baltic States became EU-members, further contributed to the 'feeling of isolation' among Kaliningrad's population (Zielinksi 2015:60). Looking at its current geographical position[3], one can see that the region lies between 'newly' European Union members Poland and Lithuania. Someone living in the Kaliningrad oblast has to pass at least Lithuania plus Belarus or Latvia to reach Russia. Due to the region's proximity to Europe and its peculiar history, feelings of a separate identity are more likely to develop among the exclave's population.

**Russian nation-building in Kaliningrad**

For the Russian state, it is therefore necessary to stimulate the process of Russian nation-building in the Kaliningrad region. Especially after 2004, when Kaliningrad became surrounded by countries of the European Union, Russian officials have focused on the creation of a Russian identity in the most-western point of the country. These officials will be the main focus of this thesis. Russian authorities, both in Moscow and in Kaliningrad, have to look for a way to give the region a place in the Russian Federation, in spite of its German past and its current

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[2] "Koenigsberg is a Russian City', Kaliningrad Mayor Says' by Paul Goble,  Moscow Times, 11-05-2009, http://www.themoscowtimes.com/blogs/432776/post/koenigsberg-is-a-russian-city-kaliningrad-mayor-says/433022.html, accessed 28-05-2015

[3] See Figures 1, 2, 3

geographic position. They have to create a feeling of common Russian identity for the people of Kaliningrad. In recent years, parts of this Russian nation-building process in Kaliningrad have been visible; for instance, Kaliningrad has been named as a place for possible deployment of Russian missiles and it will be a venue for the World Cup football in 2018. This thesis will further analyze the process of Russian national-building in Kaliningrad. The research question will be:

> "In what way have Russian officials tried to build a Russian identity of Kaliningrad since the first presidency of Putin?"

Analyzing the way in which Russian officials have tried to build this Russian identity is relevant for several academic and conceptual reasons. First of all, the Kaliningrad region has not been researched very often by (Western) scholars. Since the beginning of the 2000s, some interest in the region developed among academics; though, this seems still insufficient for such a particular Russian region located in the heart of Europe. Next to that, scholars who actually focused on Kaliningrad have mainly looked at the region's place in EU-Russia relations or its particular history and circumstances. The issue of Russian national identity in Kaliningrad has only now and then been mentioned, but has not been the primary focus of any study about the region. Furthermore, the more conceptual side of Russian national identity and the 'Russian Question' has been analyzed quite often by several experts on Russia, but the way in which this national identity develops in different Russian regions has not been widely researched. Kolstø & Blakkisrud (2004) are two of the few scholars who addressed this topic in their book *Nation-building and common values in Russia*. In this book, several scholars focus on nation-building in regions such as Komi, Bashkortostan, Dagestan, Novosibirsk, St. Petersburg and Moscow. Kaliningrad is not included in their analysis. This thesis tries to (partly) fill these different theoretical gaps: it intends to provide an addition to the analysis of the process of nation-building in Russian regions plus contribute to the, in the author's eyes, insufficient academic study of Kaliningrad.

**Methodology**

In order to answer the research question, this thesis will mainly analyze speeches and statements made by Russian officials in relation to Kaliningrad and its Russian identity. The analysis will therefore have a top-down approach: it will primarily focus on the nation-building practices of political figures in Kaliningrad, without neglecting other developments which are related to this process. The words 'officials' or 'authorities' will refer to Russian presidents, prime ministers,

ministers, governors, mayors or any other political figures which have focused on Kaliningrad. These officials can be part of the regional Kaliningrad government or the central Moscow administration. While they often have a similar political background or focus on the same issues, it is unnecessary to distinct between the two groups. By using quotes from their statements and analyzing them, this thesis will try to analyze the nation-building process in the region. Naturally, this is only one of the several ways in which the process of nation-building can be analyzed. The significant 'political' character of nationalism and the lack of research in Kaliningrad itself (due to time limits) have led to this choice of data.

The data, which is used in this thesis, comes from English news sources and several English-translated official sites of the Russian government. Only English sources are used, due to the author's insufficient knowledge of the Russian language. Russian sources are not included, which probably could have given more depth into the analysis or which could have led to a different outcome. This thesis tries to give the most complete overview as possible on the basis of English sources. News sources which were used are The Moscow Times, Radio Free Europe Free Liberty, the Institute of Modern Russia, SF Gate, RT, Bild, BBC News, the Current Digest of the Russian Press, Russia Beyond the Headlines, The Interpreter, Bloomberg Business, de Volkskrant (Dutch), Sputnik International, Eurozine and FIFA. The author is aware that in the case of Russian media, the issue of propaganda is important to reckon with; for instance, RT, Russia Beyond the Headlines and Sputnik are known for not being fully independent from the Russian government. Therefore, this thesis will only use the specific quotes and statements. Any wider arguments in these news sources were not used for the analysis. This was applied to both Russian and Western media, which are also not always objective towards Russia.

**Outline chapters**

This thesis consists of six chapters. The first chapter will focus on the broader concepts of nationalism, nations and nation-building and the main theories related to these concepts. For instance, definitions of nationalism, the ethnic and civic version of the nation and the process of nation-building will be analyzed.

The second chapter will look at the issue of Russian national identity, mainly focusing on its significance in the present time. The concept of the 'Russian Question' will be analyzed, whereby this concept will be linked to some concrete issues in contemporary Russia and to the process of Russian nation-building.

The context of the case of Kaliningrad will be the main focus of the third chapter. This chapter will first look at the historical, geographical, demographic and political situation of the region. Thereafter, it will introduce the visions of several Russian officials on the identity of the Kaliningrad region.

Chapters four, five and six will ultimately focus on the three main dimensions of nation-building by Russian officials in the Kaliningrad case. The fourth chapter will look at the symbolic dimension of the nation-building process, which includes both historical and more contemporary symbols. The fifth chapter focuses on the military dimension: officials try to create a Russian image of Kaliningrad by focusing on the region as a military outpost of the country. The sixth chapter analyzes the anti-Western dimension: by creating an image of the 'West' as an interfering force in the region, officials reinforce the Russian identity of the exclave. Overall, this thesis tries to show that the Russian nation-building process in Kaliningrad lays in-between 'common' Russian symbols (which are symbolic for the whole Russian Federation) and 'particular' issues that are relevant for the Kaliningrad region.

# Chapter 1: Nations, nationalism and nation-building

In order to analyze Russian national identity and Russian nation-building, one has to focus on the concepts of 'nation', 'nationalism', 'national identity' and 'nation-building' itself first. Despite the process of globalization, which has led to fading boundaries and more connectedness between people all over the world, the issues of nationalism and national identity have not lost their significance (Eriksen 2007). For instance, the years after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 have been accompanied by nation-building processes in the fifteen independent post-Soviet states (Kolstø 1996). Moreover, the role that the ideology of nationalism has continued to play in movements, conflicts and politics all over the world points to the remained importance of these concepts (Thompson & Fevre 2001:310); recent examples of cases in which nationalism plays a major role are the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, the Scottish movement for independence which ultimately led to a referendum and the rise of nationalistic political parties in many European countries. Just as nationalism and national identity still play a role in the world, scholars from multiple disciplines still try to analyze these concepts: both case-related and more broadly on the concepts itself. This chapter will try to give an overview of the main theories and debates in relation to these different concepts. It will start by focusing on theories on nations and nationalism: an analysis of the main paradigms within this study will be given. The sections thereafter will focus on respectively the ethnic and civic definition of the nation, the issue of national identity and the process of nation-building. In this way, this chapter shall create a conceptual background for the later analysis of Russian national identity in Kaliningrad.

## 1.1 Theories on nations and nationalism

Whereas during the 19th and the first half of the 20th century the concepts of nations and nationalism already came forward in some works (for instance by Marx and Durkheim), only in the second half of the 20th century the study of nations and nationalism became a major topic in multiple academic disciplines, such as history and anthropology. Many scholars who have focused on these concepts start their analysis by stating that there is no clear definition of what is meant if one speaks about these issues (Jenkins 1995; Thompson & Fevre 2001; Smith 2002). Rather, different lines of thought or paradigms have emerged. Kaldor (2004) mentions perennialists, primordialists, ethno-symbolists and modernists as the main groups of scholars; the modernist paradigm has been most dominant in recent years (Kaldor 2004:162). These different paradigms have been in debate over three main issues: definitions of nation and nationalism, their historical roots and the future of nations and nationalism.

### 1.1.1 Definitions of nations and nationalism

One of the most influential works on these concepts is Ernest Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism* (2006 (1983)). His analysis starts with the following definition of nationalism:

> "Nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent…. Nationalism is a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones"

> (Gellner 2006 (1983):1)

Gellner argues that nationalism, nations and national states are modern 'inventions'. According to him, these issues are a product of the transition from the pre-industrial to the industrial society during the end of the 18ᵗʰ century and 19ᵗʰ century. In this new situation, a different form of identification was needed: nationalism was 'invented' to fill this gap (Gellner 2006(1983)). Gellner emphasizes the political dimension of nationalism and sees nationalism as a 'by-product' of modernity. Another famous study of nationalism is *'Imagined Communities'* by Benedict Anderson (2006(1983)). In his analysis, Anderson reflects on the 'Origin and Spread of Nationalism'. He defines the nation as follows:

> "It is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign'

> (Anderson 2006 (1983):6)

Just like Gellner, Anderson traces the nation and nationalism back to the modern time. For him, so-called 'print capitalism' is the defining feature in the rise of nationalism: national consciousness developed through the spread of books in 'national' languages. The issue of 'imagination' is very important for Anderson's argument: 'the members of the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members … yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (Anderson 2006 (1983):6). Whereas Gellner mainly focuses on the political aspects of nationalism, Anderson tries to make sense of national 'sentiments' (Eriksen 2010:120). However, both can be seen as main proponents of the 'modernist paradigm'.

Someone who has taken a different approach to nations and nationalism is Anthony D. Smith. He focuses much more on the historical relationship between *ethnies* or ethnicity on one side and nations and nationalism on the other side. He defines the nation as:

> "A named community possessing an historic territory, shared myths and memories, a common public culture and common laws and customs"

(Smith 2002:15)

Smith argues that one cannot draw a sharp line between *ethnies* and nations and that the five features he names as a minimum for the existence of nations (name, myths, public culture, laws and customs, territory) were already visible in ethnic communities in pre-modern times (Smith 2002:16-22). He is seen as one of the most significant authors related to the 'ethno-symbolic paradigm'. So only focusing on these three authors, one can already see the difference in their emphasis. Different ideas also come back analyzing the debate on the history and the future of nations and nationalism.

### 1.1.2 Where does the nation historically come from?

Each of the four main paradigms has its own idea about the roots of nations and nationalism, which already slightly came forward in the definitions of nationalism by Gellner, Anderson and Smith. Primordialists, for instance, see the nation as something that historically has always existed. This section will not further elaborate on this paradigm, because its influence in the debate on nations is declining. However, it is important to acknowledge that sometimes politicians still use this primordialist view. An example of this is president Putin, who referred in his speeches on Crimea in 2014 multiple times to the 'historical' ties between and $10^{th}$ century unification of Crimea and Russia.[4]

Shortly, there are mainly two relevant visions on the history of nations and nationalism in which the other three paradigms can be fitted. On one side, the idea exists that these concepts come from the time of 'modernity'. The previous section already showed Gellner's and Anderson's modernist definitions; Gellner also argues that that 'nationalism is not the awakening of an old, latent, dormant force… it is in reality the consequence of a new form of social organization…' (Gellner 2006(1983):46). Another influential 'modernist' scholar, Eric Hobsbawm, states that 'nations are not 'as old as history'. The modern sense of the word is no older than the eighteenth century' (Hobsbawm 1990:3). These modernist scholars are opposed by others, who trace the roots of the nation back to pre-modern times. For instance, perennialists focus on the medieval period for the development of nations: they argue that there is continuity from earlier communities, for instance religious ones, to nations (Smith 2002:12). Ethno-symbolists argue

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[4] 'Vladimir Putin says Crimea is part of Russia historically and forever' by Sergei L.Loiko, LA Times, 04-12-2014, http://www.latimes.com/world/europe/la-fg-putin-insists-crimea-20141204-story.html, accessed 09-04-2015

that the symbols and social features of pre-modern ethnic communities are the roots of nations. Anthony D. Smith already came up as one of the main proponents of this paradigm: according to him, there is not a 'magic moment' of the creation of nations. Rather, the 'presence of nations in the minds and hearts of people and in their institutional expressions' has contributed to the process of nation-forming (Smith 2002:29). So for the other side, the development of the nation is more of a continuous path instead of a radical break with the past.

### 1.1.3 Will nations and nationalism cease to exist?

The last major point of discussion among scholars is the question of future existence of nations and nationalism. In this debate, there are again mainly two sides: some argue that the 'national era' is just a historical phase which ultimately will fade away, while others state that nations and nationalism are currently still significant and will remain so over time.

