

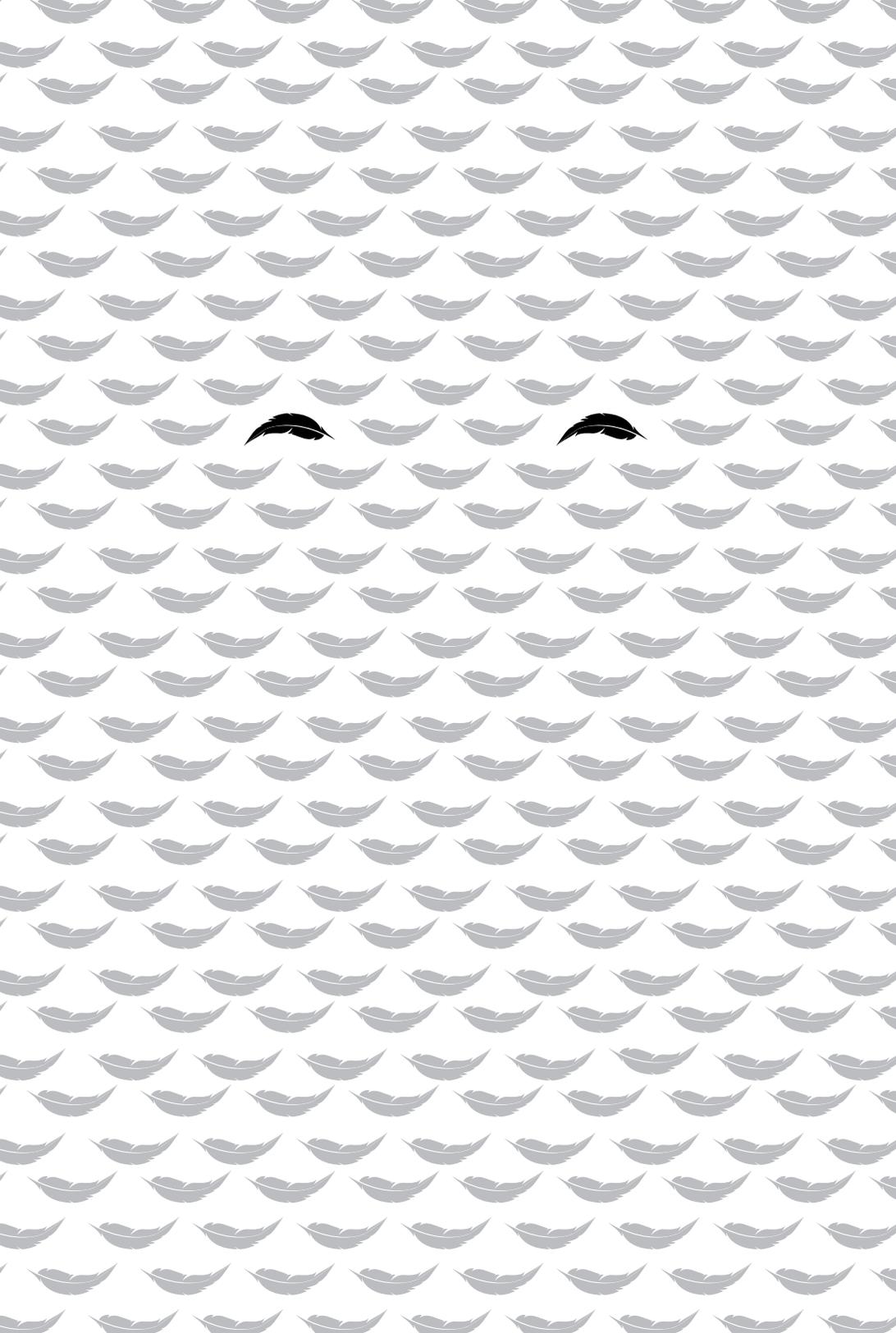


LATVIAN INSTITUTE OF  
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

# **The different faces of "soft power": the Baltic States and Eastern Neighborhood between Russia and the EU**

Editors: Toms Rostoks and Andris Spruds





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This publication aims to provide a thorough analysis and conceptual (re)definition of “soft power” projected by the EU and Russia in the shared neighbourhood. The book will have a special focus on Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia among the EU’s Eastern Partners. It will also examine the experience of the Baltic States, which, despite being full-fledged members of the EU, still remain an area of interaction and contestation.

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*The opinions expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions of the Latvian Institute of International Affairs, its partners or any other institution.*

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# Introductory Remarks

*/Andris Spruds/*

This is a book about the different faces of soft power and its projection in the shared neighbourhood of the European Union (EU) and Russia – or the ‘New Eastern Europe’. “Soft power” has recently achieved the status of an extensively applied concept in both academic analysis and public discourse. Above all, it describes the ability to attract, rather than coerce, as a means of persuasion and efficient foreign policy. Soft power aims primarily to address and attract the hearts and minds of other societies. However, the concept has not escaped methodological and political controversy as it evolved in the context of a transforming international and regional environment and within adjusting national strategies.

Susceptibility to outside soft power influences and correlating societal and strategic orientations are a continuously important issue in the Baltic and Black Sea regions. The countries in these regions have experienced a dramatic transformation during the last two decades following the breaking-up of the Soviet Union. Both regions essentially still remain “in the making”. Interaction with and power projection by the EU and Russia has had a considerable imprint on transforming post-Soviet societies. Soft power has become an increasingly important inducement in the process of making societal and strategic preferences. However, there have also been considerable divergences between the two regions. While Baltic countries are determined to orient themselves to the West and seek the membership in the Euro-Atlantic community, the strategic choices of Black Sea societies underwent a variety of trajectories and manifestations.

Recent events in Ukraine have served as a stark reminder of the complex interplays of power wielded by Russia, the EU and separate EU Member States, and obstacles standing in the way of multilateral dialogue and integration of Eastern neighbours into Euro-Atlantic structures. The EU and Russia apply a variety of instruments of influence and power projection, and many of them can be classified as “soft” – cultural, societal, and economic influence, and the attractiveness of societal performance rather than political or military pressure. These “soft” instruments are indispensable for achieving long-term gravitation from neighbouring states and societies towards either the EU or Russia. At the same time, the nature and impact of these instruments have been difficult to accurately appraise. Moreover, what is deemed “soft power”, can in many cases be considered “soft manipulation” when cultural, humanitarian, and economic tools become instrumental to gain influence over partners.

This book aims to contribute to the understanding of these trends, the driving factors, and dynamics regarding soft power in the shared neighbourhood between the EU and Russia. The publication particularly focuses on Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia among the EU's Eastern Partners, and juxtaposes their experiences to those of the three Baltic States. The latter countries already belong to the European Union but remain a playing field where EU and Russian "soft powers" still intersect - and the EU is often treated as an external player, as a 'them'. Hence, a thorough examination of the EU's and Russia's soft power vectors and tool-boxes is important. The publication also offers a re-assessment and re-conceptualization of "soft power". The authors analyse in their respective chapters, people-to-people relations, economic ties, information tools, cultural affairs, and trans-border cooperation. This comparative perspective allows the identification of differences among countries and the involved stakeholders, and defines the nature and scope of the dynamics and impact of soft power on societal preferences and different countries' strategic choices. This publication intends not only to address these issues in a comparative perspective but also endeavours to provide policy recommendations to encourage the application of soft power in order to facilitate a mutual understanding and attractiveness. Russia's adventurism and the conflict in Ukraine has considerably undermined a mutual trust and invoked notions of a "hybrid war", "manipulative power", and "weaponization of soft power". However, promotion of attractiveness and role models for a societal gravitation for other nations still remains a much more efficient and benevolent leverage in the long-term and an important, positive stabilizer in the wider neighbourhood between the EU and Russia.

The Latvian Institute of International Affairs would like to extend its most sincere gratitude to all authors and partners who made this publication possible, and to the readers maintaining interest in understanding soft power, its consequences and prospects in the shared space between the European Union and Russia.

# Forms of Russian and EU power in the ‘New Eastern Europe’

*/Toms Rostoks/*

This study is about power in the ‘New Eastern Europe.’ The security landscape in Eastern Europe has changed considerably in recent years, and Russia’s annexation of Crimea, and the ongoing military conflict in eastern Ukraine, has prompted experts and policy-makers to reassess their perceptions of the security situation in Eastern Europe. Once again, the interest in power and its application is on the rise. Although the events in Ukraine have underlined the importance of hard power, this book discusses more subtle forms of power, because concerns over Russia’s hard power are just one part of what worries countries in the ‘New Eastern Europe.’

This chapter has two parts. The first part defines power and discusses various typologies of power. Its aim is to provide the authors of subsequent chapters with a broad array of conceptual instruments for discussing forms of EU and Russian power in the ‘New Eastern Europe’, and perceptions of the EU and Russian power on the part of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia. The second part builds upon a number of softer aspects of power, and provides suggestions as to how these forms of power can be used in order to assess the interplay between the EU and Russian power in the ‘New Eastern Europe.’ Although it is soft power that is the main focus of this chapter, it also points to the complex relationship between soft and hard forms of power. Countries that belong to the ‘New Eastern Europe’ have been the targets of Russia’s soft power efforts for a number of years. What worries these countries most, however, is Russia’s readiness to cross the line between soft and hard power. In other words, this study builds on the widespread perception that, in the case of Russia, soft power is simply a prelude to application of hard power, if soft power falls short of achieving Russia’s core aims with regard to its neighbouring countries.

## **Power: definitions and typologies**

Hans J. Morgenthau has asserted that power is the currency of international relations, and “international politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power ... whatever the ultimate aims of international politics, power is always

the immediate aim.”<sup>21</sup> Although some might disagree with this statement, few would go so far as to ignore the importance of power in world politics. Power is important because states are yet to prove that harmonious coexistence is possible. States still seek power, and acquiring power is seen as a pre-requisite for security (at a minimum) and influence (at a maximum). Power makes it possible to resist unwanted external influence and to overcome the resistance of others. Thus, Karl W. Deutsch has defined power both as “the ability to prevail in conflict and to overcome obstacles”<sup>22</sup> and as a “symbol of the ability to change the distribution of results, and particularly the results of people’s behaviour”.<sup>23</sup> The absence of a great power conflict after World War II is best explained by the presence of power, rather than by the absence and/or irrelevance of it. Power not only provides states with means to resist unwanted external influences, but it also provides possibilities for shaping the behaviour and preferences of others. Some have even gone so far as to claim that “force is the ultima ratio of international politics.”<sup>24</sup> Since history has witnessed literally thousands of wars, this stark assertion has frequently been proven correct, although most contemporary analysts claim that economic power<sup>25</sup> and soft power have become increasingly important tools of statecraft.

Although power is most frequently seen as a capability, it is essentially “a psychological relation between those who exercise it and those over whom it is exercised.”<sup>26</sup> Leslie Gelb seems to agree with this when he writes that “power is mental arm wrestling.”<sup>27</sup> Thus, although power is usually seen as a set of material capabilities, the relationship between the power-wielders and those over whom power is exercised is of a psychological character. Also, if power is essentially about a psychological relationship, then it is likely that the exercise of power can only partially be uncovered by observing visible interactions, which are likely to be just the tip of the iceberg. When coercion is used to influence other states’ behaviour, it is likely that power - as the ability to produce results without coercion - has failed. Thus, resorting to violence is as much a failure of power as it is the exercise of power. Much of the power relationship, however, works through mutual perceptions of involved actors and frequently remains hidden to an outside observer.

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1 Hans Joachim Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations. The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985), 31.

2 Karl Wolfgang Deutsch, *The Analysis of International Relations*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1978), 23.

3 Ibid, 45.

4 John J. Mearsheimer, (2014) *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, updated ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014), 56.

5 Leslie H. Gelb, *Power Rules. How Common Sense Can Rescue American Foreign Policy* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2010), 37-38.

6 Hans J. Morgenthau, 32.

7 Leslie H. Gelb, 33.

The current discussion on power goes beyond assertions about tectonic shifts in present-era great power politics and includes claims about the changing nature of power. Moises Naim claims that the current transformations in world politics can be captured through the lens of “decay of power.” He argues that “In the 21st century, power is easier to get, harder to use, and easier to lose ... battles for power are as intense as ever, but they are yielding diminishing returns.”<sup>8</sup> If this is correct, then coercive forms of power are going to be much more difficult to use and are also likely to bring only short term achievements. The decay of power can also be bad news for collective action because “A world where players have enough power to block everyone else’s initiatives, but no one has the power to impose its preferred course of action, is a world where decisions are not taken, taken too late, or watered down to the point of ineffectiveness.”<sup>9</sup> The emerging powers are taking great pride in their new-found ability not to follow the Pax Americana, but the world without leadership is unlikely to produce solutions to some of the most pressing problems of our time, such as regional conflicts, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and climate change.

There are many definitions of power. This study adopts Robert A. Dahl’s definition of power as its starting point. Dahl emphasized that power has an adversarial element built into it, therefore he defined power as the ability of ‘A’ to overcome resistance of ‘B’ in pursuit of ‘A’s goals – “A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, power is different from influence because it is about changing other actors’ behaviour, being able to resist others, and overcoming others’ resistance. This study also notes that there are many faces or forms of power. However, as Robert O. Keohane correctly argues, one has to distinguish between definitions of power, and faces or aspects of power.<sup>11</sup> Dahl’s definition of power still applies because power is a capability, not a resource, but our understanding of faces of power has notably improved with the help of contributions from Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz (the second face of power), and Stephen Lukes (the third face of power). Others have come up with different classifications of power. For example, Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall have developed a four-fold typology of power which, in addition to compulsory power and institutional

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8 Moises Naim, *The End of Power*, (New York: Basic Books, 2013), 1-2.

9 Ibid, 18.

10 Robert A. Dahl, “The Concept of Power,” *Behavioral Science*, 2:3 (1957): 203. Other authors have offered similar definitions of power. For example, Max Weber has defined power as ‘the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will, despite resistances, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests’. Quoted in Robert M. Regoli, “The Conception of Power: Reconsidered,” *Kansas Journal of Sociology*, 10:2 (1974): 158.

11 Robert O. Keohane, “Stephen Krasner: Subversive Realist” in *Back to Basics. State Power in a Contemporary World*, ed. Martha Finnemore, Judith Goldstein (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 29.

power, outlines two more forms of power: structural and productive. The three faces of power or various other forms of power are, however, simply different ways in which A can make B to do something that B would otherwise not do. The following four sections look at various typologies of power.

## Faces of power

The first face of power describes the most conventional aspect of power, namely, A's ability to issue threats or provide positive material incentives in order to obtain B's acquiescence. This is also the way in which power is most frequently seen in world politics. Actors with large material capabilities are seen as powerful and are supposed to get their way over materially-weaker opponents. However, superior military capabilities are not always helpful in producing stunning victories, as the Soviet Union discovered during the Winter War with Finland and as the US discovered in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq. However, although great powers occasionally stumble when facing supposedly weaker adversaries, there is little doubt that material power matters a great deal. For example, Moises Naim argues that power 'got big' in the twentieth century, but we are witnessing an opposite trend in the 21st century.<sup>12</sup> Although he may be right, few countries would prefer to be weak in terms of material capabilities.

The second face of power refers to the ability of A to use the power in order to control which issues are going to be part of the decision-making agenda, and which issues are going to be kept off the agenda. Bachrach and Baratz have explained the essence of the second face of power in the following way: "Of course power is exercised when A participates in the making of decisions that affect B. But power is also exercised when A devotes his energies to creating or reinforcing social and political values and institutional practices that limit the scope of the political process to public consideration, of only those issues which are comparatively innocuous to A. To the extent that A succeeds in doing this, B is prevented, for all practical purposes, from bringing to the fore any issues that might in their resolution be seriously detrimental to A's set of preferences."<sup>13</sup> Thus, the ability to control or impact the decision-making agenda emerges as an important aspect of power. And having the right to veto or otherwise derail whatever is being decided by the organization is also an important aspect of power. Today, most states are members of numerous international organizations, therefore the ability to exercise power through these organizations has become crucially important.

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12 Moises Naim, see chapter 3.

13 Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz, "The Faces of Power," *The American Political Science Review*, 56:4 (1962): 948.

The third face of power is about the actors' ability to impact other actors' preferences, beliefs and interests. Stephen Lukes hypothesized that "power is at its most effective when least visible."<sup>14</sup> He went on to argue that the third dimension of power was about the "imposition of internal constraints" and that power as domination was about acquiring beliefs and forming desires consistent with the preferences of power wielders.<sup>15</sup> The adversarial element, which is most clearly visible in the first face of power and is an integral part of Dahl's definition of power, is hardly visible in Lukes' interpretation of power. However, it is also not absent completely. Rather, it marks the return to the Gramscian understanding of power, where the aim is to change the interests (not only behaviour) of those against whom power is applied. As a consequence, the adversarial element is taken out of the power relationship - although it continues to exist in an 'objective' sense, because the 'real' interests of those actors that are subjected to power have been transformed in such a way that they have become identical to the interests of the power wielders.<sup>16</sup>

To summarize, the first face of power is about using material incentives and threats to change others' behaviour. The second face of power is about the ability to use institutions to keep certain issues off the decision-making agenda. The third face of power is about the power-wielders' ability to influence others' interests and beliefs.

## Structural and productive power

Another typology of power worth exploring in greater detail has been developed by Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall. Their four-fold typology begins with compulsive and institutional power (the first and the second faces of power). However, it adds another two forms of power that cannot be reduced to Lukes' third face of power. The third form of power is structural power, and the fourth is productive power. Barnett and Duvall define structural power as 'structural constitution' - that is, the production and reproduction of internally related positions of super- and sub-ordination, or domination, that actors occupy. Productive power, by contrast, is 'the constitution of all social subjects with various social powers through systems of knowledge

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14 Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 1.

15 Ibid, 13.

16 For further discussion of Gramsci's understanding of hegemonic power see Robert W. Cox, "Gramsci, Hegemony, and International Relations: An Essay in Method," *Millennium*, 12:2 (1983): 162-175.

and discursive practices of broad and general scope.<sup>17</sup> Structural power works directly in relations between structurally advantaged and structurally disadvantaged actors, while productive power is diffuse and is mostly concerned about the kinds of subjects that are being produced. Barnett and Duvall argue that “basic categories of classification, such as ‘civilized,’ ‘rogue,’ ‘European,’ ‘unstable,’ ‘Western’ and ‘democratic’ states, are representative of productive power, as they generate asymmetries of social capabilities”<sup>18</sup> Thus, both of these forms of power are about social production of categories of actors and the ability of power-wielders to place actors to certain categories. The use of productive power, however, is likely to be time-consuming because of the nature of social interaction through which actors and categories of actors are ‘produced’. But, once produced, such categories are likely to have a lasting effect.

## Power as authority

David A. Lake distinguishes between two types of power - coercion and authority. Under coercion, actor A can issue threats and coerce other others to comply with A’s demands. Coercion is similar to hard/compulsive power, and it also includes economic power - although the element of coercion is less visible when it comes to the economic aspects of the power relationship. Political authority is different. Lake argues that “in political authority ... A commands B to alter his or her actions, where command implies that A has the right to issue such orders.”<sup>19</sup> Despite the common assertion that the international realm is anarchical (therefore it is unlikely that sovereign states would recognize that other states may have a right to issue binding orders), Lake claims that, in fact, the international realm is sufficiently hierarchical that political authority can rest on the foundation of ‘social contract.’

Lake describes social contract as follows: “Relational authority, premised on a social contract, is founded on an exchange between the ruler and the ruled, in which A provides a political order of value to B sufficient to offset the loss of freedom incurred in subordination to A, and B confers the right of A to exert the restraints on B’s behaviour necessary to provide that order.” Thus, “even though states lack formal legal authority over one another, they can and do possess a more or less relational authority, prem-

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17 Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, “Power in Global Governance” in *Power in Global Governance*, ed. Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 20.

18 Ibid, 21.

19 David A. Lake, “Authority, Coercion, and Power in International Relations” in *Back to Basics. State Power in a Contemporary World*, ed. Martha Finnemore and Judith Goldstein (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 56.

ised on the provision of international order”.<sup>20</sup> As a consequence, international politics is a struggle for authority that would provide the possibility to rule through the consent of those that are less powerful. Those actors who are seen by others as having the right to issue orders are likely to have the power because of their ability to create and sustain political order that is acceptable to actors who are part of that order. The orders of those who have authority are seen as legitimate.

## Soft power

The distinction between hard and soft power has been used with increasing frequency in the early 21st century. Joseph S. Nye, Jr. has been the key protagonist of the soft power concept over the past two decades. According to Nye, hard power includes military and economic capabilities, while the concept of soft power covers other, less tangible, dimensions of power. His numerous writings have laid out the key aspects of soft power and its relationship with hard power.<sup>21</sup> Nye has defined soft power as “the ability to shape the preferences of others,”<sup>22</sup> and this ability rests primarily on the attractiveness of the power wielder. Nye writes that “a country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries want to follow it, admiring its values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness. In this sense, it is just as important to set the agenda in world politics and attract others as it is to force them to change through the threat or use of military or economic weapons. This aspect of power – getting others to want what you want - I call soft power.”<sup>23</sup> The key aspect of soft power is the attractiveness of a country, but this is hardly a novel idea. Edward H. Carr, in his analysis of power in international politics, has argued that power over opinion - in addition to military and economic types of power - is one of the key forms of power.<sup>24</sup> Where Nye and Carr differ, however, is in their views on whether propaganda can be an effective tool in securing power over opinion. Nye rejects the usefulness of propaganda

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20 David A, 58-60.

21 Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990); Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Paradox of American Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004); Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Powers to Lead* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Future of Power* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2011).

22 Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 5.

23 Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Paradox of American Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 8-9.

24 Edward H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919-1939*, reprint of the 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Harper Perennial, 2001), 132-145.

out of hand, while Carr insists that propaganda can be an effective instrument of statecraft, at least in the short term.<sup>25</sup>

Although soft power has generated considerable controversy, it has increasingly gained acceptance among researchers and decision-makers alike. A recent study has found Nye is regarded as the most influential international relations scholar among the US policy-makers. Nye's standing is somewhat less prominent within academia, where he stands as the 6th most influential author behind Alexander Wendt, Robert O. Keohane, Kenneth N. Waltz, John J. Mearsheimer and James D. Fearon.<sup>26</sup> Although soft power emerged as a crucial aspect of the debate on the United States' power after the Cold War, this concept has more recently been embraced by China and Russia. In response to that, Nye has criticized their ability to augment and project soft power because of their lack of attractiveness to the public in liberal democracies.<sup>27</sup>

Although the relationship between soft power and the other typologies of power discussed earlier is not entirely clear, there are reasons to assume that Nye has incorporated the second and the third faces of power in his soft power concept. Nye's hard power is similar to the first face of power (threats and inducements, military and economic capabilities). Soft power, however, has elements of agenda setting and institutional power (Bachrach and Baratz) and power over interests and beliefs (Lukes).<sup>28</sup> For example, Nye writes in his book *Soft Power* that the concept of soft power "builds on what Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz called the 'second face of power'."<sup>29</sup> Elsewhere, Nye indicates that the soft power concept is rooted in the writings of thinkers such as Antonio Gramsci. Also, an important element of power is the ability to establish preferences of others.<sup>30</sup> Unsurprisingly, Robert O. Keohane has concluded that Nye's soft power is similar to Luke's third face of power.<sup>31</sup> David A. Lake, in turn, has pointed to similarities between soft power and charismatic authority (one of the types of authority outlined by Max Weber), and has argued that soft power "is a variant of charismatic

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25 It should be noted, however, that Carr admits that propaganda is self-defeating and unlikely to secure power over opinion in the long run. Carr writes that 'propaganda, harnessed to military and economic power, always tends to reach a point where it defeats its own end by inciting the mind to revolt against that power. It is a basic fact about human nature that human beings do in the long run reject the doctrine that might makes right. Oppression sometimes has the effect of strengthening the will, and sharpening the intelligence, of its victims, so that it is not universally or absolutely true that a privileged group can control opinion at the expense of the unprivileged.' Ibid, 144-145.

26 "Most Influential Scholar," *Foreign Policy*, March/April (2014): 64.

27 Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "What China and Russia Doesn't Get about Soft Power," *Foreign Policy*, April 29, 2013, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/04/29/what\\_china\\_and\\_russia\\_don\\_t\\_get\\_about\\_soft\\_power](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/04/29/what_china_and_russia_don_t_get_about_soft_power)

28 Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Future of Power* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2011), 91.

29 Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 150.

30 Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Paradox of American Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 9.

31 Robert O. Keohane, 29.

authori.<sup>32</sup> Apparently, this argument builds on the idea that soft power to a great extent rests on the attractiveness of a country. For example, cultural attractiveness may greatly increase a country's overall attractiveness and, as a consequence, allows it to shape preferences of others, and increases the willingness to follow the example set by the country whose culture others find attractive.<sup>33</sup>

Although much effort has been placed into figuring out how the divide between hard and soft power is related to other classifications of power, some scholars have been critical of Nye's classification of power. Niall Ferguson has written that 'going soft' on the part of the US is not that much different from imperial power wielded by the US and other empires in history. Also, soft power is unlikely to have much of an impact on countries that have an adversarial relationship with the US. In other words, soft power works with allies where it is least needed, but it does not work with adversaries where it is most needed.<sup>34</sup> Janice Bially Mattern, another critic of soft power, argues that soft power should be seen as an extension of hard power, rather than a separate form of power. Bially Mattern writes that "Insofar as attraction is sociolinguistically constructed through representational force, soft power should not be understood in juxtaposition to hard power, but as a continuation of it by different means."<sup>35</sup> Carnes Lord is of a similar opinion when he argues that "hard power may be said to function like soft power – that is, to cast an aura of attraction."<sup>36</sup> Moreover, he claims that hard power (including military power) can be used to generate soft power, especially when application of hard power meets the needs of subjects on whose behalf it is applied.<sup>37</sup> The last point also underlines the ability of governments in generating and wielding of soft power. While Nye admits that "governments sometimes find it difficult to control and employ soft power,"<sup>38</sup> few would doubt that govern-

.....  
32 David A. Lake, 58.

