Countering Hybrid Warfare: Mapping Social Contracts to Reinforce Societal Resiliency in Estonia and Beyond

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Kremlin-backed hybrid warfare — a whole-of-society warfare on the political, economic, and social fabric of societies — has put states in the Kremlin's crosshairs on high alert. These states remain vulnerable to hybrid threats partly because they lack appropriate tools to identify and mitigate efforts that foment political instability. Motive International developed the Social Contract Assessment Tool (SCAT) and applied a society-centric analysis in Estonia to evaluate vulnerability to or resilience against hybrid threats. Our research revealed that ethnic-Russian Estonians who speak Russian as the primary household language perceive institutions that embrace their dual identity as Estonian citizens *and* as ethnic Russians as legitimate and perceive institutions that challenge this dual identity as divisive. This research demonstrated the utility of the SCAT to characterize social cohesion relevant to national policy, security, and civil resistance efforts in the context of hybrid warfare.

Kremlin-backed hybrid warfare has put states in Russia's sphere of influence and crosshairs on high alert. While there remains no definitional consensus, Mark Galeotti has defined Russian hybrid warfare, "rightly or (probably) wrongly ... [as] the art of a style of warfare that combines the political, economic, social and kinetic ... that recognizes no boundaries between civilian and combatant, covert and overt, war and peace."[1] Fomenting political instability, chaos, doubt, and disaffection between a state and its society — and within a state's society — is not new, but how these effects are pursued in the modern era is. Contemporary hybrid tacticians include not just soldiers and spies, but cyber trolls, reporters, investors, and nongovernmental organizations. Russia's hybrid theater is vast, spanning its western border and near-abroad in South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Crimea, Donbas, Estonia, and Belarus, while reaching as far as the United States and Syria.[2] Russian government hybrid campaigns support the so-called Primakov Doctrine, which seeks a Russo-dominated world hinging on Eurasian integration and primacy in the post-Soviet era.[3]

To thwart such efforts, states have postured for defense by joining multilateral security alliances, preparing domestic resistance units, and creating new cyber and intelligence capabilities within their national security bureaucracies. But such initiatives remain predominantly confined to the security realm. This leaves states largely defenseless against Kremlin hybrid tactics that target civilian (non-military) institutions with the aim of disrupting social cohesion. Indeed, if the *modus operandi* of hybrid warfare is to avoid outright military conflict, at least initially, and instead conduct a whole-of-society war on the political, economic, and social fabric of states, then resistance and defense should, too, be pursued in a whole-of-society manner.

Current frameworks and tools for assessing and responding to hybrid threats beyond the security domain are insufficient. Despite the numerous documented successes of Russian-backed election meddling, cyber attacks on public and private

1   Mark Galeotti, *Russian Political War: Moving Beyond the Hybrid* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 8.

2   Anthony H. Cordesman, *Chronology of Possible Russian Gray Area and Hybrid Warfare Operations*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Dec. 8, 2020, 15, https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/200702_Burke_Chair_Russian_Chronology.pdf; Mason Richey, "Contemporary Russian Revisionism: Understanding the Kremlin's Hybrid Warfare and the Strategic and Tactical Deployment of Disinformation," *Asia Europe Journal*, no. 16 (2018): 101–13, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-017-0482-5; and Yimin Zhou, "A Double-Edged Sword: Russia's Hybrid Warfare in Syria," *Asian Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies* 13, no. 2, (2019): 246–61, https://doi.org/10.1080/25765949.2019.1605570.

3   Eugene Rumer, *The Primakov (Not Gerasimov) Doctrine in Action*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 2019, https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Rumer_PrimakovDoctrine_final1.pdf.

institutions, media manipulation, and disruption of financial sectors,[4] there is a dearth of research and proven, scalable analytical frameworks and tools that can help states to identify the societal targets of hybrid warfare and counter these hybrid threats at the societal level. There is a particular need for tools that can effectively identify social cleavages and institutions that render states vulnerable and are thus among the most likely targets of Kremlin-backed hybrid tactics.

Luke Coffey, director of the Heritage Foundation's Allison Center, asserted that countering hybrid warfare demands a preventive approach to detect and deter hybrid threats. After participating in an exercise on a hybrid warfare scenario in Lithuania, Coffey concluded,

> Hybrid warfare is something that has to be prevented or deterred. It cannot be easily defeated. Once the social, political and economic conditions exist to allow hybrid tactics to be effective, it is probably too late to stop it. Hybrid wars have to be won before they're even fought. To do this, countries with Russian minorities (or any minority group that is at risk of being marginalized in society) in central and eastern Europe need to create the conditions that deny Russia the effective use of hybrid tactics.[5]

How can state and nonstate actors, both within and beyond the security sector, effectively deny — or, when needed, counter — Kremlin efforts to manipulate, divide, and exploit their societies? Heeding Coffey's warning, we propose a novel society-centric analytic approach and interview tool, the Social Contract Assessment Tool (SCAT), which draws on social contract theory as an analytical framework to evaluate the strength and nature of social contracts. It does this by examining the nuanced contours of the legitimacy — or lack thereof — that underpins those contracts. In the context of hybrid warfare, this approach can help to identify and characterize societal divisions that are vulnerable to hybrid threats, while helping to identify institutions that are positioned to bolster social cohesion and therefore resilience to tactics intended to divide and weaken societies. Designed and tested in multiple academic, policy, and operational settings, the SCAT translates Enlightenment-era social contract theory and seminal literature on social cohesion and stability into a tool that can easily be adopted and employed by a range of state and nonstate actors.

To demonstrate the SCAT's value as a missing piece of the counter-hybrid warfare effort, this article presents the findings of research on the application of this innovative tool in Estonia. In the spring of 2019, we, in our affiliation with the social enterprise Motive International, conducted field research to highlight societal vulnerabilities to Kremlin-backed hybrid threats. We did this by identifying institutions with relevant social contracts across Estonian society that might be targets of hybrid tactics or that have the potential to bolster societal resilience to hybrid threats. Based on a literature review and consultations with experts on hybrid warfare in the Baltic region, both of which frequently alleged that ethnic-Russian Estonians are an exploitable population that is targeted by Kremlin hybrid operatives, we focused our inquiry on the relationship between Russian-speaking Estonians and the Estonian government, and between Russian-speaking Estonians and the nonstate institutions that play a significant role in their lives and society.[6]

Our aim was to collect objective data that could inform unbiased policies and resilience strategies, and to challenge overly simplistic assumptions that vilify this minority group of Estonians. We analyzed the societal cleavages within Estonian society and the social contracts of numerous institutions, uncovering important — and in some cases paradoxical — findings. For example, integration programs run by the government of Estonia, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) community relations efforts, and even donor-funded contemporary arts initiatives — all intended to improve the social contract between Russian-speaking Estonians and the Estonian state — had the opposite effect,

4   Susan Davis, *Russian Meddling in Elections and Referenda in the Alliance*, NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Science and Technology Committee General Report, Nov. 18, 2018, https://www.nato-pa.int/download-file?filename=sites/default/files/2018-11/181%20STC%2018%20E%20fin%20-%20RUSSIAN%20MEDDLING%20-%20DAVIS%20REPORT.pdf; Scott J. Shackelford, et al., "From Russia with Love: Understanding the Russian Cyber Threat to U.S. Critical Infrastructure and What to Do About It," *Nebraska Law Review* 96, no. 2 (2017): 320–38, https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nlr/vol96/iss2/5; Elizabeth Bodine-Baron, et al., *Countering Russian Social Media Influence*, RAND Corporation, 2018, https://doi.org/10.7249/RR2740); and Tuukka Elonheimo, "Comprehensive Security Approach in Response to Russian Hybrid Warfare," *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 15, no. 3 (Fall 2021): 113–37, https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/SSQ/documents/Volume-15_Issue-3/Elonheimo.pdf.

5   Luke Coffey, "How to Defeat Hybrid Warfare Before It Starts," *Defense One*, Jan. 21, 2019, https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2019/01/how-defeat-hybrid-warfare-it-starts/154296/.

6   For the purpose of this research, Russian-speaking Estonians refers to those who: 1) are residents of Estonia (either full citizens, visa-holding residents, or gray passport holders); 2) are ethnically Russian; 3) primarily (or exclusively) speak Russian in their private lives and may or may not know the Estonian language; and 4) may or may not be considered integrated.

alienating this population due to misalignments between the values emphasized by these institutions and those perceived as legitimate by Russian-speaking Estonians.

We believe our findings have important implications for the Estonian government, the European Union, NATO, and international actors deeply invested in countering Russian aggression in the Baltics (including the U.S. government), as well as for civil society and private sector institutions in Estonia. Our research enabled us to identify specific policy and pragmatic opportunities for these states, organizations, and institutions to mitigate hybrid threats, prevent the deepening of exploitable societal divisions, and bolster resilience to Kremlin-backed attacks on Estonian society. At the time of publication, some institutions have already acted on our research findings, demonstrating the benefits of applying a whole-of-society analytical framework and tool such as the SCAT.

The first section of this article examines the concept of Kremlin-backed hybrid warfare and the centrality of social cohesion to countering hybrid warfare, followed by a consideration of gaps in current approaches to countering hybrid warfare. We then focus on Estonia, beginning with a brief overview of the state's vulnerability to Kremlin-backed hybrid threats based on its geopolitical history and marginalized ethnic-Russian minority population. This is followed by a brief discussion of the concept of social cohesion through the lens of social contract theory and how we apply the SCAT to identify vulnerabilities in the state-society social contract. We then present our findings from fieldwork in Estonia, identifying the sources of legitimacy for relevant institutions and their social contracts that increase or mitigate Estonia's vulnerability to Kremlin-backed hybrid threats. We conclude by urging vulnerable societies and their allies to embrace a whole-of-society counter-hybrid warfare approach and to use a field-proven tool, such as the SCAT, which offers precision in analyzing societal vulnerabilities to hybrid warfare that no other tool offers.

Russian Hybrid Warfare: A Whole-of-Society Threat

The so-called Primakov Doctrine guides the Kremlin's foreign policy (and to this end, its defense policy), and sets forth its goals: to systematically transition toward a multipolar world to counterbalance America's unipolar dominance; to establish Russia's primacy in the post-Soviet space; and to counter NATO's expansion.[7] Because of Russia's disadvantages in conventional warfare and relative deftness in the information, political, and human spheres of conflict, the Kremlin is pursuing these goals by "bypass[ing] or neutralize[ing] much of the West's undoubted capabilities and superiorities."[8] One such tool the Kremlin is using to achieve its foreign policy objectives is hybrid warfare, something that has been attributed by some to the Russian Chief of the General Staff Gen. Valery Gerasimov.[9] Russian leaders do not consider the forms and concepts of hybrid warfare to be military doctrine.[10] In fact, they first used the concept of hybrid warfare to describe threats that they believed they faced from the West.[11]

Most definitions of Russian hybrid warfare include the intended ends and means of such an approach. In one scholar's definition, the ends are "to influence the politics and policies of countries in the West and elsewhere and/or to create a pretext for overt, conventional military action," and the means are "capturing territory without resorting to overt or conventional military force through, as witnessed in Crimea 2014, the use of these elite troops, in conjunction with an information warfare campaign and the deployment of loyal Russian proxies."[12] The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, a NATO-aligned think tank, also defines hybrid warfare in relation to its ends, which are "to undermine or harm a target by influencing its decision-making at the local, regional, state or institutional level ... [by] deliberately target[ing] democratic states' and institutions' systemic vulnerabilities," and its means, which are comprised of "coordinated and synchronized action ... through a wide range of means (political, economic, military, civil and information), [that] exploit the thresholds of detection and attribution as well as the different interfaces (war-peace,

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7   Rumer, *The Primakov (Not Gerasimov) Doctrine.*

8   Galeotti, *Russian Political War*, 8.

9   Galeotti, *Russian Political War*, 8; and Rumer, *The Primakov (Not Gerasimov) Doctrine.*

10   Michael Kofman, "Russian Hybrid Warfare and Other Dark Arts," *War on the Rocks,* March 11, 2016, https://www.warontherocks.com/2016/03/russian-hybrid-warfare-and-other-dark-arts/; and Charles K. Bartles, "Getting Gerasimov Right," *Military Review* 96, no.1 (January-February 2016): *30–38,* https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/military-review/Archives/English/MilitaryReview_20160228_art009.pdf.

11   Bettina Renz, "Russia and 'Hybrid Warfare,'" *Contemporary Politics* 22, no. 3 (2020): 283–300, https://doi.org/10.1080/13569775.2016.1201316.