Hobsbawm (1990) agrees with the former position: according to him, the idea of the 'nation' will lose its significance because many of its old functions are taken over by transnational organizations. For instance, he states that the growing importance of the International Monetary Fund points to the retreat of national economies (Hobsbawm 1990:181-182). For him, globalization is one of the main reasons for the decline of nationalism. Mary Kaldor (2004), who is concerned with the relation between nationalism and globalization, does not agree with Hobsbawm's argument: she states that she does not think that nationalism will lose its importance due to processes of globalization, but that contemporary nationalism is partly shaped by globalization (Kaldor 2004). She tries to show that nationalism and nations will be part of our society in the coming future. The argument by Thompson & Fevre (2001) lies in-between these two visions and is therefore quite useful. They argue that scholars cannot just 'dismiss' nationalism as something beyond its peak; for them, the idea that 'nationalism continues to reach *certain parts of the human experience* that no other ideologies can reach' is leading (Thompson & Fevre 2001:310). Thompson & Fevre's argument is quite important for the coming analysis: it is far too soon to predict the end of the importance of nations and nationalism. For instance, the significance of nationalism in the state-building processes of the several post-communist countries shows us that the role of these concepts is far from over.

So, this section has shown the main debates which lie at the heart of the study of nations and nationalism. The next two sections will focus on some other issues considering this study: the civic and ethnic definition of the nation and the issues of national identity and nation-building.

## 1.2 Civic and ethnic definitions of the nation

Whereas theories and conceptual frameworks help us to understand nationalism, these concepts often come back in more concrete forms. One of the more concrete issues, for instance for politicians and nationalists, is to decide who belongs and who does not belong to a particular nation. Often the distinction is made between a civic and an ethnic definition of the nation. Hans Kohn (2008(1944)) was one of the first scholars who argued that there was a difference between civic and ethnic nations. He made a distinction between 'civic Western' and 'ethnic Eastern' nationalism: according to Kohn, Western nationalism was based on civic institutions and liberalism whereas Eastern nationalism was based on symbols, myths and memories (Kohn 2008 (1944); Kuzio 2002:22). Kohn's distinction is criticized by multiple scholars because it would be too idealized (Kuzio 2002; Shevel 2010); however, the difference between civic and ethnic nationalism has become part of the study of nations and nationalism. In short, the main difference is made between the 'inclusive' civic definition and the 'exclusive' ethnic definition. The concept of a 'civic' nation relates to the idea that people become part of this nation on basis of territorial grounds: everyone who lives on a certain territory can belong to the nation, regardless of their ethnic background (Eriksen 2010:140). On the other side, we have the concept of an 'ethnic' nation. The idea behind this definition is that, just as its name states, people become part of the nation on basis of their ethnicity. Eriksen (2010) states that ethnicity 'refers to aspects of relationships between groups which consider themselves, and are regarded by others, as culturally distinctive' (Eriksen 2010:5). This means that ethnicity is related to boundaries: the ethnic 'Other' is used to create an exclusive identity. Shared history, ancestry, myths and others 'cultural' issues play the decisive role in this vision of the nation (Guibernau 2007:62; Eriksen 2010). Though, in relation to national identity, this 'Other' also plays a role in the civic version of the nation; the concept of nation includes the idea that there are people who are not member of this nation (Eriksen 2010:134). This will come back in the case of Russian national identity.

Analyzing this distinction, Kuzio's (2002) argument that 'pure civic or ethnic states only exist in theory' is important (Kuzio 2002:20). Civic and ethnic nations are only 'ideal types': therefore, any given example of one of the two definitions is some sort of overstatement. However, this distinction is useful because in this way one can distinguish between civic and ethnic 'features' which can be found in every nation. This also plays a role in the search for a Russian national identity, which is the focus of the second chapter.

**1.3 National identity and nation-building 'from above'**

As this chapter already has shown, several scholars focus on nations and nationalism as a primarily 'political' concept (Gellner 2006(1983), Kaldor 2004) or relate these concepts to the political dimension (Anderson 2006 (1983), Hobsbawm 1990). Although Guibernau (2007) makes a valid argument that political dimension cannot be the only dimension of national identity, the idea that nations and nationalism are closely related to 'politics' is important for the analysis in this thesis. Hereby one can distinguish between two approaches: the 'top-down' approach or mobilization 'from above', which is the influence the state has on nationalism, and 'popular sentiment' or 'bottom-up', which focuses on nationalistic political demands coming from 'ordinary' citizens (Kaldor 2004:164). This part will mainly focus on the influence coming 'from above'.

*1.3.1 National identity*

The different arguments and ideas coming from the theoretical debates are also in place if we talk about nation-building and national identity. The significance of these two concepts in the broader study of nationalism is that they point us to the ability to construct nations, both from below and from above. This argument will be emphasized later in this section. First, we should define national identity and nation-building. Montserrat Guibernau focuses on 'national identity' in her book *The Identity of Nations* (2007). She defines national identity as:

> "A collective sentiment based upon the belief of belonging to the same nation and of sharing most of the attributes that make it distinct from other nations. National identity is a modern phenomenon of a fluid and dynamic nature. While consciousness of forming a nation may remain constant for long periods of time, the elements upon which such a feeling is based may vary."

> (Guibernau 2007:11)

Furthermore, she states that belief in issues such as 'common culture, history, kinship, language, religion, territory, founding moment and destiny' make people feel that they share a national identity. This can be seen through the different dimensions of national identity, which are the psychological, cultural, historical, territorial and political ones (Guibernau 2007:11-25). So, national identity is a form of identity which people can gain from belonging to a certain nation. Important in Guibernau's definition is the 'fluid and dynamic nature' of national identity: just as other forms of identity, national identity is not fixed but rather constructed and changeable.

### *1.3.2 The process of nation-building*

The changeable nature of national identity leads to the idea that political elites and states can try to construct the nation or national identity in their own way. This process can also be named as 'nation-building' (Smith 1986; Linz 1993; Kuzio 2001). The definition of 'nation-building', which will be used in this thesis, comes from Kolstø (2004). According to him, nation-building is:

> "A political strategy to give the total population of a state a sense of being a single nation."

> (Kolstø in Kolstø & Blakkisrud 2004:19)

One can see again the focus on the political character of this process. Earlier, this chapter showed that modernists see nations as 'modern inventions'; for them, nation-building is central to the historical development of nations and nationalism. Nation-building is not only something historical but has been an ongoing process, both 'bottom-up' and 'top-down'. For instance, Miroslav Hroch (1998) has shown, through his famous model of different phases, how a national movement develops into a nation. His analysis is an example of 'bottom-up' nation-building. Others have focused more on ways in which states can try to build a nation or construct national identity, just as Kolstø (2004) argues. For instance, Guibernau (2007) names several strategies which the state can use, such as the construction of an *image* of the nation, the creation of symbols, the advancement of citizenship, the creation of common enemies and the consolidation of national education and media (Guibernau 2007:25). Another way of building a nation is named by Barry J. Posen (1993), who argues from a historical point of view that war, the mass army and military strength are used for developing nationalistic feelings among the population (Posen 1993). The process of nation-building through the creation of symbols, the creation of common enemies and the use of military strength will come back in the case of nation-building in Russia and later in Kaliningrad. Overall, the *ability* to construct nations and national identity is one of the most important features which contributes to their remained significance in the contemporary world. The fact that national identity is still one of the main forms of identity for many people today lies partly in the idea that this identity can be changed and constructed.

In sum, this chapter has shown the main theories and debates in relation to the concepts of nation, nationalism, nation-states, national identity and nation-building. It has not focused on one side of the academic study of these concepts, but rather has tried to analyze different angles which can also be viewed in the case of Russian national identity. In this way, the remained significance of nationalism, the civic and ethnic versions of the nation, the constructability and

dynamic nature of national identity and the different ways of nation-building will be a central part of the analysis of Russian national identity in the next chapter and ultimately in the case of Kaliningrad.

# Chapter 2: The question of Russian national identity

The previous chapter has shown the main concepts and issues in relation to nations and nationalism. In the coming chapter the significance of these concepts in the case of contemporary Russia will be analyzed. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the issue of Russian national identity or the 'Russian Question' became an important feature of the state-building process of independent Russia; especially after the year 2000 (Simonsen 1996; Tolz 1998; Semenenko 2015). According to President Vladimir Putin, Russia's nation-building process is an 'age-old Russian pastime' which has become important again in the post-Soviet time (Putin 2007 in Shevel 2011:179). This chapter will focus on two main dimensions of the question of Russianness, which are also related to each other: the domestic or 'inner' dimension ('what is the Russian national identity') and the foreign or 'outer' dimension ('what is the place of Russia in the world'). It will start with a historical overview of the position of Russians during tsarist and Soviet times, in which debates about the two dimensions already played a role. After that, the role of these debates in contemporary Russia will be analyzed. The final section will look at the contribution of the Russian state to these debates and to the process of 'nation-building'.

## 2.1 Russian national identity in the Russian empire and the Soviet Union

### 2.1.1 Russians in the Russian Empire

Although scholars of nationalism do not agree on the historical roots of nations and nationalism, most of them agree on their emergence. The 18th and 19th century are often mentioned as the periods in history when nationalism came forward, especially in the (West) European states. However, in the Russian case the development of nationalism was quite different. The Russian empire consisted of many non-Russian regions, for which Russian nationalism would not be very appealing. The imperial nature of the empire prevented the rise of Russian nationalism or the development of a nation-state. The Orthodox Church, the state and the tsar were much more important than the issue of nationalism for the people living in the empire (Rowley 2000; Hosking 1998; 2012). Therefore, Billington (2004) argues that until the 19th century Russia was rarely defined as a nation (Billington 2004:2-5). In the 19th century, the Russian elite also started to think about Russian national identity. For instance, a debate between Westernizers and Slavophiles on Russia's place in the world developed in the 1830s and 1840s: whereas Westernizers wanted Russia to look 'westwards', Slavophiles saw Russia as an unique civilization in the world (Billington 2004:12; Hosking 2012:275). This intellectual debate was one of the starting points for the question of Russian national identity. Later, the tsars themselves also

started stimulating national feelings through the policy of 'Russification'. The goal of this policy was to unify the periphery of the empire with the center through Russian language, religion and culture. However, this policy is often portrayed as inconsistent and unsuccessful (Hosking 1998; Rowley 2000; Hosking 2012:333-334). Ultimately, Hosking (1998) analyzes the situation before the Soviet Union as follows: 'Neither in the civic or in the ethnic sense, then, was Russia a nation by 1917' (Hosking 1998:451).

### 2.1.2 Russians in the Soviet Union

The revolution of 1917 and years of civil war in the years thereafter ultimately led to the establishment of the Soviet Union. Again, Russians were part of a bigger state which also included many non-Russian regions. The Soviet leaders, in particular Lenin and Stalin, saw nationality as one of the most important concepts of that time: according to them, nationality would ultimately fade away, but it was very important in those years and therefore it had to be reckoned with. The development of a Soviet nationality policy became one of the most significant goals of the Soviet leaders, whereby the concept of 'self-determination' of nations was quite important (Slezkine 1994; Hosking 2012:416-418). In practice, this meant that the Soviet-Union was divided into national republics in which the Soviet authorities promoted national languages, national culture and national political elites (Slezkine 1994; Brubaker 1994; Hosking 2012:427). Brubaker argues that:

> "No other state has gone so far in sponsoring, codifying, institutionalizing, even (in some cases) inventing nationhood and nationality on the sub-state level, while at the same time doing nothing to institutionalize them on the level of the state as a whole."

> (Brubaker 1994:52)

Where did this leave the Russians? Lenin and Stalin saw a difference between oppressor-nation nationalism and oppressed-nation nationalism: 'Great-Russian' nationalism belonged to the former kind, which should not be stimulated in contrast to the latter kind (Slezkine 1994:423). Therefore, Russian national identity was never actively developed or stimulated during the Soviet period by the authorities. Although a Russian 'national' republic was created (the RSFSR), Russians did not have their own Communist Party, capital city, or distinctive national culture such as the other republics had (Hosking 2012:427). Rather, Russian national identity was linked to the whole Soviet Union: Russian language was the official language, Russians dominated the central Communist Party and Moscow was the capital of the whole Union. Yuri Slezkine (1994) acknowledges the special position of the Russians. He analyzes the Soviet Union as a 'communal

apartment', in which every 'nation' had its own room. However, while the Russians occupied the hall, kitchen, bathroom and corridor, ran the place and bullied the others, they did not have a room for themselves (Slezkine 1994). Russians were seen as the 'big brother' of the other nationalities, but they were never seen as a nation whose identity should be helped to develop. This situation changed at the beginning of the 1990s.

## 2.2 Russian national identity after the Soviet Union

At the end of 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed and the fifteen former Soviet republics became independent states. It is not within the range of this chapter to analyze the reasons behind the dissolution, but many authors have pointed towards the development of nationalism and national consciousness among several republics in this process (Brubaker 1994; Kolstø 1996; Rowley 2000; Hosking 2012). The newly independent states had to deal with several issues: the economic legacy of the Soviet Union, the creation of a legal framework, and developing a political system for the new state were some of the main challenges. Another main issue for these different countries was the process of nation-building: defining who the people of the new state were and creating a feeling of belonging to the nation among them (Tolz 1998:993). As the previous section has shown, the national consciousness among the people of the non-Russian republics was already stimulated by Soviet authorities; this had not been the case for the Russians. For the first time in history, the definition of 'Russian' became more than just intellectually important. Several different ideas about the nature of the Russian nation came forward after 1991; the debate on this definition is also named as the 'Russian Question' (Simonsen 1996; Tolz 1998).