33 The soft power of a country rests heavily on three basic resources: its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when others see them as legitimate and having moral authority). Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Future of Power* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2011), 84.

34 Niall Ferguson, *Colossus. The Rise and Fall of the American Empire* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 24.

35 Janice Bially Mattern, (2005) "Why 'Soft Power' Isn't so Soft: Representational Force and Sociolinguistic Construction of Attraction in World Politics," *Millennium – Journal of International Studies*, 33 (2005): 583.

36 Carnes Lord, (2008) "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power" in *Strategic Influence: Public Diplomacy, Counterpropaganda, and Political Warfare*, ed. J. Michael Waller (Washington D.C.: The Institute of World Politics Press, 2008), 65.

37 Carnes Lord writes that the American military generated considerable soft power in Indonesia in 2004 after the tsunami: 'Nowhere was this last feature more visible than in Indonesia after the 2004 tsunami, where anti-submarine warfare helicopters of the *USS Abraham Lincoln* aircraft carrier fleet became humanitarian relief choppers, ferrying relief and medical personnel, food, water, supplies and even toys to the stricken Muslim communities. Local Muslims, traditionalists who lived under shari'ah law, begged American forces to stay.' *Ibid*, 72.

38 Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 8.

ments are increasingly trying to shape their image, both at home and abroad. This trend is most manifestly expressed through their heightened interest in public diplomacy. Even United States, a country that arguably has the largest reservoirs of soft power, has in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, attempted to mount a concerted effort aimed at regenerating its image around the world, and especially in the Middle East. With multi-polarity looming just around the corner, we are likely to witness more great power competition in terms of their efforts to be seen as attractive in the eyes of lesser powers. It does not, however, mean that the future is going to look like a benign great power beauty contest, because some of the methods used in the upcoming competition can be aimed at creating attractiveness where, in fact, there is none, and at tarnishing other great powers' reputation.

Leslie Gelb echoes the above arguments by claiming that soft power has become too inclusive. He writes that "soft power now seems to mean almost everything" because economic coercion and military power have been introduced "through the back door," and that soft power now includes not only such elements as leadership, persuasion, and values, but also "military prowess" and "all kinds of economic transactions involving the giving or withholding money for coercive purposes,"<sup>39</sup> Nye himself is partly responsible for this confusion because he has argued that "soft power fits with all three faces or aspects of power behaviour."<sup>40</sup> Thus, soft power is being identified with all three faces of power, and it becomes all-encompassing and too wide for analytical purposes. This is the key reason why this study can only adapt certain elements of the soft power concept as the theoretical framework, while embracing the work of other authors who have elaborated on less tangible aspects of power.

This section has established the definition of power and four typologies of power. The first classification of power distinguishes between the three faces of power.<sup>41</sup> The second adds structural and productive forms of power. The

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39 Leslie H. Gelb, 69.

40 Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Future of Power* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2011), 90-94.

41 There is disagreement as to how many faces or forms of power exist. The most frequently used classification includes three faces of power – coercive power, institutional power (Bachrach and Baratz) and the power to affect what other want (Lukes). However, this classification does not take into account a more recent contribution of Barnett and Duvall. They identify four kinds of power, and the structural and the productive power clearly go beyond the already established three faces of power. Although there are similarities with Lukes' conception of the third face of power, Barnett and Duvall go beyond that because their understanding of power includes not merely constitution of subjects' interests, but constitution of subjects as such. Also, Barnett's and Duvall's contribution has been recognized by Janice Bially Mattern and Stephen Krasner as a useful addition to our existing understanding of power in international relations. For more information see: Janice Bially Mattern, "The Concept of Power" in *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, ed. Christian Reus-Smith and Duncan Snidal (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 691-698 and Stephen D. Krasner, "New Terrains: Sovereignty and Alternative Conceptions of Power" in *Back to Basics. State Power in a Contemporary World*, ed. Martha Finnemore, Judith Goldstein (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 339-358.

third identifies authority, besides coercion, as an important source of power in international relations. The fourth classification discusses the merits of soft power. The following section attempts to build upon the softer aspects of power discussed thus far, and builds a conceptual foundation that can be referred to in the subsequent chapters where the application of the EU and Russian softer aspects of power in the 'New Eastern Europe' is analysed.

## **The soft end of power in the 'New Eastern Europe'**

This section aims to bring together the theoretical discussion on power from the previous section and the empirical object of this study. Before this section proceeds to discuss the possible manifestations of softer aspects of power in the 'New Eastern Europe', it is necessary to spell out the key reasons why attraction, authority and other such concepts are especially relevant for the region that this book focuses upon. This edited volume looks at application and perceptions of power in a geographical area that includes six countries - Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia - that the editors of this book have decided to call the 'New Eastern Europe'. It is, admittedly, a controversial term that brings together countries that are culturally, politically, economically and institutionally different. However, the concept of 'New Eastern Europe' fits well the purposes of this volume, because it provides a platform for discussing concerns the abovementioned six countries, as well as the EU and Russian approaches to this region. Despite the differences, it is worth exploring the somewhat similar challenges that these countries face.

From a Western European perspective, it might seem that the Baltic States should not be concerned about their security because they have already experienced the 'end of history' moment in 2004 when they became EU and NATO member states. However for Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia the current geopolitical realities are different. Thus, the dominant perception in these countries is that in the 'New Eastern Europe', history is far from over and that they have once again become part of a geopolitical competition. There are shared concerns about Russia's intentions in Eastern Europe, and the EU's and NATO's ability and willingness to support governments in the 'New Eastern Europe' politically, economically, and, if necessary, militarily in order to help them to preserve their decision-making autonomy against unwanted external influences. Their ability to counter external influence is questionable though, because they have a number of weaknesses. Some countries that are part of the 'New Eastern Europe' are small, some are economically vulnerable, some are politically unstable, some lack effective governance structures, in some there

are large gaps between society and the political elite, some are split along ethnic divisions and some are energy-dependent on Russia. These weaknesses are further exacerbated in the cases of Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia, because these three countries are not part of the EU and NATO. The Baltic States, despite being part of these organizations, are vulnerable because of their small size.

This book was conceived at the time when mainstream debate raged over Russia's occupation of Crimea and the subsequent military conflict in eastern Ukraine, but its focus is on the long-term processes of using subtle aspects of power in order to create a lasting regional political order. The post-Cold War political order in Europe was almost exclusively shaped by the EU and the US (through NATO), but at the end of the first decade of the 21st century Russia managed to reconstitute itself, and began to position itself as a viable alternative to the liberal order represented by the EU and NATO. Once again, Eastern Europe became a contested space between the West and Russia. However, this time it was largely a battle for the hearts and minds of the people rather than primarily a military and economic confrontation. The conflict in Ukraine that Russia instigated in 2014 is an exception rather than the rule, because of the wariness of Russia and the West to have a military confrontation in Europe that would undoubtedly hurt all involved parties. It does not mean that military conflicts can be ruled out, but the competition is primarily going to be waged with the help of soft power instruments.

Although this book includes a large number of country chapters, it does not encompass all aspects of Russian and EU power exercised in and against Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia. Thus, the subject of this study needs to be narrowed down, both in terms of geographical space and in terms of forms of power that are to be scrutinized. This book combines three perspectives. The first perspective outlines Russia's approach to the Baltic States and the three Eastern Partnership countries. The focus is on Russia's instruments of power that are used with regard to the 'New Eastern Europe' countries. The second perspective combines approaches to those six countries of the EU, Germany, and Poland. In this way, it becomes possible to combine EU perspective with those of its biggest member states that are key stakeholders with regard to the 'New Eastern Europe.' The third perspective brings in Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Moldovan, Ukrainian, and Georgian perspectives. These chapters assess the results of the application of EU and Russian power in those countries. Have EU and Russian instruments of power worked? Have they been effective? What are the perceptions on the part of society, the expert community, and decision-makers, on EU and Russian power? Thus, this volume aims at combining outside-in and inside-out perspectives on softer aspects of power in the 'New Eastern Europe.'

Which aspects of power does this study examine? Although both hard and soft aspects of power are important elements of statecraft, the subsequent chapters mostly focus on those instruments of power that are closer to soft power. However, this study does not adopt soft power as its analytical baseline, because the concept has become too wide and begins to encroach upon harder aspects of power. Also, it has been noted that Russia's soft power does not correspond well with Nye's interpretation of soft power. Although the key aim is to increase attractiveness of a country, there are disagreements as to how that is to be achieved. In addition, there are other useful classifications of power that should not be overlooked; therefore the following paragraphs attempt to synthesize the analytical framework of this study by combining approaches of various authors.

The study of softer forms of power in world politics may seem to be a novelty that has increasingly gained attention after the Cold War, but that overlooks earlier assessments of the importance of less tangible forms of power. Even realist authors such as Carr and Morgenthau admitted that power was not just about military might and economic strength. Carr argued that 'power over opinion' was one of the three key forms of power. Morgenthau, in turn, claimed that one of the sources of power was "the respect for love for men or institutions" and that power can be exerted also through "the authority or charisma of a man or of an office."<sup>42</sup> Thus, the application of less tangible forms of power is arguably one of the most interesting research avenues because: attraction, the ability to have an impact on public opinion in other countries, being recognized as an actor with authority, and being able to shape social categories of actors in world politics are all important elements of power, as they make it possible to have an impact on other actors' behaviour.

Leaving military and economic power aside, the subsequent country chapters focus on the following forms of power: attractiveness, power over opinion, authority, productive power, and institutional power. The authors were also invited to look at the decay of power. The following paragraphs lay out the key questions related to each of these forms of power, and these questions are laid out from three perspectives: Russian, the EU, and the 'New Eastern Europe.'

## Attractiveness

Three aspects of attractiveness are of paramount importance. Firstly, when trying to assess attractiveness of an actor, one has to begin by assessing whether attractiveness is passively possessed or actively shaped. Passive attractiveness is about 'being' rather than 'doing'. Sometimes being a 'shining city on a hill'

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42 Hans J. Morgenthau, 32-33.

is a viable option for influencing the behaviour of others, but it is increasingly abandoned because most governments understand that they can elevate their international standing by actively shaping their image abroad. The looming great power competition is likely to increase this trend.

Secondly, when assessing attractiveness, one has to find out whether the image that is projected abroad corresponds to values that a particular country represents at home. Sometimes attractiveness that is projected abroad is a façade that hardly corresponds to the realities at home. Attractiveness can be genuine when countries are honest about the values that they represent, but it can also be false if it becomes subject to spinning or outright deception. Thus, authoritarian and totalitarian regimes often put on their best face to generate soft power abroad, but for the most part these efforts fail because in the age of information and communication technologies it is difficult to conceal the reality behind the façade. However, it is also possible that the attempts to project a false image abroad may succeed in the short term.

Thirdly, to assess attractiveness of a country one needs to ask the question: What is it that makes this country attractive abroad? Thus, it becomes possible to uncover specific aspects of a country's image that make it either more or less attractive abroad. Here, it is useful to distinguish between a country's economic model, political values, culture, education and other possible sources of attractiveness. Sometimes these elements of soft power may work against each other. For example, although parts of Islamic societies may loathe the political values that the US represents, they may have a positive image of American education and leadership in science and innovation.

To assess attractiveness of a country, the following questions can be asked:

- **Russian perspective:** Does Russia see itself as an attractive country that its neighbours would like to emulate? Has Russia tried systematically to project its image as an attractive country abroad? Is this image consistent with domestic perceptions of Russia's image?
- **EU perspective:** To what extent does the EU rely on its attractiveness in relations with the Baltic States and the EU's eastern neighbours? Has the EU systematically tried to project its attractiveness abroad? Is this image consistent with internal perceptions of EU's image?
- **The 'New Eastern Europe' perspective:** What are the perceptions of Russia's and EU's attractiveness in the 'New Eastern Europe'? Why is the EU seen as more attractive than Russia (or vice versa)? Are there

any differences between the political elite and the general public on this issue? Are there any domestic regional differences in terms of perceptions of attractiveness of Russia and the EU?

## Power over opinion

Attractiveness allows the exercising of power of societies and elites of other countries. There are, however, important differences in the degree to which a country may have power over opinion in other countries. At the most basic level, power over opinion refers to situations when a residual feeling of goodwill exists towards another country. This country is viewed favourably, and it makes it easier to facilitate cross-border contacts and cooperation. It is good for business and tourism. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the power over opinion can be so strong that it can mobilize the general public and swing it into action. Although the number of instances where external influence has been so strong that it has been possible to mobilize the general public in another country against its own government is arguably small, it does not mean that such a possibility can be excluded altogether. Also, there is a possibility that power over opinion exists only in relation to a part of the population in another country. Under such circumstances, and in the strong variant of power over opinion, there is a possibility of instigating domestic strife and conflict in those countries whose populations are subject to external influence. Thus, the degree of external influence over domestic opinion is what matters most.

To assess power over opinion of a country, the following questions can be asked:

- **Russian perspective:** Has Russia systematically tried to influence public opinion about itself in the 'New Eastern Europe'? What means have been used to project such influence? How successful have these results been?
- **EU perspective:** Has the EU systematically tried to influence public opinion about itself in the Baltic States and in Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia? What means have been used to project such influence? How successful have these results been?
- **'New Eastern Europe' perspective:** To what extent has the public opinion in these countries been susceptible to external influence by the EU and Russia? What are the perceptions on the part of the political elite

about the possibility that external actors would be able to manipulate public opinion? Have there been instances when public opinion has been externally influenced to such an extent that large groups of people have been swung into action?

## Authority

Traditionally, great powers have tried to establish regional political orders, either by themselves, or in concert with other great powers. The primary aim of such attempts has been to create stability in great powers' vicinity and to allow for their extended influence. Authority is a concept that is of key importance in the context of external influence in the 'New Eastern Europe.' The Baltic States have largely accepted the external authority of other EU member states in return for having the right to take part in collective decision-making among the 28 EU members. Russia's attempts to establish authority over the Baltic States' behaviour and take part in the formation of the regional political order have been, up until now, largely rejected. It does not, however, mean that there are no groups within the Baltic States who see Russia's attempts to shape the regional political order as legitimate. With regard to Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia, relations with authority are far from being settled. These countries have been subjected to constant external influence in past years, and their participation in either the political order formed by the EU or the one formed by Russia is not yet settled. Thus, a number of questions about their being part of the EU's or Russia's political order, and their own views on legitimacy of both of these actors, can be asked.

To assess whether relations of authority have been attempted or successfully established, the following questions can be asked:

- **Russian perspective:** Has Russia tried to establish internationally its authority regarding countries that are part of the 'New Eastern Europe'? If 'yes', then what are the terms of the social contract that Russia has proposed? How successful have Russia's attempts been to establish authority over the 'New Eastern Europe'? What are the elements of the political order that Russia has tried to build in its vicinity?
- **EU perspective:** Has the EU tried to establish its authority regarding countries that are part of the 'New Eastern Europe'? If 'yes', then what are the terms of the social contract that the EU has proposed? How successful have been the EU's attempts to establish authority over the

countries in the 'New Eastern Europe'?

- **'New Eastern Europe' perspective:** Have the attempts on the part of the EU and Russia to establish authority over the 'New Eastern Europe' been regarded as legitimate in these six countries? What is the perception of willingness on the part of Russia and the EU to have authority over 'New Eastern Europe'?

## **Institutional power**

Although institutional power is usually referred to as a separate form of power, because of its indirect nature - and the absence of military and economic aspects of the relationship - it can be regarded as an integral part of the softer aspects of power. Exercise of institutional power is often less visible because of its multilateral character. Also, institutional power is sometimes used in such a way that it precludes some issues from being addressed, therefore not all instances of institutional power can be easily detected. However, under current circumstances, when most states are taking part in the workings of numerous multilateral institutions, not looking at these indirect aspects of relations between actors would be a serious omission. Thus, a number of questions can be asked about attempts to influence other actors' behaviour through multilateral institutions, by either placing certain issues on the agenda, or preventing them from being discussed and decisions being made.

In order to assess the extent to which institutional power has been used, the following questions may be asked:

- **Russian perspective:** To what extent has Russia used international institutions to exert influence on the 'New Eastern Europe'? Have these attempts been successful? Which international institutions have been given preference by Russia as channels of influence?
- **EU perspective:** Although the EU is itself an international institution, it is also a member of a number of other organizations (or at least is present in a number of international organizations). Has it used international institutions to influence the 'New Eastern Europe'? Have these attempts been successful? Which international institutions have been given preference by the EU as channels of influence?

- **‘New Eastern Europe’ perspective:** Have the six countries included in this study been influenced by the EU and/or Russia through international institutions? Which institutions have been used for this purpose? Have these countries been able to resist pressure through international institutions, either on their own or with the help of other actors?

## Structural and productive power

Structural power refers to the attempts of powerful actors to create unequal relations with other actors. All states enjoy a certain degree of domestic and foreign policy autonomy, but there are tremendous inequalities between states in economic and military terms which make it possible for structural power to be applied. Although the traditional examples of structural power – the master-slave and capital-labour relations – are hardly applicable to inter-state relations, “constitution of social capacities and interests of actors in relation to one another”<sup>43</sup> is possible to achieve in such a way that the structural relationship would privilege one actor over another. Examples of structural power would include relations between a great power and a small power, if the very nature of such relations would imply that the social capacities and interests of these actors are unequal. Other examples of structural power are donor-recipient country relations and candidate-member state relations. The capacity of actors for independent action is largely shaped by the structure of the unequal relationship that they are part of.

Productive power is different from structural power in a sense that it is indirect (the structural relationship is direct), and allows the actor to produce social categories which can then be applied to either include or exclude other actors from these categories. Barnett and Duvall use such categories as ‘civilized’, ‘democratic’, ‘rogue’, ‘European’, ‘unstable’, and ‘Western’ as examples of productive power. However, other categories can be produced as well. The most important social category in the context of this book is the distinction between successful and failed states. Exercise of softer aspects of power on the part of the EU and Russia includes value judgments about the development trajectories of the ‘New Eastern Europe’ states since the collapse of the Soviet Union. EU membership of the three Baltic States is in itself an evaluation of their success. However, Russia has consistently emphasized that the Baltic States have been only partially successful - or rather that they have failed to

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 43 Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall are cited in: Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal, “Between Utopia and Reality: The Practical Discourses of International Relations” in *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, ed. Christian Reus-Smith and Duncan Snidal (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 21.

a considerable extent. Similar disagreements have arisen also with respect to Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia.

In order to assess the extent to which structural and productive power has been used, the following questions can be asked:

- **Russian perspective:** Has Russia tried to create unequal structural relationships with the 'New Eastern Europe' countries? Has Russia tried to produce certain social categories of actors internationally and include the 'New Eastern Europe' countries in some of these categories? Has Russia regarded the 'New Eastern Europe' countries as successes or as failures?
- **EU perspective:** Has the EU tried to create unequal structural relationships with the 'New Eastern Europe' countries? Has the EU tried to produce certain social categories of actors internationally and include the 'New Eastern Europe' countries in some of these categories? Have the EU regarded the 'New Eastern Europe' countries as successes or as failures?
- **'New Eastern Europe' perspective:** How do countries from the 'New Eastern Europe' view the attempts of external actors to include them in certain social categories? How successful have they been in neutralizing the efforts of being placed in a negative social category, if there have been any such efforts? What have been the domestic effects of external actors' efforts to place the 'New Eastern Europe' countries in particular social categories?

## Decay of power

At the core of the notion that power is decaying is the two-fold idea that it has become much more difficult even for great powers to produce their desired results, and that it has become easier for the weak to resist the strong. Also, it is argued that power has become easier to lose. This provides for interesting avenues of inquiry. There is a widespread perception in Europe that Russia's power has been on the increase, while Europe, battered by the devastating impact of the economic crisis and the growing debt burden, has become weaker. But how has this been reflected in the 'New Eastern Europe' countries? Did Russia's ability to get its way increase? Did the EU's influence decrease? Thus, the decay of power concept allows us to explore the impact of fluctuations of power on the ability of actors to produce certain outcomes.

In order to assess the extent to which it is possible to talk about decay of power with regard to the 'New Eastern Europe' countries, the following questions can be asked:

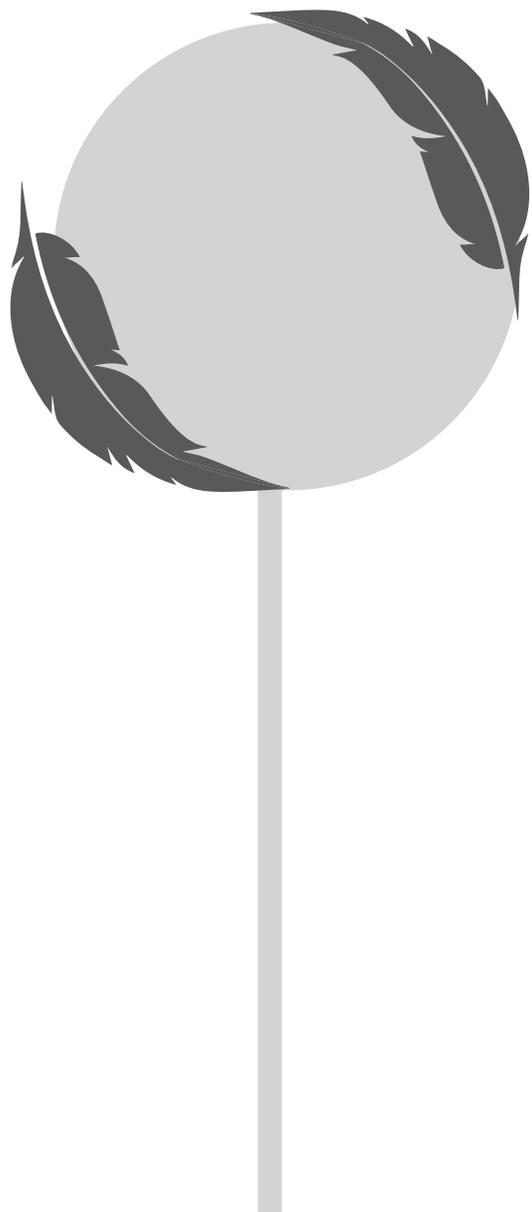
- **Russian perspective:** Is there a perception in Russia that its influence on the neighbouring countries has diminished? Has the ability of the weak to resist the strong increased over time, according to Russia's interpretation?
- **EU perspective:** Is there a perception in the EU that its influence on the Baltic States, Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia has decreased? Has the ability of the EU's eastern partners to resist proposals, demands, and suggestions of the EU increased over time?
- **'New Eastern Europe' perspective:** Is there a perception among decision-makers and the public in the 'New Eastern Europe' that their standing in relation to the EU and Russia has increased over time? Is there a perception in the Baltic States, Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia that their ability to resist initiatives and demands emanating from Russia and the EU has increased?

## Conclusion

This study is equally influenced by the interest in softer aspects of power and by the failure of soft power in Russian-Ukrainian relations. To a number of countries which are situated between Western Europe and Russia, the events of the past year have indicated that their relationship with Russia may also, in addition to soft power, include a substantial element of hard power. In other words, the political elite in the 'New Eastern Europe' countries have expressed concerns on numerous occasions regarding the potential effects of Russia's soft power on their domestic politics. But menacing as it may sometimes appear to be, soft power is still probably the preferred option of those who are on the receiving end.

This chapter provides an analytical framework for the study of softer aspects of power in the 'New Eastern Europe'. Although it is tempting to rely almost exclusively on the soft power concept which has been developed by Joseph Nye, a number of other promising research questions can be asked by broadening the scope of inquiry to include such concepts as; structural power, productive power, authority, power over opinion, and decay of power.

However, as the subsequent chapters clearly illustrate, it is not the power as such that generates considerable interest today, but rather who applies power and what the intentions are behind its use. The following chapters make it clear that there is no consensus when it comes to assessing EU's and Russia's use of power. Some of the chapters claim that Russia has upset the current international order (Russia as a 'de-structuring power') while others see Russia's behaviour as largely defensive and aimed at correcting the conventional wisdom that the political order built by the western countries is stable and just. Thus, the debate, as always, is as much about power as it is about its purpose.



# Germany, the European Union, and Their Gentle Force in the European Neighbourhood – A Comparison of Two Soft Power Engines

/Kai-Olaf Lang/

“Soft power” is a pliable, but indispensable concept. According to its most minimalistic definition, it describes “the ability to obtain preferred outcomes through attraction”.<sup>44</sup> In other words, soft power in international affairs is the gentle force of wielding influence without tough pressure. It is, in a way, the sympathetic or at least the less unfriendly face of power, the gentle force, by which actors try to shape their environment or try to affect other actors. By introducing soft power into an international relations theory, a gap between the traditional analysis of power, based on classical instruments of influence like military strength or economic pressure on the one hand, and the observation of powerlessness on the other, has been closed. Also, the distinction between powerful policy makers, great powers and international “heavyweights” possessing arms and economic resources, and powerless policy takers, i.e. small states without punchy armies, has become somehow blurred: Small states using soft power in a smart way can punch over their weight or reduce power asymmetries. So, despite its inherent vagueness necessarily unclear demarcation between soft and the hard parts of the power spectrum, soft power is a relevant category to describe the process of gaining and losing influence.