12   Christopher S. Chivvis, "Understanding Russian 'Hybrid Warfare' and What Can be Done About It," Testimony for Committee on Armed Services, United States House of Representatives, RAND Corporation, March 22, 2017, 2, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/CT400/CT468/RAND_CT468.pdf.

internal-external, local-state, national-international, friend-enemy)."[13]

Within U.S. and NATO military literature and doctrine, hybrid warfare is closely related to irregular warfare and gray-zone operations. Irregular warfare involves "a violent struggle among state and nonstate actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s)" — the ends — and "favors indirect and asymmetric approaches, though it may employ the full range of military and other capabilities"[14] — the means. Gray-zone operations involve using "covert or illegal activities of nontraditional statecraft that are below the threshold of armed organized violence" — the means — with the end goal being the "disruption of order, political subversion of government or non-governmental organizations, psychological operations, abuse of legal processes and financial corruption as part of an integrated design to achieve strategic advantage."[15] Hybrid warfare has also been related to the Russian military term "nonlinear warfare,"[16] which calls for "the broad use of political, economic, informational, humanitarian and other nonmilitary measures" — the means — and in part, seeks to weaponize "the protest potential of the population" — the ends. [17]

We recognize that there is no definitional consensus on hybrid warfare, much less the Kremlin's specific brand of it. This article does not aim to settle ongoing definitional debates about hybrid warfare or related concepts. It simply recognizes that the Kremlin is employing largely (although not exclusively) non-military means against non-military targets to undermine social cohesion and weaken state authority in support of its political agenda. With or without definitional consensus, this compels us to investigate and seek tools to counter this threat.

Consistent with the Kremlin's own concept of using nonlinear warfare to harness the protest potential of a population, we contend that a key objective of Kremlin-backed hybrid warfare is to sow chaos by disrupting a state government's relationship with its society (the state-society social contract) and by disrupting relationships along the societal cleavages within the state (social contracts within and between different populations within the state's society). This is done by pursuing objectives beyond the conventional military realm, giving credence to Galeotti's observation that hybrid warfare is better understood as political warfare.[18] But this goes a step further to assert that social contracts — the implicit or explicit pacts that organize and bond societies — are the actual targets of hybrid tactics. These compacts exist throughout the political, economic, social, cultural, and ethnic fabric of society. Therefore, identifying and countering hybrid threats demands a truly whole-of-society approach that considers the strength and nature of state and nonstate social contracts and how each may be targeted for disruption by hybrid tacticians.

Disrupting social contracts ultimately requires undermining the sources of legitimacy that individuals vested in that contract collectively value and have mutually agreed to. For a state-society social contract, this could mean exacerbating or highlighting the absence of shared values between a government and certain members of society, the inability of a government to meet the performance expectations of its people, or the ineffective mechanisms that the government uses to facilitate discourse.[19] The Kremlin-guided effort in eastern Ukraine to convince ethnic-Russian minorities that the state government is hostile to the national identity of its Russian minority populations, and is thus illegitimate, illustrates this approach well. Challenging or disrupting the state-society social contract in this way may be insufficient on its own to spark protest or rebellion, but it sets the stage for additional hybrid tactics that confer influence and advantage to the Kremlin.

As Aurelian Ratiu and Christopher Chivvis have argued, populations are the center of gravity in irregular warfare, as they are in hybrid warfare, because populations grant (or withhold from) states their legitimacy and power.[20] If the social contract

13   "Hybrid Threats as a Concept," The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, accessed Jan. 10, 2022, https://www.hybridcoe.fi/hybrid-threats-as-a-phenomenon/.

14   "Irregular Warfare: Countering Irregular Threats," Department of Defense, Joint Operating Concept Version 2.0, May 17, 2010, 9, https://www.jcs.mil/portals/36/documents/doctrine/concepts/joc_iw_v2.pdf?ver=2017-12-28-162021-510.

15   Frank G. Hoffman, "Examining Complex Forms of Conflict: Gray Zone and Hybrid Challenges," *PRISM* 7, no. 4 (November 2018): 30-47, https://cco.ndu.edu/News/Article/1680696/examining-complex-forms-of-conflict-gray-zone-and-hybrid-challenges/.

16   Cordesman, "Chronology of Possible Russian Gray Area."

17   Valery Gerasimov, "The Value of Science Is in the Foresight: New Challenges Demand Rethinking the Forms and Methods of Carrying out Combat Operations," *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kurier*, Feb. 26, 2013, http://vpk-news.ru/articles/14632.

18   Galeotti, *Russian Political War*, 13 and 30.

19   The report *Truth Decay* addresses the effect on state-society relations when these are affected. Jennifer Kavanagh and Michael D. Rich, *Truth Decay: An Initial Exploration of the Diminishing Role of Facts and Analysis in American Public Life*, RAND Corporation, 2018, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2314.html.

20   Aurelian Ratiu, "Civil Preparation of the Battlespace – Necessity in the Irregular or Hybrid Warfare," Knowledge-based Organization (International Conference) XXII, no. 1 (2017): 265–70, https://sciendo.com/pdf/10.1515/kbo-2017-0043; and Chivvis, "Understanding Russian 'Hybrid Warfare.'"

between a state and its population is weakened or absent, consensual state power, by definition, is diminished. Galeotti describes how populations can be operationalized against state institutions through divisive political movements, if the legitimacy of social, political, economic, or other institutions important to them is called into question. Populations that are vulnerable or marginalized can be mobilized through divisive political movements that prevent collective defense. Specific institutions, such as civil society organizations, political parties, think tanks, prominent businesses, and art or media institutions, may be manipulated to exacerbate tensions and galvanize these populations.[21] Once the particular populations and relevant institutions have been identified,[22] Kremlin-backed actors foment internal divisions through a variety of tactics, including the "4 Ds of disinformation" (dismissing, distorting, distracting, and dismaying),[23] social organizing, election meddling, etc.

Much as there is no agreement on the definition of hybrid warfare, blueprints for effective counter-hybrid warfare strategies are vague and lack consensus. Michael McCarthy, Matthew Moyer, and Brett Venable have observed that "subject matter experts from across the diplomacy, information, military and economic spectrum acknowledge the United States lacks a coherent strategy to deal with Russia in the gray zone."[24] Detection and deterrence are commonly prescribed, but these terms are subject to a wide range of interpretations. For example, Coffey's recipe for prevention includes good governance, economic freedom, and a bond of trust and respect between the average person and law enforcement and the intelligence services.[25] While all important components to deterring hybrid threats,

most of these goals are difficult to achieve, particularly in the immediate-to-medium term.

McCarthy, Moyer, and Venable argue that "[i]n order to deter Russian activity in the gray zone, the United States must shift its strategic framework from a predominantly security-centric model to one that comprises a whole-of-government approach."[26] After extensive research, the first recommendation from the Multinational Capability Development Campaign Countering Hybrid Warfare was that "at

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a minimum, national governments should conduct a self-assessment of critical functions and vulnerabilities across all sectors."[27] Aapo Cederberg, Pasi Eronen, and others echoed this by underscoring the importance of identifying and understanding a society's vulnerabilities and critical infrastructure.[28] We concur and believe that such an inventory requires a whole-of-society approach with a nuanced analysis of which populations may be the targets of hybrid tactics, why, and how this can be countered.

Given that great-power competition with Russia and China has risen to the forefront of America's national security concerns,[29] the demand for

21   Mark Galeotti, "(Mis)Understanding Russia's Two 'Hybrid Wars,'" *Eurozine,* Nov. 29, 2018, https://www.eurozine.com/misunderstanding-russias-two-hybrid-wars/.

22   Amos C. Fox and Andrew J. Rossow, *Making Sense of Russian Hybrid Warfare: A Brief Assessment of the Russo–Ukrainian War,* The Institute of Land Warfare, The Land Warfare Papers No. 112 (March 2017), https://www.ausa.org/sites/default/files/publications/LWP-112-Making-Sense-of-Russian-Hybrid-Warfare-A-Brief-Assessment-of-the-Russo-Ukrainian-War.pdf.

23   Lukas Andriukaitis, "Disinfo Bingo: The 4 Ds of Disinformation in the Moscow Protests," *Digital Forensic Research Lab,* Sept. 4, 2019, https://medium.com/dfrlab/disinfo-bingo-the-4-ds-of-disinformation-in-the-moscow-protests-6624d3d677e6.

24   Michael C. McCarthy, Matthew A. Moyer, and Brett H. Venable, *Deterring Russia in the Gray Zone*, Strategic Studies Institute, United States Army War College, March 2019, xv, https://press.armywarcollege.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1378&context=monographs.

25   Coffey, "Defeat Hybrid Warfare."

26   McCarthy, Moyer, and Venable, *Deterring Russia in the Gray Zone*, xvii.

27   Patrick J. Cullen and Erik Reichborn-Kjennerud, *MCDC Countering Hybrid Warfare Project: Understanding Hybrid Warfare*, Multinational Capability Development Campaign Project, January 2017, 4, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/647776/dar_mcdc_hybrid_warfare.pdf.

28   Aapo Cederberg and Pasi Eronen, *How Can Societies Be Defended Against Hybrid Threats?* Geneva Centre for Security Policy, September 2015, https://s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/defenddemocracy/uploads/documents/GCSP_Strategic_Security_Analysis_-_How_can_Societies_be_Defended_against_Hybrid_Threats.pdf; and Sean Monaghan, Patrick Cullen, and Njord Wegge, *MCDC Countering Hybrid Warfare Project: Countering Hybrid Warfare*, Multinational Capability Development Campaign, March 2019, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/784299/concepts_mcdc_countering_hybrid_warfare.pdf.

29   "National Security Strategy of the United States of America," The White House, December 2017, https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf.

effective analytical frameworks and tools to identify and counter hybrid threats is particularly high, especially in light of the shortcomings of existing approaches. For example, the U.S. military's analysis is enemy-centric — not population-centric — and is intended to evaluate an adversary's conventional military capabilities and vulnerabilities.[30] While the U.S. military uses tools — such as the Areas, Structures, Capabilities, Organizations, People, and Events framework and the analysis of effects on Political, Military, Economic, Social, Information, Infrastructure, Physical Environment, and Time — that are inclusive of the civilian sphere, these tools produce an inventory of isolated factors in a society (i.e., the number and condition of bridges and roads, the demographics of a place, or the institutions present).[31] Various stability or conflict assessment frameworks used by development agencies, militaries, the United Nations, nongovernmental organizations, and others, as well as the Marine Corps' Planning Process, go beyond these cursory inventories, but each falls short of understanding the relationships and institutions that define societal vulnerabilities.[32]

Academic research on conflict and societal divisions may complement existing military frameworks, though few, if any, have been designed with counter-hybrid warfare in mind. For example, Solveig Hillesund's work on horizontal inequalities — socio-economic or political inequalities that overlap with salient social group demarcations — may be relevant in identifying social cleavages that could be likely targets of hybrid tacticians.[33] Multidimensional in nature, analysis through a horizontal inequalities lens considers economic (income, wealth, land), social (education, healthcare), political (political participation, executive power), and cultural (recognition of symbols, dress, language) divisions in a society that may spur conflict.[34] This is relevant because horizontal inequalities could be exploited in a hybrid campaign to undermine state-society and nonstate social contracts. However, this type of analysis relies on long-term social science research and is impractical to apply at the scale and pace needed to conduct

a hybrid warfare threat assessment.

Applied research tools — such as public perception polling designed to produce insights into social cohesion, trust in government, or other topics — are certainly relevant for hybrid warfare threat assessments. But polling generally relies on survey instruments with defined subjects or topics of interest and may overlook nuances about the relationships inherent to social contracts that provide relevant insights into hybrid vulnerabilities or opportunities for resistance, such as understanding what defines these cleavages, why these perceptions formed, and how these relationships are sustained. Even when taken collectively, existing analytic frameworks and tools fall short when it comes to characterizing at the societal level the nuances of legitimacy, cohesion, and institutional relationships that make a state vulnerable or resilient to hybrid threats.

Social Cohesion Through Social Contracts: A Recipe for Deterrence and Resistance

The SCAT is based on the premise that social contracts undergird societal relations and define the strength and nature of societal cohesion and resilience, both of which are required to deter or resist hybrid tactics. Informed by the Enlightenment-era social contract theories of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, we broadly define a social contract as a mutually agreed-upon pact that binds leaders and followers together into systems of authority, or a governance relationship. Each of these systems of authority is legitimate, we assert, because it is premised on a mutually agreed-upon set of rules and norms that are voluntarily accepted, if sometimes contested or negotiated, by their respective members.

The SCAT is based on the doctoral dissertation of Salamah Magnuson, one of Motive International's senior stabilization subject matter experts.[35] Her research focuses on the social contracts of nonstate armed groups and the populations under their influence in fragile states. Drawing on decades of experience, Magnuson reflected upon political social

30   *Joint Operations*, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-0, Oct. 22, 2018, https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_0ch1.pdf.

31   *Civil Military Operations*, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-57, July 9, 2018, Appendix B, https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_57.pdf; and *Joint Intelligence Preparations of the Operational Environment*, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 2-01.3, May 21, 2014, https://fas.org/irp/doddir/dod/jp2-01-3.pdf.