### 2.2.1 The 'Russian Question': what does it mean to be Russian?

Several scholars have analyzed the question of Russian national identity. Most emphasis is thereby placed on the distinction between the civic and the ethnic version of the Russian nation, which already came forward in the previous chapter. For instance, Sven Gunnar Simonsen (1996) sees the Russian Question as the 'question of the position of ethnic Russians in relation to other groups in a multinational state'. He shows that the word 'Russian' has two different terms in the Russian language: on one hand *russkiy,* which focuses on the ethnic-cultural dimension of Russianness, and on the other hand *rossiyskiy,* which is related to the state-territorial dimension (Simonsen 1996:91). Another influential scholar who has focused on this distinction is Vera Tolz. She shows five definitions of the Russian nation which have come up among intellectuals and scholars since the 19th century, but are now relevant again in light of the 'Russian Question'.

She names union identity (Russians as imperial people in a supranational state, for instance within the borders of the former Soviet Union), Russians as nation of eastern Slavs (together with the Belarussians and Ukrainians), Russians as community of Russian speakers, Russians racially defined by blood ties, and the civic definition of Russianness (all citizens of the Russian Federation) as the main visions on Russian national identity (Tolz 1998:995-996). Others have also named different definitions of Russian national identity: often, the 'racial' definition is replaced by the definition of the nation as 'ethnic' Russian (Hosking 1998; Shevel 2011). This is important to note: over time, the idea of an 'ethnic' Russian nation (without Ukrainians and Belarussians) has become quite significant. Analyzing these different definitions, one can see that ethnic definitions (Eastern Slavs, racially defined, ethnically defined), civic definitions (citizens of the Russian Federation) and mixed definitions (imperial definition and defined by language) play a role in the 'Russian Question'. Although this often made distinction is significant in the wider case of Russia, it has not been very relevant in the case of Kaliningrad, as this thesis will show later. Therefore, the analysis of the nation-building process in Kaliningrad will go beyond the ethnic-civic dichotomy. Though, for Russian politicians and elites these different definitions have been important. For instance, politicians like Dugin and Limonov, former minister Tishkov and the famous Russian writer Solzhenitsyn have all been advocating one of these ideas (Simonsen 1996; Tolz 1998; Hosking 1998; Tishkov 2009). This shows the relevance of this 'Russian Question' in contemporary Russia.

### 2.2.2 The issue of Russian compatriots

While the debate on Russian national identity has come up in relation to various situations, two issues have been quite central in recent years. Immediately after the fall of the Soviet Union, the issue of 'ethnic' Russians living in the non-Russian former Soviet states became an important question. Around twenty-five million Russian 'compatriots', as they are often called by Russian politicians, lived in one of the fourteen other post-Soviet states during those times (Simonsen 1996:102; Pilkington 1998; Tolz 1998; Shevel 2011). These Russian minorities, especially the major groups living in Ukraine and Kazakhstan, see Russia as their 'homeland' but do not live there. Brubaker (1994) has analyzed the triangular relationship between Russian minorities, the non-Russian successor states in which these minorities live and the 'external' homeland Russia. He predicted that this 'dynamic interplay' would potentially lead to ethno-national conflict (Brubaker 1994:63-72). Twenty years later, this 'triangular relationship' has partly come back in the cases of the annexation of Crimea and the war in Eastern Ukraine (although in the latter case pro-Russian Ukrainian separatists are most important). While the issue of ethnic Russians living

in the country's 'near abroad' was particularly important in the early years after 1991, it still plays a significant role in the debate on the definition of the Russian nation.

### 2.2.3 The Muslim 'Other' in Russia

The second issue, which has recently become important in the debate on Russianness, is the position of non-ethnic Russians inside of the Russian Federation: especially the position of the Muslim population coming from the Caucasus and Central Asia. In the multi-ethnic Russian Federation, the idea that 'ethnic' Russians should be dominant has become more important over the years (Shevel 2011:186). Teper & Course (2014) argue that this definition of ethnic national identity is formed against the 'Other' inside the state, which is in the Russian case the Muslim population. In recent years, there has been a large inflow of migrants, coming from the Caucasus and Central Asia. Mostly, they acquire (illegal) low-paid jobs; in times of economic crisis, this has led to anger and frustration among ethnic Russians. As a result of this, several 'ethnic' violent clashes between Russians and these migrants and violent attacks on migrants by nationalistic groups have occurred over the years. Next to that, deathly attacks by terrorists coming from Chechnya, Dagestan and other Caucasian regions (as a reaction to the wars in Chechnya and Russia's antiterrorist actions in these areas) have led to a sense of insecurity and an image of the 'dangerous' Muslim in Russia. Slogans such as 'Russia for Russians' and 'Stop feeding the Caucasus' are supported among certain parts of the population, nationalistic movements and some politicians (Teper & Course 2014; Semenenko 2015). So, both the position of ethnic Russians in the 'near abroad' and in the multi-ethnic Russian federation itself are important in the debate on the Russian nation. Rogoza (2014) therefore describes Russian nationalism as 'between imperialism and xenophobia' (Rogoza 2014:80).

### 2.2.4 The place of Russia in the world

Another issue that has come up in recent years is related to the 'outer' dimension of Russian national identity: the question of Russia's position in the world. Is Russia 'Western', 'Eastern' or does it have its own unique civilization (Bassin 1991; Duncan 2005)? Just as the Russian elite started thinking about the nature of their nation in the 19th century, they also started debating the future path of Russia. The discussion between 'Westernizers' and 'Slavophiles' has already been mentioned (Hosking 2012). This debate among intellectuals has continued over time, although just like the debate on 'Russianness' it was not so widely discussed in the Soviet period. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the question became quite relevant again for Russia. Peter J.S. Duncan (2005) analyzes 'contemporary Russian identity' in the light of this debate. In the first

years after the Soviet Union, Russia's elite focused very much on the 'West' (as in, Europe and the United States); especially the economic reforms were drawn from Western economic models. Though, at the end of the 1990s Russians became rather critical of the 'West': the economic situation of the country had only worsened since 1991 and a feeling of betrayal by Western institutions (both economically and politically) grew in the country (Duncan 2005). Here, the idea of 'Eurasianism' stepped in. In short, Eurasianism is a vision which became popular among Russian 'émigrés' in the 1920's. They saw Russia as neither Europe nor Asia, but as a unique geographical world which they called 'Eurasia' or 'Russia-Eurasia' (Bassin 1991:14; Laruelle 2004:116; Billington 2004:69). Contemporary Eurasianism exists in different forms: as anti-Western, as a way to include Muslim minorities in the Russian national identity or as emphasis on the unique Slavic people (Laruelle 2004). However, most scholars agree that Russian Eurasianism has mainly to do with geopolitics and goal of being dominant in the 'near abroad' of Russia; therefore, Laruelle (2004) has named Eurasianism as 'an imperial version of Russian nationalism' (Laruelle 2004:115). The debate on the place of Russia in the world will come back if we look at the nation-building process in the Kaliningrad region. Due to its geographical closeness to the 'West', it is a relevant debate in the region's particular case.

Having analyzed the main debates and issues considering contemporary Russian national identity, the next section will focus on the role that the Russian state has played in these debates and the way in which the state has tried to build a Russian nation.

## 2.3 The Russian state and nation building

Just as certain movements, intellectuals and (Western) academics have been searching for an answer to the question what it means to be Russian, the Russian state (and in particular different Russian presidents) also has been involved in the debate on the nature of the Russian nation. Michael Thumann (2001) argues that the multi-ethnic character of Russia has been a fundamental part of Russian politics ever since the time of the tsars. He mentions the example of the Chechen wars; both for presidents Yeltsin and Putin this has been a core issue during their leaderships (Thumann 2001:193). Next to that, both presidents have focused on the 'national question' during their presidencies. For instance, president Yeltsin asked his fellow nationals in 1996 to come up with a new 'national idea' for Russia because the country lacked one.[5] His

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[5] 'Meditations on Russia: Yeltsin calls for New National 'Idea'' by Julia Rubin, AP News Archive, 02-08-1996, http://www.apnewsarchive.com/1996/Meditations-on-Russia-Yeltsin-Calls-for-New-National-Idea-/id-122cd732a8cf8b35989afeec4db69dcd, accessed 16-04-2015

successor, Vladimir Putin, has spoken about the 'national question' on multiple occasions[6] since the start of his first presidency in 2000 and has called it an 'age-old Russian pastime'. What definitions of the Russian nation and the place of Russia in the world has the Russian state then promoted? Before this chapter will try to answer this question, two significant arguments come forward. First of all, it is important to note that, although since the 2000s the Russian government has tried to build a strong state, they have not tried to force some kind of national identity on the Russian people. In the case of Putin, Kolstø (2004) argues that he wanted to leave room for 'intellectual liberty and pluralism of ideas' and did not follow a path of 'strong' nation-building (Kolstø in Kolstø & Blakkisrud 2004:1-7). Russian authorities have certain ideas about the nation and try to influence the debates, but they are partly dependent on popular sentiments and events which help to shape the idea of 'Russianness'. The second point, which is related to this 'voluntary' nation-building, is made by Shevel (2011). In her analysis of the nation-building strategies of Yeltsin, Putin and Medvedev, she shows that there has not been a straight focus on one of the definitions of Russianness. Rather, Russia's rulers have been ambiguous, using both civic and ethnic definitions of the nation in different cases (Shevel 2011). So, next to the voluntary nature of the nation-building process in Russia, there has not been a clear promotion of a certain definition of that nation by the ruling elite. Both these points are useful for analyzing the nation-building process in Kaliningrad in the coming chapters.

### 2.3.1 Civic and ethnic nation-building

If we take the definition of 'nation-building' by Kolstø (2004) from the previous chapter, one should be able to see different ways in which the 'sense of being one nation' is promoted by the Russian state. Earlier in this chapter, the civic and ethnic versions of Russian national identity came forward. The Russian government has used these different versions in the process of nation-building. For instance, in his early years as president, Yeltsin and his administration tried to promote the 'civic' or *rossiyskiy* definition of the Russian nation (Duncan 2005: 283; Shevel 2011:189). However, the issue of the 'ethnic' Russians living in the 'near abroad' made it difficult for Yeltsin and his advisors to maintain their focus solely on the civic definition (Tolz 1998:288). Therefore, Yeltsin started promoting the definition of Russia as a nation of Russian speakers, next to the civic definition. This civic definition remained the 'official state version' of Russian identity under the presidency of Putin and later Medvedev: both presidents have spoken multiple times about the *rossiyskiy* multicultural nation and the unity of the people living in Russia (Duncan 2005:286; Shevel 2011:190). Though, Shevel (2011) argues that the ethnic definition of

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[6] 'Putin's Nationality Dilemma', by Peter Rutland, The Moscow Times, 30-01-2012, http://www.themoscowtimes.com/opinion/article/tmt/451918.html, accessed 16-04-2015

the Russian nation (not only focusing on language but also on culture and religion) 'creeps back into official policy statements' (Shevel 2011:190). This is even more the case than it was under Yeltsin; the ethnic definition of Russianness has been expressed much more in the country in recent years, which could not be ignored by Putin and Medvedev. The analysis of nation-building in Kaliningrad will go beyond this ethnic-civic dichotomy as stated earlier. Other ways of building a Russian nation therefore come forward.

### 2.3.2 'Imperial' and 'Anti-Western' Russian identity as a way of nation-building

The significance of an 'imperial' version of Russian national identity has already come up earlier. Shevel (2011) argues that both Putin and Medvedev have used this version in their nation-building practices: the idea that Russia has a civilizational role in the region and is allowed to exert its power on its neighbors became a central part of these presidents' national discourse (Shevel 2011:190). The Russian government has been active in exerting political influence in several of its neighbors, but has also shown its military strength. The war with Georgia over South-Ossetia in 2008 and the recent annexation of Crimea are exemplary of this. Showing Russia's (military) power, Putin and Medvedev have tried to develop an image of Russia as a regional power among its own population. Related to this is the image of the 'West' as the 'Other', which has been created in recent years. At the end of the 1990s, Russia became more anti-Western. Especially the conflict in Kosovo in 1999 (Russia's ally Serbia was bombed by NATO without a UN-mandate) and the expansion of both NATO and EU into Russia's sphere of influence (in their own eyes) has led to anti-Western feelings in Russia, both among the elite and the Russian people. Russian authorities have multiple times argued against the 'unipolar' world, dominated by the United States, and want to create a 'multipolar' world in which the world is dominated by multiple great powers, including Russia (Bacon & Wyman 2006:160-168). Kolstø (2004) argues therefore that the building of a Russian national identity has 'been achieved by contrasting Russia with Europe and the Western world' (Kolstø in Kolstø & Blakkisrud 2004:19). These anti-Western feelings have developed even more since the recent conflict in Eastern Ukraine, which many people in Russia see as a result of Western influence in probably the most important country in their sphere of influence. Russian authorities have used these feelings to further distinct the country from the 'West'.

### 2.3.3 Russian national symbols

Next to nation-building in relation to the imperial and anti-Western version of Russian national identity, the Russian state has also used certain national symbols in this process. This was already mentioned by Guibernau (2007) as one of the strategies which can be used by the state. The Orthodox religion has been one of these symbols. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was a revival of the Orthodox faith in Russia which had been officially forbidden before 1991. While according to the law Russia provides 'freedom of worship', the Orthodox Church has become a national symbol and is very influential in Russian politics. For instance, the Patriarch blesses the president on his inauguration and politicians like to associate themselves with the Orthodox Church (Knox 2005; Bacon & Wyman 2006:44-45). Staalesen (2004) argues that the Orthodox belief has become sort of 'state religion' and has been used as part of the Eurasianist movement (Staalesen in Kolstø & Blakkisrud 2004). In this sense, the spread of Orthodoxy in different regions of Russia can be used by officials in the process of nation-building. Furthermore, Russia's history is also used in the nation-building process. Forest & Johnson (2002) argue that the Second World War (or the Great Patriotic War), the pre-Soviet Russian history and the history of the Russian Orthodox Church are significant for Russian national identity and are used by the Russian government (Forest & Johnson 2002:530-532). Victory Day on May 9, when the victory over Nazi Germany is remembered and celebrated, is for instance one of the major holidays in contemporary Russia.