This also holds for the Eastern Neighbourhood of the European Union. Here, the EU and its Member States have tried to exert influence by projecting soft power: Deepening economic relations, offering closer political ties, promising additional inclusion, and assisting with economic and administrative reforms are classical instruments which have been used to “Europeanize” countries in the direct Eastern Neighbourhood. These efforts have been successful only to a limited extent. The reasons for this can be found with the EU, neighbourhood countries, and Russia, the big neighbour of the EU’s direct neighbours, who found engagement of the EU and Member States increasingly worrisome.

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44 Joseph S. Nye, “Get Smart. Combining Hard and Soft Power,” in: *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2009, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/65163/joseph-s-nye-jr/get-smart>

The aim of this text is to examine soft power practices, capabilities, and the effects of two key European actors in the Eastern Neighbourhood:<sup>45</sup> of the EU proper and of Germany. The EU and Germany have a deeply embedded identity of soft power foreign action and are well-established “senders” of soft power. To that end, the soft power disposition of the EU, its objective, activities, and instruments in the Eastern Neighbourhood, and its limits are analysed. Later, the German case is investigated, analysing the historically determined German preference for soft power, the German system of soft power actors and instruments (in general and with regard to the Eastern Neighbourhood) and the impact of German soft power projection. Then, the attention focusses on the comparison between the EU and German way of yielding soft power. The text closes with some conclusions about how to improve EU soft power capabilities in the Eastern Neighbourhood.

## **The EU and its Eastern Neighbourhoods – change by attraction?**

### ***The EU’s soft power – values, rules, and asymmetry***

The EU is often described as a foreign policy actor lacking hard power. As a corollary of this, theoretical attempts portraying the EU’s external actions have often affiliated its way of performing foreign policy with non-forceful concepts such as “soft power”, “normative power” or “civilian power”.<sup>46</sup> Most of these “EU – power with adjectives”<sup>47</sup> approaches paint the picture of the EU as a specific actor in international relations. On the one hand, they emphasize the external application of its internal way of functioning: Just like the EU inside is consensus-orientated, community-friendly and rule-based it also tries to organize its relations with neighbours and partners according to principles of negotiation, accord and multilateralism. On the other hand, EU foreign policy analysis often highlights the dimension of values. According

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45 By Eastern Neighbourhood this article understands the countries, which are partners of the EU in the framework of the so called Eastern Partnership of the European Neighbourhood Policy, i.e. three Eastern European countries (Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine) and three countries from the Southern Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia). The article does not deal with Russia nor with other parts of the former Soviet Union.

46 Cf. Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005); Helene Sjursen, “What kind of power?” in: *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 13, Issue 2, (2006): 169-181; Richard G. Whitman, *Normative Power Europe: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Ian Manners, “Normative Power Europe: A contradiction in Terms?” *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 40 (2002): 235-258.

47 Lucian-Dumitru Dirdala, “After Vilnius: the European Union’s smart power and the Eastern Neighbourhood,” *Eastern Journal of European Studies*, Volume 4, Issue 2 (2013): 123-136.

to this reading, as a consequence of the founding factors of European integration, because of Europe's history and due to its nature as a "hybrid polity" the EU has developed a "normative difference": the centrality of peace, liberty, democracy, rules of law and human rights, plus a set of "minor norms" like solidarity, anti-discrimination, sustainable government, and good governance has structured its internal as well as external activities alongside a particular identity.<sup>48</sup> Hence, the key feature, which distinguishes the EU from other merely "civilian" powers is to not just pursue its mainly pragmatic interests by non-military means, but to have a normative or even moral dimension in its objectives. By use of its institutional and procedural equipment and financial and economic resources, the EU tries to shape the international landscape, especially its direct environment according to its own axiomatic assumptions. The patterns and mechanisms used for this include diverse forms of diffusion, contagion, persuasion, discourse shaping, or the power of example.<sup>49</sup>

Whereas much attention has been devoted to the way, these channels of diffusion and transfer work, it is also important to point at different levels of engagement or activity, which these mechanisms imply for the EU as a sender of soft power. In this respect there are active forms of soft power projection, based on a game of incentives, conditions, and compliance and reward. Then there are active non-conditional form of wielding influence like the creation of interdependence of attempts to persuade and discuss. And finally, there are passive ways of soft power like attractiveness by possessing skills, success, or solutions. This comes close to the rather ontological understanding of normative power, as an actor, who can exercise influence not only by "what it says or does, but what it is".<sup>50</sup> These different levels of soft power intensity can also be found in the EU's relations with its Eastern neighbours.

At least two aspects of EU soft power are controversial. The first one is the EU's inherent tendency to define and understand itself as a "force for good in the world" (as it is written in the European security strategy of 2003), hence as a "better" international actor. This is certainly a consequence of its normative identity. But this value-component is based on an immanent supremacy, as it entails a sort of moral universalism, which underestimates the normative difference of partners. Therefore the EU has been described as a "tragic

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48 Ian Manners.

49 Ian Manners identifies six norm-spreading mechanisms: contagion, informational diffusion, procedural diffusion, transference, overt diffusion and cultural filter. Tuomas Forsberg distinguishes four mechanisms typical for EU normative power: persuading others, invoking norms, shaping the discourse of what is normal and the power of example. Cf. Ian Manners; Tuomas Forsberg, "Normative Power Europe, Once Again: A Conceptual Analysis of an Ideal Type," *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 6 (2001): 1183-1204.

50 Ian Manners, 252.

actor” and “a self-proclaimed ‘ethical power’”, which will either “be left as a weak and ineffective actor unable to further the shared interests of its Member States” or “will indulge in quixotic moral crusades - with the attendant risk of hubris leading to nemesis”.<sup>51</sup> The second disputed aspect of EU soft power is whether the EU’s external action is actually as soft as it pretends to be. Notwithstanding traditional hard power wielded by EU Member States (e.g. France interventions in sub-Saharan Africa), which in a broader sense are also part of the European foreign and security policy activities, the EU proper often recurs to foreign policy practices, which are at least in a grey zone between hard and soft power. The most relevant example for this is certainly the use of conditionality (mostly positive, but sometimes also negative), i.e. the prospect of getting a dividend for adapting to rules, standards, or norms (or the loss of a privilege for non-compliance). “Conditionality is a key component of the spread of EU values into countries that receive EU aid. By putting conditions to recipients to improve democratic conditions, Europe can play its power effectively.”<sup>52</sup> So, what appears to be a soft strategy has also a relatively tough end and can be seen as power-play based on asymmetry.

### ***The European Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership: The Eastern Dimension of EU soft power***

The ambivalent nature of EU moulding attempts is particularly visible in the European neighbourhoods. It is not surprising that in this context, many scholars have voiced their criticism of EU soft power or the inappropriateness of the concept of soft power. The EU’s activities to spread its norms have been termed “imperial politics” or “economic and political domination” (J. Zielonka) or as a “robust form of power” exerted by a “regional normative hegemon” (H. Haukkala).<sup>53</sup> Irrespective of the particular labelling, there is no doubt the EU has intended to change its Eastern environment by applying its transformative power. This capacity can be understood as a specific application of normative power and gentle force in countries, which are in a situation of transition. The most successful case of EU transformative power has been enlargement, i.e. the possibility for neighbours to become part of the EU after these countries adapted to political, economic, normative, and legal

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51 Adrian Hyde-Price, “A ‘tragic actor’? A realist perspective on ‘ethical power Europe,’” *International Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 1 (2008): 29-44.

52 Michael Bourguignon, “Does Europe influence the world with its soft power?” *theEuros.eu*, November 22, 2007, [www.theeuros.eu/spip.php?page=print&id\\_article=919&lang=fr](http://www.theeuros.eu/spip.php?page=print&id_article=919&lang=fr) 22.11.2007.

53 For an overview of the discussion, see Derek Averre, “Competing Rationalities: Russia, the EU and the “Shared Neighbourhood,”” *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 61, No. 10 (2009): 1689-1713, 1704ff.

standards of the entity they wanted to join. Facing the “big bang” enlargement of 2004/7, the intra-EU consensus on continuing with a pro-active policy of further accessions broke apart. Bordering now on its Eastern flank with vulnerable states and fragile societies, the Union had to look for a new method to stabilize an uncertain region. This new method was called the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). From the beginning, the documents of the ENP sketched out the philosophy of the new approach: It was basically an idea of “enlargement light”. The ENP pursued similar objectives as the enlargement policy did: It wanted to promote democracy, good governance, human rights, rule of law, market economy, and security. These objectives ought to be reached by deepening economic exchange, trade, political dialogue, and technical support. In contradistinction to enlargement policy, the prospects of the whole endeavour remained somehow vague. The main vision as described in the original ENP strategy was to build “a ring of countries, sharing the EU’s fundamental values and objectives, drawn into an increasingly close relationship, going beyond co-operation to involve a significant measure of economic and political integration”. The “significant degree of integration” could include “a stake for partner countries in the EU’s Internal Market”.<sup>54</sup> In order to reach this level of approximation, partner countries would have to implement reforms and to adapt important parts of their legal orders by adopting elements of the EU’s *acquis communautaire*.

Hence, the core of the ENP was the objective of creating normative harmonization, partial economic integration, political cooperation, and regulatory convergence without granting a promise to accede to the Union. Even though it was built on the idea of “partnership”, the relation between the EU and its neighbours has been one of profound and multidimensional asymmetry. Also after 2008, when the so called Eastern Partnership (EaP), a meso-level framework between the overall umbrella of the ENP (for neighbours in the East and the South of the EU) and bilateral relations, was initiated, these parameters did not change. In a similar vein as the ENP, the EaP wanted to promote “stability, better governance and economic development”, albeit with a more ambitious intention. The EU was ready to upgrade contractual relations towards “association agreements”, which would include “deep and comprehensive free trade agreements” and to establish a multilateral forum for cooperation with six countries on the wider Eastern flank, i.e. Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> *European Neighbourhood Policy. Strategy Paper*, Communication from the Commission, Brussels, 12.5.2004, COM (2004) 373 final.

<sup>55</sup> *Eastern Partnership*, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, Brussels, 3.12.2008, COM (2008) 823/4.

A key principle of ENP and the EaP is the use of conditionality. This also follows the model of “enlargement light” – and it means a clear delimitation from policies vis-à-vis Russia, where the EU has acted according to the idea of enhancing interdependence and cooperation without conditionality, i.e. without defining criteria which have to be fulfilled as a precondition for collaboration. The principle of conditionality was not pursued consistently, however the EU wanted to reinvigorate it at least symbolically, emphasizing in its ENP review of 2012 the mechanism of “more for more”.<sup>56</sup> Notwithstanding the existence of the ENP and EaP multilateral frameworks, the main level of contacts with neighbourhood countries is bilateral relations. This allows for differentiation and a performance-based deepening of contacts.

The most important areas of ENP and the EaP have been economic reforms, sectorial policies like energy, justice, and home affairs including internal security, support for administrative capacities as well as strengthening democracy. Whereas the ENP has traditionally predominantly focused on cooperating and solidifying state structures and public administrations, later it also tried to strengthen civil society and foster contacts with the EU for broader parts of societies. Given obvious democratic deficiencies, this was also meant to enhance independent actors’ vis-à-vis strong and often repressive political and administrative systems. As a matter of fact, ENP and the EaP, apart from policy areas and sectorial cooperation, now combine four components of support and cooperation:

- Fostering people-to-people contacts means above all the improvement of travel opportunities by visa-facilitation or visa-liberalization (in 2014, Moldova was the first EaP-country to achieve visa-free-travel for its citizens). Moreover, EaP countries can take part in EU programs, which are directly beneficial for citizens or institutions from neighbourhood states (e.g. Erasmus, Horizon 2020, cultural programmes).
- The reinforcement of civil society is a declared priority of the EaP, which, as a visible manifestation of its efforts, established a Civil Society Forum for neighbouring countries. However, on the ground the EU has not played a significant role in directly supporting NGOs and other independent actors. It is actually other donors who give substantial direct aid to NGOs in the neighbourhood (e.g. Member States or the US). The EU helps indirectly, by pressing governments to ensure an adequate regulatory environment for NGOs – with quite modest results.

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<sup>56</sup> The Eastern Partnership Integration and Cooperation (EaPIC) program (established in 2012), which was to reward well-performing countries, earmarked only €120 million of extra money for all EaP-countries in two years.

- Support for administrative reform and the strengthening of administrative capacities is organized via programs, which have been originally designed for accession countries, e.g. TWINNING and TAIEX. The Eastern Partnership Technical Assistance Trust Fund (EPTATF) gives more specific support, offering technical support and project-related advisory services in the context of the European Investment Bank's (EIB) engagement in EaP countries.
- Development aid in various manners is also part of the ENP and EaP portfolio. Support for development is reflected in the structure of the ENP and EaP funding mechanism, which (since 2014) is the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI). ENI includes six targets: human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, equality, sustainable democracy, good governance and a thriving civil society; integration into the EU internal market and enhanced co-operation including through legislative approximation and regulatory convergence, institution building and investments; creating conditions for well-managed mobility of people and promotion of people-to-people contacts; encouraging development, poverty reduction, internal economic, social and territorial cohesion, rural development, climate action and disaster resilience; promoting confidence building and other measures contributing to security and the prevention and settlement of conflicts; and enhancing sub-regional, regional and Neighbourhood wide collaboration as well as Cross-Border Cooperation.<sup>57</sup> However, given a total budget of €15.4 billion for the period between 2014 and 2020 for all ENP countries (including the Southern neighbourhood), in spite of an increase compared with the previous financial framework, there will be no huge financial stimulus for particular EaP countries from ENI.

## ***EU attractiveness in the Eastern Neighbourhood***

If the EU is to generate change by attraction, it has to be attractive. Whereas this statement appears to be tautological, it points at a matter highly relevant for the functioning of soft power, which is often underestimated: Who is the receiving side exactly? As the “objects” of smooth influencing efforts are usually complex, multi-segmented, and multi-layered, the effects of soft power as well as preconditions for wielding it, are usually discrepant. This of course,

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 57 Regulation (EU) No. 232/2014 of the European Parliament and the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing a European Neighbourhood Instrument, Official Journal of the European Union, L 77 / 27.

also holds for the EU and its Eastern version of Neighbourhood Policy. Here, on the receiving side there are political and economic elites, political and socio-economic actors and interest groups, or “societies”, which are often internally sub-divided due to economic, material, geographic, language- or ethnicity-based factors. This means for example, the EU can be very attractive for society, but not for the power elite. Or the EU, and more practically, approximation to the EU, can be interesting for some elite factions or parts of society, but not for others, who may be adamantly opposed to what the EU stands for. Also, even if there is general support for deepening relations with the EU, particular groups or actors might have diverging preferences regarding the substance of cooperation. Some might have a predilection for mere economic exchange, others can be interested in fostering political contacts or in emphasizing common values. Furthermore, there can be varying desires for ways to organise mutual relations, especially for preferring or rejecting conditionality. Bearing in mind this heterogeneity, a number of key areas of attractiveness can be defined.

First, in a broader sense the EU – and the process of getting closer to it – is a promise of wealth and development as well as better governance and public sector reform. This appeal is widespread among relevant parts of societies in the neighbourhood, although there are big differences – among and within societies. There seems to be a growing soberness about the effects of EU activities, since public opinion in neighbourhood countries shows only a limited desire to see the EU more engaged in the improvement of democracy, governance, human rights, employment, or trade.<sup>58</sup> When there is general support for EU integration (75 percent) and at the same time half the population considers Russia a “strategic partner” (as is the case in Moldova), one can certainly share the view that in neighbourhood countries “...pro-EU sentiments [...] are broad, but shallow and confused.”<sup>59</sup> The road to the EU model in terms of economy and governance implies reforms: adaptation to market economy, fostering transparency, strengthening democracy, and separation of powers, rule of law and many other changes. This very often clashes with the interests of groups which are not interested in change but in maintaining the status quo. The existence of oligarchic structures or an extended grey-zone between state, politics, and the economy usually means that there are strong interested groups, for which the prospect of getting closer to the EU and related reforms mean an erosion of their political or economic power. For them, the general

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58 “EU Neighbourhood Barometer. Eastern Partnership,” the European Union, Autumn 2014, 48f., [http://euneighbourhood.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/6009ENPI\\_Report-Wave-6\\_East\\_EN\\_final.pdf](http://euneighbourhood.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/6009ENPI_Report-Wave-6_East_EN_final.pdf)

59 Andrew Wilson and Nicu Popescu, “Russian and European Neighbourhood policies compared,” *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Volume 9, Issue 3 (2009): 317-331, 324.

attractiveness of the EU is rather a threat. This also applies to repressive or semi-authoritarian regimes in the neighbourhood – there, democracy-related conditionality can undermine the basis of power of the ruling class.

Second, the possibility of gaining access to the EU single market e.g. on the basis of free trade agreements is a long-term incentive for most neighbouring countries, but entails short-term costs, as long as economies are not competitive. This effect is certainly mitigated by an asymmetric policy of mutual market-liberalization (the EU opens up more quickly), but in any case it requires adaptations, e.g. by downsizing non-profitable sectors and companies. Hence, business associations, single economic actors, and regions with problematic industrial structures are often reluctant or opposed to a policy of trade liberalization with the EU. On the other hand, there are important parts of the economy, which can immediately benefit from access to EU markets (agriculture, productive or low-cost industrial branches). Their representatives (including “oligarchs” in some cases), will see the possibility of removing trade barriers as an incentive.

Third, for Eastern partnership countries, closer ties with the EU mean less dependence on Russia. This relates to specific policy areas like the economy or energy (with additional opportunities of diversification and growing energy solidarity on the part of the EU as the most palpable example), but also to foreign policy in a broader sense. Irrespective of their domestic political system, more contact with the EU can be a counterweight to one-sided cooperation with Russia. Of course, in the case of countries, with more mono-centric political systems, there is often a situation of choice: They have to choose between deepening contacts with the EU in exchange for fulfilling some European rules of the game and remaining in stark dependence on Russia. In such a situation, repressive regimes will mostly not go for the European option, as EU conditions can weaken the domestic power basis – and the survival of this is often top priority for leaders in authoritarian systems.

Fourth, coming closer to the EU has advantages for citizens in neighbourhood countries. Successful cooperation with the EU on visa-liberalization leads to “open borders” for individuals. Also the prospect of getting access to EU labour markets (even though this is not part of the EU offer at the moment) or training and education in the Union, is an interesting prospect for many in the neighbourhood. Of course, here again, substantial differences are occurring. For mobile and younger parts of the populations in neighbouring countries, EU labour markets and training opportunities are much more attractive than for elderly persons or for regions where emigration-flows are traditionally directed toward other regions, especially toward Russia. Moreover, even in those social segments, which wish to see “more EU”, an impression of closure has emerged (e.g. given the slow progress in visa-facilitation or

visa-liberalization, but also due to political hesitance on the part of Brussels or Member States in dealing with the neighbourhood).

Fifth, normative convergence, i.e. the diffusion of European values and their active fostering in the process of approximation to the EU is a clear pulling factor for liberal, pro-Western, urban cosmopolitans in neighbourhood countries. But for traditionalist parts of societies or for the Church many values promoted and embodied by the EU are highly controversial. The disputes about LGBT-rights in some neighbourhood countries are only one example for the normative differences within societies but also between partner countries and the EU.

Overall these observations suggest that EU attractiveness in the neighbourhood is not a given, that it is limited, and that it is unevenly spread across the region and very much within countries. In view of various soft and hard channels of influence on the part of competitors, especially Russia (but also for example Turkey), the EU's allurements are further restricted. In their contact with governments the EU is facing the challenge that these regimes would like to deepen cooperation with the EU, but they dislike conditionality. In the case of EU perception on the level of the elites and societies, the Union has for a long time underestimated the varying preferences and interests among different actors and social groups. In other words, as long as the EU does not consider the socio-political and socio-economic heterogeneity in the neighbourhood, the effectiveness of neighbourhood policies will continue to be seriously inhibited. This also implies that one of the main principles of ENP, namely "differentiation" between partner countries, should not only be strengthened, but also applied to the intra-state level.

### ***Flaws and shortcomings of EU soft power in the Eastern Neighbourhood***

Given the impressive list of ENP objectives and instruments, why does the EU have only a relatively modest track record in its efforts to change neighbouring societies, economies, political systems, and normative orders? One part of the answer has been given in the previous section. It has to do with refracted interests and differing perceptions on the side of the "receiving" countries. But a lot of the soft power limits also have to do with the EU and its arrangement and implementation of its neighbourhood policies. As long as there is no signal for an open-door-policy, i.e. a long-term accession prospect, the EU restricts its transformative traction in neighbourhood countries (which of course does not mean this most important incentive would spark profound dynamics of reform everywhere – given the internal situa-

tion in partner countries, described above). Another form of auto-deleveraging is differing interests of EU Member States, tendencies to considering Russian interests, reluctance for domestic political reasons in many countries (e.g. hesitance towards visa-liberalization or resistance to an accession perspective) or competition between the Southern and Eastern component of EU neighbourhoods.

Moreover, there are divergent levels of engagement even within the Commission, which (together with the External Action Service) is in the operative driver's seat for implementing neighbourhood policies and the Eastern Partnership. Many General Directorates dealing with sector policies have to be convinced with "great difficulty" to regard ENP as a priority. The same dividing lines can be observed in Member States, where line ministries usually show less enthusiasm than foreign ministries.<sup>60</sup>

Another problem stems from the EU's nature as a technocratic and legalistic polity. Often, its initiatives and programs directed to partner institutions or civil society actors in neighbourhood countries are bureaucratic and require substantial formal and procedural expertise. This complicates the implementation of projects. The other side of the technocratic nature is the EU lacks personalities that embody "Europe" and are visible in neighbourhood countries. Apart from some EU parliamentarians, top level EU politicians are rarely present or have a rather sober, i.e. non-charismatic, habitus.

Since the launch of the ENP, the EU has preferred a rather comprehensive neighbourhood policy including as many areas of reform as possible (this holds true at least for the countries on the way to an association agreement). This broad and all-inclusive approach made reform-overstretch a large-scale phenomenon in partner countries. More recently, the EU seems to have moved to a more focused approach with clear priorities.<sup>61</sup> Also, as a combination of lacking ownership and comprehensive reform agendas, the process of implementing EU rules has often resembled a technical "ticking-off-exercise", rather than a sustainable transposition of innovations.

Finally, the EU has limited clout due to its insufficient foreign and security policy capabilities. The EU was able to insulate frozen conflicts in Moldova and Georgia and neutralize them so that there were no obstacles on the way to signing association agreements. However, the EU could not contribute to the solution or constructive regulation of these conflicts. In a more dramatic way, the lack of EU hard power became manifest during the Ukraine-Russia crisis, as the EU was not able to provide Ukraine with protec-

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60 Andrew Wilson and Nicu Popescu, 324.

61 Cf. Joint Consultation Paper, *Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy*, Brussels, 4.3.2015, JOIN(2015) 6 final.

tion. In partner countries, this obviously lead to the impression that instead of a “ring of friends” (which is one of the official goals of the EU), it is rather a “ring of uncertainty” that emerged in the EU neighbourhoods.

This all does not mean that the ENP or EaP have been without effects. It is true the EU has been unable to generate a qualitatively better system of governance. And neither has it succeeded in introducing deep democracy in the semi-authoritarian regimes, or in other states where democracy is shaky rather than deep. Between 2003 and 2012 practically all EaP states showed a negative trend of democracy scores, with Georgia and its stagnating score being the best performer. Belarus and Azerbaijan were ranked as consolidated authoritarian regimes, Armenia as a semi-consolidated authoritarian regime, Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia as hybrid or transitional regimes.<sup>62</sup> Also on the economic front, fortunes have been mixed. The overall picture is that there is no clear correlation between the engagement of the EU and political or economic-financial ups and downs of neighbourhood countries. The only visible tendency is the emergence of a group of countries, which are willing and able to embark on the track of association, and the existence of a group of countries which are looking for low-intensity contacts with the EU. This however, seems not to be an implication of a specific stepping-up of EU efforts, but rather a consequence of domestic preconditions or third-party intervention. However, what matters is that the EU, by offering a sort of European prospect in the form of association agreements, has created a critical junction – or at least the impression of one: apart from the practical effects of association and free trade, for countries like Ukraine, Georgia, or Moldova, bilateral agreements with the EU open up the possibility of a different future. The EU and its soft power have apparently contributed to the development of a critical mass of actors opposing Easternisation and calling for normative change and related reforms. In this respect, EU soft power has brought about a strange situation: it has created little or no results, but it had an effect.

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62 Findings based on the Nations in Transit index by Freedom House; see Martin Nilsson and Daniel Silander, “A Wider Europe: Does the European Neighborhood Policy Work?” *International Relations and Diplomacy*, Vol. 2, No. 5 (2014), 336-353.