32   "Stability Assessment Framework Quick Reference Guide," Marine Corps, June 2018, https://www.trngcmd.marines.mil/Portals/207/Docs/wtbn/MCCMOS/SAF quick reference June 2018.pdf?ver=2018-06-01-093543-453h.

33   Solveig Hillesund, "Choosing Whom to Target: Horizontal Inequality and the Risk of Civil and Communal Violence," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 63, no. 2 (2017): 528–54, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002717734286.

34   Solveig Hillesund, *Choosing Targets and Tactics: How Horizontal Inequality Spurs Conflict*, PhD Dissertation, University of Oslo, 2019, http://urn.nb.no/URN:NBN:no-71659.

35   Salamah Magnuson, "The Formation of Nonstate Armed Groups' Social Contracts in Fragile States: The Sudanese Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) in Sudan and the Union for Democratic Forces for Unity (UFDR) in the Central African Republic," PhD Dissertation, The Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies, 2018, http://jhir.library.jhu.edu/handle/1774.2/61207.

contract theory and the sources of legitimacy that undergird social contracts to conduct primary research and pathway-tracing of the formation of the social contracts between two nonstate armed groups and the populations under their influence in fragile states. Parting from an Enlightenment-era application of social contract theory that focused singularly on the state-level social contract, her research and consequent comprehensive social-contract framework also recognizes the multitude of social contracts that exist within societies, and therefore the layers of authority and governance that facilitate social cohesion, stability, or vulnerability. We posit that social contracts exist in all forms of social relationships: between societal members and the state, employers and employees, parents and children, social movements and supporters, etc.[36]

Cohesion depends not on all members of a society opting into an identical mix of social contracts, but on the condition that social contracts are deemed critical by entire groups and are not perceived as being in fundamental conflict with other social contracts in that society. If entire groups experience conflicts in their chosen social contracts and those to which they are expected or compelled to belong, society becomes less cohesive. Identifying competing social contracts and examining the features within a society that are in tension, therefore, can help to pinpoint, explain, and offer potential repairs to social cleavages. This is precisely what our research in Estonia aimed to achieve.

Unpacking the concept of legitimacy, we assert that all social contracts are premised on three sources of legitimacy, the invisible glue that bonds people together: performance (what leaders, or the governing, do for the benefit of followers, or the governed, and what followers must do to receive benefits); processes of exchange (mechanisms by which leaders and followers interact); and shared values (identities and interests common to leaders and followers that bring them together into a consensual pact). Analyzing the precise characteristics and manifestations of these sources of legitimacy affords a granular understanding of any given social contract and offers insight into the strength and vulnerability of that contract or system of authority.

One would expect to hear statements such as "my government works for me; it provides security, roads to facilitate the economy and health services" from society members expressing how performance contributes to a state's legitimacy. Conversely, societal expressions such as "my government does not

protect me" would highlight how the lack of security provided by the state government for specific individuals serves as a source of illegitimacy. Similarly, expressions of how processes of exchange contribute to a state's legitimacy might include "my government listens to me," while expressions such as "my government and its leaders ignore me" would indicate how the lack of exchange with the government serves as a source of illegitimacy. Finally, and seemingly the most nebulous source of legitimacy, expressions of how shared values contribute to a state's legitimacy could include "my government is composed of people like me — they think and talk like me," which contrasts with expressions such as "my government does not reflect what is important to me." The latter suggests a lack of shared values, which in turn contributes to illegitimacy.

The SCAT uniquely maps these sources of legitimacy to analyze coexisting social contracts to gain an understanding at a highly granular level of why these social contracts are perceived as legitimate or illegitimate. In its application to hybrid warfare, the SCAT is a novel yet proven analytical approach that focuses on revealing a state's vulnerability to hybrid threats based on the strength of the state-society social contract — the state's social cohesion — and focusing specifically on the state's social contract with its minority or vulnerable populations. Through applying the SCAT, relevant institutions and their social contracts with these populations can be quickly identified and assessed. These institutions are then evaluated as to how their social contracts complement, compete with, or run parallel to the overarching state-society contract. This is evaluated by mapping the sources of legitimacy of the various institutions' social contracts and comparing them with the sources of legitimacy that reinforce the state's social contract with its broader population.

Estonia's Vulnerabilities to Hybrid Warfare: A Precarious Moment

Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea was a watershed moment for sovereign states in the country's sphere of influence, including the Baltic states. Territorially small and with modest unilateral defense capabilities, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have rightly pointed out their almost-certain defeat in the event of a Russian military attempt to reclaim the region. Gaining Article 5 assurances as a deterrent to this eventuality, the Baltic states each became NATO members in 2004. Because NATO membership

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36   We define the state-level social contract as a state-society social contract, formed between the state government and those within its borders. Depending on the context, this may include members of the diaspora. In such social contracts, citizens are one category of those considered part of the society engaged in the state-level social contract.

raises the stakes of a conventional military attack, the Kremlin's calculus shifted to hybrid warfare in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

All three Baltic states are thriving, Western-leaning, NATO and E.U. member states. Estonia and Latvia share borders with Russia and have sizable ethnic-Russian minority populations that chose to remain in the Baltics instead of returning to Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union.[37] Baltic geography, demographics, security alliances, pro-European Union trade and energy policies, strictly regulated financial sectors, and alignment with Washington largely run counter to Russian interests, creating incentives for the Kremlin to undermine state legitimacy and sow societal divisions. Many fear that the Kremlin will reuse its playbook from elsewhere in Eurasia and manipulate or mobilize ethnic-Russian populations in the Baltics, especially Estonia.

Although Latvia has a slightly higher percentage of ethnic Russians than does Estonia, ethnic Russians in Estonia are considered to be less integrated overall.[38] Narva, for example, is a small Estonian town bordering Russia with a majority ethnic-Russian population (96 percent).[39] It is culturally, linguistically, and economically distinct from mainstream Estonian society. In 1993, Narvans supported a referendum to secede from Estonia, but the measure ultimately went nowhere.[40] With an overwhelming ethnic-minority majority population that has strong and enduring ties to Russia, Narva is thought to be a primary target of Russian encroachment. From Twitter to academic literature, the phrases "Is Narva next?" "Is Narva (still) 'the next'?" and "Why Narva is not next" have gone viral, referring to the possibility of the city befalling the same annexation fate as Crimea.[41]

Estonia has shown remarkable resilience in the face of historic aggression. The modern state of Estonia officially formed in 1991 with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Quickly instituting political and economic reforms and aspiring for E.U. membership, Estonia transitioned from a single-party communist industrial enclave to a liberal democracy competitively positioned for the digital age. The late 20th century was not the first time that the small Baltic nation had broken free from external control, hence Estonians' reference to 1991 as "re-independence." The territory of modern Estonia has been occupied by Sweden (1710–21), the Russian Empire (1721–1917), Nazi Germany (1941–44), and the Soviet Union (1944–91), with ethnic Estonians reasserting national independence after wave after wave of occupation.

Estonians say it is their unwavering commitment to preserve the Estonian language and culture that has fueled — and enabled — their independence. So central is language and culture to Estonian sovereignty, in fact, that the modern state is constitutionally premised on these ideals. The newly independent Estonia's 1992 constitution starts with a call for an ethno-linguistic nation-state in its preamble, stating: "The purpose of the Estonian state is to guarantee the preservation of the Estonian people, the Estonian language and the Estonian culture through the ages."[42] W. Rogers Brubaker describes how, driven by fears of "minoritization" and the ethnic-Estonian population's weakening ethno-demographic position (reduced from 97 percent of Estonia's population in 1945 to 62 percent in 1989), like Latvia, Estonia's independence was interpreted as a restoration from the interwar period rather than the formation of a new state.[43] Reflecting that restoration, Estonia's 1992 citizenship law drew on its 1938 citizenship law and narrowly interpreted citizenship to prevent ethnic-Russian permanent residents — who comprised

37   W. Rogers Brubaker, "Citizenship Struggles in Soviet Successor States," *International Migration Review* 26, no. 2 (June 1992): 269–91, https://doi.org/10.1177/019791839202600205.

38   Nils Muiznieks, Juris Rozenvalds, and Ieva Birka, "Ethnicity and Social Cohesion in the Post-Soviet Baltic States," *Patterns of Prejudice* 47, no. 3 (July 2013): 288–308, https://doi.org/10.1080/0031322X.2013.812349.

39   "Census 2011: Population by Ethnic Nationality, Sex, and Place of Residence," Government of Estonia Statistics, accessed Oct. 22, 2020, https://andmed.stat.ee/en/stat/rahvaloendus__rel2011__rahvastiku-demograafilised-ja-etno-kultuurilised-naitajad__rahvus-emakeel-ja-keelteo-skus-murded/RL0428.

40   Andrew Radin, *Hybrid Warfare in the Baltics: Threats and Potential Responses*, RAND Corporation, 2017, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1500/RR1577/RAND_RR1577.pdf.

41   David J. Trimbach and Shannon O'Lear, "Russians in Estonia: Is Narva the Next Crimea?" *Eurasia Geography and Economics* 56, no. 5 (2015): 493–504, https://doi.org/10.1080/15387216.2015.1110040; Alexandra Yatsyk, "Is Narva (still) 'The Next': A Controversial Story of the City of Many Frontiers," *Baltic Rim Economies Review*, May 29, 2019, https://sites.utu.fi/bre/is-narva-still-the-next-a-controversial-story-of-the-city-of-many-frontiers/; and Andres Kasekamp, "Andres Kasekamp: Why Narva Is Not Next," *Estonian World*, Jan. 24, 2019, https://estonianworld.com/security/andres-kasekamp-why-narva-is-not-next/.

42   *Estonia's Constitution of 1992 with Amendments through 2015*, Government of Estonia, The Constitute Project, 2015, https://constituteproject.org/constitution/Estonia_2015.pdf?lang=en.

43   Brubaker, "Citizenship Struggles;" David J. Trimbach, "Estonian Citizenship Policy: The Restoration of a Country Leads to Statelessness for Some," Migration Policy Institute, June 1, 2017, https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/estonian-citizenship-policy-restoration-country-leads-state-lessness-some; and Jeff Chinn and Lise A. Truex, "The Question of Citizenship in the Baltics," *Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 1 (January 1996): 133–47, https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.1996.0003.
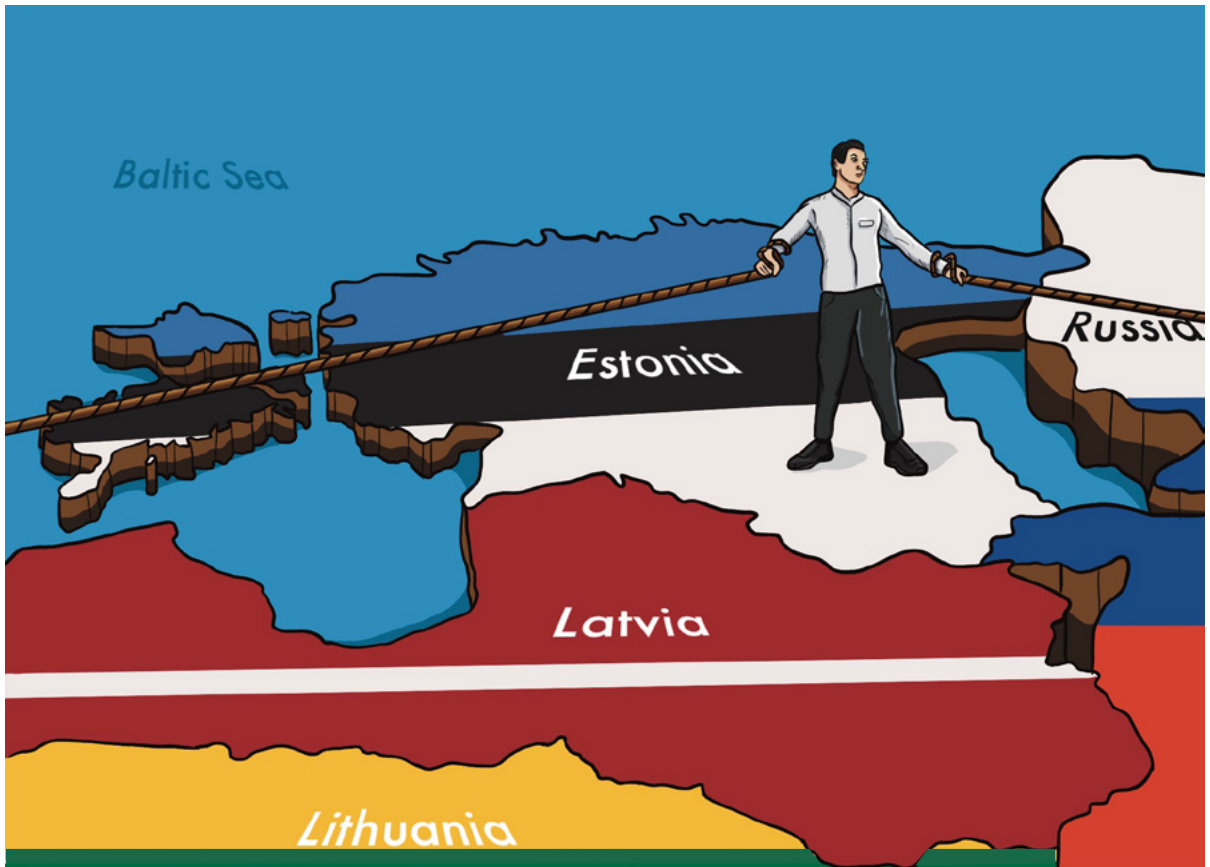
30 percent of Estonia's population in 1989 — from becoming citizens.[44]

Although many ethnic Russians left Estonia following the Soviet Union's collapse, the majority of ethnic Russians — largely bureaucrats, industrial workers, and former members of the Russian military — were attracted by higher living standards and chose to remain, willing to endure a lengthy and uncertain naturalization process. As of 2020, roughly one quarter of Estonia's population remained ethnic Russians.[45] One requirement for this population to gain citizenship — perhaps the most concrete measure of belonging to a state-society social contract — is fluency in the Estonian language, a requirement that continues to prevent many older ethnic Russians, in particular, from gaining official status. As a result, many ethnic Russians in Estonia today possess so-called "gray passports" that reflect their noncitizen or stateless status and exclude them from national civic participation (i.e., the right to vote, hold certain political offices, etc.).