In conclusion, this chapter has shown that multiple definitions and ideas exist on the nature of the Russian nation. There is no consensus on the questions about Russianness or Russia's place in the world. In light of the nation-building process by the Russian state, this means that they focus on different dimensions in creating a 'single' Russian nation. This chapter has shown the imperial/military dimension, the anti-Western dimension and the symbolic dimension of Russian nation-building: in the case of nation-building in Kaliningrad, these three dimensions will the main points of focus. In the next sections, the context of Kaliningrad and the process of nation-building in the region by Russian officials will be analyzed.

# Chapter 3: Kaliningrad - a 'particular' region or also 'normal' Russian?

As the most western region of the Russian Federation, Kaliningrad occupies a special position: because of its distinct history and geographical position, the Kaliningrad *oblast* is not just an ordinary Russian province but a 'one-of-a-kind' part of the country. In the process of Russian nation-building, this situation gives Kaliningrad a special position between 'commonality' and 'particularity'. Before this thesis will analyze this distinction, it is useful to look at the special context of the region. This chapter will look at the historical, geographical, and political background of Kaliningrad. Furthermore, the last sections will give an introduction to the question of identity in Kaliningrad and the way in which Russian officials look at this question.

## 3.1 Historical situation

### 3.1.1 Kaliningrad before 1991

The city and the region have not always been named 'Kaliningrad'. Before the Second World War, the city was called Königsberg. Königsberg was founded in 1255 and was the capital of East Prussia, part of the kingdom of Prussia and later part of Germany. The city was known for its university, of which several important scholars, scientists and poets have graduated. The most well-known alumnus is philosopher Immanuel Kant, who was born in the region and hardly ever left it (Zielinski 2015:58). Kaliningrad's university has later been renamed after Kant. The former territory of East Prussia is currently divided among three countries: Poland, Lithuania and Russia. The fact that a part of the former Prussian territory is Russian has to do with the Second World War and its consequences. The Soviet army took control of the region and the city of Königsberg after heavy fighting in 1945, and it became a part of the Russian Soviet Republic (RSFSR) in 1946. Stalin ordered to remodel the heavily damaged city to Soviet standards and wanted to get rid of all of its German traces. First of all, the name of the city and region were changed into Kaliningrad in 1946, after the former Soviet head of state Mikhail Kalinin; however, Kalinin himself had never visited the region (Zielinski 2015:59). Next to that, the region had to be repopulated: in 1947 and 1948, over 100,000 Germans who had lived there fled or were forced to and Russian, Belarusian and Ukrainian migrants came in to replace them. Kaliningrad's population has had a 'migrant' character over the years (Oldberg 2000:271, Berger 2010:348; Zielinski 2015:59). Finally, Kaliningrad had to be rebuild in Soviet style. Over ninety percent of the city was destroyed during the war; the authorities decided to shape the city in the same way as Moscow. However, this process of rebuilding did not went as fast as the Soviet authorities would have wanted and nowadays one can still see some of the German roots of the

city. The best example of this (partial) failure was the construction of the so-called 'House of the Soviets', a monumental building which had to become the new symbol of the city. It was never finished and became known as 'the Monster' (Oldberg 2000; Berger 2010; Zielinski 2015). In geopolitical terms, Kaliningrad became a military outpost for the Soviet Union and was transformed into a military bastion. It became the base of the Soviet Baltic Fleet, heavy conventional and nuclear weapons of the Red Army were placed there and the area was closed for foreigners and Soviet citizens without permits (Baxendale et.al 2000:10; Aalto 2002:146).

### 3.1.2 Kaliningrad after 1991

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 also majorly influenced Kaliningrad. The region now found itself located between newly independent Lithuania and Poland and lost its connection to 'homeland' Russia. The countries which surrounded the now Russian exclave set course for membership of NATO and the EU, which led to a feeling of 'isolation' among the population of Kaliningrad (Oldberg 2000; Zielinski 2015). Next to that, Kaliningrad suffered economically in the 1990s (just like the rest of Russia), it lost its military significance and there was no real solution to the new issues of visa and border traffic. In order to counter these problems, the region was awarded a 'special economic status' by Russia and agreements on visa-free travel were signed with Poland and Lithuania. Some people hoped that Kaliningrad would become the 'Hong Kong of Central Europe'. However, the actual membership of the EU which Poland and the Baltic states gained in 2004 led to more problems and further added to the feeling of alienation (Oldberg 2000; Archer & Etzold 2010; Zielinski 2015). Historically speaking, Kaliningrad has a very different background than most parts of the Russian Federation. What is then Kaliningrad's current geographical, demographic and political situation?

### 3.2 Geographical and demographic situation

The Kaliningrad region has a size of 15,200 square kilometers and has a population of just under the 1 million people (Baxendale et.al 2000:9). Around 450,000 people live in the city of Kaliningrad, which makes it by far the largest city of the region, followed by cities such as Chernyakhovsk, Baltiysk and Sovetsk which all have populations between 30,000 and 40,000.[7] Looking at a wider map of the Baltic region[8], one can see that the region borders Poland in the south-west, Lithuania in the north-east and has access to the Baltic Sea in the north-west. Gdansk in Poland and Kaunas in Lithuania are the closest major cities for Kaliningrad. To reach Russia from Kaliningrad, you will have to pass at least Lithuania and Belarus or Latvia; between

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[7] City Population Kaliningrad, http://www.citypopulation.de/php/russia-kaliningrad.php, accessed 30-04-2015
[8] See Figure 1 and 2

the two nearest borders of Kaliningrad and Russia lies 400 kilometers (Baxendale et.al.2000:9). So, contemporary Kaliningrad is also geographically distanced from the rest of the Russian Federation. Therefore, the Kaliningrad region is often named as an 'exclave', a term which refers to this kind of geographical distinct relationship between a certain region and its homeland. Its geographical position also contributes to its strategic importance for Russia: it is a military outpost inside Europe and it is Russia's most direct access to warm water (Sanchez Nieto 2011:466).

As stated before, Stalin ordered a repopulation of the Kaliningrad region after it was taken over by the Soviet Union. Nowadays, one can still see the influence of this decision in the region: according to the 2010 census, Russians (82%), Ukrainians (3,5%) and Belarussians (3,4) still are the three biggest ethnic groups living in Kaliningrad. This same census shows that only 0.8% of the people living in the region are 'ethnically' German. There has been a change in the ethnic composition of the region since the dissolution of the Soviet Union: whereas the number of Russians has been growing since the 1989 census, the numbers of Ukrainians, Belarussians and Lithuanians living there have all been decreased by fifty percent since 1989 (Zimovina 2014:94). Probably this has something to do with the independence that these countries gained in 1991, which led many people to return to their 'first' homeland from Kaliningrad. Another noteworthy process is the inflow of (temporary) migrants from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan into the region in recent years; in this sense, Kaliningrad is no different than the rest of Russia which also has seen an increase of migrants coming from the Central Asian countries (Zimovina 2014:90).

### 3.3 Political situation

The Kaliningrad region has the status of *oblast* inside the Russian Federation; there are 45 other *oblasts*, which have less autonomous rights than the 21 republics inside the federation. These *oblasts* can be compared to provinces with an own local administration. In this sense, the two most influential political posts of the Kaliningrad regions are the position of governor and the position of mayor of Kaliningrad. The current governor of the Kaliningrad *oblast* is Nikolai Tsukanov, whereas the current mayor of Kaliningrad is Alexander Yaroshuk; both are member of United Russia, the political party of president Putin and prime-minister Medvedev. Tsukanov gained the position of governor in 2010, after his predecessor Georgy Boos was not nominated by United Russia to rerun for the post. This had to do with protests in Kaliningrad against Boos in 2010: in the eyes of these protesters, Boos had a very negative impact on the region. When he announced he would run for another term, over 10,000 people gathered to protest against him

(Zielinksi 2015:61-62). In this sense, Kaliningrad is quite special: it is one of the few Russian places in which protests against the ruling elite were allowed and which led to actual change (Boos was not nominated for governor again). However, having both a governor and mayor from United Russia, Kaliningrad is not so different than most other Russian regions and cities.

In another way, Kaliningrad is politically quite different than the rest of Russia. Since Kaliningrad became a Russian exclave in the heart of Europe and the European Union has started focusing extensively on Central and Eastern European countries (ultimately leading to several countries' membership in the EU), the region also has become a point of interest for the EU. Several authors have argued that Kaliningrad is seen by both EU and Russian officials as a 'pilot region' for developing relations between the two 'blocs' (Aalto 2002:152; Archer & Etzold 2010; Gänzle & Müntel 2011:58). Over the years, Russia and the EU have had several discussions on multiple issues in relation to Kaliningrad; for instance, the visa transit system, economic market integration and Kaliningrad's place in regional cooperation have been major points of discussion (Archer & Etzold 2010: 337-338). In this sense, Kaliningrad is different because it is probably the only Russian region which has been so extensively focused on by the European Union. However, as this thesis will show later, the question of Kaliningrad has not always been a positive issue in Russian-EU relations.

## 3.4 Identity of Kaliningrad

So, while Kaliningrad occupies a special position in Russia in some ways (historically and geographically), in another sense it is not that different from the Russian 'standards' (politically and demographically). How is this situation reflected in the identity of Kaliningrad? Analyzing the statements about Kaliningrad's identity by scholars, one can see that there are multiple dimensions of identity which can be assigned to the region. First of all, the German roots of Kaliningrad have led in recent years to a renewed interest in the German history of the region. According to Stefan Berger (2010), since the time of Mikhail Gorbachev's 'glasnost' there have been certain groups and individuals who have started researching German heritage and German traditions. The 750-year anniversary of the city in 2005 was in this sense a good opportunity to also focus on the time when the city was still named 'Königsberg' (Berger 2010:350-352). As this thesis will argue later, this anniversary was also an opportunity for Russian authorities to reinforce the Russian identity of the region. So, although Stalin ordered to get rid of all German traces of the region, there is currently still some sort of German identity in place. Next to, there has developed a regional identity among the people of Kaliningrad. According to Oldberg (2000), the people of Kaliningrad are equally focused on Europe and Russia in economic and

political sense, which ultimately has led to some sort of regional identity. Many Kaliningraders state that they are 'both Russian and European' (Oldberg 2000:283-284). Also, the geographical position of the region in the 'Baltic area' contributes to this sense of regionalism. When speaking of this Baltic Area, analysts often mention all countries which surround the Baltic Sea, including the Kaliningrad region. Moreover, 'Baltic' countries like Estonia, Finland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Sweden have shown special interest in the region (Sanchez Nieto 2011:475). Whereas the German identity comes from history, the regional identity of Kaliningrad can be mainly awarded to its current geographical and political situation. Last but not least, naturally the region also has a Russian dimension of identity. In response to the emerging German and regional identity of the region, several movements and groups have come to the 'defense of Russianness' (Oldberg 2000:279; Berger 2010:352). The most prominent of these groups are military ones and old war veterans; their significance will come back in later chapters. They have been especially arguing against any attempt of 'Germanization' of the region; for instance, they opposed the celebrations of the 750-years anniversary of the city (Berger 2010:352). Next to these veterans, the Orthodox Church has found its way back into Kaliningrad. As this thesis has shown earlier, the Orthodox Church is related to Russian national identity; in this sense, the 'return' of Orthodoxy to Kaliningrad will contribute to reinforcing the Russian identity of the region (Oldberg 2000:279-280). This argument will be emphasized later in this thesis. Different scholars ultimately conclude that there is not a coherent 'Kaliningrad identity'. Oldberg (2000:280) states that this is a result of 'many conflicting pressures', whereas Zielinski (2015:64) speaks of 'unsolved riddles'. Romuald Misiunas (2004) even argues that this lack of a coherent identity is Kaliningrad's major problem. In this sense, it is important for Russian authorities that Kaliningrad's main identity will be Russian. Therefore, this issue of identity comes up during the references to the region by these authorities.

## 3.5 Russian officials' views on the Kaliningrad region

> "Do Kaliningrad residents consider themselves distinct from the rest of the Russian population?
>
> I like the phrase about how the Kaliningrad region is an ordinary Russian region that wound up in extraordinary circumstances."

<div align="right">

Interview with Alexander Yaroshuk, mayor of Kaliningrad[9]

</div>

The special and partly distinct place of Kaliningrad inside the Russian Federation is also acknowledged by Russian officials. As this thesis has shown earlier, the idea of a Russian national identity has been rather vague since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In this sense, the position of Kaliningrad within this national identity is two-folded: on one side, the special place of the region makes it even harder to find a coherent Russian national identity, but on the other side, the lack of such a coherent identity makes it possible for Russian officials to focus on certain parts of Russian national identity which are applicable to Kaliningrad. Kaliningrad's Russian identity in-between 'commonality' and 'particularity' will be the main focus of the coming chapters.