## Germany – a “soft great power”

### *German predilection for soft power – roots and determinants*

In 2013, Germany climbed to the number one position in one of the best known soft power rankings, annually done by Monocle magazine and the London-based Institute for Government. Lauding the German chancellor, who in spite of being characterized as a “stern taskmaster” seems to have also a “softer side”, publishers pointed at more profound and longstanding factors that stand behind Germany’s augmentation of soft power, because “the country is traditionally excellent at pursuing its ideas, values and aims using diplomatic, cultural, and economic tools.”<sup>63</sup> Also in more general polls asking for the popularity of nations, Germany was rated extraordinarily positively. In a worldwide survey commissioned by the BBC, Germany held first place in 2013 and 2014,<sup>64</sup> a fact which was considered as an effect of Germany’s “diligent diplomacy”.<sup>65</sup> In 2014, in a comprehensive nation brands index Germany replaced the US at the top – the index is based on six image-making dimensions: exports, governance, culture, people, tourism, and immigration/investment.<sup>66</sup>

Much of Germany’s predilection for smoother approaches can be explained with its more recent history. After World War II Germany sought its return to the international and European community by fostering reconciliation and collaboration with partners on a bilateral level and particularly in broader alliances and structures. At the same time, for the new Federal Republic the use of hard power was almost a taboo, since it was rejected by all relevant groups in domestic politics and it would not have been accepted in the international arena. Since then Germany’s external behaviour has been determined by “welfare” instead of “warfare” and Germany, concomitantly with its economic rise during the post-war era, turned into a “trading state” with foreign policy shaped by growing interdependence and economic as well as societal interests. This disposition has been extraordinarily stable and has not been fundamentally altered from 1989-1990: “Also after Germany’s reunification readiness for integration and cooperation, a political style preferring multilateralism and a secondary relevance of military power are the

63 “Soft Power Survey,” *Monocle Magazine*, issue 69, volume 7 (December 2013 - January 2014).

64 “Negative views of Russia on the Rise: Global Poll,” *BBC World Service*, June 3, 2014, <http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/country-rating-poll.pdf>

65 “BBC poll: Germany most popular country in the world,” *BBC*, 23 May 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-22624104>

66 “Germany knocks USA off best nation top spot after 5 years,” *GfK*, November 12, 2014, <http://www.gfk.com/news-and-events/press-room/press-releases/pages/germany-knocks-usa-off-best-nation-top-spot.aspx>

characteristics of foreign policy for the enlarged Germany.”<sup>67</sup>

Given this, some scholars saw an oblivion of power (*Machtvergessenheit*) in Germany’s “tamed” post-war foreign policy (as opposed to an obsession of power before 1945).<sup>68</sup> For them Germany, embedded in European and transatlantic frameworks and trying to attain legitimacy and reassurance in the Cold War was now a cautious actor whose foreign affairs were based on a ‘culture of restraint’.<sup>69</sup>

However, a majority of observers came to the conclusion that Germany, of course limited by legacies of the post-war order, pursued a quite efficient policy: Behind the façade of a political and military dwarf, Germany used the asset of being an economic giant. That was possible because foreign policy currency was changed. Instead of using classical hard power, Germany resorted to money and trust in order to co-shape European integration and (to a limited degree) international relations. Among the main elements of Germany’s foreign policy role concept were principles like “never again”, i.e. widespread pacifism and moralism, “never alone”, i.e. a firm commitment to anchoring Germany in international and cooperative organisations, or “politics, not force”, i.e. a proclivity to negotiations, compromise, and *détente*.<sup>70</sup> Hence, for decades “chequebook diplomacy”, confidence-building or post-Westphalia Europeanness were hallmarks of German foreign and European policy and of Germany’s strategic culture.

This all had essential implications for Germany’s power strategies. It nudged Germany to diversify its set of influence strategies and develop persuasive and co-optive ways of generating impact. So in terms of politics and policies, Germany, particularly in the context of European integration, tried to show empathy, included and engaged smaller partners, devoted greater effort to relations building and the creation of diffuse reciprocity, showed commitment for the European project, and tried to promote core values. Moreover, Germany elaborated its capabilities to interact and communicate with partners, and in a broader sense with the international environment.

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67 Michael Staack, “Deutschland als Wirtschaftsmacht,” in *Handbuch zur deutschen Außenpolitik*, ed. Siegmund Schmidt, Gunther Hellmann and Reinhard Wolf (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2007), 85-97, 87.

68 Hans-Peter Schwarz, *Die gezähmten Deutschen: von der Machtbesessenheit zur Machtvergessenheit* (Stuttgart: DVA, 1985).

69 Cf. on “culture of restraint”: Rainer Baumann, Gunther Hellmann, “Germany and the Use of Military Force: ‘Total War’, the ‘Culture of Restraint’ and the Quest for Normality,” *German Politics*, Vol. 10, Issue 1 (2001): 61-82.

70 Hanns Maull, “Germany and the use of force: still a ‘civilian power’?” *Survival. Global Politics and Strategy*, Vol. 42, Issue 2 (2000): 56-80, 66 ff.

## *German soft power – dimensions and actors*

Thus a well-developed and strong system of soft power structures, instruments and actors, buttressed with substantial resources and endorsed by a cross-partisan political consensus emerged. The following clusters are the main components of this German soft power system.

- **Foreign cultural and educational policy.** Traditionally, foreign cultural policy (Auswärtige Kulturpolitik, now the foreign cultural and educational policy [AKBP]) has been a key element of Germany's public diplomacy. Along with political and economic relations it is traditionally regarded as "one of the three cornerstones of German foreign policy".<sup>71</sup> Germany's AKBP wants to a) foster "dialogue, exchange and cooperation between people and cultures" by creating and strengthening networks with partners and friends from politics, economy, science, arts or media; it wants to b) communicate an image of Germany abroad, which is both "positive and realistic", and promote Germany as a location for business, research, and innovation; it wants to c) contribute to conflict resolution; and it wants to d) bring people to Germany on a temporary or permanent basis.<sup>72</sup> As the core of official public diplomacy the AKBP has three main areas of activity. The network of Goethe-Institutes is in charge of enhancing knowledge about all aspects of Germany and promoting German culture and language all over the world. There are around 160 Goethe-Institutes in 94 countries. Another relevant actor is the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations, ifa). "Germany's international cultural and educational relations body" intends to promote cultural exchange and intercultural dialogue.<sup>73</sup> The system of German schools abroad includes 140 fully-fledged German schools and 1100 other schools in about 90 countries, which offer the opportunity to acquire a German Language Certificate.<sup>74</sup> The most important organisations taking care of Germany's foreign science policy are the German Academic

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71 "Cultural relations and education policy," Auswärtiges Amt, accessed April 19, 2015, [www.auswaertiges-amt.de/EN/Aussenpolitik/KulturDialog/ZieleUndPartner/ZielePartner\\_node.html](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/EN/Aussenpolitik/KulturDialog/ZieleUndPartner/ZielePartner_node.html)

72 "Auswärtige Kultur- und Bildungspolitik in Zeiten der Globalisierung - Partner gewinnen, Werte vermitteln, Interessen vertreten," Auswärtiges Amt, September 2011, [www.auswaertiges-amt.de/cae/servlet/contentblob/595030/publicationFile/161978/AKBP-Konzeption-2011.pdf](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/cae/servlet/contentblob/595030/publicationFile/161978/AKBP-Konzeption-2011.pdf)

73 "Mission Statement," IFA, accessed April 19, 2015, [www.ifa.de/en/about-us/mission-objectives/mission-statement.html](http://www.ifa.de/en/about-us/mission-objectives/mission-statement.html)

74 "Central Agency for German Schools Abroad (ZfA)," Federal Office of Administration, accessed April 19, 2015, [www.bva.bund.de/EN/Themen/German\\_schools\\_abroad\\_zfa/node.html](http://www.bva.bund.de/EN/Themen/German_schools_abroad_zfa/node.html)

Exchange Service (DAAD) and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. DAAD is a funding organization which among other things provides scholarships for students and scholars, or lectureships (outgoing fellowships and support for Germans and in-coming programs for foreigners). Since its establishment it has supported almost two million academics. With a budget of €430 million, almost 120,000 persons received funding from DAAD in 2013. The Humboldt Foundation grants scholarships and research awards annually for about 700 scientists.<sup>75</sup> Given the dynamics of research, a growing need for more contact with partners abroad, and given the new global challenges, the German government decided to increase its efforts in this field.<sup>76</sup>

- **Political foundations.** All major German political parties have close relations to foundations which share their ideological and normative orientation: the Friedrich-Ebert-foundation (FES) related to the social-democratic SPD, Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation (KAS) related to the Christian Democrats (CDU), Hanns-Seidel-foundation (HSS) related to the Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU), Friedrich-Naumann-foundation (FNS) related to the liberal FDP, Heinrich-Böll-foundation (HBS) related to the Greens and Rosa-Luxemburg- foundation (RLS) related to the Left Party. Since the 1960s these political foundations, whose original mission was to promote and enhance democracy, social pluralism, and civil society in a domestic context, have become increasingly active abroad. They have played an important role in development cooperation and assistance for democratisation. Even though political foundations have a close relationship with political parties (personal ties, involvement in project, exchange of information, counselling, provision of services like organising visitors' programs for related party politicians), they enjoy a relatively high level of practical autonomy as they do not belong to the administrative apparatuses of parties. The funding of political foundations comes mainly from the public budget (more than 90 percent, amounting to €466 million in 2014).<sup>77</sup> Thus, regarding their economic situation and financial accounting, political foundations have to report to state institutions, e.g.

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75 "Annual Report 2013," DAAD, accessed April 19, 2015, [www.daad.de/medien/daad-jahresbericht-2013.pdf](http://www.daad.de/medien/daad-jahresbericht-2013.pdf)

76 Cf. *Deutschlands Rolle in der globalen Wissensgesellschaft stärken. Strategie der Bundesregierung zur Internationalisierung von Wissenschaft und Forschung*, Bundesministerin für Bildung und Forschung, February 2008, [www.bmbf.de/pubRD/Internationalisierungsstrategie.pdf](http://www.bmbf.de/pubRD/Internationalisierungsstrategie.pdf); *Wissenswelten verbinden. Deutsche Außenpolitik für mehr Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung* (Berlin: Auswärtiges Amt, 2009), [www.auswaertiges-amt.de/cae/servlet/contentblob/382832/publicationFile/3669/AWP-Konferenz.pdf](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/cae/servlet/contentblob/382832/publicationFile/3669/AWP-Konferenz.pdf)

77 "Politische Stiftungen erhalten so viel Geld wie nie," *Die Welt*, October 5, 2014.

they can be controlled by the federal board of auditing. Nevertheless, political foundations do not work on behalf or by order of the government. They have a certain political orientation, but have to maintain a certain distance to “their” parties. And they include features of non-governmental organisations, although they have a “public” background and receive state grants.<sup>78</sup> As a matter of fact, they are neither NGOs nor quasi non-governmental organizations (QUANGOs).<sup>79</sup> Although political foundations are often seen as instruments of German foreign policy, due to their substantial independence they are not simply co-implementation agencies of official foreign policy. Their work is “over long distances complementary” to government objectives and activities.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, political foundations play important roles in the German foreign policy system. First, they are an important supplement to any form of official foreign policy, because they can use their informal face as an NGO-like organization, which enables them to cooperate with civil society and with political parties or in general with partners in the pre-political sphere, when it would not be suitable or possible for official institutions. On an operative level, they can carry out programs, give advice, and foster the strengthening of parts of organized civil society, which would not be part of the mandate of government institutions. They “complement, accompany, and exonerate” Germany foreign policy. Second, they foster contact with persons and institutional partners irrespective of their status as government or opposition. This helps to maintain communication channels and secure continuity, which is sometimes difficult for embassies or other parts of government. And third, political foundations have deep and privileged access to their specific partners, hence they have a profound expertise on current and possible developments in specific segments in society or the political landscape of their host-country. Thus political foundations can organise the transfer of knowledge and have an early warning function.<sup>81</sup>

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78 Cf. Ute Pascher, *Die deutschen parteinahen politischen Stiftungen - hybride Organisationen in der Globalisierung*, (Berlin: Logos Verlag Berlin, 2002).

79 Cf. Alexander Mohr, *The German Political Foundations as Actors in Democracy Assistance* (Florida: Boca Raton, 2010), 90f.

80 Ibid, 278.

81 Svetlana W. Pogorelskaja, „Die parteinahen Stiftungen als Akteure und Instrumente der deutschen Außenpolitik,“ *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, B 6-7 (2002): 29-38.

- Development cooperation.** The overall objective of German development aid is “the sustained fight against poverty and structural deficiencies”. The main official institution in charge of development policy is the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).<sup>82</sup> However, eight additional line ministries and most federal states make important contributions to Germany’s development policy. Apart from a classical form of aid and technical assistance, Germany has put special emphasis on support and consultancy for countries in a period of system transformation and on conflict prevention. Among the priorities of German development policies are rural development and agriculture, health, gender equality, education, and the environment.<sup>83</sup> In German debates on development cooperation during the last few years there was an attempt to strengthen ownership and promote the potential for self-help in developing countries. However, this shift away from state-support was clearly softened after the liberal party ceased to be part of the government (after 2013). What remained was, however, an effort to make German development policy more efficient, e.g. by institutional reorganisation, by concentrating on countries in need (and phasing out emerging nations), and by thematic focusing. The most important public institutions in charge of implementing German development aid are the German Federal Enterprise for International Cooperation (GIZ), an entity with an annual turnover of €1.9 billion in 2013 (German official development aid in total amounted to €10.7 billion in 2013) and more than 16,000 employees in 130 countries<sup>84</sup> carrying out projects and programs, and the Reconstruction Loan Corporation (KfW) which is responsible for financial assistance. Moreover, there are many NGOs, supported by funding from the BMZ who are implementing development projects (e.g. churches, private initiatives, volunteering).
- Outreach to society and publicity.** The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth funds extensive youth exchange programs. Institutions like the offices for German-French or German-Polish youth exchange have brought together millions of young people from Germany and partner countries (the Franco-

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 82 *The German Government’s 14<sup>th</sup> Development Policy Report*, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, May 2013, p. 5, [www.bmz.de/en/publications/topics/development\\_policy/Weissbuch.pdf](http://www.bmz.de/en/publications/topics/development_policy/Weissbuch.pdf)

83 *Deutschlands Zukunft gestalten. Koalitionsvertrag zwischen CDU, CSU und SPD. 18. Legislaturperiode [Coalition Treaty 2013]*, 182.

84 Numbers according to “Profil,” GIZ, accessed April 20, 2015, [www.giz.de/de/ueber\\_die\\_giz/1689.html](http://www.giz.de/de/ueber_die_giz/1689.html)

German Youth Exchange alone has organised programmes for eight million people since 1963.)<sup>85</sup> Germany's international broadcaster Deutsche Welle (DW) offers radio and online content in 30 languages, and produces TV programs in English, German, Spanish, and Arabic. A more recent phenomenon is the rising activity of private endowments, which are networking agencies for existing and prospective elites, do-tanks and dialogue facilitators. Examples for this group of organizations are the Robert Bosch Foundation, the BMW Herbert Quandt Foundation, or the Körber Foundation. All of them act independently, however some try to loosely relate their activities to German foreign policy or to implement projects in cooperation with government bodies. This obviously helps them to find additional intra- and extra-organisational legitimacy, whereas from the point of view of German foreign relations, they can be utilised as an element of broader transnational foreign policy.

- **Business and trade contacts.** An important player fostering business activities of German companies abroad is the German Chambers of Commerce (AHK), which have 130 offices in 90 countries. AHKs have basically three functions. They are the official representation for German industry and commerce, they are member organisations for about 44,000 companies all over the world, and they are service providers to companies (to German companies in host countries as well as local companies having business contacts with German partners). AHKs also promote “the marketing of Germany as a business location for interested companies”.<sup>86</sup> As a complement to the government foreign economic policy, carried out by the Ministry of Economics and Technology and the German embassies, AHKs have specific networks and insight into business conditions in the host country. Apart from AHKs, the strong presence of German companies in many countries is an important aspect of soft power. They also have a socializing function for local economies and the workforce, adapting them to, or at least making them familiar with, the German or EU business culture, professional training, and qualifications.

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85 Numbers according to “Zahlen,” German-French Youth Cooperation, accessed April 20, 2015, [www.dfw.org/zahlen](http://www.dfw.org/zahlen)

86 “AHK – worldwide competent on-site,” AHK, accessed April 20, 2015, [www.ahk.de/en/about-ahk/ahk-tasks](http://www.ahk.de/en/about-ahk/ahk-tasks)

A wide variety of organisations, a broad scope of action, and a considerable backing by public and private resources are key features of Germany's soft power. Compared with other European countries, Germany has a well-developed system of soft power, which reflects the broader foreign policy DNA of Germany and its leaning towards subtle ways of exerting influence. However, there seems to be a lack of smart collusions between particular players. What has been described for the field of public diplomacy is also true in a more general sense: "Germany's public diplomacy is performed by a number of institutions on different levels, and not always in unison. In the past, it often was difficult to see a concerted effort or a unified approach."<sup>87</sup>

### ***German soft power in the Eastern Neighbourhood***

After the end of the Cold War Germany's attention was drawn to the Eastern part of Europe in many respects. Foreign policy and trade, but also culture and society was heavily interested and engaged in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as in Russia. The stabilization and democratization of countries, which were part of an old and at the same time new geographical but also mental neighbourhood became one of the priorities of German politics. Germany fostered political and economic reforms and turned into an engine of Eastern enlargement. Countries of the so-called post-Soviet space also swiftly became a priority region for German foreign policy and German businesses, with the main focus on Russia. Consequently, the German soft power disposition substantially reoriented its activities toward these regions.

German political foundations established offices in most countries (many newly emerged or re-emerged) of the former communist world. In terms of spending, Central and Eastern Europe advanced to the single most important region: The share of project expenditures of all political foundations in this part of the world in the decade after 1989 amounted to almost a quarter of total spending.<sup>88</sup> Activities in Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus were less intensive than in Central Europe or Russia. Nevertheless, all the countries in these regions were covered by the foundations' activities, with fully-fledged offices in Kiev all foundations (except for the Luxemburg-foundation) and FES, KAS, HBS, and FNS had representatives in the Southern

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87 Oliver Zöllner, "German Public Diplomacy: The Dialogue of Cultures," in Nancy Snow and Philip M. Taylor, *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 262-269, 267.

88 Even though the structure of regional spending remained relatively even, with Sub-Saharan Africa absorbing one fifth and the Arab World 14 percent of project expenditures; cf. Alexander Mohr, 106f.

Caucasus.<sup>89</sup> FES and KAS have on-the-spot representations in Moldova, but they are coordinated from their respective offices in Romania. Even though German political foundations generally have a similar mission, i.e. to foster democratization and good governance, Europeanization and international dialogue, according to their background and vision, they have differing specializations. The KAS usually emphasizes subsidiarity and self-governance, FES devotes much of its attention to questions of societal cohesion and the emergence of a social dimension of market-oriented reforms, HBS underpins ecology and gender issues, HNS rule of law and decentralization, and HSS has specialized in administrative reform and modernizing security sectors. A special challenge in Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus is the low institutionalization of party systems as well as the weakness of civil societies. In this respect, their environment is different from Central Europe (where political parties as the traditional partners of Stiftungen are also weak organizationally and financially) and the circumstances of their work often resemble those in developing or authoritarian countries from other parts of the world. That is why in the EU's Eastern neighbourhood countries, German foundations as "civil diplomacy" actors have often deepened their contact with civil society and functional elites in politics, the economy, media, or science. However, while trying to maintain cooperation with governments, in the past the Stiftungen have often been reluctant to pursue vigorous democratization agendas. This meant that, for example, during the "coloured revolutions" in Georgia 2003 and in Ukraine 2004, American NGOs were much more active and German foundations "played no role".<sup>90</sup>

As mentioned earlier, private endowments established by big companies or wealthy families play an increasingly important role in strengthening Germany's strategic communities and interlinking them with partners abroad. Their portfolio includes traditional activities of comparable institutions, i.e. entertaining dialogue fora, fostering networks, looking out for young leaders, and inviting foreign experts and politicians to Germany. Some of these non-state actors have included Central and Eastern Europe as well as Russia in their scope of activities. With a clear priority on cooperation with Eastern Europe, the Robert Bosch foundation is organizing programs for sending German-speaking lecturers to countries of the region, it supports so-called "cultural managers" from Germany working on the spot and taking care of cultural projects, and it co-finances a couple of dialogue initiatives, e.g. the Kiev Talks on Ukraine.

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<sup>89</sup> For political reasons, the German political foundations had to leave Belarus, see also: Nadine Lashuk, "German Foundations in Belarus - the Soft Power of Foreign Policy," *Belarus Digest*, August 19, 2013, <http://belarusdigest.com/story/german-foundations-belarus-soft-power-foreign-policy-15106>

<sup>90</sup> Winfried Schneider-Deters, "Civil Diplomacy. Politische Stiftungen in Ost- und Ostmitteleuropa," *Osteuropa*, No. 5 (2005): 107-123, 115.

In the field of German foreign cultural policy all main players have a tradition of engagement in Eastern Europe. However, the prioritization of that part of the world is different. For the German Academic Exchange DAAD the region called “Central- and Eastern-Europe, Community of Independent States” is the most important one (with 16,000 people from these region being supported in 2013). Even though at the core of DAAD is exchange between research institutions, the institution has also supported civil society dialogue with Eastern Europe and in 2009 it initiated a program called “Democracy support in Ukraine”, which financed projects for students on democratic participation and rule of law.<sup>91</sup> On the other hand, institutions like the Goethe-Institute or the system of German schools abroad had a traditional strong presence in Western and Southern Europe.<sup>92</sup> That is why the German government intends to strengthen the respective networks in Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>93</sup>

Due to strong trade ties and investment activities German businesses have established a dense network of contacts. The German Chambers of Commerce have offices in Russia (Moscow, St. Petersburg, Novosibirsk, Kaliningrad, and an Information Centre), in Ukraine, Belarus, Azerbaijan, and Georgia (including an office for Armenia). The Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations (Ostauschuss der Deutschen Wirtschaft, an organization set up be the most important associations of the German economy) is a lobby institution as well as a provider of information and contacts for enterprises being active in Eastern Europe, Russia, Central Asia, the Southern Caucasus, and Central Eastern Europe. The Committee is also in close exchange with government representatives in most of these countries.

German development cooperation in Eastern Europe includes a broad range of support including sustainable economic development, energy efficiency, health, and climate-friendly measures.<sup>94</sup> Various German line-ministries have initiated respective programs, with the implementation of agencies like GIZ devoting a substantial part of their activities to countries in the region.<sup>95</sup> A particular feature of German development cooperation in Eastern Europe has been consultancy in various areas. One of the main umbrel-

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91 DAAD, 56.

92 Even though the German schools abroad have had a tradition of engagement in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Of the 430,000 pupils attending German schools worldwide, 253,000 are located in this region. Cf. *Deutsches Auslandsschulwesen in Zahlen 2013* (Köln: ZfA, 2014), [www.bva.bund.de/DE/Organisation/Abteilungen/Abteilung\\_ZfA/DieZfA/ZahlenausderZfA/AuslandsschulwesenZahlen2013.pdf](http://www.bva.bund.de/DE/Organisation/Abteilungen/Abteilung_ZfA/DieZfA/ZahlenausderZfA/AuslandsschulwesenZahlen2013.pdf)

93 Auswärtiges Amt, *Auswärtige Kultur- und Bildungspolitik in Zeiten...*

94 For a thorough overview see Justyna Gotkowska, “Niemieckie sieci na wschodzie,” *Raport OSW* (Warszawa, 2010).

95 See for example the activities of GIZ in Ukraine, “Ukraine,” GIZ, accessed April 20, 2015, <http://liportal.giz.de/ukraine/wirtschaft-entwicklung>

las was the so-called TRANSFORM program and its successor - initiatives which intended to promote economic development e.g. by exchange of business executives or start-up support. The programme, carried out by the KfW Development Bank, was extended in 2005 - with a focus on Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. One of the flagship projects of the program is the expert group of German economic advisers to the Ukrainian government.<sup>96</sup> TRANSFORM was also an important source for funding programs of the German Centre for International Migration and Development (CIM), which is concentrating on “economic promotion and building up market economy structures”, e.g. by placing German experts in partner countries or the other way round.<sup>97</sup> The activities of CIM resemble TWINNING programs of the EU, in which Germany also is very active. In a similar vein, the German Foundation for International Legal Cooperation (IRZ, established in 1992) has given advice to governments in Eastern Europe concerning rule of law, legislation, and reform of the legal and judiciary systems.<sup>98</sup>

### ***German impact in the Eastern Neighbourhood***

What is the impact of German soft power in the Eastern neighbourhood? As it is rather difficult to directly assess the effects of Germany’s soft engagement, a number of more general observations on its possible effects is more helpful than the attempt to “measure” and evaluate activities.

- First, Germany’s activities are more intensive than those of other EU Member States. German engagement is not single-issue orientated, but multidimensional, ranging from economy, businesses, and technical aid to democratization support, cultural contacts and civil society exchange. In terms of resources, an on-the-spot presence and networking capacity, there is no other European country which has invested comparable efforts.
- Second, German engagement has been relatively robust. Irrespective of unfavourable and changing circumstances in host countries, Germany has maintained its activities or even extended them – the only exception being Belarus, where due to the political environment some

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 96 Similar groups exist for Belarus and Moldova.