The stateless ethnic-Russian population in Estonia comprises approximately 6 percent of the country's total population.[46] This means that many ethnic Russians who celebrated the break with Moscow in 1991 and identify as Estonian remain officially disenfranchised from Estonia's state-society social contract, perpetuating societal divides along ethnic lines.[47] Far larger than the 6 percent who experience *de jure* marginalization is the portion of ethnic-Russian Estonians (51 percent as of 2011) who are *de facto* considered "unintegrated,"[48] a complex label connoting, among other characteristics, lack of mastery of the Estonian language, weak or no affiliation with

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44   Brubaker, "Citizenship Struggles."

45   "Population by Sex, Ethnic Nationality and County," Government of Estonia, accessed Jan. 5, 2022, http://andmebaas.stat.ee/Index.aspx?-DataSetCode=RV0222U.

46   Aadne Aasland, "Citizenship Status and Social Exclusion in Estonia and Latvia," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 33, no. 1 (2002): 57–77, https://doi.org/10.1080/01629770100000211.

47   Juhan Kivirähk, *Integrating Estonia's Russian Speaking Population: Findings of National Defense Opinion Surveys*, International Centre for Defence and Security, December 2014, https://icds.ee/wp-content/uploads/2014/Juhan_Kivirahk_-_Integrating_Estonias_Russian-Speaking_Population.pdf.

48   Katja Koort, "The Russians of Estonia: Twenty Years After," *World Affairs* 77, no. 2 (July/August 2014): 66–73, www.jstor.org/stable/43556204.

Estonian institutions and culture, and close socio-economic and/or socio-political ties to Russia.[49] While "integration" is a fraught and largely subjective term, the implication that as much as 10 percent of the state's population is excluded from the state-society social contract, with most of these people living in relatively homogenous ethnic minority enclaves like Lasnamae or Narva,[50] makes Estonia ripe for hybrid tactics designed to deepen social cleavages.[51]

The debate around basing Estonia's citizenship law on the legal principles of soil and place of birth (*jus soli*) on the one hand, or heritage and ethnicity (*jus sanguine*) on the other, reflects the larger dialogue as to whether Estonia is a nation-state or a pluralistic republic. At the heart of this debate is whether and how Estonia's ethnic-Russian permanent residents can be integrated into Estonia's state-society social contract. Brubaker surmises,

> In the end, formal citizenship cannot be divorced from broader questions of substantive belonging. Successor states' willingness to accept Russian immigrants as citizens, and immigrants' readiness to adopt a new state as their state, will depend on the terms of the membership for national minorities and the organization of public life in the successor states.[52]

Although both ethnic groups indicated strong or moderate support for a national identity with the Estonian state in the 2015 Estonian Society Monitoring surveys on the integration of Estonian society, each perceived the other as threatening its language and culture.[53]

The 2019 parliamentary election offers an example of Estonia's tenuous social cohesion and divisions along ethno-linguistic lines. Stunning Estonians and international onlookers alike, a far-right party, the Conservative People's Party of Estonia (in Estonian *Eesti Konservatiivne Rahvaerakond*, or EKRE), gained seats at the national level and brokered a coalition with two other political parties (each of which had failed to secure the required majority alone) to form a government. As we conducted fieldwork in Estonia shortly after the election, a majority of interviewees were eager to share their feelings on the election outcome.

Among those elated by the rise to power of this populist, overtly anti-Russian, right-wing party were Estonian nationalists who tended to describe ethnic Russians as unwanted Kremlin partisans, unknowingly exploitable by the Kremlin, or simply "outsiders" who threaten the ethnic identity upon which Estonia was explicitly founded. Those who decried the party as antithetical to Estonian and E.U. ideals of liberalism and inclusion were appalled by its victory. Perhaps most notable, however, was a third, deeply conflicted group, comprised largely of ethnic-Russian Estonians, who were awkwardly aligned with a ruling coalition that was in part overtly hostile to them but whose anti-E.U. and anti-NATO sentiments resonated with them. The irony is that this coalition plays precisely to the Kremlin's hand by ostracizing ethnic-Russian minorities from their own elected leaders who, even if unknowingly, advocate foreign policies that align with the Kremlin's interests.

With social cleavages deepened at the time of our research, Estonia has perhaps never been more vulnerable to hybrid warfare. The debate about when or if Russian tanks will someday roll across Estonia's eastern border is largely irrelevant when viewed in the context of Coffey's reminder: "Once the social, political, and economic conditions exist to allow hybrid tactics to be effective, it is probably too late to stop it."[54] Indeed, the moment to pre-empt the first hybrid tactics has already passed. In 2007, after the Estonian government removed a Soviet World War II monument from Tallinn's city center, Russia-aligned media outlets fomented social unrest through viral information campaigns falsely alleging that the Estonian government was exhuming graves of Soviet heroes around the country.[55] Days after this so-called "bronze soldier incident," perfectly timed to exploit the acute splintering along ethnic lines, the Estonian government and commercial institutions suffered a crippling cyber attack that was widely believed to have been orchestrated by

49   Chinn and Truex, "The Question of Citizenship in the Baltics."

50   Brubaker, "Citizenship Struggles."

51   Raivo Vetik, *Citizenship, Statelessness and Belonging in Estonia*, European Consortium for Political Research, 2011, https://ecpr.eu/Events/Event/PaperDetails/9102.

52   Brubaker, "Citizenship Struggles," 289.

53   Raivo Vetik, et al., *Estonian Society Monitoring 2015*, Kultuuriministeerium [Ministry of Culture], 2015, https://www.ibs.ee/wp-content/uploads/Integration-Monitoring-Estonia-2015.pdf.

54   Coffey, "Defeat Hybrid Warfare."

55   Viljar Veebel, "Russian Propaganda, Disinformation, and Estonia's Experience," Foreign Policy Research Institute, Oct. 4, 2015, https://www.fpri.org/article/2015/10/russian-propaganda-disinformation-and-estonias-experience/.

Kremlin-backed trolls ordered to retaliate for the political slight of removing the Soviet monument.[56] Findings from the Estonian government's annual Integration Monitoring Survey between 2007 and 2011 suggest that ethnic-Russian Estonians' trust in the Estonian state and the attitudes of ethnic Estonians toward the Russian-speaking population worsened after the bronze soldier incident.[57]

Since then, other events consistent with Kremlin-backed hybrid tactics have deepened mistrust along ethnic lines in Estonia, weakening social cohesion and the state-society social contract. In 2014, a Russian agent abducted an Estonian intelligence officer at a customs checkpoint, causing a spike in anti-Russian sentiment in Estonia.[58] In 2015, a money-laundering scandal said to be Europe's largest involved Russian account holders with ties to the Kremlin laundering an estimated $220 billion through a Tallinn branch of the Swedish Danske Bank, severely bruising Estonia's global reputation as the most cyber-secure country in Europe.[59] In 2017, a field-grade ethnic-Russian Estonian military officer was indicted for spying on behalf of Russia's military intelligence service,[60] giving credence to the narrative that the Kremlin seeks to recruit spies particularly from among Estonia's ethnic-Russian minority.

To be clear, Estonia is a stable, liberal democracy that continues to negotiate how best to balance the vision of an ethno-linguistic nation-state with the values of a pluralistic, rights-based republic, and is doing so peacefully through civil discourse while the Estonian government is sending an indelible, political, and symbolic message to its neighbor, as it builds a 70-mile-long wall along its shared border with Russia.[61] But, as demonstrated by recent events, the fibers that hold the fabric of Estonian society together can become unknit. While the terms of competing social contracts are being negotiated, Kremlin operatives have ample targets. Regardless of whether deepening social cleavages result from or are independent of external influence, divided societies are less productive and stable and are at elevated risk of interference or exploitation by outside actors. Estonia is therefore a prime case in which to demonstrate the effectiveness of using a whole-of-society analysis to identify societal vulnerabilities to hybrid warfare through the SCAT.

Using the SCAT to Identify Institutions Susceptible to Hybrid Warfare in Estonia

In the spring of 2019, we applied the SCAT in Estonia to conduct qualitative research aimed at identifying and characterizing relevant social contracts as they relate to social cohesion and vulnerability to hybrid warfare. The research team highlighted the social contract between Russian-speaking Estonians and the Estonian government and nonstate social contracts that play a significant role in the lives of these Estonians, including those in the political, security, cultural, economic, educational, familial, and civil society spheres.

Applying the SCAT in Estonia, our research first sought to understand societal institutions in Estonian society that are of significance to Estonia's ethnic-Russian population. Next, we refined this inventory to focus on institutions whose social contracts directly bolstered or reduced social cohesion or that were or could be targeted by Kremlin-backed hybrid tactics with potentially consequential effects in Estonia. We interviewed individual leaders and members of these social contracts to characterize the strength and nature of the sources of legitimacy that give each institution its power and position of relevance. This yielded highly granular insights into specific societal institutions, while also identifying what constitutes legitimacy in the eyes of Russian-speaking Estonians.

Prior to in-country fieldwork, we conducted initial consultations with U.S. and Estonian policy and security officials whose mandates cover Baltic security, Estonian politics, hybrid warfare, and integration policy, as well as with social scientists with expertise in the Baltics. A prevailing topic that came up was the relationship and relevance of ethnic-Russian Estonians to Kremlin-backed hybrid warfare in Estonia. These experts raised questions about the extent to which ethnic Russians may be vulnerable to recruitment or manipulation by the Kremlin, especially

56   Monaghan, Cullen, and Wegge, *Countering Hybrid Warfare.*

57   Kristina Kallas, Ingi Mihkelsoo, and Kaarin Plaan, *Integrating Estonia 2000-2011: An Analysis of Integration Monitoring Surveys*, Institute of Baltic Studies and the Estonian Ministry of Culture, 2013, https://www.ibs.ee/wp-content/uploads/Integrating_Estonia_2000-2011.pdf.

58   Reid Standish, "Russia's Neighbors Respond to Putin's 'Hybrid War,'" *Foreign Policy*, Oct. 12, 2017, https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/10/12/russias-neighbors-respond-to-putins-hybrid-warlatvia-estonia-lithuania-finland/.

59   "Estonia Expands Danske Laundering Probe to Cover up to $2 billion of Transfers," *Reuters*, Jan. 16, 2020, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-moneylaundering-estonia-danske/estonia-expands-danske-laundering-probe-to-cover-up-to-2-billion-of-transfers-idUSKBN1ZF11E.

60   Michael Weiss, "The Hero Who Betrayed His Country," *The Atlantic*, June 26, 2019, https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/06/estonia-russia-deniss-metsavas-spy/592417/.

61   "Estonia 'Plans Russia Border Fence' Amid Ukraine Tensions," *BBC*, Aug. 28, 2015, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34085926; and "Estonia Builds Barbed Wire Fence on Russian Border — Reports," *The Moscow Times*, Dec. 7, 2020, https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2020/12/07/estonia-builds-barbed-wire-fence-on-russian-border-reports-a72264.

Regardless of whether deepening social cleavages result from or are independent of external influence, divided societies are less productive and stable and are at elevated risk of interference or exploitation by outside actors.

in light of the political coalition that emerged from the March 2019 elections. They discussed Estonia's social cohesion and the society's vulnerability to hybrid threats overall, but especially as it related to the integration of ethnic Russians, suggesting that greater understanding and engagement with the ethnic-Russian minority was central to policymaking, national defense, and the wellbeing of Estonian society. From this, we refined our research objective by defining the specific population of interest: ethnic-Russian Estonians.