### 3.5.1 Local officials' views

The above statement by mayor Alexander Yaroshuk shows that he acknowledges Kaliningrad's special position, but that he sees Kaliningrad as an 'ordinary' Russian region. One of his fellow local officials, Feliks Lapin (former Minister of Economy and Head of the city's administration), made somewhat similar statements about Kaliningrad's 'Russianness'. According to him, 'Kaliningrad is not a trophy won by Moscow in World War II' but 'rather a 'Russian city' that became part of the Russian empire two centuries earlier'. Lapin also refers to the geographical and economic situation of the region, but states that everything in Kaliningrad is like a 'normal big city'.[10] In focusing on Kaliningrad's identity, these two local officials view Kaliningrad as slightly different but state that it is mainly an 'ordinary' or 'normal' Russian region. However, not every (former) official agrees with this idea. Alexandra Smirnova, who was the Minister of Economy in the Kaliningrad Region from 2008 till 2010[11], stated the following in 2011:

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[9] 'Kaliningrad' by Alec Luhn, The Moscow Times, 20-11-2011, http://www.themoscowtimes.com/beyond_moscow/kaliningrad.html, accessed 28-05-2015

[10] "Koenigsberg is a Russian City', Kaliningrad Mayor Says' by Paul Goble, The Moscow Times, 11-05-2009, http://www.themoscowtimes.com/blogs/432776/post/koenigsberg-is-a-russian-city-kaliningrad-mayor-says/433022.html, accessed 28-05-2015

[11] Linked-In page Alexandra Smirnova, https://www.linkedin.com/in/smirnovaalexandra, accessed 28-05-2015

"Kaliningrad is a European city with a lot of culture, with very European-oriented minds… They behave like Europeans, and they have high demands, not only for living standards but for democracy and the accountability of the government."[12]

For Smirnova, Kaliningrad is not a normal Russian city but more a European one. Naturally, Smirnova is able to express her vision because she was not in office anymore in 2011. Though, it shows us that not all Russian officials see Kaliningrad as a 'normal' Russian place. The references made by Smirnova to democracy and the accountability of government are probably related to the 2010 protests in the region, which were directed towards governor Boos. Also in this sense, Smirnova does not view Kaliningrad as ordinary Russian (just as this chapter earlier argued). This argument is further emphasized by a recent loss for Putin's United Russia party in a small council election in the city of Baltiysk; the party failed to gain a single seat in the small council.[13] Although these small elections do not pose a real threat (yet) to the power of United Russia in Kaliningrad and the whole of Russia, it does show us that Smirnova's statement on Kaliningrad's political situation is actually reflected in current elections.

### 3.5.2 Central officials' views

Next to the statements by local officials, authorities in Moscow also have shown their vision on the Kaliningrad region. In a recent speech on socio-economic developments in the region, Dmitri Medvedev (the prime-minister and former president of the Russian Federation) stated the following:

"Last year, the Kaliningrad Region became a leader – it registered faster growth rates in several key indicators as compared to the national average."[14]

In his remarks, Medvedev refers to Kaliningrad as a leader within the Russian Federation in the economic sense: he names the examples of growth in the industrial, housing and agricultural sector.[15] Medvedev shows through this statement that Kaliningrad is economically doing better than the national average, whereas he does not make any reference to its special position.

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[12]'Kaliningrad' by Alec Luhn, The Moscow Times, 20-11-2011,
http://www.themoscowtimes.com/beyond_moscow/kaliningrad.html, accessed 28-05-2015
[13] 'Rumblings of Dissent in Russia's West' by Brian Whitmore, Radio Free Europe Free Liberty, 27-05-2015,
http://www.rferl.org/content/rumblings-in-russias-western-outpost-power-vertical-blog/27039567.html, accessed 29-05-2015
[14] 'Socio-economic development of Kaliningrad Region', The Russian Government, 24-03-2015,
http://government.ru/en/news/17359/, accessed 28-05-2015
[15] 'Socio-economic development of Kaliningrad Region', The Russian Government, 24-03-2015,
http://government.ru/en/news/17359/, accessed 28-05-2015

However, in a meeting with governor Nikolai Tsukanov of Kaliningrad in 2011, he did refer to this position:

> "Let's discuss the situation in the region you are responsible for in general, taking into account its particular geographical location and the special rules that apply here and that effect all different areas of the region's life, including its legal status."[16]

Just as local officials Lapin and Yaroshuk, Medvedev names the 'particular' status of Kaliningrad while addressing the governor. One can conclude from the statements of these important political figures that both on the local and central level, Russian authorities do view Kaliningrad as a 'normal' Russian region but do acknowledge the peculiar situation which they have to take into account.

As already mentioned in previous sections, another way in which Russian officials look at the region is as a possible 'pilot-region' for Russia-EU relations. This idea was already expressed by president Putin in 2003:

> "For the moment I would just like to say that in my opinion we should work together with you to turn the Kaliningrad Region into a model of cooperation between Russia and the enlarging Europe."[17]

One should note that Putin made this statement during the time that EU-Russia relations were quite good, compared to the contemporary 'cold' relations. Despite these worsened relations, the idea of using the region to work together with the European Union has not been totally abandoned. During his time as president, Dmitri Medvedev referred to 'our European partners' while discussing certain issues in relation to Kaliningrad[18]. For Russia, it is not really possible to neglect the European Union while focusing on Kaliningrad: this would lead to total isolation of the exclave. However, since the worsening of relations with the 'West', Russia has mainly used Kaliningrad against the EU and the United States. This argument will be analyzed further in the chapters to follow.

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[16] 'Excerpts from meeting with Governor of Kaliningrad Region Nikolai Tsukanov', President of Russia, 31-07-2011, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/12159, accessed 29-05-2015

[17] 'Excerpts from a Transcript of the meeting with the Students of the Kaliningrad State University', President of Russia, 27-06-2003, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/22042, accessed 29-05-2015

[18] Excerpts from meeting with Governor of Kaliningrad Region Nikolai Tsukanov', President of Russia, 31-07-2011, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/12159, accessed 29-05-2015

### 3.5.3 Kaliningrad between 'commonality' and 'particularity'

Analyzing the statements made by Russian officials, one can see two sides of Kaliningrad's position inside Russia coming back. On one side, Kaliningrad is seen as just another part of the Russian Federation and will be treated that way, but on the other side, different officials do acknowledge the differences between Kaliningrad and the whole Russian Federation. Relating this to the process of Russian nation-building, it is clear that for a large multinational country as Russia the state always have to take the local context in account. In relation to Kaliningrad, this is certainly the case. However, Russia should also try to focus on an overarching and including national identity in specific regions in order to keep them from separating too much from the center. In recent years, there have been developments in Kaliningrad which can be referred to as 'separatist': this varies from debate on changing back the city's name into Königsberg to small movements who call for rejoining Germany or Lithuania.[19] This means that Russia needs to keep focusing on the development of a Russian identity in the region; or as Vladimir Putin stated in his speech at the 750th anniversary of the city in 2005:

> "Russia will continue to pay the necessary attention to developing the city of Kaliningrad and the entire region. We will do this using all the financial, legal and administrative means at our disposal"[20]

Whereas Putin refers to the development of the economy, the administrative bureaucracy and specific laws in relation to Kaliningrad, Russia also has to pay 'necessary attention' to the dimension of identity. In the coming chapters, this thesis will analyze the way in which Russian authorities have tried to do this.

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[19] 'Russian Separatism: the Hotbeds of Tension' by Alexander Podrabinek, Institute of Modern Russia, 29-08-2014, http://imrussia.org/en/analysis/politics/797-russian-separatism-the-hotbeds-of-tension, accessed 29-05-2015
[20] 'Speech at the Celebrations of the 750th anniversary of Kaliningrad', President of Russia, 02-07-2005, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/23071, accessed 29-05-2015

## Chapter 4: The 'symbolic' dimension of nation-building in Kaliningrad

"Many great events in the history of Europe and in that of our own country are associated with this land. It was here that our first contacts with European countries began. It was here that Peter the Great arrived at the head of his famous Great Embassy to Europe."[21]

President Vladimir Putin in speech at the 750th anniversary of Kaliningrad

The coming chapter will focus on symbols which are both 'common' Russian and 'particularly related to the region. The symbolic dimension of nation-building is often named by scholars as an important part of the creation of 'a sense of being a single nation', as Kolstø (2004) states. For instance, this thesis has elaborated on the theories of Anderson (2006(1983)) and Guibernau (2007) which both acknowledge the importance of symbols for the development of nationalistic feelings. In the case of Kaliningrad, this dimension also plays a role in Russian nation-building by officials. Here, it appears that Russian officials cannot focus solely on particular symbols of the Kaliningrad region. This could result in a local or even separatist form of identity, something that these officials try to avoid through the process of nation-building. Therefore, they have to focus on overarching Russian symbols which are also relevant for Kaliningrad. 'Normal' and 'particular' issues or symbols come together; for instance, the Second World War and its remembrance is an issue that relates both to Russian national identity and Kaliningrad's particular history. However, as the coming sections will show, the symbolic dimension is not the core feature of Russian nation-building in the region: Russian officials have not consistently used the symbolic dimension of nation-building in the case of Kaliningrad.

### 4.1 The use of history

(Shared) history can be an important part of national identity. According to Guibernau (2007), the historical dimension is one of the five dimensions of national identity and the 'belief' in a shared history contributes to the feeling of a shared national identity among people. Therefore, Russian officials have 'used' history in their nation-building process in relation to Kaliningrad. However, the history of Kaliningrad is different than most parts of Russia: only in the most recent seventy years has the region been part of the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation. Russian officials have to look for common ground in the history of Kaliningrad and Russia. Putin's statement during the 750th anniversary of the city, which is on top of the chapter, is a good example of this. His reference to Peter the Great, one of the most important people in the

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[21] 'Speech at the Celebrations of the 750th Anniversary of Kaliningrad', President of Russia, 02-07-2015, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/23071, accessed 08-06-2015

Russian history, and his relation to Kaliningrad shows that Putin tries to focus on Kaliningrad's place in the Russian history (even when it was not part of Russia yet). Peter the Great, who is a symbol of Russian history, is used by Putin to create a symbolic connection between Kaliningrad to Russia. Another symbol of Russian history, the Second World War, is used in a similar way by Russian authorities.

### 4.1.1 The Second World War as symbolic, historical event

The Second World War is one of the 'common grounds' in the history of Kaliningrad and Russia. Forest & Johnson (2002) have argued that this 'Great Patriotic War' is significant for Russian national identity. Victory Day on May 9 (whereby the victory on Nazi Germany by the Soviet Union is remembered and celebrated) is one of the major bank holidays and symbols of contemporary Russia. It is also the defining moment in the creation of Russian Kaliningrad and therefore can be used by Russian officials for their nation-building practices in the region. So both on particular and 'common' level, the Second World War takes an important symbolic position inside the Russian national identity. In Kaliningrad, just as in Moscow, St. Petersburg and other major Russian cities, there is a military parade every year on May 9 in remembrance of the victory by the Red Army in 1945. The 2015 parade was especially large because of the 70th anniversary of the victory, also in Kaliningrad.[22] Next to that, every year Russian motor riders from Kaliningrad make the 60-km trip to the Polish city of Braniewo in order to honor Russian soldiers who died during the War and are now buried there. This year, governor Nikolai Tsukanov drove his Harley-Davidson to Braniewo.[23]: this partly illustrates the importance which is assigned to remembering the 'Great Patriotic War' by Russian officials. Related to the importance of this specific war, Russian officials acknowledge the significance of veterans in the history of Kaliningrad. For instance, president Putin also stated the following in his speech at the 750th anniversary of the city:

> "We will never forget the feats of our forebears who outstandingly defended the interests of our Motherland on these Baltic borders on more than one occasion."[24]

Putin does not make clear which 'forebears' he is specifically referring to here, but it seems that the veterans of the Second World War are definitely part of his statement. This is further

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[22] 'Putin's Tanks Draw Cheers in Russian City Jammed Between NATO Nations' by Leonid Ragozin, Bloomberg Business, 11-05-2015, http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-05-11/putin-s-tanks-draw-cheers-in-russian-city-jammed-between-nato-nations, accessed 09-06-2015

[23] 'Motorduivels tarten Poolse gevoelens' by Jan Hunin, De Volkskrant, 30-04-2015

[24] 'Speech at the Celebrations of the 750th Anniversary of Kaliningrad', President of Russia, 02-07-2015, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/23071, accessed 08-06-2015

emphasized by Putin's visit to Kaliningrad in November 2011, during his time as prime minister. He had a meeting with World War II veterans' organizations and other retired military personal, in which the current President of Russia stated that:

> "Our primary task will be to significantly raise allowances and pensions to military personnel."[25]

This statement, among others, makes emphasizes that the military history of Kaliningrad is one of the issues which Russian officials use to try to create a Russian identity in Kaliningrad. Through stimulating the remembrance of the Second World War and the importance of veterans, the Russian government makes the military dimension of Kaliningrad's history into a symbol of the region's Russianness. However, the next chapter will argue that the contemporary military importance of Kaliningrad is more useful for Russian officials as a dimension of nation-building in Kaliningrad.