97 “Central and Eastern Europe,” CIM (2007), 6, [http://www.cimonline.de/documents/MOE\\_englisch.pdf](http://www.cimonline.de/documents/MOE_englisch.pdf)

98 Information of IRZ, “Über uns,” IRZ, accessed April 20, 1015, <http://www.irz.de/index.php/ueber-uns>

German actors moved out.<sup>99</sup> This highlights the long-term orientation of Germany's approach.

- Third, from the point of view of neighbourhood countries, Germany is a highly important or even the most important partner in the West or in an international context. The perception of Germany in the countries of the region seems to correspond to the positive European-wide or global popularity of Germany. According to a large-scale survey among Ukrainians from 2010, Germany was the most popular destination to migrate for persons from Ukraine. Moreover, Germany was the country most frequently associated with Europe, economic performance and social security especially seemed to play an important role for Germany's attractiveness.<sup>100</sup>
- Fourth, relevance of the region is deeply anchored in the mind set of German foreign policy, hence Germany's active soft power efforts and resources are clearly oriented towards this part of the world. However, there is no dominance of Eastern Europe, since Germany's attempts to support transformation elsewhere, especially in Northern Africa and the Arab World, or to show more presence in Asia or in BRICS-states and other emerging countries, were also leading elements of Germany's soft scaffolding of foreign policy. An interesting example is the discussion about a recalibration of Germany's foreign cultural policy according to the concept presented by the Government in 2011. One element of the concept was to "remove imbalances" between Western Europe and Central and Eastern Europe (e.g. at that point there were seven Goethe-Institutes in France and Italy, whereas in Poland there were only two, and just one in the Czech Republic; in Southern and Western Europe there were 250 teachers with German schools abroad, whereas the respective number in Central and Eastern Europe was just 57).<sup>101</sup> This attempt to

99 Also in this case, this did not mean a downgrade of engagement, since there were attempts to continue activities from outside.

100 "Informants imagined that Germany is the most/a highly developed country in Europe... it is economically and politically powerful and it provides security - legally and socio-economically - for citizens, migrants and future generations. Such conditions are stable and which enable informants to plan their future, their life projects for themselves and their children... Concomitantly informants refer to Germany not only as economic powerhouse but also in imaginations related to social welfare, imagining that 'the state will not leave you alone, will not let you starve' - which is one of the disappointments informants had to experiences after the year of Ukraine's independence," Yuriy Bilan, et al., "Within Country Analysis: Perceptions, Imaginations, Life-Satisfaction and Sociodemography: The Case of Ukraine," *EUMAGINE, Imagining Europe from the Outside, Project Paper 11* (2012), [www.eumagine.org/outputs/Project%20Paper%2011%20-%20Ukraine%20FINAL.pdf](http://www.eumagine.org/outputs/Project%20Paper%2011%20-%20Ukraine%20FINAL.pdf)

101 Auswärtiges Amt, *Auswärtige Kultur- und Bildungspolitik in Zeiten...*, 4.

devote more resources to the Eastern part of the continent sparked criticism, since there were apprehensions this could lead to a reduction of Germany's institutional presence in Western Europe.<sup>102</sup> Given this, the general German strategy of "cultivating old friendships, establishing new partnerships" (which was one of the key principles of the 2011 concept) is emblematic for the relevance of Eastern Europe for German soft power in a broader sense: enhancing cooperation, but not to the detriment of other priority areas in a globalized and crisis-afflicted world.

In sum, Germany disposes of various channels of projecting attractiveness, doing lobbying and fostering networks with countries, elites, and societies in Eastern Europe. This has ensured Germany a privileged position among other external or Western partners. At the same time, after a longstanding and substantial engagement one could argue the impact on economic transformation and political change was rather meagre, since the respective track record in many countries has been at least mixed. Hence, it could be said German soft power investments in the Eastern European Neighbourhood have primarily lead to a relatively positive perception and a strong German partnership position, but not so much for results in terms of market-oriented or democratic reforms. On the other hand, structural obstacles inside and around countries "receiving" German power have imposed severe limits on any form of external support for change. So, the balance sheet of German soft power effects should rather be read in a counterfactual way: The question is not so much "What has been achieved by German engagement?", but rather, "What would not have been achieved without German presence?" In this respect, personal contacts have especially been an important asset in crisis situations. The transfer of institutional knowledge and individual expertise have created basic capabilities for partial reforms, and fostering civil society has contributed to the emergence of islands of autonomy and pluralism.

## **Soft power: a German and EU edition**

Germany and the EU are soft power actors par excellence. For different reasons of course: In Germany's case twentieth century history, Europeanization, and economic strength, have propelled its use of gentle influence. In the

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102 *Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Große Anfrage der Abgeordneten Ulla Schmidt (Aachen), Rainer Arnold, Sabine Bätzing-Lichtenthäler, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der SPD, Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache 17/11981, December 19, 2012, <http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/17/119/1711981.pdf>*

case of the European Union, a political, reconciliation- and peace-oriented stimulus of the early period of European integration together with the win-win logic of intensifying economic and trade exchange, made Brussels a natural soft power talent. Therefore, German foreign policy DNA and European internal, as well as external, modus operandi have been highly corresponding, resting on in-built demilitarization, a post-Westphalia attitude, consensus-building, and using trade and commerce as vehicles for political inclusion. In spite of the major changes that have occurred in German foreign policy and EU policy making – re-nationalization, lower significance of values, de-Europeanization, the return of hard security as a challenge, to mention just a few – the predilection of Germany and the EU for soft shaping and attraction-based approaches continues to exist. However, a closer look at the sources and ways of wielding soft power, apart from analogies, reveals considerable diversities and peculiarities. This also holds true for the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood.

Of course, there is a fundamental difference between the soft power of a nation state and an international organization – even if it is as tightly knit as the European Union. One which plays an important role in terms of the countries in the Eastern vicinity, is the approximation prospects. A partner can come closer to another state by aligning itself, by cooperating, by introducing practices and political, administrative, or economic patterns, but it is (usually) not possible to become part of the “point of reference” (German reunification of course is an important but quite specific exception). That is different with the European Union: Processes of emulation and harmonization are supposed to bring Eastern neighbours not only closer to the EU, but to include them at least partially into policies and rule-systems of the Union. In a best case scenario, i.e. granting neighbours a membership perspective, those countries would have the possibility to join and change their status by moving from the external environment of the system into this present system and turning into an internal subsystem. If there is strong wish to join the organization and a basic readiness on the part of the organization to be inclusive, a soft power asymmetry situation emerges.

This is exactly the case with the EU in its relations with Eastern neighbours. With the desire of neighbouring countries to come closer or even to join, the EU has the possibility to create leverage, provided it can or wants to offer interesting incentives of course. This means that EU soft power works in a context of asymmetry and conditionality. German active soft power (i.e. foreign cultural policy, political foundations and their activities, and development assistance) is based on creating interdependence and deepening cooperation, without usually having a clear “reward”. Also, quite often the principle of a common development of programs and projects is applied, whereas the

EU sets up lists of objectives and related Action Plans. It is true the EU sometimes, and to some extent, does consultations with partners in the process of preparing reform agendas, but usually they are aligned with unilaterally fixed EU goals, especially the need to adapt to the *acquis communautaire*.

The German approach is clearly oriented towards strengthening partners and actors in neighbourhood countries. This does not mean giving them technical or material support (which is often not possible due to public budget directives), but it implies enhancing partners' capabilities to interconnect, their sustainability or their ability to exert autonomous influence. The EU, on the other hand, tends to primarily create "better" regulatory, governance and legal frameworks and a friendly environment for businesses and trade, for citizens, for political participation and for civil society. This means that governing system and public administrations have traditionally been the primary addressees of EU activities, while NGOs and other social groups came in only with some delays, e.g. establishing a ceremonial Civil Society Forum and more recently the European Endowment for Democracy.

Germany's soft power approach is also characterized and shaped by a huge variety of institutions and actors involved on the "sending side". The spectrum ranges from government agencies, mediating and implementation organizations (Mittlerorganisationen, Durchführungsorganisationen) including QUANGOS, genuine NGOs, and a broad set of commercial endowments and private initiatives. Thus, institutions with a German background have the opportunity to reach out to a huge variety of partners and different parts of political life, societies, or businesses in neighbourhood countries. This often leads to heightened sensitivity for social or political developments, hence better expertise for the situation in a given country. Compared to the EU, German actors usually have a much more elaborated presence in the Eastern Neighbourhood. For example the following German institutions have established on-the-spot representation in Ukraine: The Goethe-Institute has an office in Kiev, there is a German school in Kiev and about 40 schools are cooperating with ZfA, and the Delegation of German Industry and Commerce has its own office in the Ukrainian capital just like DAAD. Except for the left-leaning Luxemburg-foundation, all German political foundations have offices in Ukraine. Since 1994 the German Advisory Group for economic and financial policy has been linked with the Ukrainian government. In the region of Cherkassy there is a German Agrarian Centre. Also, more than 1000 German companies are doing business in Ukraine. This compares to the rather slight presence of the EU, basically made up of the Delegation of the EU to Ukraine in Kiev.

Bearing in mind the relatively big number of players and a broad scope of action and differing specializations, German active soft power is more ver-

satellite and multidimensional than the EU's, which is historically bound to a catalogue of reforms, determined by the Neighbourhood Policy or Eastern Partnership frameworks. This can also entail less flexibility and adaptability of European measures.

Finally, German attractiveness can be bolstered by three highly relevant sets of factors, which the EU has to a limited degree or not at all. First, Germany as a national state has "faces" - politicians, who can show up, can be popular abroad and convey credibility. It is not only the top leaders' images (which have played an important role in pushing Germany upwards in international soft power rankings), but also engagement of a variety of lower level politicians for and in the neighbourhood, which the EU - in spite of a number of dedicated members of the European Parliament and one or another European Commissioner - mostly do not dispose of. Second, Germany has a much more detailed and ample groundwork of institutions supporting and projecting soft power, supported by substantial funding.<sup>103</sup> Apart from an on-the-spot presence, the huge number of exchange programs and organizations involved, working in or with neighbouring countries or partners, opens many more opportunities for Germany to get in touch with "recipients". Also, even where the EU comes into play, effects and perception are very often via Member States. E.g. if students from Eastern Neighbourhood countries, receive the opportunity to enjoy higher education via the EU Erasmus Mundus program, in their personal experience they will study in a particular country, rather than "in the EU". Third, from the point of view of neighbourhood countries, the EU's image is very much determined by its internal economic performance and ability to deliver security and solidarity to partners. Both have been far from perfect throughout the previous years. Member States like Germany, on the other hand, have an enormous set of elements depicting their national image - from sports and food (i.e. football and beer), to tourism and industrial brands (e.g. Bavaria and car manufacturing).

This all suggests a comparative advantage for national states and especially a soft power stronghold like Germany vis-à-vis the EU. This is not to say the European Union has structurally weak soft power traction. The promise of wealth and solidarity, the prospect of belonging to a strong community, and manifold programs of assistance and inclusion are powerful pulling-factors. However, these are big potentials, and can only be used to a limited extent, because the EU and its fragmented politics often have a self-limiting effect.

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103 Although it is not completely comparable, consider for example the €466 million annual support for German political foundations and the €14 million initial annual budget for the European Endowment for Democracy.

In a comparative view, there are shared weaknesses with German and EU soft power approaches. These include: a permanent challenge of coordination – which is the downside to virtues of decentralization and being multifaceted; a lack of soft strategic and conceptual interplay between foreign policy and informal actors which would allow the emergence of additional smart power, and above all, an insufficient back-up of soft power by hard power resources.

## **Conclusion: maintaining and improving EU soft power in the Eastern Neighbourhood**

Looking beyond the Eastern borders, EU soft power seems to have reached its limits. The encounter with hard power, as in Ukraine's case, is at least a strong setback for "friendly" and incentive-based EU philosophies, mechanisms, and tools, which intend to generate change and approximation. Hence, is the Union losing out in the rivalry over attractiveness in its Eastern Neighbourhood? And has it lost its capabilities to transform and converge? These questions have gained seriousness in a situation where Russia's deft use of combined aspects of hard and soft power has been effectively limiting EU attempts to project more social, normative, or economic homogeneity in neighbouring regions. In order to maintain or restore its gentle power and solidify its cooperation with partners in its direct vicinity, the EU has to be aware of some basic facts and should reorganize or intensify its activities in key areas.

**Beauty comes from inside.** EU "magnetism" for neighbours and partners comes predominantly from the internal condition and its positive perception from the outside. As long as the EU stands for the promise of prosperity, better governance, solidarity, and security, the Union will continue to be an interesting pole of reference. With economic and financial crises, domestic turmoil, sinking legitimacy of the "European project", increasingly inward-looking tendencies and divisions among Member States, doubts about solidity and sustainability in the Neighbourhood will grow. Alongside the recuperation of economic dynamics, an honest discussion about weaknesses and strengths instead of naïve optimism and restoration of a positive belief in Europe's future will be the main preconditions for enhancing EU soft power.

**Credibility is a precondition for wielding soft power.** Particularly in its relations with Eastern neighbours the EU has to be a credible and engaged actor. It has to send a clear signal of a reinforced commitment, which includes realism and ambition. Without a convincing offer and without trustworthy actions to show solidarity, the EU will be unable to manage expectations or act as a normative power.

**Soft power is a long-term project.** Achieving additional soft power is usually neither a quick fix nor a done deal. Of course, sudden events or effects connected to the rapid rise of popular personalities (e.g. the Obama-effect in the United States) can accelerate the emergence of a positive reputation. However, most soft power is a long-term investment without guarantees for profit. It is based on broad diplomatic infrastructures, historical links with many countries and substantial public diplomacy efforts ensuring outreach and presence.<sup>104</sup>

**Soft power has to be in line with the values an international actor embodies.** The traditional assumption according to which values ascribed to a state or an international actor are an asset and an important soft power resource is true, just like foreign policy, especially “legitimacy and moral authority in its conduct abroad, i.e. is a state seen as a force for good or ill?”<sup>105</sup> is a relevant factor. However, what is exactly good or bad, and which values create legitimacy or authority, can differ substantially according to the particular addressees wielding soft power. Therefore what is more important than emphasizing the “positive” values, is achieving harmony between the values a state or an entity promotes, and the soft power practices of that state. For the EU this means its soft power efforts should be inclusive and not divisive, they should be transparent and not opaque, and their main thrust is directed at the promotion of norms like fairness, plurality, and cooperativeness.

More practically, in order to solidify its soft power towards neighbourhood countries in the Eastern vicinity, policies of the EU and Member States should be guided by the following principles:

- Initiate better coordination of soft power related activities – within Member States, among Member States and among EU agencies and institutions. Of course, it will not be possible to adapt or synchronize the “soft power systems” of Member States or even their core elements, however a loose but structured information flow among Member States and the EU on priorities and main activities in order to avoid duplications or to create synergies could be useful. Such a slim platform could be set up with the European Endowment for Democracy or as an autonomous stakeholders’ body.
- Orient the broad thrust of soft power activities towards the improvement of political, economic, and above all, social resilience. With the general aims of fostering societal integration, cultural inclusion, terri-

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104 Jonathan McClory, “The New Persuaders. An international ranking of soft power,” *Institute for Government*, 3f.

105 *Ibid.*, 3.

torial cohesion, and economic development, the EU or Members States could consider the launch of country-specific resilience packages, which would target possible hot spots, inroad-areas for external negative power, or domestic conflict issues. Apart from traditional conflict prevention measures in fragmented societies, or rapprochement and reconciliation efforts in frozen conflicts, particular attention should be devoted to historical questions, socio-economic issues and political participation, or representation of ethnic or linguistic groups.

- Enhance likeability by multilevel and transnational relationships. Well-functioning relationships, regular and close contact and familiarity breed friendship – and they are the basis of “liking”. Since bilateral relations are the cornerstones of Neighbourhood policies and the Eastern Partnership, the EU and Member States should step up their culture of nourishing contacts with partner countries. However, as the focus on official politics and administrations is not effective enough and often volatile, the EU, Member States and European NGOs should engage in relationship building with a variety of transnational partners, on different levels and in varying formats. Also, contact building and networking is not a one-way street. Apart from bringing people and partners from the neighbourhood into the EU’s (by means of fellowships, scholarships, internships, and so on) outbound programs, bringing people and information from the EU to neighbourhood countries should be extended.
- Open up ways to new partners and recipients. The EU’s outreach in neighbourhood countries has to be deepened and widened. This includes at least three practical challenges. First, the EU and Member States have to actively foster a landscape of civil society and other autonomous actors. One of the values of the German approach is its orientation towards partners and networks. Given the weakness and volatility of civil society and non-profit structures in neighbourhood countries, more emphasis has to be put on the practical support of such organizations. Second, apart from established partners and target groups, the EU and Members States should find ways to engage with new groups. A permanent mapping of stakeholders should be complemented by a structured outlook for prospective partners. Third, beyond the focus on traditional partners within the elite, the EU and Member States should initiate dialogue with all relevant power actors. This will not necessarily lead to constructive engagement, but it could at least help to detect mind-sets and future

conflicts. Apart from the elite, public diplomacy efforts, media, cultural, and civil society activities, but also private, non-profit initiatives should be directed to a broader public. Visibility of the EU and the creation of first hand contact opportunities with Western culture and way of life for “common people” and “sceptical” parts of societies have to be improved (together with improvement of travel and visa conditions, which of course is the best way to ensure direct contact).

- Engage actively in normative competition. The EU and Member States should accept they are part of a grand controversy of ideas. They should seek and promote active debate about assumptions, content, and implications of these ideas – in neighbourhood states, in the EU, in an international context, and with Russia. This requires the strengthening of expertise and analysis, as well as the upgrade of vehicles for communication with societies, especially media and their outreach. Soft power efforts of course have a normative orientation. The EU should not deny this value dimension or claim it is a “neutral” or objective actor but it should promote the creation of unbiased and fair normative competition. Germany, the Baltic States, and other interested Member States should politically, and in terms of expertise, support the EU’s emerging action plan on strategic communication with priority given to media freedom. The establishment of a communication expert team with the European Endowment for Democracy is a first step in this regard. More specifically, Germany together with the Baltic States and other partners could set up an (East) European Media Academy for training journalists and advising representatives from the media sector, as well as from the Eastern neighbourhood and Russia (alternatively, they could support such an institution as an EU project; the DW Akademie could provide for expertise). In this context, Germany and the Baltic States could take advantage of their intensifying bilateral cooperation in this field.
- The EU and Member States should not forget that an attempt to wield soft power vis-a-vis partners requires a solid political will which is rooted at home. The dispute of narratives begins at a domestic level. If there is no discussion about issues and their salience, or about the need to assume responsibility in international affairs, there will be no sustainable engagement and hence no use of soft power.
- Finally, interconnect soft power efforts and hard power capabilities. Not only with recent events in Ukraine, the dynamics of global rela-

tions in the last few years have shown that rather than soft (or hard) power alone, it is a “smart” combination of hard and soft power that decides who influences in an international environment. Since 2014, the Ukrainian crisis helped confirmed that borderlines between soft and hard are fluent. The buzzwords of the conflict, i.e. “hybrid warfare” clearly illustrate this vagueness, since it comprises of high end military measures as well as elements of less robust destabilization and conflict. But the events in and around Ukraine have also revealed that a strategy of “only soft power” or “only hard power” has serious limitations. Even if a competitor applies the means of “muscular” strength against a vulnerable adversary, there is no foregone result of the conflict. The use of hard power can of course destroy the achievements of soft power, but it can also boost the soft power of the other side, e.g. cohesion against a third party intervention can go up, acceptance for otherwise unpopular leaders can increase, the legitimacy of the one who is dominantly perceived as a spoiler can be undermined. Hence, all sides of the conflict want to reduce their structural imbalance of powers: Russia feels a need to complement hard power with soft power, Ukraine and the West are looking for ways to counter military force without risking further escalation. For the EU this means it has to think its “Neighbourhood Policy East” in a more comprehensive way. The ENP is just one part of relations with adjacent countries, not the sole policy, and it has to be complemented by additional soft elements and by harder strategic elements. Additional components of the EU’s set of relations with Eastern neighbours are financial support, external dimensions of traditionally internal policies (like justice and home affairs, or energy policies), and of course a security policy. Especially with regard to the hard security end of the power spectrum, a structured and continued transatlantic dialogue on the EU’s Eastern policy would be useful.



# Poland's Soft Power in Eastern Europe

/Rafal Sadowski/\*

Poland has defined the Eastern European region as an ever-present part of its key foreign policy priorities since the fall of the communism in 1989, alongside the cooperation and integration with the European and Transatlantic structures. Ukraine and Belarus have been of key importance for Warsaw, due to being its direct neighbours. Poland has also become more engaged in its policy towards Moldova and Georgia, especially after launching the Eastern Partnership initiative. This is in line with increasing activity in the EU's policy towards its eastern neighbourhood (which has been strongly supported by Poland). The main priorities of Poland's policy towards Eastern Europe are defined as: 1) development and deepening of friendly political relations with the countries of the region, and 2) to draw them closer to European structures and to bring about systemic change alongside EU standards. Political actions aimed at achieving these goals have been supported by instruments of soft power policy, the role of which has been increasing in Polish political thinking and the measures it has taken in recent years.

Poland's soft power activities have enabled it to build up a rather broad network of contacts and cooperation platforms in various areas, reaching several different groups (i.e; civil society, culture, the media, local and central administration). This results in Poland's image improving in these countries. It concerns mainly Ukraine and Belarus and, to a lesser extent, Georgia and Moldova. However, it still has problems effectively coordinating its activities, both on a national level and with its foreign partners. There is also a lack of sufficient financial resources for the ambitions it has expressed. Finally, most activities are of rather a short-term character, and it lacks a comprehensive, long-term strategy and vision to build Poland's soft power in the region.

This chapter analyses and assesses Poland's soft power activities in the EU's eastern neighbourhood countries, namely Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. The chapter will also include Poland's soft power activities towards Belarus, due to the importance of the country for Poland and the scale of Poland's engagement there. Warsaw does not provide any active measures in the Baltic states in regards to soft-power, so the chapter does not cover the three countries of that region.

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\* The author would like to acknowledge Mr Maciej Falkowski, with whom he carried out the research on Poland's soft power in Eastern Europe, and the results of which were the basis for writing this chapter.

The theoretical basis for this analysis is provided by the classic definition of soft power by Joseph S. Nye, who defines it as the capability of a country to win allies and build up its network of influence by the attractiveness of its culture, politics, values and ideology, as well as an ability to influence other countries using instruments other than military and economic power, which are defined as a hard power<sup>106</sup> - as well as classic diplomacy based on realpolitik and hard power.<sup>107</sup>

The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part briefly presents Poland's approach towards soft power in Eastern Europe and a general model of how Poland's soft power activities are organised. The next part focuses on the assessment of Poland's position as a soft power in the Eastern European region as of 2014. Finally, the chapter includes some recommendations for policy-makers.

## Soft power as an instrument of Poland's foreign policy

Poland has been paying more and more attention to the importance of using soft power instruments in its policy towards Eastern Europe. It has become clearly visible in the last eight to 10 years. Poland's MFA defines public diplomacy, which is one of its instruments, as:

“a set of strategic, conceptual, analytical, coordinating and executive actions seeking to impact social attitudes and public opinion abroad and thereby to secure the principal interests of the Republic of Poland across the globe. This is done by using tools and methods from outside the realm of traditional diplomacy, essentially confined to intergovernmental relations. The primary aim of public diplomacy is to foster understanding and support for the national interest and policies of the Polish government.”<sup>108</sup>

However, in the perception of the Polish administration, this definition of public diplomacy could be generalised to the whole idea of soft power.

The shape of Poland's soft power activities stems from the key guidelines of its foreign policy towards the countries of the region, where three principal goals play a dominant role. The first one is to have good and friendly relations with its neighbours in the East, which is indispensable for state security and opens up new opportunities for economic cooperation and people-

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106 Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Paradox of American Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

107 David Ronfeld and John Arquilla, *What if there is a revolution in diplomatic affairs?* (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1999), <http://webharvest.gov/peth04/20041018110436/http://www.usip.org/virtualdiplomacy/publications/reports/ronarqISA99.html>

108 “About Public Diplomacy,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, accessed April 19, 2015, [http://www.ms.gov.pl/en/foreign\\_policy/public\\_diplomacy/about\\_public\\_diplomacy/about\\_public\\_diplomacy](http://www.ms.gov.pl/en/foreign_policy/public_diplomacy/about_public_diplomacy/about_public_diplomacy)

to-people contact. The second aim is to deliver support for the independence of the countries of the region. The third is to support a democratic and free market transformation following the EU model and its integration with Western structures and institutions (first and foremost with the European Union). These aims answer the main challenges for Poland's foreign policy, which are defined as the need to strengthen Poland's position in the European and Trans-Atlantic structures, and to secure the stability of its eastern neighbourhood and counteract the political dominance of the region by Russia.