By applying the SCAT, we sought to inventory the state and nonstate institutional social contracts of relevance to ethnic Russians and to characterize them based on their potential to exacerbate or repair social divisions along ethnic lines. The ultimate goal of our research was to produce empirically based, actionable recommendations for Estonian and international stakeholders to bolster Estonia's societal resilience to Kremlin-backed hybrid threats, demonstrating the utility of a society-centric analysis and the SCAT as an effective tool in countering hybrid warfare. The first round of interviews in Estonia consisted of semi-structured interviews along the SCAT areas of inquiry focusing on the three sources of legitimacy.[62]

We conducted interviews with approximately two dozen Estonians. Respondents included Estonian government officials and prominent civil society leaders, as well as a balanced mix of residents across gender, ethnicity, and age groups identified through man-on-the-street, random sampling techniques. We conducted interviews in four locations across Estonia to reflect a range of ethnicities and social contexts: Tallinn, the capital city; Lasnamae, a predominantly ethnic-Russian suburb outside the capital; Tartu, an ethnically diverse university town; and Narva, a post-industrial city on Estonia's border with Russia with a majority ethnic-Russian population.[63] Respondents were asked to identify an institution that is important in their life. This was followed by a complete SCAT interview to characterize the strength and nature of the social contract of that institution. This yielded an inventory of more than 50 institutional social contracts in Estonian society, ranging from religious organizations, to family units, to state and multilateral entities. It also offered insights into how Estonians across ethnic, age, and other demographic categories perceive and use language to describe sources of legitimacy.

To reveal the respondents' orientation toward political and historical dynamics, we used carefully selected "prompt" words and asked them to respond with the first words that came to mind.[64] Prompt words included: family values; the Orthodox Church; civil defense; Russian occupation; the European Union; and language politics. The responses allowed us to detect significant correlations between demographics and socio-political orientation. For example, in response to "family values," ethnic Russians across generational lines were quick to use words such as "close," "conservative" and "protective," whereas many ethnic Estonians hesitated before coming up with words such as "open," "different for everyone," or "I don't know." After these prompts, we collected basic biographical data from each respondent (age, city of residence, languages spoken and primary language used at home, ethnicity, and education level).

We refined the list of institutions to those that respondents had described as relating to social cohesion in some way. For example, while several ethnic-Russian respondents selected major corporations in Estonia as being relevant to their lives, the institution itself was not perceived as affecting social cohesion or vulnerability. We short-listed those institutions that were consistently identified and assessed as having utility for understanding and potentially affecting social cohesion and/or vulnerability to hybrid warfare.

For the second round of interviews, we conducted targeted interviews with leaders and followers/members/supporters across demographic lines of each institution of interest. These respondents included, for example, heads of political parties and party members, government officials and constituents, directors of cultural institutions and program participants, and security force leaders and servicemembers. Following the second round of interviews, we synthesized data (raw transcripts, prompt word response coding, and biographical and location information) into SCAT tables for more than a dozen institutions. The sources of legitimacy for each social contract were evaluated with respect to intensity for those involved in the contract (weak to strong) and with respect to their effect on social cohesion (reinforcing, divisive, ambiguous, or inconclusive).

Analysis of this second round of interviews assessed the different sources of legitimacy and membership in specific social contracts to identify Estonia's primary social cleavage. We then sought to identify institutions and their respective social contracts that functioned to deepen or ameliorate this primary social cleavage and to identify patterns among these institutions and social contracts,

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62   Interviews were conducted using a combination of random, snowball, and deliberate sampling open-ended questions.

63   Government of Estonia Statistics, "Census 2011."

64   This word-association technique is sometimes referred to as Subject Theme Positioning (STP).

based on a hypothesis that those that deepen social cleavages increased vulnerability to divisive hybrid tactics, and those that ameliorate social cleavages increased resilience to them. To do this, we coded, indexed, and grouped SCAT data in a variety of ways: by institution type, respondent characteristics such as age and ethnicity, and words and phrases used to describe legitimacy. We then identified the institutions that are likely to have the greatest impact on societal vulnerability to Kremlin-backed hybrid warfare due to their direct impact on social cohesion.

SCAT Analysis in Estonia: Illuminating Societal Cleavages and Relevant Social Contracts

Our data show that the primary language spoken at home was the main predictor of Estonians' relationships with institutions that are likely to affect social cohesion and to be vulnerable to hybrid threats. More consequential than the divide simply along ethnic lines, we found a deeper societal cleavage between ethnic Russians who speak Russian as the primary household language — "Russian-speaking Estonians" — and ethnic Estonians and ethnic Russians who speak Estonian at home. We detected almost no distinctions between ethnic Estonians who also speak Russian and those who did not, as it relates to social contracts and legitimacy. We did find, however, that among Russian-speaking Estonians there was a distinct type of social contract to which they belonged and a distinct manner of perceiving legitimacy that differed from both ethnic Estonians and ethnic Russians who speak Estonian as the primary household language. From this, we concluded that the social divisions between Russian-speaking Estonians and other Estonians is perhaps the societal division with the highest degree of vulnerability to Kremlin-backed hybrid warfare.

Though Estonian state and civil society actors often use the terms "integrated" versus "non-integrated" to refer to Russian Estonians, we found this label less useful for our analysis than the primary household language delineation because integration status is highly subjective, occurs on a continuum rather than a dichotomy, and most importantly was less predictive of individuals' views and relationships toward relevant social contracts than was the primary language spoken at home. For example, multiple respondents self-identified as integrated Russian Estonians, but social contract trends within this group varied widely. When organized by response type, the data showed a consistent cluster among ethnic Russians who speak Russian at home, which includes both integrated and non-integrated ethnic-Russian Estonians. In other words, the primary language one uses in private life more accurately predicts one's societal relationships than ethnicity, integration status, or citizen status.

Ethnic-Estonian respondents often expressed that ethnic-Russian Estonians who were not fluent in the Estonian language were still very much considered to be "Russians" and seen as "not true" citizens of the state. This sentiment was sometimes followed by concern that, at best, ethnic-Russian Estonians were ambivalent about the survival of the Estonian state; or, worse, that they could be coopted by the Kremlin as unknowing vectors for misinformation; or, worst of all, that they were vulnerable to recruitment as Russian partisans working against the Estonian state. Meanwhile, Russian-speaking Estonian respondents consistently expressed the strong desire to belong to the Estonian state, juxtaposed with a sense of continued alienation — feeling that "belonging" was contingent on shedding one's Russian cultural, linguistic, and familial values (i.e., abandoning one's identity). Ethnic-Russian Estonians — both Russian-speaking and Estonian-speaking — consistently asserted that increased social cohesion was dependent on making more space for ethnic-Russian Estonians in Estonia's society. Some of these same respondents explicitly correlated increased cohesion with reduced risk of the Kremlin being able to manipulate ethnic-Russian Estonians in hybrid warfare.

Second to primary household language, we observed trends along generational lines. Consistent with the global trend of nostalgia among older generations who lived in the Soviet Union or Soviet-influenced states, ethnic-Russian Estonians older than 35 years old at the time of our research tended to use positive words in response to the prompt "Russian occupation," while those younger than 35 years old tended to use neutral terms. We observed this age cut off by clustering response types, noting that those aged 35 and older had reached adolescence during or in the years shortly after the Soviet era and were likely old enough to have formed positive assessments of the time. Their younger counterparts were less likely to have developed nostalgia for the Soviet era as very young children. Ethnic Estonians of all ages tended to describe the Soviet era in rather negative terms. In addition to the divergence in attitudes toward the Soviet era, there was also a divergence between older and younger ethnic Russians' attitudes about what constituted legitimate social contracts in general. When considered together, primary household language and age proved highly predictive of attitudes about legitimacy and tended to determine the specific institutional social contracts to which an individual was likely to belong. Perhaps the most clear-cut example of this relates to attitudes about family social contracts. Respondents unanimously identified the institution of family

as among the most important social contracts in their lives. However, their expectations and preferences with regard to family social contracts differed across primary household language and generation. Russian-speaking Estonians of all ages tended to prefer multi-generational families as an institution that reinforces a culture of "closeness" and "tradition." This contrasted with ethnic Estonians of all ages, who tended to view the small, nuclear family as an institution that is vital for "cultural" and "linguistic well-being." An ethnic-Estonian academic we interviewed, for example, bemoaned having to interact so much with the parents and grandparents of her Russian Estonian students who often called or stopped by to discuss grades and educational plans of their family members. Crosscutting the primary household language line, the older populations identified more "liberal" values (such as the acceptance of homosexuality) as "European values," which they saw as contrary to their more "traditional" family values.

Based on our analysis of the different sources of legitimacy and membership in specific social contracts, we conclude that Estonia's primary social divide is between those Estonians who speak Russian as the primary household language and those who speak Estonian as the primary household language, regardless of ethnicity. The second most important social divide is between younger and older Russian-speaking Estonians. More than just points of diversity among sub-populations in a society, the primary household language divide tended to result from and further contribute to ethnic tensions and the systemic marginalization of Russian-speaking Estonians, therefore making this split vulnerable to hybrid tactics, which are designed to deepen ethnic grievances, weaken social cohesion, and undermine state legitimacy. Recognizing this, our research further sought to identify the institutions and their respective social contracts that functioned to deepen or ameliorate this division. In other words, we wanted to understand which social contracts in Estonian society were driving a wedge or building bridges between Russian-speaking and non-Russian-speaking Estonians and how that was being done.

After coding, indexing, and grouping SCAT data in a variety of ways, a clear trend emerged: Russian-speaking Estonians overwhelmingly perceive institutions that embrace their dual identity as Estonian citizens *and* as ethnic Russians as legitimate, whereas institutions that fail to accommodate or that challenge this dual identity are seen as illegitimate and divisive. By dual identity, we refer to this population's explicit self-description as loyal, invested citizens of Estonia, while at the same time loyal, invested members of a global Russian ethnic group. "Of course, I'm Estonian, but I'm also Russian," was

a common sentiment we heard from nearly every Russian-speaking Estonian we interviewed, including a young and "integrated" classical arts dancer, a 70-year-old gray passport holder who did not speak Estonian, and a middle-aged business owner involved in trade across Europe. Each described maintaining close and unwavering affiliations with Russian society, especially through cultural, familial, economic, and, in some cases, religious institutions, which was not perceived as being problematic or incongruous with their political and ideological allegiance to the Estonian state and institutions in Estonian society — be they public or private, state or nonstate.

While the dual identity of ethnic minority and immigrant populations globally is a well-researched topic, our research examined it through the novel lens of social contract theory, social cohesion, and vulnerability to hybrid warfare. In doing so, we found that institutions in Estonian society whose social contracts accommodated the performance, process of exchange, and shared values that correlated with dual identity tended to have a reinforcing effect on social cohesion, quite literally by bringing ethnic Estonians and Russian-speaking Estonians together or by increasing Russian-speaking Estonians' overall feeling of social belonging in Estonia. Conversely, institutions whose social contracts were incompatible with or hostile to this dual sense of identity — namely those premised on a false dichotomy of being either Estonian or Russian — tended to deepen the split between Russian-speaking Estonians and those who speak the Estonian language as their primary household language in Estonian society, therefore undermining social cohesion.

From this, we concluded that the institutions in Estonian society that are the most or least accommodating of this dual identity are likely to have the greatest impact on societal vulnerability to Russian hybrid warfare due to their direct impact on social cohesion. Using SCAT data and analysis, we categorized institutions across all facets of Estonian society into one of three categories:

1. Institutions with social contracts that are *hostile* to Russian-speaking Estonians' dual identity and could increase, or have the potential to increase, Estonia's vulnerability to hybrid threats;
2. Institutions with social contracts that are *compatible with or reinforcing of* Russian-speaking Estonians' dual identity and could increase, or have the potential to increase, Estonia's resilience to hybrid threats; and
3. Institutions with social contracts that are *neutral or ambivalent* to Russian-speaking Estonians' dual identity and whose impact on

Estonia's vulnerability or resilience to hybrid threats is inconclusive.

From the more than 30 institutional social contracts we analyzed, at least a dozen fit into the first two categories. In each case, we assessed these institutions as having a demonstrable relationship with dual identity and also as being a significant enough institution to impact societal cohesion, whether locally or nationally.

While far from an exhaustive national inventory, the diversity and patterns of the institutions we were able to identify and categorize have practical and important, yet sometimes counterintuitive, implications for policymakers, civil society, ordinary citizens, international allies, and others concerned about boosting Estonia's resilience to hybrid attacks. Those institutions with social contracts that were hostile to Russian-speaking Estonians' dual identity were identified as the primary threat to Estonia's social cohesion and the main vulnerability to potential hybrid threats. For example, any institution involved in language policy or that offered language courses tends to have an outsized impact on social cohesion, for better or worse.