## 4.2 Contemporary symbols

Next to focusing on history as a symbol of Russianness, Russian officials have also used other symbols for stimulating a Russian 'consciousness' in Kaliningrad. More specifically, the 750th anniversary of the city in 2005 comes forward: during the festivities, there were multiple banners and symbolic titles which pointed to the Russian identity of Kaliningrad. For example, each of the three days of celebration had a motto: two of those mottos were related to Russia, namely 'A Russian city in the heart of Europe' and 'Kaliningrad: Meeting Point of Russia and Europe' (Berger 2010:353). While these mottos were related to Kaliningrad's place inside Europe and the idea of Kaliningrad as a bridge between Russia and Europe, other slogans focused solely on the city's Russian identity. One of the banners seen during the celebrations stated: 'We are not a Russian island, we are one Russia'.[26] Naturally, this is the idea that Russian officials keep in mind and are keen to express when referring to Kaliningrad: the region is not separate but an integral part of the Russian Federation.

### 4.2.1 Orthodoxy in Kaliningrad

Another issue, which has been used to symbolically link Kaliningrad to Russia, has been the Orthodox religion. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Orthodox faith has been revived

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[25] 'Working Day', Archive of the official site of the 2008-2012 prime minister of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, 02-11-2011, http://archive.premier.gov.ru/eng/events/news/16950/, accessed 09-06-2015

[26] 'Kaliningrad marks key anniversary', BBC News, 03-07-2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4645447.stm, accessed 04-06-2015

as an important part of the Russian national identity, as shown in chapter 2. In the case of Kaliningrad, one can see the same development in relation to Orthodoxy in the most recent years. In 2006, during some smaller celebrations of sixty years Kaliningrad under Russian rule, a brand new Orthodox Cathedral was opened in the city. Patriarch Alexy II, who is not a 'real' official but still occupies an important political position in Russia, stated during the opening that the Cathedral emphasized the fact that Kaliningrad is 'Russian, Orthodox land' (Berger 2010:355). President Putin also attended the opening ceremony, showing the importance that the Kremlin imputes to Orthodoxy in the Kaliningrad region. He stated that:

> "This is a significant event for the region and for the whole of Russia because this is another step towards reviving our national spiritual culture from the Baltic Sea to the Pacific Ocean."[27]

The correlation between Russian Orthodox religion and Russian national culture, mentioned by Putin, again emphasizes the symbolic importance of religion in contemporary Russian national identity. Besides that, his statement also reflects the way in which the Orthodox belief is used to relate Kaliningrad to the rest of Russia. By mentioning 'our national spiritual culture' from 'the Baltic Sea to the Pacific Ocean', Putin shows that Russian Orthodoxy unifies the people of Russia, including that of Kaliningrad.

Moreover, other events show the stimulation of the Orthodox faith in Kaliningrad. In 2009 and 2010, many castles and former church buildings (for instance Protestant or Catholic ones) in the region have been reassigned to the Russian Orthodox Church due to a new law. This law describes that religious property which was nationalized after 1917 should be returned to their pre-1917 owners, which is in most cases was the Orthodox Church.[28] While this law is not specifically focused on the Kaliningrad region, it does have consequences in the region because the Orthodox Church became by far the biggest religious 'landowner' and even became more of a 'national' religion in Kaliningrad. Though, the opening of a new Orthodox Church and the take-over of former church buildings have mainly been sole events. In recent years there has not been a consistent and long-lasting stimulation of the Orthodox belief in Kaliningrad.

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[27] 'New Cathedral in Kaliningrad to help friendship in Baltic Region', Sputnik International, 10-09-2006, http://sputniknews.com/russia/20060910/53697772.html, accessed 11-06-2015
[28] 'Rewriting history in Kaliningrad: Facts on the ground' by Vasilijus Safronovas, Eurozine, 20-06-2011, http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2011-06-20-safronovas-en.html, accessed 11-06-2015

### 4.2.2 The World Cup in Kaliningrad

An event that will probably be used by Russian officials for nation-building practices is the World Cup football, which will be held in Russia in 2018. The country's bid won the vote of the FIFA congress in December 2010 and will organize one of the most important sporting events in 2018. In this light, it is interesting to look at the decision by the Russian organization to award Kaliningrad the status of 'host city'. The city is among the eleven cities which will host matches during the tournament, next to Russia's football capitals Moscow and St. Petersburg and other important cities such as Sochi, Kazan and Ekaterinburg. Analyzing Kaliningrad's status as football city, it is actually quite strange that the city will host the World Cup. A whole new stadium, which will harbor 35,000 spectators, will be built in the city. In other cities new stadiums will be built as well; however, in most of these venues a big Russian club will play in that stadium before and after 2018. Kaliningrad's professional team Baltika is not very well-known and in the season 2014/2015, they just barely stayed up in the Second Division of Russian football. In comparison: Krasnodar, which will not be a venue for any matches status, has two major teams (Kuban and FC Krasnodar) playing in the Russian First Division. It seems that one of the reasons for the choice of Kaliningrad as a venue is creating a Russian identity in the region. It shows to the people of Kaliningrad, Russia and the world that the region is a significant part of Russia and is taken into account in such big events. Or, as governor Tsukanov has said:

> "For us, the World Cup isn't just a sporting event. It's a powerful catalyst for wholesale changes to our hotel, transport and sports infrastructure, as well being a powerful driver of inbound tourism and an opportunity to put Kaliningrad on the map in Russia and around the world."[29]

While for the Russian nation the World Cup will be an opportunity to present itself in a positive way to the world, for Kaliningrad it is also an opportunity to put itself on the 'map in Russia' according to Tsukanov. One cannot know what the World Cup will bring for the region, but it seems that it will be used to emphasize the bond between Kaliningrad and Russia.

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[29] 'Russia 2018 could 'revitalise' Kaliningrad's Oktyabrsky Island', FIFA, 27-04-2012, http://www.fifa.com/worldcup/news/y=2012/m=4/news=russia-2018-could-revitalise-kaliningrad-oktyabrsky-island-1621892.html, accessed 11-06-2015

### 4.3 Russian nation-building in Kaliningrad through the 'symbolic' dimension

Nationalism and national identity are concepts which cannot exist without a 'symbolic' dimension: in order to connect people throughout the nation, this nation should have certain symbols which should relate people to one another, as Anderson (2006(1983)) argues. In the case of Russian nation-building in Kaliningrad, one can see that Russian officials try to focus on certain 'common' symbols that unite the region with homeland Russia. This is one of the ways which is mentioned by Guibernau (2007) in which a state can try to build a nation. For instance, the 'military' history of Kaliningrad has come forward as a symbol of this unification. This has also to do with the importance of World War II as a symbol of the overarching Russian national identity: this is a good example of a symbol in which the particularities of Kaliningrad and common Russian symbols come together. Moreover, more contemporary symbols of Russian national identity are also relevant for Kaliningrad. The opening of a new Orthodox Church or the World Cup football in 2018 are used or will be used by Russian officials for the creation of national Russian feelings in the region. It is important to note that mainly specific events have been used in this manner. As this chapter has tried to show, there has not been a *consistent* policy of Russification or stimulation of national symbols in Kaliningrad: Russian authorities have tried to stimulate Russian national symbols in the region over the years, but they have not initiated major projects or developed plans in order to symbolically Russify the Kaliningrad region. In this way, the symbolic dimension is not the most significant dimension of this process in the exclave. In the following two chapters, two other dimensions which have been more significant than the symbolic one will be analyzed: the military and the anti-Western dimension.

## Chapter 5: The military dimension of nation-building in Kaliningrad

"In 2015, the Defense Ministry will focus its efforts on increasing the combat capabilities of its units and increasing combat strength in accordance with the military development plans. Special attention will be given to the groups in Crimea, the Kaliningrad region and the Arctic."

Valery Gerasimov, chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Russia[30]

This chapter will focus on the renewed status of Kaliningrad as a military bastion and the way Russian officials use this as a form of nation-building. When the Kaliningrad region was incorporated into the Soviet Union after World War II, one of the main projects initiated by the Soviet authorities was to turn the region into a military bastion. Until 1991, Kaliningrad's main significance laid in its strategic position; especially the function as base for the Soviet Baltic Fleet made the region important for the Soviet Union's geopolitical position. However, in the 1990s (after the collapse of the Soviet Union) the 'new' Russian Federation was quite a weak state; therefore, it did not have the opportunity to focus on geopolitics too much. For Kaliningrad, this meant that its position as military outpost, which it had occupied for more than forty years, was mostly abandoned by the authorities in Moscow. When Vladimir Putin came to power in 2000, it did not seem if there would be any change in this situation; as shown, Putin referred to the region as a possible 'model of cooperation' between Russia and the European Union. Though, Putin managed to put a hold on Russia's declining position and both in economic and political sense, the country started gaining power again. This also meant that Russia could refocus on geopolitical issues; the war with Georgia in 2008 is often mentioned as the main event in this sense. Related to this, Kaliningrad became a military and strategic post for the Kremlin again.

### 5.1 The reemergence of 'military outpost' Kaliningrad

#### *5.1.1 The US missile defense system*

If we analyze the reemergence of Kaliningrad as a militarily important region for Russia, it is actually the United States' geopolitical strategy that functions as a starting point. After the terrorist attacks of September 11 2001, the US started the 'war on terror' in order to combat Islamic fundamentalists. Whereas the war in Afghanistan was a direct consequence of these attacks on US soil, president Bush later also started a war against Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Moreover, the United States' administration started targeting its 'old enemy' Iran again: they

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[30] 'Russia planning to step up combat capabilities in Crimea, General says', The Moscow Times, 13-01-2015, http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/russia-planning-to-step-up-combat-capabilities-in-crimea-general-says/514301.html, accessed 21-04-2015

accused Iran of developing nuclear weapons which they could use to fight the United States and Europe. Therefore, the US initiated plans on the deployment of a missile defense system in Poland and the Czech Republic in order to counter possible attacks by Iran.[31] Here, Russia comes into the picture. The Russian government had doubts about the intentions of the US in deploying a defense system close to their country. President Dmitri Medvedev formulated Russia's concerns as followed in 2008:

> "From what we have seen in recent years – the creation of a missile defense system, the encirclement of Russia with military bases, the relentless expansion of NATO – we have gotten the clear impression that they are testing our strength."[32]

Although the US government stated that the missile defense system would function against Iran, for the Russian government it was clear that the system would also function as a threat to their own security. Next to that, in August 2008 Russia and Georgia had a short war about the breakaway region of South-Ossetia. Russia was heavily condemned for this war by the United States and the EU, which led to a worsening in relations between the different countries.

### 5.1.2 Missile deployment in Kaliningrad as Russian reaction

In order to react to the possible deployment of American missiles in Poland and the Czech Republic, the Russian administration started expressing the idea of stationing Russian missiles in Kaliningrad. In 2007, one year before the war in Georgia, Russian Defense minister Sergei Ivanov was one of the first officials who warned for the possible deployment of missiles in Kaliningrad in reaction to the United States' plans in Central Europe.[33] In November 2008, the idea of using Kaliningrad again as a military post was also expressed by president Medvedev himself in a speech at the Federal Council:

> "An Iskander missile system will be deployed in the Kaliningrad Region if there is a need to counter the anti-ballistic missile system in Europe."[34]

Whereas during the Soviet period Kaliningrad was separated from Western Europe by Soviet satellite states Poland and East-Germany, it currently lays directly on the border of the NATO and the EU due to Poland's and the Baltic States' membership in both organizations. The

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[31] 'Q&A:US missile defence', BBC News, 20-09-2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6720153.stm, accessed 19-06-2015
[32] 'Russia to deploy missiles near Poland' by Steve Gutterman & Vladimir Isachenkov, SF Gate, 06-11-2008, http://www.sfgate.com/news/article/Russia-to-deploy-missiles-near-Poland-3187024.php, accessed 01-06-2015
[33] 'Russia to deploy missile shield in Kaliningrad region?', RT, 18-09-2007, http://rt.com/news/russia-to-deploy-missile-shield-in-kaliningrad-region/, accessed 21-04-2015
[34] 'Military Proposals', RT, 05-11-2008, http://rt.com/news/military-proposals/, accessed 21-04-2015

threats, made by Ivanov and Medvedev, therefore carry more weight than ever before. For Kaliningrad itself, this meant that the region achieved an important strategic position again inside the Russian Federation. As stated earlier, in the 1990s Kaliningrad suffered economically and a feeling of isolation grew among the population. The expansion of NATO and the EU only further contributed to this feeling; therefore, statements about stationing missiles in Kaliningrad are not only geopolitically useful for Russia, but also create a feeling of importance for the Kaliningrad region. While president Obama dropped the plans of creating a missile defense system in Central Europe in 2009, to which Russia reacted by also dropping its plans for Kaliningrad[35], Russian officials remained focused on the military function of the Kaliningrad region.

## 5.2 Kaliningrad's military function in tensions between Russia and the 'West'

The relations between Russia and the 'West' worsened after the war in Georgia in 2008. The main point of conflict has been the influence which both the US and the EU on one side and Russia on the other side want to have in several countries in the post-Soviet space. The recent war in Eastern Ukraine can be viewed as a consequence of EU-Russia tensions about influence in Ukraine. In light of these tensions, the development of Kaliningrad into a military region again has continued after 2008.