## Key features of Poland's soft power

Poland's soft power actions consist of two principles - building up its own national position, and also promoting European integration. This 'European agenda' component of Poland's foreign policy is responsible for the special characteristics of the soft power activities in the Eastern European region. Poland is not necessarily an individual soft power centre, but it operates to a large extent within the broader European and EU framework. This kind of approach differs from a classical understanding of soft power applied by other countries (e.g. the US or Russia), which is more a strategy of exclusively building its own national influence in the individual states. Poland's attitude arises from an assessment of its own political and economic potential, which is rather limited compared to the other key players in the region. Being an EU member state, Poland tries to strengthen its own foreign policy tools using the EU's instruments. Poland also seeks to achieve its policy goals by shaping the EU's policy and soft power instruments. Warsaw cooperates with other EU member states which provide activities aimed at the integration of the Eastern European countries with the EU. One example of this could be cooperation within the Visegrad group with the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia. The International Visegrad Fund, which is financed by these four countries, engages in supporting democratic transformation and Eastern Europe's rapprochement with the EU (however it has very limited financial resources). This kind of cooperation is not limited only to partners from Central Europe - on the contrary, Poland is also seeking other partners. In 2014, in cooperation with the government of Canada, Poland launched a special Polish-Canadian Democracy Support Programme addressed towards Ukraine.<sup>109</sup> Besides state engagement, Polish non-governmental organ-

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109 The programme's total budget for 2014-2016 is estimated at €3.9 million. More info at: "Canada and Poland Strengthen Coordinated Engagement in Ukraine," Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada, April 24, 2014, <http://www.international.gc.ca/media/aff/news-communiqués/2014/04/24b.aspx?lang=eng> and "Polsko-Kanadyjski Program Wspierania Demokracji," Solidarity Fund, accessed April 19, 2015, <http://solidarityfund.pl/en/polsko-kanadyjski-program-wspierania-demokracji-ukraina>

isations run projects thanks to financial support from foreign donors (e.g. from the US and other European countries) or charity collections in Poland.<sup>110</sup>

Activities addressed towards the support of the Polish minority in Eastern Europe forms another specific feature of Poland's soft power.<sup>111</sup> They are, however, of lesser importance. Poland's authorities of all governments so far have principally separated activities addressed to the eastern neighbouring countries and to Poles living there. One of the reasons for that has been to depoliticise the Polish minority issue in relations with neighbouring countries. Warsaw has strived to avoid any negative consequences for the Polish minority from those local governments in response to the foreign policy actions of the government in Warsaw. Poland is very cautious in this matter and does not use the Polish minority as a soft power instrument.

Another factor is the limited role and impact of Polish minorities in the neighbouring countries. They have not created any influential lobby groups in these states. Moreover, censuses in Belarus and Ukraine show that the number of people declaring Polish nationality has been declining since the end of the 1980s (according to the official local censuses the number of Poles decreased from around 400,000 in 1989 to 295,000 in 2009 in Belarus and from 220,000 in 1989 to 144,000 in 2001 in Ukraine). This is caused partly by emigration to Poland and partly by the de-Polonisation of the younger generation. Recently, some interest in Polishness was increased when Poland issued a special document called the 'Polish Card' (Karta Polaka).<sup>112</sup> The card grants its bearer some preferences in obtaining a Polish visa, or in employment or studying in Poland. To receive the document, the applicant has to prove their Polish roots and knowledge of the Polish language and culture. There were cases of people of Belarusian or Ukrainian origin applying for the card, mostly out of self-interest, however no assessments have been made regarding the number of these cases.

## How does Poland want to be perceived?

One of the key guidelines in Poland's foreign policy is that it wishes to project itself to the countries of Eastern Europe as a country which made a successful transformation in its own history; from being a communist regime, to democracy and the free market. A narrative formulated in the soft power activities of

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110 For example – the Polish branch of the Caritas Fund sent humanitarian support for Ukraine worth €155,000 in 2014. A significant part of this sum was collected in charity collections. Moreover, there are many other charity organizations working actively in the eastern neighbourhood countries.

111 According to official local data, which is probably understated, there are around 300,000 Poles living in Belarus and 150,000 in Ukraine.

112 100,000 "Polish Cards" have been issued so far: 50,000 in Ukraine and 40,000 in Belarus.

Poland is based on three interconnected elements. The first is that Poland successfully overcame a dictatorship in 1989 and afterwards built a free and democratic political system, which brought benefits to the whole of society. Poland's political narration towards Eastern Europe thus highlights its success in the change of its political system from dictatorship to democracy. Poland promotes itself as being experienced and having know-how in system transformation, and as being ready to share this with its eastern partners. A lot of activities in the soft power framework are focused on sharing experiences and supporting actions aimed at establishing a democratic and free market rule of governance.

The second element of Warsaw's narrative focuses on the promotion of democratic and free market change in the countries of Eastern Europe. This message is especially addressed to the societies of the countries which have problems with democracy and human rights. Poland has taken a positive approach towards all the "colour revolutions" in the region, which advocated democratisation and respect for human rights and had been aimed against authoritarianism - in Ukraine in 2004 and 2013-2014, Moldova in 2009, and Georgia in 2003. It also concerns Belarus, which is still a country with an authoritarian system of government, and Warsaw strives to support Belarusian democratic movements.

The third element is Poland's membership of the Western institutional structures, especially the EU and NATO. Poland wants to be perceived not only as an independent and individual actor, but also as a member of the Western structures which initiate the activities of these organisations towards the region (e.g. the EU's Eastern Partnership initiated by Poland and Sweden, or the fact that Poland is one of the lead nations of NATO's Logistic and Standardisation Trust Fund for Ukraine). Poland wants to be perceived as a country which promotes and is actively engaged in the integration of the East European states with Western structures. Poland has staunchly advocated as far-reaching an integration as possible of the Eastern European states with the EU, and also with NATO.

## **Actors in Poland's soft power**

A whole host of actors are involved in Poland's soft power activities in Eastern Europe. They can be divided into state administration institutions, civil society organisations, local-government entities, academic circles, and business representatives (including business support organisations). State institutions are represented by various ministries and government agencies. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs plays an important role, having some coordination functions in selective areas, i.e; defining the key political objectives. However,

other ministries are also important, e.g; the Ministry for Higher Education as far as research and education cooperation are concerned, the Ministry of Economics in the area of business and economic engagement (including business promotion), and the Ministry of Culture for activities related to promoting and cooperation on culture. There is no clear division of labour in selective areas between subsequent institutions, which means that the responsibilities of individual institutions overlap to some degree (e.g. both the MFA and the Ministry of Economics are active in the promotion of business, and the MFA and the Ministry of Culture in culture-related activities).

Polish NGOs play a very important role in shaping Poland's presence in Eastern Europe. There are many organisations engaged in the implementation of projects relating to providing development aid, democracy promotion and public diplomacy. Polish NGOs themselves organised a Grupa Zagranica (Foreign Group), which is fully independent of the state and is an institutional way of lobbying their interests, strengthening cooperation between civil society organisations, and increasing their capacity.<sup>113</sup> Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia and Moldova are of major importance for Poland's NGOs' foreign activities, measured by implemented projects and other actions.

Polish local governments play a specific role in the state's soft power activities. They are mostly focused on local administration cooperation and cross- and trans-border cooperation. However, they also implement projects related to development aid, as well as educational and culture cooperation. Fifteen of 16 Polish voivodeships (a unit of regional administration) and 58 powiats (units of the second level of local government administration in Poland) were engaged in the implementation of projects in at least one of the four countries this report covers.<sup>114</sup> Poland's entire eastern border with Ukraine and Belarus is covered by three Euro-regions, which are an institutional form of cross-border cooperation in which various actors are involved (local authorities, NGOs, and entrepreneurs).

Despite the obvious boon of a wide variety of actors involved in Poland's soft power activities, the key problem is the lack of full coordination of cooperation between them. It is characteristic of Poland's engagement in the east that there is a certain fragmentation in regards to the entities involved, and also regarding the scope of its activity. There is no single institution or organisation which is entirely dominant in developing soft power action, despite some coordinating role for the MFA. Activities taken

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113 Grupa Zagranica website, accessed April 19, 2015, <http://www.zagranica.org.pl>

114 Taczyńska Jolanta, *Współpraca polskich jednostek samorządu terytorialnego z władzami regionalnymi i lokalnymi oraz innymi podmiotami z państw objętych inicjatywą Partnerstwa Wschodniego* (Uniwersytet Łódzki, 2013), 49, <https://administracja.mac.gov.pl/download/58/13511/PartnerstwoWschodnieSamorzady.pdf>

by Polish entities concern a wide range of areas and it would be difficult to single out one particular area of action or specialisation.

On a strategic level, no comprehensive strategy coordinating and linking all activities in the soft power framework has been prepared yet, nor have sectoral strategies been addressed in selected areas, i.e; public diplomacy, educational cooperation, and cultural diplomacy, etc. One exception is official development aid, where several strategic documents have been adopted - including long-term programmes and guidelines, and short-term implementation documents. In 2009, the Polish government also adopted a “General Strategy for the Promotion of Poland”, which defined Ukraine and Belarus as key priorities. However, the document does not specify concrete goals and measures regarding the activities addressed in the East.

## **Poland’s soft power in practice**

There is a whole spectrum of different kinds of soft power activities undertaken by Poland. They are related to development aid, civil society, education, media and information policy, people-to-people contact, support for an administration to implement reforms, local administration, business and entrepreneurship.

### ***Development aid***

One of the key elements of Poland’s soft power is providing development aid in cooperation with NGOs and local authorities. Part of the activities of NGOs is financed not only by Poland, but also by other foreign donors, i.e, the EU, the EU’s member states, the US, and others. Despite this, their activities are still perceived to some extent as being Polish. The main areas for this kind of engagement focus on support for democracy, transformation and development.

Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and Georgia were recognised in various strategic documents as priority states for Polish bilateral official development aid (ODA)<sup>115</sup>. Around 50 per cent of all resources for bilateral ODA are directed to the Eastern Partnership (EP) countries, mostly for Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and Georgia. Ukraine and Belarus received between 65 per cent and 80 per cent of allocations for all six EP countries depending on the year,

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115 Total value of Poland’s ODA was PLN 1,423 million (€ 345 million) in 2012. Most of Poland’s ODA is dispersed as multilateral assistance as contributions to the EU budget (approx. 75%) and other institutions, while 25% is directed into bilateral aid.

and between 25 and 30 per cent of all the ODA's allocations. It is difficult to assess the exact value of the total support due to the different instruments of financing. Generally, the MFA is responsible for supervising the development aid disbursement. Poland's ODA support has fluctuated between 100-130 million Polish zloty annually (€25-30 million), of which around 40-45 million PLN (around €9.5-10.5 million) has gone to the four countries under discussion.<sup>116</sup>

Poland differentiates the areas of its support addressed to these countries, depending on the conditions and needs of the recipients, as well as potential possibilities for implementing certain programmes. The areas of priority for the support given to Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia are determined by the EU integration process. All three countries are pursuing the EU integration path and implementing Association Agreements with the EU. Thus, Poland focuses on support for the process of transformation and reform. The key areas of Poland's engagement in Ukraine are: 1) support for increasing the potential of central and local administration, and the implementation of the reform process (e.g. of local and self-government, the justice system, education system, border guards and customs); 2) public security and border management; 3) the development of rural areas and agriculture; and 4) the development of small and medium enterprise. Support for Moldova and Georgia concentrates mostly on similar areas: 1) support for agriculture and rural areas, and 2) strengthening administration capacity on both a central and local level. With all three countries, the focus on reform and EU integration processes envisages greater attention to cooperation with the administration structures and institutions. With Belarus there is a different situation, since it is an authoritarian political regime. The leadership in Minsk is not interested in integration with the EU or in democratic and free market reforms. Besides this, Poland does not have good political relations with Minsk. In this situation, Polish entities are focused on activities aimed at: 1) support for independent media and civil society; 2) education (e.g. scholarships for young students or financial support for an independent European Humanities University in Vilnius); and 3) cross-border cooperation and the development of local self-government.

### ***Media and information policy***

The importance of information policy as a soft power tool is gathering more and more focus in Poland. Poland's activities in this area cannot compare with the actions of other big players, i.e. the US (which, for example, finances the radio stations Voice of America and Radio Free Europe), Russia (RT television

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<sup>116</sup> Author's own calculations based on official data taken from *the Polish Aid* website, accessed April 19, 2015, <https://polskapomoc.gov.pl/Polish,Aid,160.html>

and many other Russian language media outlets) or Germany (e.g; Deutsche Welle radio and website). Despite this, Poland tries to be active in this sphere. Belarus and Ukraine are a major focus of Poland's action in the information area. Belarus plays a crucial role here, and supporting independent media and journalists there is a key goal. Poland is engaged in supporting the Belarusian language TV satellite station "TV Belsat." It provides technical support (Polish TV has delivered equipment and provided training for journalists) and financial support of around €4 million annually for running the station. Poland also supports two radio stations, "Radio Ratsya" and "Euroradio," and various independent information websites, including the most important, Charter97.org. Both the radio stations and 'TV Belsat' broadcast from Polish territory. Poland is also engaged in Ukraine, where it also participates in supporting independent media, providing financial support and trainings for journalists, e.g; for two very popular internet TV stations, Hromadske TV and Espresso TV. In the case of Ukraine, Poland pays a lot of attention to local media, (i.e; newspapers and Internet websites), not only from the western part of the country but also in the east, For example, support is provided to the one of the major information websites in the Donbass region, *ostro.org*). Polish National Radio has also its Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian sections. They do not, though, play an important role in the media sphere of the Eastern neighbours. Currently, the Polish government is advocating launching an EU information TV channel dedicated to the countries of the eastern neighbourhood. The aim of the channel is to reach the Russian-speaking population living in the countries to the EU's east, and to provide them with objective information which would counteract the propaganda circulated in the Russian media (which is the key source of information for this group of people in the EP countries).

Another part of Poland's engagement in developing independent media is the support given to journalists, delivered in different forms of short-term projects, or scholarships and training. There is no exact data on the number of people who took part in these projects. However, it may be assumed that they make up rather a significant part of journalistic circles.

A specific element of Poland's soft power, which could be treated as a form of an intellectual base, are Polish media organisations specialising in East European issues. One example of this could be the professional journal 'Nowa Europa Wschodnia' ('New Eastern Europe') published in three separate language editions (Polish, English<sup>117</sup> and Russian; while a Ukrainian version is being prepared). There are also several websites dedicated to the region, e.g; *Eastbook.eu* (which has versions in all the languages of the Eastern Partnership countries, and in English).

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117 Around 12,000 copies of New Eastern Europe are printed and distributed all around the world.

## *Cultural diplomacy*

Cultural diplomacy is aimed at promoting Polish culture and developing cooperation in the area of culture. This kind of cooperation between cultural entities from Poland and the Eastern partners is based on different shared artistic projects, festivals, exhibitions, concerts, festivals (music or film) and exchange programmes. It takes the form of small-scale events, however there is a relatively large number of them.

There are several institutions engaged in developing this kind of cooperation, with the MFA and the Ministry of Culture playing the leading role. Poland has a quite well-developed network of Polish Institutes, of which the aim is to promote Polish culture abroad. Institutes of this kind were established in Kyiv in Ukraine and Minsk in Belarus. Polish diplomatic missions also provide different activities in the cultural sphere in all four countries under discussion. Besides this, the Adam Mickiewicz Institute - which is responsible for the promotion of Poland and its culture around the world - has implemented various projects for its the eastern partners, with its flagship project “I, Culture Orchestra” an educational programme for talented musicians from Poland and the EP countries, the aim of which was to support cultural developments in the region.<sup>118</sup> Another institution active in this sphere is the National Culture Centre, a state-funded institution responsible for the development of culture in Poland.<sup>119</sup> This institution is active in cultural education, for example the project “The rise of eastern culture,” which aims to create a platform for cultural and educational cooperation between the eastern regions of Poland and the EP countries. However, in regards to the Eastern European countries, it also provides youth exchange programmes (e.g; a Polish-Ukrainian youth exchange programme). Moreover, several of Poland’s cultural institutions have run a number of smaller activities related to the various culture spheres in at least one of the Eastern European countries (e.g; the Book Institute, the Polish Film Institute, the Theatre Institute, and the International Cultural Centre).

Activities related to historical issues are another aspect of cultural policy. Ukraine and Belarus play a special role in Poland’s historical policy due to a shared heritage. For example, Poland engages in financing common academic research in this area. Poland’s Ministry of Culture also finances the conservation of Polish historical monuments in Ukraine and Belarus. In the

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118 More info about IAM at “Projects,” Adam Mickiewicz Institute, accessed April 19, 2015, <http://iam.pl/en/about-us#projects>

119 More info about NCC at the website of *Narodowe Centrum Kultury*, accessed April 19, 2015, <http://www.nck.pl>

case of Georgia, there is still acknowledgement of Polish exiles in the 19th and 20th century, who played their role in the history of that country, which helps form a positive image of Poland there.

Some of the events are organised in Poland, which shows that Polish society takes an interest in Eastern Europe. One example could be provided by cyclical festivals, e.g. Days of Ukrainian Culture in Warsaw, Caucasian culture festival 'Transcaucasia,' Belarusian film festival 'Bulbamovies' or the Belarusian rock festival 'Basovichcha.' These kinds of events are strengthened by the growing activity in Poland of national minorities from eastern states.

## ***Education and scholarships***

Poland also attempts to develop scholarships and educational programmes in Eastern Europe. Poland finances a total of around 1000 scholarships a year under the framework of various programmes, mostly for Ukrainians and Belarusians (some of them are people of Polish origin from these states). Besides state scholarships funded by Poland, there are a far larger number of students studying at Polish universities, often paying for this. Ukrainians number a third of all foreign students in Poland, and Belarusians approximately 12 per cent. In both cases, Poland is in those countries the third most preferable destination for studying (after Germany and Russia in Ukraine, and after Russia and Lithuania in Belarus). In the academic year 2012-2013, 9727 Ukrainians, 3388 Belarusians, 101 Moldovans and 87 Georgians studied at Polish universities.<sup>120</sup> Poland is increasingly being perceived as an attractive country whose education opens doors to Europe. Another advantage of Polish universities is the relatively good level of education combined with the lower costs, and its geographical, cultural and linguistic proximity. Poland's universities are also increasingly active in promoting themselves in Eastern European countries, due to the demographic crisis in Poland.

Poland also develops Polish language courses, which are run by various institutions, such as Polish Institutes, Polish schools, and Polish departments in schools and universities. The government finances around 120 Polish teachers from Poland working in the region. It could be estimated that around 24,000 people study Polish in Ukraine, 6000 in Belarus and around 100 in Georgia (there is no data for Moldova).<sup>121</sup> However, this number should

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120 Wojciech Marchwica and Bianka Siwińska, *Study in Poland, Studenci Zagraniczni w Polsce w 2013* [*Foreign Students in Poland in 2013*], Fundacja Edukacyjna Perspektywy, October 2013.

121 Author's calculations based on data provided by Poland's MFA, Ministry of Science and Higher Education and Centre for the Development of Polish Education Abroad.

be at least doubled, since it does not take into account the large number of people studying Polish in private courses, or courses financed by civil society organisations. Despite that, these numbers cannot be compared with the most popular languages of English and German. Nevertheless, it shows some attractiveness and interest in Poland by Ukraine and Belarus.

### ***The engagement of local governments***

Poland's local authorities increasingly enhance their activities in the Eastern European countries, which is another dimension of Poland's soft power actions. Regional and local governments use the various financial instruments available to them (i.e; funds for development aid and cross-border cooperation and cultural policy). One important tool of financing cross-border cooperation is the Cross-border Cooperation Programme Poland-Ukraine-Belarus, operated within the European Neighbourhood Instrument of the EU. The most intensive cooperation is with Ukraine, and then with Belarus. Nevertheless, Polish local governments are becoming increasingly active in Georgia (e.g; cooperation between the cities of Poznan and Kutaisi) and Moldova (e.g; cooperation between Płock and Bălți). This concerns only bigger entities – regional or major cities – but also smaller units of lower administration level. Regional authorities from different parts of Poland are engaged in cooperation, not just from eastern Poland, which borders Ukraine and Belarus. Poland also focuses on strengthening cooperation and the capacities of local authorities in the partner states. The Information Center for Local Authorities serves as one example of this. It was established in Moldova in 2012, with the aim of strengthening local democracy in Moldova by involving citizens, local authorities, and local leaders in partnerships.<sup>122</sup>

### ***Business dimension***

Poland has not treated business and economic cooperation as a key principle of its engagement in Eastern Europe. It has paid more attention to the development of political relationships and support for democratic transformation in the countries of the region. Nevertheless, Ukraine and Belarus, along with the EU, the US and Russia, were named as priority countries for Polish for-

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122 More information about the Information Center for Local Authorities at its website: <http://www.centruinfo.org/en>

eign economic policy in various official documents<sup>123</sup>. Moldova and Georgia play rather a secondary role in Poland's economic policy. However, Moldova is becoming ever more interesting for Polish entrepreneurs in recent years, because of an intensification of political relationships between both countries, and Moldova's ongoing process of European integration.

Business activity has not become an important benchmark for changing business attitudes and business identity in the partner countries. It is a result of Poland's limited economic engagement, and the way Polish business entities operate in Eastern Europe. Despite Poland being an important economic partner for Ukraine (its fourth-largest trading partner and 13th-largest investor in 2013), the total level of business activity (in terms of invested resources) has not produced a measurable change in the style of doing business there – for example in business legislation, the business climate, level of corruption, and administration procedures, etc. The same could be said about Belarus and Moldova, where Poland is one of the top 10 economic partners. At the same time, Poland is engaged to a very limited degree in Georgia. Polish business entities engaged in the region are mostly small and medium-sized enterprises, so their chances to have an impact on the local situation are very limited. In their strategy, they try to find a local partner who will be responsible for the implementation of the business project 'on the ground.' Thus, this way of operation limits the possibilities of changing the business environment of a recipient country to a large extent.

Business Support Organisations (BSO) have not become influential actors in this area either. Trade and economic chambers are functioning between Poland and all four countries concerned, and Poland's BSOs are active in the region. However, only the Polish-Ukrainian Economic Chamber and the Polish-Belarusian Trade Chamber are active in a visible way. The BSOs are focused mostly on developing business contacts between entrepreneurs, and are not necessarily focused on changing the business environment of the partner countries on a national level.

However, Poland could serve as a gateway to the EU market and the world financial markets for firms from Eastern Europe, and in that way could stimulate changes there. For example, one Belarusian and 11 Ukrainian companies are listed on the Warsaw Stock Exchange (however, they are registered not as Belarusian or Ukrainian, but as from Cyprus, Luxembourg and the Netherlands). Ukrainian and Belarusian investors have made some investments in Poland (to the value of US\$55 million and almost US\$2 mil-

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123 E.g. Stowarzyszenie Eksporterów Polskich, *Strategia proeksportowego rozwoju gospodarki polskiej* [A strategy for the pro-export development of Poland's economy] (Warszawa, 2012), [http://www.eksporterzy.org/documents/2012-08-22\\_strategia/Strategia\\_proeksportowego\\_rozwoju\\_gospodarki\\_polskiej.pdf](http://www.eksporterzy.org/documents/2012-08-22_strategia/Strategia_proeksportowego_rozwoju_gospodarki_polskiej.pdf)

lion respectively.)<sup>124</sup> Despite the small scale, the engagement of business entities from Eastern Europe on the Polish market could be used as a soft power instrument for changing the business identity of the countries of the region.

## **An assessment of Poland's soft power in Eastern Europe**

An asset of Poland's soft power in Eastern Europe is the engagement of a very broad spectrum of various actors - state institutions (not only the MFA, but also others), civil society organisations, local governments and entrepreneurs. All actors have developed their own links and ways of cooperating with partners from Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and Belarus. It makes it possible to engage with different partners on various levels, from the national level to the local one. Polish entities are active in many different areas, where they try to have an impact on changing the local situation, i.e; the reform process (both on a national and local level), business and economy cooperation, education, sustainable development, agriculture, soft security, and public administration, etc. They do not focus only on certain regions of partner countries, like capital or major cities, or regions in close proximity to Poland. For example in regards to Ukraine, although Poland is more active in the western part of the country, it nevertheless also implements projects in the more remote, eastern part of the country, including Donbass. The same trend may be observed in Moldova, Georgia and Belarus.

This attitude makes Poland's activity more dispersed. On one hand, it means its impact could be limited to some extent, due to a lack of sufficient resources. However, on the other, Poland is represented in a broader geographical area.

Geographical proximity is an important factor in influencing Poland's position in Eastern Europe. Poland is far more active in Ukraine and Belarus than in Moldova and Georgia. Cultural and historical proximity, and political and economic importance, are important factors influencing the higher level of engagement in Ukraine and Belarus. However, it should be noted that Poland is playing an increasing role in Moldova, which is stimulated by the growing intensity of political cooperation and Moldova's engagement in European integration.

Due to its soft power activities, Poland was able to build a network of contacts, which allows it to become an important external partner for its Eastern neighbours. Poland's engagement in the resolution of political conflicts threatening the European integration process in Moldova (in 2009 and 2013),

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124 Data as of 2013. Despite the small amount of money invested, Poland is in 8<sup>th</sup> place in the list of capital invested abroad by Belarus.

or in Ukraine (in November 2013-February 2014), may serve as proof of this.

It is hard to assess the real impact of Poland's soft power in the region. For example, the EU's institutions and the EU's member states were also involved in supporting the integration of the Eastern European countries with the EU. Nevertheless, it could be stated that Poland's activities, together with others, have also contributed to keeping Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia on the path to European integration.