Institutions' social contracts that were considered ambiguous with regard to dual identity included the media writ large, given the diversity of outlets. For example, respondents reported that Estonia's older population preferred to receive news from more traditional media outlets such as television and radio, and from broadcasts that are aligned with their language preferences. Older ethnic Estonians generally watched the Estonian government's Public Broadcast News channel while older Russian-speaking Estonians generally watched the Estonian government's Russian-language TV channel, ETV, as well as the pro-Kremlin Pervoi Kanal and Rossia 1 television stations and the more moderate channel Ehomuskavi. This latter group did not describe the content as overtly political and identified soap operas and other social commentary shows that they enjoyed watching. Younger ethnic Estonians and Russian-speaking Estonians tended to access their news through social media outlets such as Facebook and Instagram in their preferred language and, to a lesser extent, Russian-sponsored *Vkontakte*.

Six of the institutions are examined below in greater detail. There are a number of institutions and their social contracts that are relevant to

hybrid warfare — albeit less so — that are not included in the analysis below.

EKRE: Exclusionary Language Policies Pose Risks

The Estonian nation's ability to prevail despite waves of occupation is undoubtedly owed to Estonians' steadfast emphasis on language preservation. Estonia's constitution mandates that the state protect and preserve the Estonian language and culture. In addition, *de facto* language policy and practice makes fluency in Estonian a prerequisite for many socio-economic opportunities. Because language dramatically affects one's status in Estonia, language politics are hotly contested. Our analysis shows that institutions that advocate for restrictive or exclusionary language policies challenge the dual identity of Russian-speaking Estonians and therefore tend to be viewed by this population as hostile to that identity. This leads these Russian-speaking Estonians away from institutions that embrace exclusionary language policies, which, in turn, reinforces the primary household language divide. This further undermines social cohesion and increases vulnerability to hybrid tactics.

The one institution that exemplifies this and managed to gain political prominence is the political party EKRE. While the research team was in Estonia (May 2019), the country had just emerged from a controversial election the preceding month that saw EKRE form a coalition with the Center Party (which has support from Russian-speaking Estonians) and the national-conservative political party *Isamaaliit* (Fatherland Union) to govern Estonia, ousting the majority-elected Reform Party. Associated with neo-Nazism by some Estonians we interviewed, EKRE's platform, "to defend the interests and balanced development of the Estonian indigenous people,"[65] has been described by some researchers as conservative, nationalist, Euroskeptic, anti-Russian, and anti-refugee.[66] The party champions aggressive language policies such as eliminating bilingual education in favor of Estonian-only schooling.

Our analysis found that the party's proposed restrictive language policies, coupled with the Estonian government's inability to meet the demand for Estonian-language adult education classes for the mostly Russian-speaking population who seek it, serve as a significant source of illegitimacy for Russian-speaking Estonians and reinforce primary household language divisions in Estonia's society. Most affected are older

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65   "The Estonian Conservative People's Party EKRE," EKRE USA, accessed Jan. 5, 2022, https://ekre.us/.

66   Kasekamp, "Why Narva Is Not Next"; and Louis Wierenga, "Russians, Refugees and Europeans: What Shapes the Discourse of the Conservative People's Party of Estonia?" *Humanities and Social Sciences Latvia* 25, no. 1 (Spring-Summer 2017): 4–19, https://dspace.ut.ee/handle/10062/58569.

Russian-speaking Estonians who do not speak Estonian and have limited access to Estonia's education system and economy. Despite having lived in Estonia for decades, or even since birth, their legal status in Estonia could be at risk. One respondent expressed concern about EKRE's anti-immigrant and, specifically, anti-Russian stance, stating, "With EKRE and the rise of Neo-Nazis, there is an expression of fear among Russians."

Such policies go beyond abstract hostility toward the dual identity of Russian-speaking Estonians and virtually guarantee support of the Kremlin's narratives about states excluding ethnic Russians. This coalition is potentially threatening to Estonia's social cohesion, deepening divisions that could be exploited through hybrid warfare tactics, such as mobilizing disenfranchised minorities into anti-state movements; seizing on diminished social trust to meddle in elections, promulgate misinformation, and gain economic advantage; or using other tactics that could render a state's sovereignty less assured. Disinformation campaigns — a core tactic of hybrid warfare — are easier when language is not shared across divided segments of populations who might otherwise

Our analysis shows that institutions that advocate for restrictive or exclusionary language policies challenge the dual identity of Russian-speaking Estonians and therefore tend to be viewed by this population as hostile to that identity.

debate or correct false or misleading information. For this reason, we flagged EKRE as an institution whose current social contract has a relevant and negative impact on Estonia's vulnerability to hybrid warfare.

Almost two years after our research and the 2019 election that ushered in a coalition with EKRE, there are subtle indicators that the Estonian government is embracing greater inclusiveness within its society. In February 2021, the new two-party coalition cited differences in values and excluded the EKRE.[67] The president at the time, Kersti Kaljulaid, hinted

in statements that the new coalition may move toward embracing Estonia's ethnic-Russian minority. Recognizing the traditional ethnic-Russian preference for strong leadership, she used this to delegitimize the Russian government when commenting on its suppression of opposition protests, stating that "Such a reaction by the [Russian government] authorities shows their actual weakness."[68] The new coalition seeks to align its values with its northern Nordic neighbors, rather than explicitly with the East or West.[69]

NATO: Thanks for Your Service, but Stop Telling Me My Grandma Is the Enemy

For Estonians, Russia's annexation of Crimea and incursions into Ukraine and the Caucasus were not an abstract violation of international norms. They were a cautionary tale that hit uncomfortably close to home. As residents of a small state previously controlled by the Kremlin and situated on Russia's border, respondents across linguistic lines expressed anxiety that current hybrid tactics could be laying the groundwork for an eventual Russian incursion.

In light of these fears, we learned, Estonia's membership in NATO is supported widely across primary household language and generational lines because it is viewed as a vital deterrent against Russian aggression.

Our analysis revealed that irrespective of primary household language and age, respondents perceived Estonia's membership in NATO as legitimate, specifically when it comes to the performance and shared values elements of the alliance's social contract, even in predominantly Russian-speaking regions like Narva, where the large-scale NATO exercise Spring Storm takes place each year.[70] SCAT analysis revealed that Russian-speaking Estonian support for NATO stemmed largely from the utility of the institution as a strategic deterrent to Russian invasion and from a shared value of self-defense (protecting one's family, community, and state).

Yet, for those older ethnic Estonians and Russian-speaking Estonians who strongly value a state's

67   "Estonian President to Meet with Party Leaders Next Week to Discuss Political Situation," *The Baltic Times*, Jan. 10, 2021, https://www.baltictimes.com/estonian_president_to_meet_with_party_leaders_next_week_to_discuss_political_situation/.

68   "Kremlin's Behavior Shows their Weakness," *The Baltic Times*, Jan. 24, 2021, https://www.baltictimes.com/kremlin_s_behavior_shows_their_weakness/.

69   "Estonian Coalition Negotiators: It's Important to Intensify Cooperation with Allies," *The Baltic Times*, Jan. 17, 2021, https://www.baltictimes.com/estonian_coalition_negotiators__it_s_important_to_intensify_cooperation_with_allies/.

70   "Spring Storm in Estonia. 6 Thousand Soldiers from 10 Countries Involved in an Exercise," *Defense24*, May 7, 2016, https://www.defence24.com/spring-storm-in-estonia-6-thousand-soldiers-from-10-countries-involved-in-an-exercise.

strength, the Estonian government's highly visible relationship with NATO and the intentional visible presence of foreign soldiers gave the perception that the Estonian government is weak due to its heavy reliance on foreign military support. In a negative reinforcing cycle, some older Russian-speaking Estonians also perceived NATO's highly visible presence as indicative of the Estonian government's decisive commitment to align with the West and, by default, align itself against the East, namely Russia. The perception of state weakness and that NATO is confronting Russian-speaking Estonians' value of dual identity served as sources of illegitimacy among the primarily older Russian-speaking Estonians.

Importantly, our research also revealed that Russian-speaking Estonians viewed NATO as deeply illegitimate when it came to one particular process of exchange: community relations outreach. In an effort to humanize NATO and with the aim of building bridges with young Russian-speaking Estonians perceived as vulnerable to Russian propaganda, Estonian and uniformed NATO member military personnel visited elementary school classrooms. But our data suggests that this was backfiring. Confronted with NATO talking points that set up a Cold War-esque dichotomy between "good" NATO allies and "bad" Russia, these school children reportedly went home feeling confused and distraught about their relatives who lived just a few kilometers away in Russia. Parents in Narva whom we interviewed were incensed that their children were left "fearing their own families" and ashamed of their dual identity. As one respondent stated, "NATO is essential for our survival as a small country, but don't tell my kid that grandma is the enemy just because she lives in Moscow."

In this key local community, it was school visits, not massive military exercises, that reduced NATO's legitimacy and stoked division between Russian-speaking Estonians on the one hand, and the state and multilateral institutions on the other, and that seemed to suggest that Russian-speaking Estonians needed to pick a side between their Russian identity and their Estonian allegiance. For this reason, we flagged NATO as an institution with high potential to deter hybrid aggression, but whose social contract would benefit from better accommodating the dual identity of Russian-speaking Estonians and avoiding fueling social tensions along the primary household language line, particularly through divisive visits to the classroom.

Estonian Defense League: It's Not About the Capabilities, It's About the Relationships

Given their explicit role in national defense and relevance to hybrid warfare, we spent time analyzing domestic security sector institutions, namely the Estonian Defense Forces, the Estonian Police Force, and the Estonian Defense League. Fascinatingly, these institutions spanned the categories of social contract positioning relative to the dual identity of Russian-speaking Estonians. By characterizing the social contracts each institution offered — or at least the social contracts that each Russian-speaking Estonian perceived them to offer — we found that the defense force and police force contribute to social cohesion in Estonia by embracing duality and that the defense league had the potential to do the same, but was, at the time of our study, potentially undermining social cohesion.

Routinely highlighting the fact that the military and police forces require members to speak Estonian and Russian, and that each institution conducts training and operational activities in both languages, Russian-speaking Estonians described the two forces as largely inclusive and remarkably compatible with their dual identity. Furthermore, both Russian-speaking Estonians and ethnic Estonians talked about civic responsibility as a value that they shared strongly with the police and defense forces. They also respected and trusted the performance of these institutions when it came to national and civil defense. Estonia's mandatory conscription also creates opportunities to strengthen social cohesion across the primary household language line.[71] From this, we concluded that the Estonian Defense Forces and the Estonian Police Force play a resiliency-building role in Estonian society relative to hybrid warfare.

In subtle contrast was the Estonian Defense League, the primary element of a civil defense network called *Kaitseliit* in Estonian. *Kaitseliit* is a state-sponsored civil defense network with a paramilitary organizational structure comprised of all-volunteer local units. Under the authority of the Ministry of Defense, the league's stated purpose is "to enhance, by relying on free will and self-initiative, the readiness of the nation to defend the independence of Estonia and its constitutional order."[72] Its roots stem from "total defense" resistance models seen throughout Europe during the 20th century, including the Forest Brothers in Estonia, a peasant guerilla movement credited with resisting Russian imperialism shortly after World War I, resisting the Nazis during World War II, and fighting against post-war

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71   James W. Derleth, "Failing to Train: Conventional Forces in Irregular Warfare," Modern Warfare Institute, May 5, 2021, https://mwi.usma.edu/failing-to-train-conventional-forces-in-irregular-warfare/.

72   "Estonian Defence League," Kaitseliit, accessed Jan. 5, 2022, https://www.kaitseliit.ee/en/edl.

Soviet advancement in the 1940s and 1950s. Reconstituted after Estonia's "re-independence" in the 1990s, the defense league today has 26,000 members, making it the largest portion of the broader *Kaitseliit* network, which also includes the Women's Voluntary Defense Force, the Youth Eagles (for boys), and the Home Daughters (for girls).

Given the network's bold mandate to serve as a civilian bulwark against a would-be invader, we wanted to understand the essence of the Estonian Defense League's legitimacy and role vis-à-vis Kremlin-backed threats to sovereignty. The respondents — league leaders and members, as well as non-members — presented a remarkably consistent picture of this institution. The league offers a social contract premised on the shared value of civic responsibility, common across primary household language and generation. Civic responsibility for many Estonians is crystalized in the Estonian Defense League's motto: "defense readiness." One respondent summarized the defense league's values as "Patriotism, preparedness, action and team (togetherness)." Most respondents described the performance value of the league enthusiastically but modestly, pointing to its function of building useful skills among its members, such as in first aid, mechanics, or firefighting, rather than its potential performative role in thwarting or resisting a foreign invasion. With respect to the actual paramilitary resistance capabilities of the league, most Estonians, NATO allies, and regional security experts we interviewed were skeptical of its actual deterrence capabilities. Without saying so explicitly, Estonians we spoke with revealed something significant about the league's legitimacy: that it stemmed less from the institution's defense capabilities and more from its shared value and performance in support of civic preparedness.