The possible deployment of missiles in the region has remained a topic for Russian officials. On multiple occasions, just as in the period before 2008, officials have talked about this deployment in reaction to a renewed American plan for a missile defense system. For instance, Russian newspaper 'Izvestia' and German newspaper 'Bild' have had reports in 2012 and 2013 on this development.[36][37] Again, no Russian official confirmed the deployment of missiles in the region but kept all options open in order to counter 'Western' plans. Currently, it is still an option: in March 2015, unidentified Russian defense officials stated again that missiles would be sent to

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[35] 'No Need Now For Missiles in Kaliningrad, Russia Says', Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, 19-09-2009, http://www.rferl.org/content/No_Need_Now_For_Missiles_In_Kaliningrad_Russian_Minister_Says/1826567.html, accessed 21-04-2015

[36] 'Russia Puts Antimissile System in Kaliningrad', Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, 07-04-2012, http://www.rferl.org/content/russia_missile_defense_europe_kaliningrad_s-400/24540347.html, accessed 21-04-2015

[37] 'Putin stationiert Raketen für Atomsprengkopfe nahe polnischer Grenze ' by Franz Solms-Laubach, Bild, 14-12-2013, http://www.bild.de/politik/ausland/nuklearwaffe/putin-stationiert-raketen-fuer-atomsprengkoepfe-nahe-polnischer-grenze-33848846.bild.html, accessed 02-06-2015

Kaliningrad.[38] Analyzing this 'geopolitical game', it is clear that it is related to the annexation of Crimea by Russia and the war in Eastern Ukraine.

Although Russian-Western relations were not that good already, the events in Crimea and the east of Ukraine have led to the lowest point in their relations since the Cold War. Economic sanctions have been imposed on each other, among other consequences such as prohibiting certain politicians or businesspeople to travel to the respective countries. Next to that, NATO has increased their presence in the member states which are located close to Russia (Poland and the Baltic States), and has started guarding the borders of these countries with Russia more heavily. Russia, on the other side, has also started increasing its military activity. Valery Gerasimov's statement, which this chapter started with, emphasizes this. He focuses on the Arctic, Crimea and Kaliningrad as 'regions of special attention'. Russia has not only threatened to use Kaliningrad again as a military base, they did actually use Kaliningrad for military activities. Moscow has ordered several military drills in the region, for instance in June and December 2014.[39][40] The drill in December was even initiated by President Putin himself. Kaliningrad was also used as a starting or landing place for several Russian planes to fly over NATO countries, which sometimes were intercepted by NATO patrols.[41] Even more so than in the period between 2006 and 2009, Kaliningrad has become strategically and militarily very important for Russia's geopolitical position vis-à-vis NATO and the EU.

**5.3 Russian nation-building in Kaliningrad through the military dimension**

The previous sections have shown that the reemergence of Kaliningrad as a militarily important region in the minds of Russian officials is related to the geopolitical 'game' between Russia and the 'West'. As the theories by Shevel (2011) and Kolstø (2004) argue, one of the dimensions of nation-building used by the Russian state is the imperial-military dimension. In the case of Kaliningrad, the focus on the strategic importance of the region is also a way to build a Russian identity there. Kaliningrad cannot be a *real* part of this 'imperial nationalism', because it is already

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[38] 'Russia deploying strategic bombers to Crimea, Missiles to Kaliningrad', Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, 17-03-2015, http://www.rferl.org/content/russia--strategic-bombers-crimea-missiles-kaliningrad/26906157.html, accessed 02-06-2015

[39] 'Russia and NATO Flex Muscles at Parallel Baltic War Games', The Moscow Times, 10-06-2014, http://www.themoscowtimes.com/article/russia-and-nato-flex-muscles-at-parallel-baltic-war-games/501812.html, accessed 21-04-2015;

[40] Russia Stages Snap Military Drills in Kaliningrad', The Moscow Times, 16-12-2014, http://www.themoscowtimes.com/article/russia-stages-snap-military-drills-in-kaliningrad/513363.html, accessed 21-04-2015

[41] 'NATO Fighter Jets Intercept Russian Planes over Baltic Sea, Latvia Says', The Moscow Times, 18-03-2015, http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/nato-fighter-jets-intercept-russian-planes-over-baltic-sea-latvia-says/517608.html, accessed 21-04-2015

part of the Russian Federation; this imperial version is mainly focused on Russian influence in its neighboring countries. Though, the geographical location of Kaliningrad is hereby useful for Russian authorities. In this way, they have a region from which they can exert some sort of military influence in Eastern Europe. It gives them access to the Baltic Sea, they have been able to counter the US' plan for a missile defense system with their own plan of stationing missiles in Kaliningrad, and they can threaten several NATO states by increasing military activity in the region. The focus on Kaliningrad as both 'normal' Russian and a particular region inside the country comes forward in this way. The 'imperial' dimension of Russian national identity, as for instance Rogoza (2014) names it, is important in all parts of the country: in this sense, Kaliningrad is not a special region. However, the use of the region as a military base is particularly useful due to Kaliningrad's position inside Russia. Threatening to deploy missiles in for instance Vladivostok would not have the same effect on these 'Western' organizations as it has had in Kaliningrad's case. In this way, Kaliningrad is a special region inside the Russian Federation. This has contributed to the creation of a feeling of significance for the region, despite its geographical distance from 'homeland' Russia. The military dimension is one of the two main area's through which Russian officials try to give Kaliningrad a sense of 'Russianness'; the theory of Posen (1993) on the relation between the military and nationalism comes back in the case of Kaliningrad. The next chapter will focus on the other significant dimension of nation-building in the region, which is also related to the military one: Kaliningrad as a non-Western region. Hereby, the relation between 'commonality' and 'particularity' will come back again.

## Chapter 6: The 'non-Western' dimension of nation-building in Kaliningrad

"We are celebrating the 750th anniversary of Kaliningrad/Koenigsberg as an internal Russian event"[42]

President Vladimir Putin on the celebrations in 2005

This chapter will focus on the way Russian officials have tried to create a sense of 'non-Western' Kaliningrad. As the previous chapter has argued, the Kaliningrad region is 'used' by Russian officials to counter 'Western' military plans. These officials do not only focus on Kaliningrad as a 'non-Western' region in a military sense. In order to create a feeling of Russianness in the region which is more important than the regional identity there, it is necessary for them to constantly remind people in the region itself, in the whole Russian Federation and in the surrounding European countries that Kaliningrad is part of Russia. Russian officials need, for instance, to distinct the region from its German past or from its geographical close neighbors in the Baltic Area. The theories of Kolstø (2004) and Duncan (2005), which state that contemporary Russian identity has become 'anti-Western', come back in the case of Kaliningrad. Therefore, this dimension of nation-building in the region also illustrates the position of Kaliningrad between 'commonality' and 'particularity'.

### 6.1 The 750th anniversary of Königsberg/Kaliningrad

The celebration of the 750th anniversary of the city is a good example of the anti-Western dimension of nation-building in the Kaliningrad region. In 2005, it would be 750 years ago that Königsberg was founded as a German settlement. Already in 2001, the Kaliningrad Cultural Association called for a celebration of the anniversary (Berger 2010:350). Authorities in Kaliningrad decided in 2003 that they wanted to celebrate this anniversary in style. However, the central government in Moscow was not so eager to celebrate the long history of the city, of which only sixty years had been under Soviet/Russian rule. Celebrating 750 years of Königsberg/Kaliningrad would also mean that the German background of the city could be rediscovered, something that Russian officials have been wary of. Therefore, the Kremlin rejected the idea of a celebration in 2005 and instead proposed to celebrate sixty years of Kaliningrad in 2006.[43] Despite this rejection, several lobby groups (for instance, 'Zemlyachestvo-

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[42] 'Kaliningrad marks key anniversary', BBC News, 03-07-2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4645447.stm, accessed 04-06-2015

[43] 'Kremlin Pulls the Plug on Kaliningrad Bash' by Oksana Yablokovo, The Moscow Times, 20-05-2003, http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/kremlin-pulls-the-plug-on-kaliningrad-bash/238401.html, accessed 04-06-2015

Kaliningrad' from Moscow and 'Pro-Königsberg' from Kaliningrad) kept pushing for the celebration of the anniversary, together with local authorities such as major Yuri Savenko. Ultimately, president Putin gave in and announced that the Kremlin would support the celebrations in 2005 (Berger 2010:350-351).

The chapter on the symbolic dimension of nation-building already illustrated the way in which the anniversary was used to construct a symbolic Russian identity of the city. The celebrations were also used by Moscow to remind Kaliningrad's neighbors Poland and Lithuania of the region's Russian background. Whereas president Putin invited the German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and the French President Jacques Chirac to the celebrations in July 2005, the presidents of Poland (Aleksander Kwasniewski) and Lithuania (Valdas Adamkus) were not invited to come to Kaliningrad.[44] Officials from both countries expressed their displeasure with this decision and wondered why the French and German leaders did get an invitation. The statement by Vladimir Putin on the top of this chapter was a reaction to these Polish and Lithuanian concerns. His Minister of Foreign affairs, Sergei Lavrov, also explained why the two presidents were not invited:

> "The Kaliningrad anniversary celebration is a primarily Russian event... (The meeting between Putin, Schröder and Chirac) is a separate event within the context of an established political dialogue."[45]

According to Lavrov, Schröder and Chirac were not specifically invited for the celebrations, but had planned a meeting with president Putin beforehand. However, it is quite odd not to invite the leaders of the two closest countries to Kaliningrad, which are also quite important for the region in an economic and political sense. It seems that the authorities in Moscow wanted to use the anniversary, which they earlier blocked, to show Lithuania and Poland that they should not try to interfere with Russia's business in Kaliningrad. Several experts on the region have related not inviting Poland's and Lithuania's presidents to earlier incidents. For instance, the Lithuanian president had refused to attend the Second World War anniversary celebrations in Moscow and the Polish president had supported the pro-Western president candidate Viktor Yushchenko during the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004.[46] In this way, Kaliningrad was used for geopolitical reasons by Russia, just as the previous chapter has argued in relation to the military

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[44] 'Russia: Putin meets German, French Leaders in Kaliningrad' by Valentinas Mite, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, 03-07-2005, http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1059652.html, accessed 21-04-2015

[45] 'Slavs are fighting among themselves. Kaliningrad anniversary celebrations causes quarrel between Russia and Poland', The Current Digest of the Russian Press, 27-07-2005

[46] Russia: Putin meets German, French Leaders in Kaliningrad' by Valentinas Mite, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, 03-07-2005, http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1059652.html, accessed 21-04-2015

dimension of nation-building. Though, not inviting the region's neighbors also had do with the 'non-European' or 'non-Western' image of Kaliningrad that Russian authorities have tried to create.

## 6.2 Russian anti-Western 'practices' in Kaliningrad

Next to the issue of the 750th anniversary of Kaliningrad, Russian officials have used other ways to build a non-Western identity of Kaliningrad. Hindering foreign officials, the focus on non-Western migrants to come to the region and the creation of an image of the 'West' as stimulating separatism have come up in this sense.

### 6.2.1 Foreign officials in Kaliningrad

To start with, the local authorities in Kaliningrad have tried to hinder foreign officials to do their job or even accused neighboring countries of spying. In 2004, the newly appointed German consul-general Sommer had to wait for a very long time to get an appropriate building to do his work in Kaliningrad; six months after his appointment, he was still working from a hotel. According to some analysts, authorities made it deliberately hard for the consul because his work would help people to obtain German visas more easily.[47] Next to that, the FSB (Federal Security Service of Russia) accused an official from Kaliningrad of spying for neighbor Lithuania in 2006.[48] These kinds of tricks are also seen in other places in Russia; for instance, an alleged Estonian spy was arrested on the border with Russia at the end of 2014 and diplomats in Moscow and other places have been hindered in recent years. In this sense, the Kaliningrad region is no different; only these two cases officials of specific countries were targeted that, in Russia's eyes, were possible interfering in Kaliningrad's affairs.

### 6.2.2 Migration and travelling to and from Kaliningrad

Moreover, several Russian officials have made more concrete statements in which they envisioned Kaliningrad as a non-Western region. Feliks Lapin stated in 2006, during his time as regional economic minister of Kaliningrad, that he wanted to attract more immigrants to the region:

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[47] 'No Building for German consulate' by Vladimir Kovalev, The Moscow Times, 30-08-2004, http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/no-building-for-german-consulate/228704.html, accessed 05-06-2015

[48] 'Russia detains 'Lithuanian Spy', BBC News, 24-10-2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6080740.stm, accessed 05-06-2015

> "We're advertising all over the former Soviet Union, among the Russian diaspora in Kazakhstan and in the Caucasus."[49]

It is interesting to analyze the regions which Lapin mentions. The former Soviet Union is a huge area, which also includes countries close to Kaliningrad such as Belarus, Ukraine, the Baltic States and naturally Russia; it is an obvious region to mention for Lapin. However, Kazakhstan and the Caucasus are quite far away from the exclave; Poland, Germany and the Czech Republic are much closer. For Polish workers coming from Gdansk, the trip to Kaliningrad would take a few hours; for ethnic Russians from Astana, it would be a trip of over 4000 kilometers. Lapin's focus on these regions carries the message that they are not looking for Polish or German migrants to come to Kaliningrad. Authorities in Kaliningrad probably think that these 'Western' migrants would decrease Kaliningrad's Russian identity and maybe contribute to a more European identity of the region. In relation to Lapin's statements, other officials have made references to holidays and travelling in order to counter possible other identities of the region. Sergei Ivanov, then first deputy prime-minister of Russia, urged Russians in 2007 to 'not to go on holiday to Estonia, but go instead to our Kaliningrad for a holiday'.[50] Again, this had partly to do with geopolitics: Russia reacted to the Estonian plan to remove the Bronze Soldier monument (commemorating the victory of the Red Army in Second World War). Moreover, Ivanov also created an image of Kaliningrad as the Russian alternative to the 'European' Estonia. Furthermore, the Russian government has launched the so-called 'We Are Russians' program in Kaliningrad to promote travelling to other regions in the Russian Federation. Analyzing the problem of travels from Kaliningrad and the idea of the program, mayor Alexander Yaroshuk stated in 2012:

> "This is our first problem. We are in the heart of Europe, and have a generation of people who have never been to Russia. But from childhood they have been making weekend trips to Poland, Lithuania or Germany. … (on 'We are Russians program') Schools file applications and during holidays, we take pupils to Russia by train and plain, show them Moscow and St. Petersburg, the Kremlin and Red Square."[51]

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[49] 'Kaliningrad erases stains of past', BBC News, 16-10-2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6048708.stm, accessed 04-06-2015

[50] 'Russians advised to shun Estonia', BBC News, 03-04-2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6522377.stm, accessed 05-06-2015

[51] 'Authorities fear separatism with a European face' by Olesya Gerasimenko, Russia Beyond the Headlines, 25-09-2012, http://rbth.co.uk/articles/2012/09/25/authorities_fear_separatism_with_a_european_face_18537.html, accessed 04-06-2015

Yaroshuk describes the fact that people in Kaliningrad rather visit Poland, Lithuania or Germany instead of Russia as a 'problem' here. Taking children to see Moscow and St. Petersburg, the authorities try to create a feeling among the people of Kaliningrad that they form a community with the rest of Russia. By doing so, they hope to reduce (as the article states[52]) possible 'separatist' feelings inside the region.