The most visible effect of Poland's soft power is the change of attitude towards it from Eastern European societies. The image of Poland and of Poles has improved. The best example is in Ukraine, where positive opinions about Poles have increased from 45-65 per cent (measured in different categories) in 2000, to 80-90 per cent in 2013.<sup>125</sup> According to the latest available poll in December 2011, 68 per cent of Belarusians have a positive or very positive attitude towards Poles and 11 per cent negative (only Russians and Ukrainians were regarded by Belarussians more favourably than Poles).<sup>126</sup> Poland also has a positive image in Georgia and Moldova however there is no viable sociological research on this issue.

Poland is generally perceived as a country which successfully transformed itself politically and economically. For example, the Ukrainian leadership - which took power after the Revolution of Dignity in 2014 - is interested in Poland's experience and support in the implementation of decentralisation and local government reforms, which are of top priority for them. Earlier, Ukraine used Poland's experience in reforming its border guards and examination system in education.

The biggest deficiency of Poland's soft power is the lack of a strategic approach, which include long term-visions and strategies. As a result, a lot of actions are taken from a short-term perspective, which limits their sustainability. There is also not enough coordination of activities between different actors. Each of them operates individually and does not cooperate closely with other partners from Poland or the EU. This leads to the problem of an inefficient use of limited resources, which are too dispersed and fragmented. The limited level of financial engagement in developing soft power is not enough for the needs and ambitions of those involved, and makes a general scale of action unfeasible.

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125 Joanna Fomina et al., *Poland-Ukraine, Poles-Ukrainians: Look across the border* (Warsaw: Institute of Public Affairs, 2013).

126 «Кого белорусы уважают и как уважают» (Whom Belarusians respect and how), *Zerkalo-Info*, January 4, 2012, <http://zerkalo-info.com/investigations/132.html>

## Some recommendations

A general recommendation for improving Poland's soft power activities is the need to strengthen cooperation and coordination with both different Polish actors, and also with external partners. It is essential for increasing efficiency of implemented actions within the soft power framework, which is especially important when financial resources are limited. On the national level, it would be advisable to strengthen institutional mechanisms for the coordination of soft power activities, and more closely adjust them to the foreign policy guidelines. Better cooperation with external players is also important. It would be advisable to strengthen cooperation and coordination with other actors from the EU, and other EU member states which are engaged in supporting European integration and democratic change in Eastern Partnership countries. This is important to prevent actions taken by other actors from overlapping, and it could increase the efficiency of actions taken.

With limited funds, some tangible results could be achieved by focusing on selected and specific areas, both thematic and geographical. A concentration of means could bring about tangible results. It is thus important to develop a long-term strategy which would define the key areas for action. In the case of Poland it could, for example, be the development of a free and independent media, cultural and historical cooperation (including education), civil society, administration reforms and the business environment, with a special focus on small and medium-sized enterprises.

Finally, it is very important to remain patient, tenacious and consistent in the measures taken. Soft power activities can bring effects only in the long-term. These kinds of activities are very time-consuming, and are definitely unable to bring effects in the short term. A long term strategy should be consistently implemented. However, it should also be flexible and involve a mechanism for adjusting to dynamic, current events in Eastern Europe.

# Russia's 'Soft' Policies towards the Baltic States

/Victoria V. Panova/

Today, not a single state could afford to rely only on hard military and economic power. While those remain at the heart of most countries' policies (at least when it makes sense), and we see alarming tendencies of an increasing reliance on hard power, not a single country could do without soft power and public diplomacy. Soft power is much more subtle, but requires no fewer resources than the previous two. It also requires a very advanced and skilled user in order to bear fruit, especially given that "Many of its crucial resources are outside the control of governments, and their effects depend heavily on acceptance by the receiving audience."<sup>127</sup> Taken comprehensively, soft power covers three broad categories: "a) influence, b) the force of an actor's arguments, and, perhaps most important, c) the 'attractiveness' of an actor's culture and institutions – the supposed 'intangible assets',"<sup>128</sup> which could lead to the desired outcome of the other country wanting what you want, or 'co-opting' it.

This chapter is generally structured along the following lines. Primarily, it looks at the legacy Russia comes with - the considerable load of soft power that its predecessor (the Soviet Union) had. At the same time, it is vital to distinguish between a positive future-oriented legacy and an ambiguous 'revolutionary' image, highly regarded in distant countries, but, unfortunately, scaring immediate neighbours. Later, the chapter looks at some of the institutions and instruments of Russia's soft power. It also shows that while a lot of fur was made to fly around increased spending on soft power projects, the reality saw a reduction of engagement all over the world due to hard economic conditions and sequestered budgets. Finally, the article lists the main 'segments' of soft power (the Russian language and literature, educational and cultural exchanges, entertainment and pop-culture events, etc), that Russia could and should use in order to support its image positively, but also shows the main obstacles on the way to turning Russia into an attractive entity to the world.

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127 Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 99.

128 Craig Hayden, *The Rhetoric of Soft Power: Public Diplomacy in Global Contexts* (Lexington Books, 2012), 5.

## Russia's image: past and future

The concept of soft power is finally legally present in the Russian official foreign policy discourse, as one can see from the Foreign Policy Concept of Russia as of February 2013. In the document, soft power is described as a “comprehensive instrument of foreign policy solutions based on abilities of the civil society, ICT, humanitarian and other alternatives to classic diplomacy methods and technologies.”<sup>129</sup>

It is generally accepted that the USSR, while not achieving ‘parity’ with the USA in ‘soft power,’ still occasionally gave a hard time to its main Cold War opponent in terms of promoting the attractive sides of the country all over the world - including to some people in the Western sphere of influence. While ideology presented a danger to the other side, mostly at the earlier stages of the Cold War (especially until de-Stalinization in 1956, with the glory of the country and people who won over Nazism and communal ideas of equality), it was often intertwined with the nationalist liberation movements of the former colonies or dependent territories. Later on, while the ideology mostly lost its attractiveness, the Soviet Union would invest heavily in genuine cultural and sporting achievements - mostly associated with Russia though, rather than with the USSR as it is. Russian ballet was, and remains, the best in the world, with the Bolshoi and Mariinsky theatres guest performances always attracting considerable audiences and traditionally having a full house. During Soviet times, the government invested heavily in sports. Since 1952 in Helsinki, the Soviet sportsmen participated very successfully in all Olympic Games (except for the ones in Los Angeles in 1984). It has to be mentioned that the Soviet team were ranked first six times in the unofficial team estimate of medals (1956 in Melbourne, Australia; 1960 in Rome, Italy; 1972 in Munich, Germany; 1976 in Montreal, Canada; 1980 in Moscow, USSR, and 1988 in Seoul, South Korea).<sup>130</sup> At the Winter Olympic Games held in 2014 in Sochi the hosts also won the medal count, which constituted the turning point after the sporting failures experienced by the country after the break-up of the Soviet Union.

Ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the ‘Russian bear with a balalaika’ has been searching for its new image and new identity. The grand project of communism, while still alive in a number of countries all over the world, failed as the ultimate model to win the hearts and minds of the world’s citizens. Actually, it is rightly argued that the USSR

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129 *Concept of the Foreign Policy of Russian Federation*, February 12, 2013, [www.mid.ru/bdomp/ns-osndoc.nsf/e2f289bea62097f9c325787a0034c255/c32577ca0017434944257b160051bf7!OpenDocument](http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/ns-osndoc.nsf/e2f289bea62097f9c325787a0034c255/c32577ca0017434944257b160051bf7!OpenDocument)

130 For more on the account of Olympic games history see <http://www.olympic.ru/100-year/chapter-3/> and “Завоевания России (СССР) на Летних Олимпийских Играх. Справка,” РИА Новости, August 5, 2008, [www.ria.ru/sport/20080805/150110560.html](http://www.ria.ru/sport/20080805/150110560.html)

“fell into decline because it lost legitimacy among its own people,”<sup>131</sup> which showcases the statement that any great power could only exist in the situation of both military might and internal and external legitimacy.

Today we witness a new search for ideas and a “mission” for the country. This attempt is by no means new in Russian history. It is enough to remember the debates between the so-called Slavophiles and Westerners on the fate, role in the world, and development model for Russia in the middle of the 19th century, which were sparked by the “Philosophical letter” published by Petr Chaadaev in 1836. Slavophiles (Alexei Khomiakov, brothers Ivan and Petr Kireevskii, Yury Samarin and others) believed that the old Russian traditions and peoples’ moral are a true source of strength and potential for national development. For the Westerners (represented by Vissarion Belinskii, Alexander Gertsen, Nikolai Ogarev, Vasily Botkin and others) possibilities for further development and well-being could only be found through rapprochement with Europe, industrial growth and scientific progress, and establishment of political and civil rights.

Those debates have resumed with renewed vigor today and very much resemble the 19th century lines of thinking. Considerable numbers of political scientists (to name but a few most-known thinkers: Artemiy Panarin, Alexander Dugin, Alexander Neklessa, Vadim Tsimburskii, and Kamaludin Gadzhiev) look at the role of Russia in the modern context. The ideas of the Russian mission, Moscow as the “Third Rome,” pan-Slavism, etc. are still relevant in many of those deliberations. Most of the thinkers are committed Eurasianists and, with different degrees of militancy, proclaim the idea of the war waged by the “Absolute West” against Russia, and thus Russia being the last citadel against corrupt and rotten Western society. In terms of geopolitics, Russia is seen as controlling the heartland, the so-called geopolitical island concept of the Eurasian world. So far those deliberations, while attractive to certain groups of society, nevertheless look futile if wanting to attract other nations and ethnic groups to join Russia in a common cultural and ideational space. Instead, with the extra emphasis on Orthodox civilization, this could rather provoke fears of reviving imperialism by smaller nations. In contrast to suggestions of experts like Nye, not a single culture in the world could be viewed as universal and adaptable to different civilizations and traditions. Rather, a lack of in-depth cultural values and identity features could be easily introduced and be attractive for the least educated segments of any society, since it is easy ‘to gobble up.’ That is probably the only universality that could be applied, and, fortunately or unfortunately, not applicable in the case of the Russian legacy, tradition and culture.

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131 Peter van Ham, “Power, Public Diplomacy, and the Pax Americana” in *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, ed. Jan Melissen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 48.

So what is the Russian brand today? Is there a way beyond the ‘angry bear with a balalaika, eating caviar and drinking vodka under the shade of the Kremlin towers’? In 2014, its “polite people” brought the image of “polite Putin.” This is quite attractive to a number of citizens in what was formerly known as Western Europe and in the USA, as well as some developing countries, in their longing for a strong leader - which clearly is the image of the Russian President. The Chinese, with their psychology, history and traditions, also favour that picture. Joseph Nye Jr., in his book “The Powers to Lead” acknowledges that heroic and alpha-male approaches to power are often attractive to the general public: “The fact that history has been written in terms of heroes constrains our imagination and understanding of the enormous potential of human leadership that ranges from Attila the Hun to Mother Teresa.” Nevertheless, he warns of the accompanying risks, mostly of the situation when such an approach “neglects the community norms and institutions that provide crucial constraints on leaders.”<sup>132</sup>

While this might be an interesting finding (the image of ‘polite Putin’ on a bear) and also attractive to wider audiences, more questions arise with the immediate neighbours, or all those countries (formerly in one socialist block) which remember the stronghold of the USSR. There are questions also with regards to how much this image is good for the Russian brand in the long-term, or whether it could degenerate into a cheap personality cult.

The cultural legacy (Russian literature and poetry, music and ballet, and Russian sport) seems to work not in a way to attract others to the Russian state, but rather to dissociate from it. Admirers of the Russian culture are not necessarily fans of Putin, nor would they want to support current Russian policies or associate with today’s Russia, and the same applies in reverse.

This search for a new identity, to gather other nations around a re-emerging Russia, is nothing else but the search for instruments and models of soft power to be used. Thus, it is absolutely true to re-state what Jan Melissen stressed as of utmost importance in the age of global information society: “Loss of soft power can be costly for hard power.”<sup>133</sup> This is very applicable to the current situation around Russia. With the not-very attractive legacy of the Soviet socialist community to its former members - and intensive public relations work on the part of the Western-created political and military block of NATO - the goal and actual steps of the former USSR allies (or even former parts of the Soviet Union currently being independent states) to join the

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132 Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Powers to Lead* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 10.

133 Jan Melissen, “The New Public Diplomacy: Between Theory and Practice” in *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, ed. Jan Melissen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 4.

North Atlantic Alliance; their refusal to engage Russia on an equal footing; and resurging “June 22nd syndrome”<sup>134</sup> of Russia, leads to costly decisions on both sides (although probably more difficult for Russia) for military build-up. Thus, if we look at the State Arms Program of Russia, the one adopted for 2001-2010 had 2.5 trillion rubles<sup>135</sup> budgeted, the program for the period of 2011-2020 already saw an increase to over 20 trillion rubles<sup>136</sup>, and the next program for 2016-2025 will, in theory, see future planned growth.<sup>137</sup> Now, as it was back during the times of the ideological differences between capitalism and communism, the “battle of values and ideas” is evolving “into the competition in the sphere of hard power, and not vice versa.”<sup>138</sup>

I would argue that with all the existing conceptual documents, the amount of literature, research and philosophical deliberations, and all the discussions between the Eurasianists and liberal Westerners, there is a lack of firmly set ideas on what Russia stands for and what historical mission it has. This influences the external image of the country on the international arena, and will impact the ability to ‘rebrand’ Russia on the international marketplace. Therefore, it has to be evaluated whether the existing image is a proper ‘public good,’ as termed by Mark Leonard, and can create an “enabling environment for individual transactions”<sup>139</sup> to the extent of being able to compete for “investment, trade and tourism,”<sup>140</sup> which in the end contributes to economic and social development, and Russian stability locally, regionally and globally.

While the concept does not really exist, and the concept of “sovereign democracy” cannot be seen as a substitution for national identity, this image seems to be still dwelling on the Soviet legacy both positively and negatively. Negatively, its neighbours bring fears of resurging imperial ambitions on the part of Russia. Positive aspects also exist, and they come from a number of

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134 The term used in order to allude to the mistrust Russia has in its Western partners and the bare necessity to create “security belts” consisting of friendly or neutral states around its borders after the Nazi Germany attack on June 22, 1941.

135 At the time of the adoption of the Program the ruble/euro rate amounted to around 40/1. These days, after the plunge in the ruble value and relevant depreciation of the Euro the approximate rate reaches 63/1.

136 Сoвeщaниe пo вoпpocу paзpaбoтки пpoeктa гocпpогpaммы вooзyжeния нa 2016–2025 гoды (Meeting on the issue of elaboration of the draft State Arms Program for the period of 2016 – 2025), September 10, 2014, [www.kremlin.ru/news/46589](http://www.kremlin.ru/news/46589)

137 With the crisis experience currently by the Russian economy, there is a reduction of expenditures for State Programs by 10%, but dynamics of higher attention to defense and military build-up are going to be featured characteristics of Russian development in the situation of low trust and confrontation with its ‘Western’ counterparts.

138 Jan Melissen, 4.

139 Mark Leonard, Catherine Stead and Conrad Smewing, *Public Diplomacy* (London: The Foreign Policy Centre, 2002), 9.

140 Wally Olins, *Trading Identities: Why Countries and Companies are Becoming more alike* (London: Foreign Policy Centre, 1999), 1-3.

politically left-leaning people of developing and emerging economies from Asia, Latin America and Africa, or even from the well-off countries of the West. By those, Russia is seen as the “freedom-fighter” confronting “liberal imperial evil.” This ‘evil golden billion’ is exploiting poorer countries and preventing them from sustainable and prosperous development. Thus, if we look at the latest crisis around Ukraine, despite prevailing propaganda, the prevailing mood in those countries sees it mostly as an attempt of the American empire to break down the country which dared to have its independent vision of the world.<sup>141</sup>

While the idea is not to look at this problem globally, it is important to understand that context, which would explain a number of issues arising around not only the Russian image in the Baltics, but also Russian intentions (or sometimes lack of intentions) towards the Baltic States. In this global fight for freedom and a fair and equal world, while Ukraine matters as a civilizational polygon or the border line between different civilizations, the Baltic States (by now long seen as part of the established Western community) simply do not play any significant role with regards to a future world architecture, its rules and arrangements. The game Russia stepped into (whether voluntarily or accidentally is a different question) simply has different level of trumps to be played. If it were about Ukraine and regional issues only, the conflict would have been rather easy to solve. Meanwhile, confrontation involving reformulation of the rules of the game, and laying the foundation for the incoming world order, is bound to make big players employ all possible means and resources.

## **Russia’s instruments and mechanisms of ‘soft power’**

What has been explained earlier by all means does not mean that the Baltic States are either irrelevant for Russia, or that there is no interest in cooperating with those countries. While Russia does not seem to see much of a political role for the Baltic States (attaching more importance to players like Germany, or also France, Poland or Italy), this region has a very specific place in Russian politics. Moreover, given uneasy relations with those countries, Russia (when working out soft power strategies) should take into account a whole range of limitations and impediments.

In general, there is a tendency to differentiate between different aspects of soft power and public diplomacy. This differentiation is somewhat elusive, but still could be a good start for reviewing the Russian instrumental approach towards its neighbours to the north-west. According to Jan Melissen, there should be offered three different concepts to operate within when talking of

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141 Based on personal interviews with experts, academia, students, political analysts and other representatives of civil society in Brazil, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Italy, South Africa, USA, etc.

public diplomacy: propaganda, nation-branding and foreign cultural relations. While the first two concepts are largely about directing information and ideas to the foreign public with the intent to revert or reinforce existing opinions, cultural exchange is more about engaging with the foreign public and establishing sustainable and long-term relations.<sup>142</sup> The first task is usually tasked to the media (see Jakub Korejba's chapter in this volume devoted specifically to Russian media efforts to 'win' the Baltics 'hearts and minds') and official track diplomacy.

With regards to the Baltics, as in general towards most of other countries (including CIS states), Russia seems to employ mostly a hierarchical model of public diplomacy which "stresses the centrality of intergovernmental relations, in which the foreign ministry and the national diplomatic system over which it presides act as gatekeepers, monitoring interactions between domestic and international policy environments and funnelling information between them." Thus, it is narrowed to a top-down approach where people are targets, even if implying "a high level of culture and patterns of media usage as well as a deep knowledge of overseas news organizations and political systems."<sup>143</sup>

What makes the case of the Baltics special is not just the troubled bilateral political relations, but also the group of Russian-speaking Balts. There are fewer and fewer Russian ethnic representatives in the Baltic countries. From 1989 to 2011, the amount of ethnic Russians in Latvia decreased from 34 per cent to 26.9 per cent, in Lithuania from 9.4 per cent to 5.4 per cent, and in Estonia from 30.3 per cent to 25.5 per cent<sup>144</sup>). Modern 'Baltic Russians' are also different from their Russian counterparts, and what makes the situation further more difficult for Russia to be able to formulate adequate policies to attract Russian speaking communities, is that each Baltic country's Russian community has its own specificities. Apart from the more-or-less consolidated Russian community in Latvia, the other two are not so united.<sup>145</sup>

The first and foremost institution responsible for coordinating and supervising the efforts of 'soft power' is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. Here, one would need to look at the official conceptual documents (elaborated by the MFA) and also the steps and activities held by the central office, as well as Russian embassies and consular offices in the Baltic States.

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142 For more on that distinction see Jan Melissen, 16-23.

143 Brian Hocking, "Rethinking the 'New' Public Diplomacy" in *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, ed. Jan Melissen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 35-36.

144 Figures taken from the estimates of authors in Irina Novikova and Nikolai Mezhevich, "Государства Прибалтики: вызовы на пути к эффективному и устойчивому развитию" (The Baltic States: challenges on the way to effective and sustainable development), *Russian International Affairs Council*, September 10, 2014, [www.russiancouncil.ru/inner/?id\\_4=4339#top](http://www.russiancouncil.ru/inner/?id_4=4339#top)

145 Vadim Smirnov, "Российская «мягкая сила» в странах Балтии" (Russian 'soft power' in the Baltic countries), *Russian International Affairs Council*, May 2, 2012, [www.russiancouncil.ru/inner/?id\\_4=351#top](http://www.russiancouncil.ru/inner/?id_4=351#top)

The foreign policy concept Russia adopted in 2013, meanwhile, demonstrates a rather pessimistic trend in terms of Russian approaches towards the Baltics. Concepts and other doctrinal documents could be less regarded as genuine documents, but rather based on the structure of similar writings in the USA. Nevertheless, their content reflects the immediate priorities and interests of Russia. This first attempt to offer a national foreign policy vision in 1993 was rather bleak, but at the same time extremely commendable, since its authors had to start from scratch with deliberations on what national interests Russia had (the Soviet Union did not have that notion).

That said, what is so pessimistic about Russian foreign policy thinking with regard to the Baltics? Economic and political realities of the modern world prove that countries able to establish intensive contacts with the surrounding world are among the most successful. Thus, the pessimistic tendency is rooted in the fact that those countries are losing much of their significance, and thus a special place in Russian foreign policy thinking. It is therefore not surprising that regional experts have noticed drastic change between the attention given to the Baltics at the early stages after the break-up of the Soviet Union, and attention given recently. The earliest Foreign Policy document adopted in 1993 has at least 1.5 pages of text devoted to those countries. The latest foreign policy concept lacks any mention of the Baltic States.<sup>146</sup> That simply means that Moscow would be primarily talking to the countries it believes relevant in regards to decision-making. In fact, it could be argued that policies made towards the Russian minority in those countries, which led to a lower percentage of the population in each of the three countries, made clear the situation in which, bit by bit, the Baltic states are further losing any leverage they had earlier over Russia. With Russian communities in the Baltics it is clearly a two-way street, since Russia has to modify its foreign policy discourse and approach, taking into account the general attitude of the population, compared with the perception of this situation as “foreign agents” providing for adversarial Russian influence. According to Oxford researcher Agnia Grigas, the young Russians in those communities do not approve of Russian policies and see no need for any protection from Russia in a way that could compromise sovereignty of any of the Baltic countries, and they associate themselves with the place they were born.<sup>147</sup>

With the recognition that Russia made mistakes in not paying enough attention to its compatriots in Ukraine, questions were asked whether Rus-

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146 Nikolai Mezhevich, “Прибалтика как перевернутая страница для России” (The Baltics as the page turned for Russia), *RuBaltic*, August 27, 2013, [www.rubaltic.ru/persona\\_grata/pribaltika\\_kak\\_perevernutaya\\_stranitsa\\_dlya\\_rossii](http://www.rubaltic.ru/persona_grata/pribaltika_kak_perevernutaya_stranitsa_dlya_rossii)

147 Agnia Grigas, “Compatriot Games: Russian Speaking Minorities in the Baltic States,” *World Politics Review*, October 21, 2014, <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/14240/compatriot-games-russian-speaking-minorities-in-the-baltic-states>

sians in the Baltics were receiving relevant attention and help. The answer was negative. Sergey Sergeev, head of the Union of societies of Russian compatriots, said that the tendency was for the opposite. He claimed that each year subscriptions to local Russian-speaking newspapers and magazines were decreasing. After Moscow's mayor Yury Luzhkov was ousted in 2010 the situation worsened considerably. The only time when those civil society organizations were remembered was on the eve of the 100-year anniversary of the start of World War I, in order to restore Russian soldiers' burials.<sup>148</sup>

Those few compatriots that remain in the Baltic republics, as mentioned earlier, are not really consolidated (apart from Latvia). Many young Russians would rather associate themselves with Europe as a whole.<sup>149</sup> Existing politically-active communities of Russian-speaking citizens often are not really influencing their country's policies, but rather pretending to be extremely active in order to continue receiving funding from Russia. Sometimes it is not clear whether it is just not influencing, or rather is a deteriorating situation, providing for negative PR and frightening local authorities while achieving zero results with regards to the real aim – assisting in preservation of language and cultural identity of the Russian-speaking population. This is a problem not just for the Baltics, but in all post-Soviet areas, where certain groups monopolize the position of a 'pro-Russian' entity and the efficiency of funds used is rarely under scrutiny - thus not achieving the end goal of such funds, which is the improvement of Russian minorities' status and position.

The official Russian stance on non-citizens in Latvia and Estonia<sup>150</sup> repeats itself - MFA representatives provide statements, but with regards to activities they look more like mantra and a formerly well-known song - it is

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148 Alexei Polubota, «Жёсткий отпор мягкой силе,» (A tough response to the soft power), Свободная пресса, November 22, 2014. [www.svpressa.ru/society/article/104828](http://www.svpressa.ru/society/article/104828)

149 Earlier mentioned Agnia Grigas held interviews with the younger Russian-speaking population with corresponding claims made by the respondents <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/14240/compatriot-games-russian-speaking-minorities-in-the-baltic-states> Another account is offered by the Vesti segodnia (Latvia) journalist Yulia Alexandrova present at the Youth Conference held in Riga in September 2013: "Конференция в Риге: русская молодежь из Литвы и Эстонии стыдится говорить на своем родном языке,» *Baltija EU*, October 16, 2013, <http://baltija.eu/news/read/33999> Also in 2011 the Baltic Federal University named after Kant held relevant research on the topic. As a result 31.6% of Russian-speaking respondents in Lithuania see Lithuania as its Motherland, 55.2% prefer to confer that status to their local place of birth/study/living as opposed to 5.1% seeing Russia in that same regard, and 5.7% respondents choosing USSR, see "Русские Литвы: Кто мы такие?" *Kurier.lt*, October 8, 2011, <http://www.kurier.lt/russkie-litvy-kto-my-takie>

150 Estonia as of December 1, 2014 has 85 578 (or 7% of total population) so-called 'residents of undetermined citizenship'. Source: "Citizenship," *Estonia.eu*, April 7, 2015, [www.estonia.eu/about-estonia/society/citizenship.html](http://www.estonia.eu/about-estonia/society/citizenship.html), while Latvia has around 260 thousand of non-citizens in the country (or 13% of population): "Почти 2% жителей Латвии — граждане России; их число постоянно растёт" (Almost 2% of Latvian residents are Russian citizens; their number is constantly growing), *DELFI*, September 24, 2014, <http://rus.delfi.lv/news/daily/latvia/pochti-2-zhitelej-latvii-grazhdane-rossii-ih-chislo-postoyanno-rastet.d?id=45012326>

like a game played between two sides with agreed rules. It is enough to cite a recent speech of MFA human rights ombudsman Konstantin K. Dolgov at the regional conference of Russian compatriots of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia in Riga. There he continued talking about this issue, and the issue of former Nazi collaborators' honours in some of the Baltic countries – naming and shaming with no new suggestions.<sup>151</sup> Both sides on a diplomatic level seem to remain happy with regards to the status quo.