Although, in principle, the defense league is inclusive of Estonia's Russian-speaking citizens, it remains unclear how it attempts to be inclusive and achieve greater participation from Russian-speaking Estonians. While this population's participation levels in the league could not be confirmed, when asked whether Russian-speaking Estonians are members, some league members responded that they thought that some were, although they were not able to personally confirm any such members, responding, "all citizens of Estonia are eligible to be EDL [Estonian Defense League] members, and since some Russian-speaking Estonians are citizens, then they can join the EDL." One ethnic-Estonian member provided an anecdotal story: "There was a 40-year-old ethnic-Russian woman running for the local board

and she said, 'I am a strong Estonian woman,' and I thought, 'Yes, yes you are!'"

While the Estonian Defense League and broader *Kaitseliit* network officially welcomes any Estonian citizen to join, Russian-speaking Estonian interviewees shared their perceptions of the network as an Estonian nationalist institution, commenting that this renders it less attractive. Indeed, one ethnic-Estonian member we interviewed said that serving in the Estonian Defense League gave him "a sense of regaining independence" after nearly a century of Soviet occupation. This difference in perspectives can be observed in the 2018 Estonian Government Public Opinion and National Defense report, in which only 46 percent of non-ethnic-Estonian residents reported trusting the Estonian Defense League, compared with 87 percent of ethnic Estonians.[73] The league seems not to have prioritized recruiting among ethnic Russians, nor has it intentionally broadcast its adaptable language policies or values of self-reliance among Russian-speaking Estonians with whom they are likely to resonate. We found that the league's siloed processes of exchange that limit interaction between units likely prevents those few units that include Russian-speaking Estonians from sharing their experiences and setting an example.

The league's social contract in principle is perceived as legitimate to all Estonians and relevant to contributing to a secure and unified Estonian state and society, but it is currently underutilized as an institution for building cross-ethnic social cohesion. Leaders and members we spoke with of all backgrounds described league events as a primary forum for building understanding and personal relationships with citizens outside their own ethnic group. They also reported that membership significantly increased their sense of patriotism, national belonging, and, perhaps most importantly, local community belonging. We identified the Estonian Defense League as an institution with high potential to deter hybrid warfare, but whose social contract would benefit from increased Russian-speaking Estonian participation.

Contemporary Arts Institutions: An Unlikely Divider

Our interviews often began with open-ended prompts inviting respondents to identify any institutions of importance or consequence in their lives. In Narva, this led us somewhere surprising. From older ethnic-Russian men to integrated mixed-ethnicity

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73   Juhan Kivirähk, *Public Opinion and National Defence*, Government of Estonia's Ministry of Defense, Spring 2018, https://www.kaitseministeerium.ee//sites/default/files/elfinder/article_files/public_opinion_and_national_defence_2018_march.pdf.

youth, arts organizations were at the forefront of Narvans' minds. Narva, and even the broader Estonian state, is endowed with culture and art from both the East and West and Narva has become a hub for the arts. Unbeknownst to us before arriving, our visit coincided with an accelerating trend of arts-related initiatives in the city — including Narva being considered as the "European Capital of Culture 2024" and investments in contemporary arts institutions like the new "Vaba Lava" (Open Stage) theatre and the Narva Arts Residency.[74]

Our research identified how culture and the arts are a shared value that transects Estonia's societal divisions, as many respondents in Narva highlighted the cultural festival in 2018, State Narva, as an example of a positive event bringing together Estonian and Russian cultures. While the shared passion for cultural arts has the potential to foster social cohesion and reinforce the Russian-speaking Estonians' dual identity, the manner in which the arts are being manipulated to serve a divisive agenda has become a source of illegitimacy for Russian-speaking Estonians. Respondents' interpretation of these events was divided sharply along primary household language and generation. The minority ethnic-Estonian population and many young Russian-speaking Estonians shared a sense of hope that their post-industrial town in the far east of Estonia would benefit from the recent influx of investment in the arts community. However, much of the recent art and culture brought to Narva was contemporary and viewed as dissonant with the traditional culture that many of Narva's residents prefer, particularly its older population and Russian-speaking Estonians. One respondent told us, "If the government wants to bring art to Narva, how about the St. Petersburg Ballet or investing in our orchestra or traditional arts?"

This cultural alienation was even stronger for older Russian-speaking Estonians, as these contemporary events were perceived as confronting their deeply held values with regard to art and Russian cultural identity, on the one hand, and casting the contemporary arts as Western-influenced and synonymous with pro-West allegiances, on the other. Older Russian-speaking Estonian respondents described these events as "foreign or strange" and as a thinly veiled cultural imperialism that is "led by outsiders" and is being "imposed." We observed that the managers of and investors in the contemporary arts institutions came from other regions, and many did not speak Russian, the dominant language spoken in Narva, which deepened the sense of exclusion that older Russian-speaking Estonians felt from the processes of exchange that these institutions offered. Another

respondent said that "[t]he Vaba Laba situation is better because they invited Russian ballet culture. They combined Russian culture and invited Estonians to create a multicultural environment."

Interviews with those actively supporting these arts and culture programs, both in Narva and at Estonian government ministries in Tallinn, confirmed that arts programming was part of an effort to promote cultural and economic integration across Estonia's society. Yet our research suggested that the very intent of these programs was backfiring — pushing many ethnic Russians toward the margins of Estonian society and making them more resentful of the state and its allies than before. While the agenda might be working to build cohesion and bolster perceptions of state and societal legitimacy with younger Narvans, contemporary arts programs appear to be deepening division for their parents and grandparents, who tend to look to Russia for their culture, media, and sense of social belonging.

Given the perceived stakes of the arts agenda for Narva's economic, cultural, and linguistic fate, the intense divide in perceptions of legitimacy of arts institutions, and the potential unintended consequences of deepening the generational divide, we assessed contemporary arts institutions in Narva as having a negative and consequential impact on social cohesion and vulnerability to hybrid warfare.

**Narva Trans:
Building Cohesion through Football**

As much as the arts in Narva seemed to divide the community, one institution in the city appears to have quite intentionally cracked the code when it comes to fostering social cohesion: Narva Trans, the celebrated football (soccer) club that routinely ranks at the top of *Meistriliiga* (Premiere League) clubs in the Estonian Football Association. As frequently as respondents named arts institutions as defining life in Narva, they also cited Narva Trans — with unanimous praise. Old and young, ethnic Russians and ethnic Estonians alike, the football club was uniformly seen as legitimate and loved. This was not always the case. Until recently, matches were plagued by low attendance from a small fanbase. This prompted us to seek out club leadership, players, and fans to examine how Narva Trans had succeeded in forging a social contract with such a deep and wide cross-section of the community.

We learned that the club's market research had helped to increase attendance numbers by 200 percent over a two-year period. The demographics of the team's fanbase had fundamentally changed from

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74   "European Capital of Culture 2024," Narva for European Capital of Culture 2024, accessed Jan. 5, 2022, https://narva2024.ee/en.

a small homogenous set of mostly young, male, single Russian-speaking Estonians to a mix of the city that included loyal inter-ethnic and inter-generational match-goers. To achieve this, the research findings recommended making the matches more family-friendly by changing the match times, music selection, and beverages served, and by encouraging men to bring along the other members of their household, which almost always included three or more generations of parents, grandparents, and small children. Exceeding expectations, attendance boomed, not just among inter-generational Russian-speaking Estonians, but also among ethnic Estonians and prominent figures in town.

Our SCAT analysis of Narva Trans revealed the institution to have high performance value for community building in support of an inclusive cross-section of the population. The club's highly legitimate processes of exchange included everything from bilingual play-by-play commentary to football players visiting schools to signage that revealed that the Estonian government and European Union were among Narva Trans' sponsors. The club's shared values resonated with a broad base of Estonians' sense of local and national pride, encouraged inclusive, wholesome community fun, and fully aligned with Russian-speaking Estonians' dual identity. In a town much talked about as a potential frontline for Russian aggression, Narva Trans emerged as an unlikely, yet highly consequential, institution for building social cohesion. Narva Trans' social contract with Narvans could serve as a model for how to boost social cohesion and create communities with ingrained resilience to the hybrid tactics of foreign powers.

The State-Society Social Contract: Stable but Lacking Strength

At the time we conducted this research, our analysis assessed the state-society social contract between Estonia's government in Tallinn and the Estonian society as overall legitimate, with some notable points of illegitimacy. Our SCAT research suggests that the state's legitimacy is largely derived from its accessible and transparent processes of exchange (e.g., e-governance digital platforms)[75] and the small size of government institutions that allow citizens to directly engage with state officials for most interactions with the state. Russian-speaking Estonians and ethnic

Estonians pointed to this as evidence that they could reliably interact with their government and be heard, with the Estonian president's recent visit to Narva mentioned frequently.

With respect to the state government's performance, satisfaction was high overall. Narva respondents repeatedly mentioned the recent arrest of Narva City Council member Aleksi Voronov by the national police agency as an example of the Estonian government's strength.[76] Of significance, however, is how perceptions of the state's performance dropped sharply when it came to one performance element of outsized importance to Russian-speaking Estonians: access to state-sponsored or state-delivered Estonian language classes. Many Russian-speaking Estonians we interviewed consistently named the Estonian government's challenge to fully meet the demand for language classes as a singular point of illegitimacy. This is because this service is seen as one of the state's most critical performance expectations, given the implications that language mastery can have on Russian-speaking Estonians' socio-economic status in society and, potentially, on their right to citizenship in Estonia.

With regard to the shared values of the state-society social contract, significant differences emerged across generational and primary household language lines. The Estonian government's values appear to be in closest alignment with the 25 percent of the population that is under 25 years old. These young Estonians — regardless of ethnicity or primary household language — tend to identify with values such as support for: minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer rights; immigration; and prioritizing economic opportunity. Estonian youth and government officials alike tended to describe the country in similar terms and are proud of their "regained independence" and "democratic ideals."

But while the state enjoys a strong basis of shared values with its younger citizens, the majority (75 percent) of Estonia's population are older and have values that the Estonian government struggles to accommodate in the state-society social contract. Adults aged 35 and older, both ethnic Estonian and Russian, with whom we spoke tended to value the strength and stability of state leadership at a level that they felt was not reflected in the values the state presented in its foreign policy. There was a shared sense among the older populations that the Estonian government

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75   This accessibility is largely facilitated by the government of Estonia's friendly e-governance, a great source of pride for both Estonian-speakers and Russian-speakers. In fact, Estonia is ranked as "Very High" in the United Nation's 2018 E-Governance Development Index, 17th overall just after Switzerland and before Spain. "E-Government Survey 2020: Digital Government in the Decade of Action for Sustainable Development, With Addendum on COVID-19 Response," United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2020, accessed Jan. 10, 2022, https://publicadmin-istration.un.org/egovkb/Portals/egovkb/Documents/un/2020-Survey/2020 UN E-Government Survey (Full Report).pdf.

76   "Court Places Narva Council Member Voronov in Custody," *Post Time Estonia,* March 28, 2019, https://news.postimees.ee/6555944/court-places-narva-council-member-voronov-in-custody.

kowtowed too much to the European Union, leaving the state short on legitimacy when it came to the importance older citizens placed on strength and stability. This older population perceived the government as weak in its negotiations with the European Union, citing the integration policy adopted in 1999, and in its security posture, noting a too-heavy reliance on NATO and the United States. Respondents frequently described the Estonian government as "marching to the European Union's drum."

Older Russian-speaking Estonians in particular described this same value to explain why they liked the Kremlin's leadership, with one respondent stating, "It is strong, the strength of one state is better than the strength of one state derived from an agglomeration of many [referring to the European Union]." Notably, Russian-speaking Estonians faulted the European Union for pushing its values on the Estonian state and society, and for promoting social welfare programs that are optimized for nuclear families instead of multi-generational family structures. They view this as particularly incongruous with their "traditional family values," driving a wedge between them and their government.

While respondents reflected on the Estonian government's social contract with its society, a majority of Estonians, regardless of generation or primary household language, expressed high levels of uncertainty, distrust, and even fear with regard to the potential impact of the recent election on the state-society social contract. In particular, concerns were raised over how EKRE's polarizing and nationalistic policies on education, language, and citizenship would affect the Estonian government's shared values and performance.

Particularly in light of the incoming coalition and political configuration in 2019, we identified the Estonian government as an institution whose state-society social contract has a relevant and negative impact on Estonia's vulnerability to hybrid warfare.