### 6.2.3 'Separatism' coming from Europe

This issue of 'separatism' has also been used in other cases by Russian officials to distinct Kaliningrad from the 'West'. Dimitry Rogozin, who is currently the deputy prime-minister of the Russian Federation, has occupied the position of Special representative of the President of the Russian Federation for the Kaliningrad region for some time. He stated, in an interview in 2010 about Russia-EU negotiations on Kaliningrad, that some European negotiators had other plans:

> "As they say, I do not want to point my finger at anybody … But I had some information that, in the EU, a number of 'political players' considered the Kaliningrad situation an occasion to stimulate the separatist attitudes in the region."

> (Smirnov 2010:53)

Rogozin actually does point his finger to some EU officials, who would have tried to stimulate other identities than the Russian one in Kaliningrad during the negotiations with Russia. More recently, governor Nikolai Tsukanov of Kaliningrad accused Western special services in 2014 of sending in activists from Poland in order to start a revolution like the one in Ukraine:

> "It was no secret for anyone that Western special services are working to unleash a Maidan in Kaliningrad."[53]

In this case, the influence of the conflict in Ukraine comes back in relation to Kaliningrad; just as it was the case in relation to the military dimension of Russian nation-building. It seems highly unlikely that Western special services are actually sending in activists to 'unleash a Maidan' in Kaliningrad. Tsukanov seems to contribute here to the flow of Russian anti-Western propaganda in relation to Ukraine's revolution since it started at the end of 2013. Though, it is remarkable that a Russian official refers to the 'West' as a possible stimulating force of separatism in

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[52] 'Authorities fear separatism with a European face' by Olesya Gerasimenko, Russia Beyond the Headlines, 25-09-2012, http://rbth.co.uk/articles/2012/09/25/authorities_fear_separatism_with_a_european_face_18537.html, accessed 04-06-2015

[53] 'Kaliningrad Governor Says West Sending Maidan Activists into Russian Regions to Spark Dissent' by Paul Goble, The Interpreter, 03-07-2014, http://www.interpretermag.com/kaliningrad-governor-says-west-sending-maidan-activists-into-russian-regions-to-spark-dissent/, accessed 29-05-2015

Kaliningrad again. In this way, they try to create an image of the 'West' or the EU as an enemy of Russia and in specific Kaliningrad. The recent decision by Moscow to short up the express-visa program on January 1 2015 can also be related to this image; before 2015, citizens of the UK, Japan and the Schengen zone could obtain short three-day visas at the Kaliningrad airport or at two border crossings.[54] Now, these citizens have to obtain a 'regular' Russian visa to enter Kaliningrad. Although the real reasons behind this decision (which was opposed by local authorities) are unclear, it seems that the central authorities stopped the program in order to hinder Europeans to come to Kaliningrad.

## 6.3 Russian nation-building in Kaliningrad through the 'non-Western' dimension

In sum, both central and local Russian authorities have tried to create a non-Western image of Kaliningrad in recent years. Whereas in the early years after the collapse of the Soviet Union Russia looked to Europe and the United States in building a liberal democracy, the economic crisis led to a feeling of betrayal by the 'West' among Russians (Duncan 2005). This is also reflected in the Russian national identity and in the creation of a Russian identity in Kaliningrad. Here, the place of Kaliningrad in-between 'commonality' and 'particularity' is visible again. On one side, it is especially important to show that Kaliningrad is not European or does not has a special identity which is different than the overarching Russian one. Russian officials tried to create a 'Russian' 750th anniversary of the city by referring to it as an internal celebration and not inviting neighbors Poland and Lithuania. Next to that, in relation to immigrants, travelling and possible separatist movements, Russian officials have tried to ignore Western countries or create an image of the 'West' as a negative, interfering force in Kaliningrad's issues. In this way, the Western countries are portrayed as the 'Other'. This is related to the creation of a national identity, just as theory of Eriksen (2010) states. In the specific case of Russian national identity, Kolstø (2004) has argued that the West has been used in contrast to Russia. The theories by Eriksen and Kolstø come together in the case of Kaliningrad: the 'common' idea of Russia as anti-Western relates the region to the whole Russian Federation. On the other side, the image of the 'West' as some sort of enemy is also particularly useful in Kaliningrad's case, due to the exclave's geographical closeness to the EU and NATO countries. This image will be less useful in nation-building practices in other parts of Russia. For instance, in Southern Siberia or the Far East of Russia nation-building issues have probably much more to do with China, Japan and other Asian countries. This illustrates that the anti-Western dimension of nation-building is also

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[54] 'Russia Ends Express-Visa Program for Kaliningrad', Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, 01-01-2015, http://www.rferl.org/content/russia-visas-kaliningrad/26772559.html, accessed 21-04-2015

particularly relevant for Russian authorities in creating a Russian identity in the Kaliningrad region.

# Conclusion

This thesis has shown in what way Russian officials have tried to build a Russian identity in Kaliningrad since Vladimir Putin came to power in 2000. The main theoretical focus was based on the question of Russian national identity and the broader theories of nations and nationalism. The analysis of the nation-building project in Kaliningrad has drawn on two main arguments from these broader theories. First, the *political* character of nationalism has been emphasized by authors like Gellner and Anderson: although the political side of nationalism cannot be its only dimension, politics and nationalism are strongly correlated. Secondly, the *ability* to construct national identity has come forward from different theories and is one of the main reasons for the remained significance of nationalism in the contemporary, globalizing world. These two conceptual arguments together formed the background of the 'political' Russian nation-building practices in the Kaliningrad region.

Russian national identity has been under construction since Russia became an independent country in 1991. Several authors have named the search for a coherent Russian national identity as the 'Russian Question', whereby multiple definitions of the Russian nation have come forward. This forces Russian state officials to focus on different definitions of 'Russianness' in the process of nation-building. Whereas some argue that this is problematic, it is also useful: Russian officials have had the opportunity to create a feeling of 'Russianness' on the basis of particular issues relevant for specific regions. This has been visible in the case of Kaliningrad, as this thesis argues. Historically and geographically distinct, the exclave occupies a special place inside the Russian Federation. Russian officials have referred to the Kaliningrad region as being 'normal' Russian in a particular situation. In this sense, three dimensions of Russian nation-building have been visible in the nation-building process in Kaliningrad analyzing the statements of Russian authorities: the symbolic, the military-imperial, and the anti-Western dimension of Russian national-identity.

The 'symbolic' dimension of Russian nation-building is one of the areas which have been used by these authorities in Kaliningrad. Both historical and more contemporary Russian symbols have stimulated the Russian identity in the exclave; for instance, the remembrances of the Second World War and the Russian Orthodox Church have been useful in this sense. Within this dimension, it is obvious that common Russian symbols and particular symbols of the region come together. However, the stimulation of symbols has not been the most noteworthy part of the nation-building process in Kaliningrad: there has not been a consistent Russifying policy in the region. Rather, certain specific events have been used in this sense. The military dimension

has for instance been more important in creating a feeling of Russianness in Kaliningrad. Since Russia has regained its position in the international arena and has started focusing on geopolitics again, Kaliningrad has become a military outpost for the country (just as it was during Soviet times). The possible deployment of missiles has been widely discussed by Russian officials, and the region has been used multiple times for military drills since the start of the conflict in Ukraine. In this way, Russia gives the Kaliningrad region a feeling of significance and importance inside the country. The region's place between 'commonality' and 'particularity' is visible in this military dimension: Kaliningrad's military importance is related to its distinct geographical position, but also has to do with the growing importance of 'imperialism' in Russia's national identity. Next to the military dimension, Russian officials have focused on the 'anti-Western' dimension of Russian national-identity in the region. In relation to different events and situations, these officials have created an image of the West as the 'Other' for Kaliningrad. In this way, they have tried to distinct the region from their EU and NATO neighbors. Again, commonality and particularity come together: Russia's national identity has been constructed in contrast to the 'West' in recent years, which is also useful in Kaliningrad's case because of its closeness to Europe.

In sum, the main idea coming from this thesis is that the way in which Russian officials have stimulated the nation-building process in Kaliningrad lies between 'commonality' and 'particularity'. On one side, it is necessary for the authorities to relate the Russian nation-building process to particular issues relevant for the Kaliningrad region. Due to the region's distinct place, officials who want to stimulate Russian identity in the exclave have to take Kaliningrad's particular situation into account. On the other side, these officials cannot focus solely on issues that are only relevant for the region; otherwise, the regional identity of Kaliningrad would be stimulated too much and separatist movements could rise. Russian officials have to find a balance between these two sides. The nation-building practices are therefore focused on dimensions of Russian national identity that are both relevant for Kaliningrad and for the whole Russian Federation. In this way, Kaliningrad can be related to homeland Russia without neglecting its special situation.

This conclusion has implications for both the study of Russian national identity and the study of nation-building practices in exclaves or specific distinct regions. In the case of Russian national identity, it points towards the argument that Russia's enormous size and the uncertainty about its national identity forces officials to take local elements in account while creating a 'common' Russian identity in different parts of the country. In the case of the study of exclaves and distinct

regions, this thesis has shown that particular circumstances cannot be the only point of focus in nation-building practices by the 'homeland'. However, more research is needed to further contribute to the arguments of this thesis. In the case of Russia, other regions such as Chechnya or the Primorsky Krai (the Vladivostok region) could be researched on this topic. When taking Russian sources into account as well, this could provide different insights or outcomes on the process of Russian nation-building. In relation to exclaves, other cases such as Spanish Ceuta and Melilla or French Guyana could be researched on this topic in order to draw more general conclusions. Ultimately, this will lead to more understanding of the process nation-building in specific regions, something which for instance the study of Russian nation-building slightly lacks at the moment in the author's eyes. In this sense, the analysis of the case of Kaliningrad has tried to contribute to the understanding of the way in which the process of nation-building takes place in these kinds of specific regions.

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# Appendix 1: List of quoted Russian officials

Gerasimov, Valery Vasilevich (1955)

- chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Russia, 2012 - current

Ivanov, Sergei Borisovich (1953)

- Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation, 2001 – 2007
- (First) Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, 2007 – 2008, 2008 – 2011
- Chief of the Presidential Administration of the Russian Federation, 2011 - current

Lapin, Feliks Feliksovich (1958)

- Minister of Economy of the Kaliningrad *Oblast,* 2005 - 2008
- Head of Administration of the city of Kaliningrad, 2008 - 2010

Lavrov, Sergei Viktorovich (1950)

- Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2004 – current

Medvedev, Dmitri Anatolyevich (1965)

- President of the Russian Federation, 2008 – 2012
- Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, 2012 - current

Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich (1952)

- President of the Russian Federation, 2000-2008, 2012 – current
- Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, 2008-2012

Rogozin, Dimitry Olegovich (1963)

- Special representative of the President of the Russian Federation for the Kaliningrad region, 2002 – 2004
- Ambassador of the Russian Federation to NATO, 2008 – 2011
- Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, 2011- current

Savenko, Yuri Alekseevich (1961)

- Mayor of the city of Kaliningrad, 1998 - 2007

Smirnova, Alexandra Viktorovna (1979)

- Minister of Economy of the Kaliningrad *Oblast,* 2008-2010

Tsukanov, Nikolai Nikolayevich (1965)

- Governor of the Kaliningrad *Oblast,* 2010 – current

Yaroshuk, Alexander Georgievich (1965)

- Mayor of the city of Kaliningrad, 2007 - current

## Appendix 2 : maps of Kaliningrad



**Figure 2: Map of the Kaliningrad *Oblast***

Source: http://www.russianworldforums.com/photos/RUSSIA/Kaliningrad_region/map.jpg
(accessed 26-06-2015)



**Figure 3: Map of the Russian Federation with Kaliningrad marked in red**

Source : http://www.russianlessons.net/russia/kaliningrad/ (accessed 25-06-2015)