Half of Estonia's population is older than 41 and has strong memories of the Soviet occupation (both positive and negative).[77] Moreover, Estonia's older ethnic-Russian population has experienced persistent integration and language challenges. This means that fostering a well-integrated, pluralistic society may take longer than in states with a younger population that is further removed from the events of the 20th century. While Estonia's leadership and its population are in dialogue about the nature of Estonia's state-society social contract, anonymous acts

suggestive of Kremlin-backed hybrid warfare tactics continue to manipulate public opinion against Estonia's government.[78]

Discussion

Findings from our SCAT research and analysis include several specific opportunities — from the intuitive to the surprising — for Estonia and its allies to deepen social cohesion across primary household language and generational divides in a manner that we believe could directly contribute to greater resilience to Kremlin-backed hybrid warfare.

Embrace Duality, Locally and Strategically

In our research and analysis, we found that Russian-speaking Estonians favor institutions that accommodate and even embrace their dual Estonian socio-political and Russian cultural identity, and that they rebuff institutions that they perceive as offering a false binary between being a loyal Estonian or a Russian. This was more apparent in Narva than in other locations where we conducted research in Estonia.

The Estonian government's pursuit of liberal, Western-oriented values could bolster Estonia's social inclusion. However, if the pursuit of these values is presented as part of the Estonian government's decisive commitment to align itself with the West, then Estonians who embrace a dual identity might reject those values due to the perception of an exclusionary alignment with the West — implicitly or explicitly perceived as anti-Russian — rather than because of the actual values themselves. One Russian-speaking Estonian we interviewed observed that the European Union meant "divorce" for her, as she felt she would be asked to shed her identity, culture, and family. If the Estonian government and its population were to identify these values as uniquely Estonian instead, then it is possible that Russian-speaking Estonians might be more receptive to accepting and embracing them.

When it comes to NATO, our research found that it would be less divisive if those who work for, or in affiliation with, the alliance did not unnecessarily confront the dual identity of some Estonians through large displays of NATO soldiers. Although well-intended, too many displays of military equipment, strolls through the center of a town, or even shaking

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77   "Estonia: Average Age of the Population from 1950 to 2050," Statista, accessed Jan. 5, 2022, https://www.statista.com/statistics/377036/average-age-of-the-population-in-estonia/.

78   "Numerous Fake Accounts Posting on Facebook Pages of Estonian Publications," *The Baltic Times*, Jan. 7, 2021, https://www.baltictimes.com/nume"rous_fake_accounts_posting_on_facebook_pages_of_estonian_publications/.

hands with students in elementary schools in uniform can become uncomfortable for Russian-speaking Estonians. It is at best counterproductive to militarize a civilian space in the name of an entity — NATO — that directly challenges the dual identity of Russian-speaking Estonians. Rather, NATO, and in particular those associated with strategic communications, should seek to build relationships with Russian-speaking Estonians by seeking natural defense partnerships with the Estonian military and the Estonian Defense League, and by taking more educational approaches, such as convening roundtable discussions that include a mix of military and civilian defense experts.

Institutions that are intent on attracting, influencing, enfranchising, or integrating this demographic should ensure that the social contracts they offer make space for the dual identity of Russian-speaking Estonians. This means incorporating the use of the Russian language; being cognizant of the traditional values that are held by older Russian-speaking Estonians, the more liberal values that are held by younger Russian-speaking Estonians, and the values of strength in leadership and multi-generation family units that are common across this group; and ensuring that institutions hold events that are likely to resonate with Russian-speaking Estonians, such as multi-generational events or activities that impart skills or information deemed useful to self-reliance-oriented Russian-speaking Estonians. Minor shifts like these could enable the Estonian Defense League, for example, to attract and retain more Russian-speaking Estonians, not only boosting social cohesion but leading to an expanded and more culturally diverse civil defense network that would be better positioned to counter hybrid tactics. The Estonian government's cultural institutions and international donors alike could see a higher return on their integration-oriented programs if they ensure that classical Russian heritage is featured alongside program elements seen as decidedly Western, Estonian, European, or simply non-Russian. This could have the two-pronged benefit of enfranchising ethnic Russians into Estonian society while mitigating the risk of resentment or openness to hybrid misinformation campaigns among older Russian-speaking Estonians, in particular.

Estonian societal institutions writ large and international allies of this vulnerable nation would benefit from embracing the dual identity of Russian-speaking Estonians and taking a culturally hybrid approach in order to meaningfully integrate this segment of the population into society and strengthen resilience to thwart hybrid threats.

Beware the Power of Language Politics

The issue of language, and its relationship to citizenship and integration, directly affects Estonia's state-society social contract perhaps more than any other issue, and is an intrinsic part of the ongoing dialogue between the state government and its society. The majority of Russian-speaking Estonians with whom we spoke mentioned the lack of access to Estonian language education as the largest factor affecting their ability to participate in Estonia's broader society and in Estonia's state-society social contract. In addition, our research revealed the need for the Estonian government and broader Estonian society not to vilify the use of the Russian language. The lack of adequate access to Estonian language courses, as well as calls to restrict Russian-only or bilingual schools and workplaces, fuels Russian-speaking Estonians' grievances and perpetuates dangerous divisions in Estonian society.

Estonian institutions and allies would benefit from investing in Estonian language preservation and education, while simultaneously ensuring that Russian-speaking Estonians are more effectively included and accommodated in Estonian society. Institutions such as Narva College have found innovative models to provide bilingual higher education by creating bilingual classroom experiences, bilingual libraries, and, importantly, a bilingual campus environment that allows students and their families to achieve true linguistic and cultural fluency in Estonian and Russian. Expanding access to Estonian adult education classes could pay significant dividends by reducing cultural and socio-economic divisions and countering divisive Kremlin-backed narratives. The promotion of Russian-language education as an option for ethnic Estonians could also signal to ethnic Russians Estonia's desire for greater social inclusivity and help to facilitate increased interaction between the two populations.

To avoid the risk of confirming Kremlin-backed information campaigns that frame societies that are intolerant of Russian language as enemies of ethnic Russians, it is in Estonia's best interests to reject exclusionary language politics and embrace a language-inclusive model, such as that of Narva College, which could be replicated and adapted throughout the country.

Invest in Institutions that Organically Boost Societal Cohesion

Even a short visit to Estonia makes clear that social silos exist. From the Tallinn neighborhood of Lasnamae, where almost no ethnic Estonians live, to Estonian cultural institutions in which few if any ethnic

Russians participate, Estonians — like most people — tend to organize themselves into ethnically and generationally homogenous groups. This forecloses enriching cultural and economic exchanges and creates in-groups and out-groups that can foster inequality, ignorance, and prejudice.

Our interviewees regularly observed that the Estonian language is, in and of itself, insufficient to integrate Russian-speaking Estonians into Estonia's society and conveyed a need for greater "cultural exchanges, local activities and seminars." Interviewees across generation and primary language divides suggested that ethnic Estonians could actively seek enriching cultural and economic exchanges with ethnically diverse Estonians to foster true social cohesion. The institutions that span social divides by building on values shared by ethnic Estonians and Russian-speaking Estonians can serve as such bridges. Drawing on the passion for football shared by all Estonians, the Narva Trans football club stands out for its success as a bridging institution and has become a valued forum for inter-ethnic and inter-generational interaction. The football matches help to facilitate organic cross-cultural exchange and interaction in a city with deep social divides. Estonian civil society groups like the Estonian litter clean-up nongovernmental organization Let's Do It similarly build on the shared value of pride in one's neighborhood and help to form inter-ethnic connections among Estonia's multi-ethnic youth through their events.[79]

Institutions that seek a similar role in society could learn from these successes by understanding and embracing the shared values underpinning the social contract of a broad set of constituents and organizing social cohesion-boosting exchanges that bring together ethnic Estonians, ethnic Russians, the young, and the old. Such activities organically strengthen social cohesion and bolster against opportunism for divisive outsiders.

Conclusion

Despite the absence of a definitional consensus on hybrid warfare within the academic community, it is nevertheless critical that vulnerable states and the international community agree that countering this threat demands society-centric analysis and strategies. We implore states in the Kremlin's crosshairs, and their allies, to embrace a society-centric approach to preemptively identify the intra-societal and state-society vulnerabilities to hybrid warfare, while also proactively mitigating these societal vulnerabilities through a combination of immediate and long-term responses. To identify these vulnerabilities, whole-of-society analytical frameworks and tools, such as the SCAT, offer a timely, accessible, and adaptable analysis that can help to bolster social cohesion, and in so doing boost resilience to hybrid attacks. Our research revealed that Russian-speaking Estonians overwhelmingly perceive institutions that embrace their dual identity as Estonian citizens *and* as ethnic Russians as legitimate, whereas institutions that fail to accommodate or that challenge this dual identity are seen as illegitimate and divisive.

Applied in the context of a Baltic state that is confronting Kremlin-backed hybrid warfare, the SCAT helped to reveal vulnerabilities and opportunities to bolster cohesion as part of a strategy of resilience against tactics designed to divide societies. Our research and analysis approaches in Estonia enabled us to craft timely, precise, and actionable recommendations to institutions as varied as the U.S. Embassy in Tallinn; NATO policy officials in Brussels; Estonian civil society leaders spanning the arts, sports, politics, and culture; and members of the *Kaitsliit*. Some of the institutions have already made changes in policy, rhetoric, and programming as a result of our recommendations, including reviewing donor-funded programs in the contemporary arts. Accurately measuring the extent to which these actions contribute to making Estonia more cohesive and thus resilient to Kremlin-backed threats is beyond the scope of our efforts, but does offer an opportunity for further research.

We believe that a society-centric framework and tool has relevance in other former Soviet republics that, like Estonia, are debating the nature of their state-society social contract and are in Russia's sphere of influence and in its crosshairs. Although Kazakhstan is different from Estonia — it is not a NATO member and Russian is a national language — Kazakhstan is similarly seeking to strike a balance with its ethnic-Russian minority (23–26 percent of the population)[80] and a growing sense of Kazakh nationalism. Alarmingly, recent events suggest that Russian hybrid warfare is targeting the country: The same irredentist Russian National Liberation Movement in Ukraine is now claiming Kazakh land on behalf of Russia.[81]

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79   "Homepage," Let's Do It, accessed Jan. 10, 2022, https://www.letsdoitworld.org/.

80   *Kazakhstan: Situation of Russian Minorities; State Protection and Support Services*, Canada's Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Aug. 10, 2012, https://www.refworld.org/docid/50b5f6f02.html.

81   Aydar Ashimov, "Russian National Liberation Movement Stokes Anxiety in Kazakhstan," *Caravanserai*, Jan. 20, 2021, https://central.asia-news.com/en_GB/articles/cnmi_ca/features/2021/01/20/feature-01.

Recognizing this threat, Kazakhstan has responded by revising its military strategy to include hybrid warfare.[82] It remains unclear how Kazakhstan's government and society are identifying and mitigating its societal vulnerabilities to possible Russian hybrid warfare beyond the security domain. Now, almost two years after our research, Kazakhstan is facing a political crisis involving Russian interests and actors.[83] While research in Kazakhstan is necessary, based on the findings of our research in Estonia, one could speculate that embracing the dual identity of Kazakhstan's ethnic-Russian population could strengthen the country's resilience to Kremlin-backed hybrid warfare tactics.

States beyond Estonia and other former Soviet republics such as Kazakhstan could also benefit from society-centric analysis to identify vulnerabilities and to proactively mitigate the societal vulnerabilities to hybrid warfare. Our research demonstrates the potential value of applying the SCAT in states as varied as Iraq, where sectarian factions compete for legitimacy through countless social contracts, to the politically polarized United States, where social cleavages have, for example, been exploited by foreign election meddlers and by fringe movements intent on undermining trust in specific institutions.

As we hope our work in Estonia has showed, a society-centric framework is useful for policymakers, practitioners, and the public alike, enabling individuals or institutions to understand their society's strengths and weaknesses with regard to social cohesion. In particular, we urge states that are actively being targeted through hybrid warfare — and their allies — to embrace a society-centric approach to identify vulnerabilities through the lens of weak or problematic social contracts, illuminate opportunities to bolster social cohesion by repairing or reforming these contracts, and, in so doing, boost societal resilience. We believe that the SCAT is the tool for just such an approach. ♟

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Image: ToBreatheAsOne (CC BY-SA 2.0)[84]

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82   Deirdre Tynan, "What Does Kazakhstan's New Military Doctrine Reveal About Its Relations with Russia?" *Eurasianet*, Dec. 7, 2017, https://eurasianet.org/what-does-kazakhstans-new-military-doctrine-reveal-about-its-relations-with-russia.

83   Peter Spiegel, "Kazakhs Shine a Light on Putin's Weakness – At the Worst Possible Time," *Financial Times*, Jan. 6, 2022, https://www.ft.com/content/aab644cd-f8e9-4351-9147-c699eae1e896.

84   For the image, see https://www.flickr.com/photos/tobreatheasone/3691499250/. For the license, see https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/.