At the same time, it is worth mentioning the Russia-initiated resolution adopted at the UN Human Rights Council on “Human rights and deliberate deprivation of citizenship,”<sup>152</sup> which proves that Russia is prepared to act by legal means through relevant international organizations, as opposed to the use of force as often claimed by its opponents. Also, Latvia was recommended by the UN to reconsider its law on high schools (see below). No specific action has been taken yet, but if a more active stance is taken while Riga presides in the EU, there is the chance of improvements in this area. There are high expectations in Russia that by being in the European politics spotlight Latvia would be more willing to comply with all the international and European principles, and respect minorities' rights for language and cultural identity and other rights.

While the MFA and its representative missions are responsible for transmitting the official position of the country, a wider range of activities is provided by other institutions. Namely, organizations such as Rossotrudnichestvo or Russkiy Mir are generally responsible for the second and third type of activities, mentioned earlier - nation-branding and foreign cultural relations. Interestingly though, such organizations (responsible for expansion of Russian ‘soft power’ all over the world, including in the Baltic states), are seen in the Baltics as the ones undertaking espionage and sabotage.<sup>153</sup> While for the objective observer, there would seem no practical and conceptual difference between Rossotrudnichestvo on one hand, and the British Council, Goethe Institute, USAID or Soros Foundation on the other hand. Rather, the only difference that comes to mind is that the latter two organizations are much more far-reaching and comprehensive in scope, promoting American national interests globally. This way, we either acknowledge that all institutions involved in foreign relations and participation in cultural, scientific,

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151 *Speech of MFA human rights ombudsman K.K.Dolgov at the Regional conference of Russian compatriots of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia in Riga, September 13, 2014*, [www.mid.ru/ns-reuro.nsf/ZUstrana/44257B100055EC1544257D5400382B03?opendocument](http://www.mid.ru/ns-reuro.nsf/ZUstrana/44257B100055EC1544257D5400382B03?opendocument)

152 Adopted June 26, 2014 in Geneva, at the 26<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Human Rights Council.

153 In addition to continuous informal claims the author hears from representatives of the Baltic think-tanks, one could see public statements from national deputies, e.g. Latvian Saeima deputy Imants Paradnieks, see “Парадниекс призывает включить в «чёрный список» инвесторов-россиян,” *Latvijas Sabiedriskie mediji*, July 14, 2014, <http://www.lsm.lv/ru/statja/politika/novosti/paradnieks-prizivaet-vklyuchit-v-chrnyy-spisok-investorov-rossij.a91366>

research and information exchange are adversarial entities (aiming at sabotage and undermining of security of the hosting country), or we agree “soft power” and cultural attraction are legitimate and desirable instruments of state and non-state actors, in order to promote people-to-people contacts and stable and friendly interstate cooperation.

Briefly , on the first point: the Federal Agency on CIS affairs, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation (Rosstrudnichestvo). Initially it was created in the form of a Russian centre of international, scientific and cultural cooperation under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russian Federation on February 6, 2002, after President Putin signed the relevant order. In its current form, as a separate governmental legal entity (still reporting to the MFA), it came into being on September 6, 2008.<sup>154</sup>

While Rosstrudnichestvo is primarily centred on the CIS countries, according to its head Konstantin Kosachev it could be called an “instrument of civilized lobbying of Russian interests abroad.”<sup>155</sup> That is, all over the world - 93 offices in 80 countries. The main tasks Rosstrudnichestvo is entrusted with are:

- the formation of objective views of modern Russia, “its material and spiritual potential, content of internal and external policies”,
- humanitarian cooperation and organization of festivals, exhibitions and other cultural events,
- Russian language support and promotion,
- cultural, scientific and educational exchange,
- cooperation with compatriots abroad,
- international development aid,
- the preservation of historical legacy, intellectual and spiritual memorials.<sup>156</sup>

According to Rosstrudnichestvo, its public diplomacy is realized with

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154 Presidential order #1315.

155 Konstantin Kosachev’s interview to Rosbalt: “Русский мир нуждается в консолидации” (Russian world needs consolidation), *Rosbalt*, September 10, 2012, [www.rosbalt.ru/main/2012/09/10/1032234.html](http://www.rosbalt.ru/main/2012/09/10/1032234.html)

156 A comprehensive description of Rosstrudnichestvo mandate could be found at “Дружба Народов,” (Friendship of People), Rosstrudnichestvo, accessed April 19, 2015, [www.rs.gov.ru/project/2252](http://www.rs.gov.ru/project/2252)

the immediate cooperation with the national non-governmental organizations, including the Russian Association of International Cooperation, the Russkiy Mir Foundation, Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation, Russian Cultural Foundation, the Union of theatre workers, and others. Rossotrudnichestvo is offering Russian language courses at the Russian Centres of Science and Culture. Almost 20,000 people attend such courses annually, at 56 centres in 50 countries. Beginning in 2010, Rossotrudnichestvo also organizes work around the preservation and maintenance of historical burial sites and memorials abroad. Interestingly, those activities were not visible in the Baltic countries. News relevant for the directions of activities and events held by Rossotrudnichestvo abroad concerns CIS states, Western and Central Europe (Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Poland), Asia (China, India, Mongolia), Latin America (Argentina, Paraguay) or other regions, but none is realized in the Baltic states.

The next institution to be mentioned should be the Russkiy Mir Foundation, established by Presidential order in 2007. Its initial aim was mainly to assist in the preservation and expansion of the Russian language abroad. Today, the Russkiy Mir Foundation pursues a number of tasks, the most important being: the objective information promotion and formulation of the positive image of Russia abroad; support of national and international organizations and unions of the teachers of Russian language and Russian literature; and Russian diasporas activities in the preservation of Russian cultural identity, the education industry, export support, etc.<sup>157</sup> Specific policies of the Foundation would be considered in the next part of the chapter applying to concrete activities in the Baltic States.

## **‘Soft power’ segments**

The Russian language is probably the first and most powerful segment of ‘soft power’ that comes to mind with regards to promotion of Russian culture and understanding of the Russian mentality and its aspirations. The Russian language is considered to be the cultural and historical basis of the Russian state. Globally, there is an alarming trend of the Russian language losing its position. In the early 20th century about 150 million people spoke Russian; at the time of the Soviet Union break-up this figure went up to 350 million people, with 286 million living in the USSR. Nowadays, estimates suggest between

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157 “Russkiy Mir Foundation,” Russkiy Mir, accessed April 19, 2015, <http://www.russkiymir.ru/fund>

270 and 300 million people speak Russian.<sup>158</sup> One of the steps taken in order to reverse adverse tendencies was the adoption in June 2011 of the Federal Target Program “Russian Language” for 2011-2015. Operated by Rossotrudnichestvo and the Ministry of Education of Russia, it had around 2.5 billion rubles assigned for its implementation.<sup>159</sup>

While both of the above-mentioned organizations - Russkiy Mir and Rossotrudnichestvo - act on this direction, their efforts are not really fulfilling their purpose. There are Russian centres in Riga and Daugavpils (Latvia), Vilnius and Siauliai (Lithuania), and Tallinn (Estonia), which are responsible for Russian language, cultural promotion and study as “important elements of world civilization,” development of intercultural dialogue, and building trust. Similar functions are performed by the so-called Russian classes, which are usually opened in high schools, institutions and libraries (Valmiera State Gymnasium in Latvia, Estonian Association of Teachers of Russian Language and Literature in Narva, Study Centre Jareleaitaja, the Tallinn library of Alexandro-Nevsky Cathedral, and the Pushkin Institute in Tartu).

To be fair, it should be stated that a lot of barriers come directly from the political situation and extreme unwillingness of the hosting ruling entities to see Russian soft power, and in particular the Russian language, retain its importance in the Baltic countries. Nevertheless, even with the exploitation of the majority of ruling elites of anti-Russian sentiment, the situation with regards to people opting to study Russian is once again changing, compared with the 1990s. More and more people are realizing that the Russian language is necessary in order to have a better chance of career –promotion, in business, political and humanitarian areas. Although it should be acknowledged that the current crisis and information war might reverse those positive tendencies in the future.

In Lithuania, the amount of Russian-language media over the past 15 years has halved. With regards to high schools in Lithuania, as of 2013/2014 only 14 350 pupils obtained an education in Russian.<sup>160</sup> This was a considerable decrease on the previous five years (down from 19200 pupils), and led to a considerable reduction in the use of Russian, both in public and private spaces.<sup>161</sup> After the 1995 elections in Estonia, with the pro-Russian parties

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158 Georgy Bovt, “Мягкая сила русского слова,” (The soft power of a Russian word), *Russian International Affairs Council*, October 2, 2013, [www.russiancouncil.ru/inner/?id\\_4=2422#top](http://www.russiancouncil.ru/inner/?id_4=2422#top)

159 Important to note that once again due to economic difficulties this State Program was not able to avoid reduction and will have 5% less of a budget for 2013-2015. Current ruble value suggests that this sum translated into Euros is slightly over 40 million.

160 «Образование в Литве,» [olitve.ru](http://olitve.ru), accessed April 19, 2015, [www.olitve.ru/kultura-litvy/obrazovanie-v-litve](http://www.olitve.ru/kultura-litvy/obrazovanie-v-litve)

161 Natalia Ivanova, “Kazakhstan i strany Pribaltiki: Sravnitelny analiz inostrannogo prisutstviya v sfere obrazovaniya,” *Vestnik MGIMO-Universiteta*, #3 (2014): 168.

winning around 6 per cent, local security forces paid special attention to, and marked as dangerous for the country, political and civil society leaders, civil society organizations and media, which would deem it important to develop links with Russia.<sup>162</sup> The situation with Russian schools in Latvia is also quite dramatic. It started in 1995 with the first law on education, which gave rise to regulations on the number of subjects taught in Russian, and the Latvian language in Russian, mixed, and specialized schools. With regards to the education reform to be implemented in 2018, only 20 per cent of subjects would be given to Russian children in Russian, the rest should be taught in Latvian. As with the institution of non-citizens, the situation with schools for other language minorities is quite unique in Latvia. Most other countries, including those of the EU, allow for ethnic minorities to have schools and teaching in the native language of that specific minority.<sup>163</sup>

With the example of high schools, we see that the elite in the Baltic countries sees the Russian language and Russian educational system as an endemic threat, which leads to a number of policies adopted to reduce this aspect of bilateral cooperation. The recent concern of the Lithuanian public prosecution office to ‘test to treason’ pupils and teachers of the Russian-speaking gymnasium, to those attending summer sports quasi-military camps in Russia being to an extent reminiscent of summer pioneer camps and Zarnitsa games during the Soviet times, is another signal to that end.<sup>164</sup>

It is not just language, but the full spectrum of the educational industry that is a very important and effective ‘soft power’ tool. According to the rector of MGIMO-University, Anatoly Torkunov, a globalized world leads to intensified competition for cultural influence,<sup>165</sup> and education gives extra opportunities to contribute to shaping the values and beliefs of the citizens of other countries. The Baltic countries present mostly emigrant constituencies with regards to higher education (although reverse flow, even if small, also exists). The majority of young people strive to leave those countries, primarily to study in more prestigious institutes and universities abroad, with the eventual aim to not return back to their country. The main direction after

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162 Vadim Smirnov, “Российская «мягкая сила» в странах Балтии” (Russian ‘soft power’ in the Baltic countries), *Russian International Affairs Council*, May 2, 2012, [www.russiancouncil.ru/inner/?id\\_4=351#top](http://www.russiancouncil.ru/inner/?id_4=351#top)

163 For more discussions on the school reform in Latvia see Alla Berezovskaja, “Vladimir Buzaev: Obrazovatelny bilingvizm v russkikh shkolah Latvii nikogo ne ustraivaet” (Educational bilingualism doesn’t satisfy anyone in Russian schools in Latvia), *Russkiy Mir*, December 18, 2014, <http://www.russkiymir.ru/publications/182537>

164 Sergey Orlov, «Шпионы, шпионы, вокруг одни шпионы,» (Spies, spies, only spies all around), *Свободная пресса*, December 4, 2014, <http://svpressa.ru/society/article/106128>

165 Anatoly Torkunov, “Образование как instrument ‘miagkoi sily’ vo vneshnei politike Rossii,” *Vestnik MGIMO-Universiteta*, #4 (2012): 86.

the Baltic countries' entries' into the EU is obviously towards the European Union universities, which is supported by about 20 European foundations in educational exchanges, such as Comenius, Erasmus Mundus, etc.<sup>166</sup>

Russian potential is lower than that of the EU, but still quite considerable. As of December 2013, Russia hosted around 176,000 students from the countries of the former Soviet Union. Annually, the Ministry of Education of Russia offers a quota of 80 to 100 students in each of the Baltic countries to study in a variety of Russian universities (free entrance and study). To be more specific, for the year 2014-2015 the Estonian quota consisted of 81 free places. Of those, 79 were taken, which led to a decision to increase the quota to 100 places next year.<sup>167</sup> The Latvian quota for the past five years has traditionally exceeded 100 places. The Lithuanian quota for the year 2015-2016 amounts to 90 students.<sup>168</sup>

History remains a difficult issue for the Baltic countries, and views on what has happened over the 20th century often look irreconcilable. While discussions on those items should be held, it is quite logical that disagreements over historic approaches should in no way influence political, economic and cultural relations between Russia and each of the Baltic countries. A number of experts suggest the Russian-Finnish model of relations as a model to examine.<sup>169</sup> Nevertheless, history and education in history - especially given we have plenty of common moments - has to be taken seriously, and not used for cherishing national feelings or uplifting one's self-respect at the expense of the other nation. This is the situation not specific to just Europe. We see how much the issue of re-written history textbooks in Japan stirred the situation in the whole of East and South-East Asia. Bilateral commissions of historians are the proper way to go,<sup>170</sup> but it should be made certain that people included

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166 Natalia Ivanova, "Kazakhstan i strany Pribaltiki: Svravnitelny analiz inostrannogo prisutstva v sfere obrazovaniya," *Vestnik MGIMO-Universiteta*, #3 (2014): 167

167 Alexander Kustov, "V rossiiskih VUZah uvelichatsia quoty dlya studentov iz Estonii," *Russkiy Mir*, December 11, 2014, [www.russkiymir.ru/news/158650](http://www.russkiymir.ru/news/158650)

168 *Ob'yavleniye o prieme na obuchenie inostrannykh grazhdan v 2014/2015 uchebnom godu*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, accessed April 19, 2015, [http://www.lithuania.mid.ru/doc/obrazovanie\\_2013.htm](http://www.lithuania.mid.ru/doc/obrazovanie_2013.htm)

169 Irina Novikova and Nikolai Mezhevich, «Государства Прибалтики: вызовы на пути к эффективному и устойчивому развитию» (The Baltic States: challenges on the way to effective and sustainable development), *Russian International Affairs Council*, September 10, 2014, [www.russiancouncil.ru/inner/?id\\_4=4339#top](http://www.russiancouncil.ru/inner/?id_4=4339#top)

170 This was argued in the case of Latvia and Russia as the proper development since 1997 by the Russian Ambassador in Latvia, A. Udaltsov (for a more detailed account of efforts on this front up until V.Zatlers announcement after meeting with the then President D. Medvedev see "Виктор Гуштин: Российско-латвийская комиссия историков: Что в повестке дня?" (Russian-Latvian commission of historians: What's on the Agenda?), *Baltija EU*, January 17, 2011, [www.baltija.eu/news/read/15071](http://www.baltija.eu/news/read/15071)) Although it should be acknowledged that politics continues standing in the way of such to-be-neutral mechanisms. The most recent manifestation of that is another postponement of the most effective up-to-date Russian-Polish Commission on complicated issues.

in those do not fulfil a specific political order of either side, and to test their objectivity and neutrality to its utmost. Those people have to be ready for compromise, with no firmly set scenario - and what is no less important is that this has to be set completely free of political and commercial interests of either side. This is unlikely to have an immediate effect, but only this will lead in the end to the situation when mutual history is not divisive (be it the matter of the historic battle of Alexander Nevsky on Chudskoe Lake, or much more painful recent moments of 1940), but rather a common platform, upon which peoples in all those countries (big and small) can build friendly and prosperous societies, stressing positive achievements emanating from this forced or voluntary unification.

Mostly hierarchical types of soft power have been discussed earlier in this article, meanwhile network models seem to be more and more effective and up to the task of managing modern complex international realities. Challenges of a global scale, which leave efforts not only of separate national governments, but of a group of governments together as futile, require the so-called 'catalytic' diplomacy - and to achieve results need "to establish policy networks of varying scope and composition,"<sup>171</sup> bringing together governments, business and epistemic communities, civil society organizations, youth, etc. Thus, networks of people from different backgrounds (be it cultural exchange, education exchange or civil society projects) seem to be the most appropriate and effective way to bring countries together and overcome political tensions. It is painful to see culture being the victim of politics.

A number of cultural and educational exchange examples were cited earlier, due to the fact that they were held under the auspices of one organization, having connections to the Russian government. It is necessary to consider other events and activities that contribute considerably to building a positive image of Russia and its culture. Festivals as "Novaya Volna" ("New Wave"), "Jurmalina", and KVN (Club of the Funny and Inventive) were traditionally held in Jurmala, Latvia.<sup>172</sup> Two years ago, Comedy Club<sup>173</sup> started

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171 Brian Hocking, 37.

172 New Wave is a continuation of the popular 'Jurmala' contest of young singers which was held up until 1990. After a break of as long as a decade, it resumed again under the name New Wave in Jurmala in 2002. Jurmalina is an international Comedy Festival, first time held in 2004 with many of Russia's best comedians. Jurmalina since its start would bring thousands of people, primarily from Latvia and Russia, but also from other countries with Russian speaking audiences. KVN - Club of the Funny and Inventive - first time ever came out on the Soviet TV screens in 1961 - initially was a students' comedy contest. It's been closed from 1971 because of the jokes of the participants being too political, but then re-opened in 1986. Today KVN embraces not only countries of the former Soviet Union, but the whole world, where there is a Russian-speaking community. Jurmala has been hosting one of KVN musical festivities - Golosiaschii KiViN (The Singing KiViN) - since 1996 (the first year of the new KVN format, 1995, was held in the Moscow Palace of Youth).

173 Russian stand-up show existing since 2005 in Russia.

another festival in Jurmala – the Week of Fine Humour, which was supposed to be held annually with the contract signed until at least 2016. Nevertheless, after the latest incident around Latvian authorities banning some Russian singers from entering Latvia to participate in this event, due to their views being in discord with that of Latvian officials, New Wave will be moved to another location (most likely Sochi). Given that New Wave (held in Jurmala since its inception in 2002) brought about 20 million Euros for the host country, this looks like not only a serious loss for the Russian-speaking community of Latvia, but also commercial losses for those involved in the organization and services around it. What is worse is that recent announcements show this is likely to spread beyond just one event. Jurmalina and KVN refused to book the Dzintari concert hall for their concerts in the coming summer. The above-mentioned Comedy Club is likely to withdraw as well. And the question that comes as a result is – who's winning in this situation?

## **Conclusion: is there a way to win-win?**

Russia and the Baltics, while bound to be together (presupposed by geography, history and culture), live through another wave of tensions and crisis. Ongoing crises between Russia and the West, being global, do not involve the Baltics directly. Nevertheless, dwelling on suspicion and mistrust, the elite of those three countries try to be at the forefront of the current confrontation. Meanwhile, its opponent does not really notice those efforts much. It is seen as important for Russia to continue to concentrate on the 'big enemy' of the USA. In the current crisis, even the EU is generally not considered as an independent actor, let alone its separate parts.

Russia, not unlike other countries, has been using its 'soft' instruments to win 'hearts and minds' of the other countries' citizens on a regular basis. It should be noted that the Soviet Union, to which Russia is a legal successor, employed soft power widely. One can still witness the results of such policies when, for example, meeting Russian-speaking Africans in some distant village on the continent. With this concept not being new (even if acquiring a new name with the comprehensive Nye work), due to economic difficulties and with the ideological 'dizziness' after the immediate collapse of the USSR, Russia withdrew and halted many of its educational, cultural and scientific programs all around the world. For at least a decade, Russia and its citizens became the target of 'soft' and all other types of power from the USA and Europe. For quite some time no logical policies really existed towards its former allies or republics, with which it shared 50 to 70 years of common

countryhood. Even if conceptual documents of those times proclaimed those countries as a priority for cooperation, in reality nothing went beyond simple former Soviet assets and resources banding together under the elite of those new-born countries.<sup>174</sup> Consistent policies took a while to be formulated.

The story with the Baltics was somewhat different. In his power struggle with the federal centre and Mikhail Gorbachev, Boris Yeltsin used the three Baltic republics and signed special agreements with them, which undermined and eventually ousted the first and last Soviet President. Problems started to become apparent once the Russian government ‘inherited’ the Soviet status on the international arena. Even though a number of issues were unsolved (and some remain so), it did not change the perception of the Baltics as not much of a part of the post-Soviet space. On the one hand, the Baltics did not have the priority of importance for Russia, since it was not part of the would-be restored area of cooperation. On the other hand, with regards to Europe, those three countries (even if they were the most vocal after joining the EU) were not considered as vital stakeholders to win its sympathy. Instead of consistent efforts to ‘lure’ all those countries into comprehensive cooperation with Russia, Moscow centred on secondary (within the global structure of its priorities and policies) issues of Russian minorities and historical legacy.

It is quite possible, though, that this course is a result of priority setting, when the country is not rich enough to cover all areas and has to choose certain areas over others. There are obviously programs to help its compatriots abroad, but in most cases funds are allocated inefficiently and within groups that are not able to project Russian attractiveness, but instead create visibility of such actions and their proper potential. Educational (Russian language promotion) programs are welcome, but insufficient in scale. For example, Confucius Institutes are much more spread in many more distant countries from China, than the spread of centres sponsored by Russkiy Mir. Offering quotas for Russian-speaking young Balts is a very welcome and proper policy. But the end goal would be to work inside Russia to further promote and improve its higher education, so that Russian universities become as attractive as the first-tier universities in the USA and UK - to have not only Russian-speaking youths coming to Russia, but all nationalities and ethnic groups.

Another factor to be taken into account is that political parties with nationalist leanings often build on their anti-Russian sentiment to remain in power. This would make Russian soft power policies even more unattain-

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174 The example of Ukraine is outstanding in this regard, taken qualifications and activities of Chernomyrdin as Russia’s ambassador to Kiev.

able today, with the not-so-good economic situation in the Baltics. Internal problems have to be blamed on an external enemy (not to say that the Russian government does not use similar techniques of pointing the finger at a yet more powerful country).

All in all, given the objective deterioration of the political, economic and ideational situation in the world; confrontation between Russia and the West; the economic difficulties of all participants of that equation, and relatively low priority of the Baltic countries in the Russian policies, it is highly unlikely that the situation in bilateral relations would improve in the near future. Any intensification in 'soft power' projection efforts would be considered as 'imperial ambitions.' Currently-existing institutions and programs, even if they survived the crisis, would continue with minimal interaction. Russia (with the pace depending on the course and outcome of the economic and financial crisis it faces) will pursue its 'soft' and 'hard' policies primarily in other directions – the CIS (or from January 1, 2015 Eurasian Union), BRICS and the developing world. The West - represented by the USA, Germany, and probably France, Poland, Italy and some others – is seen as more prospective. All of that, of course, is not forgetting the ever-shrinking Russian population in the Baltics.

## **Recommendations**

The situation around Russia's soft power opportunities is quite paradoxical. The reality brought about two mutually-exclusive tendencies: once Russia came to realize the importance of soft power, and had spare resources to use those for its public diplomacy, almost simultaneously it ran into problems of providing for its national hard security. The establishment of *Rossotrudnichestvo* looked like a belated response, with the trouble spots rising one-by-one in Russia's immediate neighbourhood. Further attempts of a considerable increase in financing for soft power projects failed, with the majority of those having to be employed for cultural, media, and educational events abroad - but the unfortunate reality is the funding has not in fact increased, it has been catastrophically reduced - with the Russian currency losing more than half its value since early 2014.

Thus, the first and foremost recommendation would be for Russia to concentrate on its internal problems in order to overcome the current economic crisis, and return - at least for a while, and to a limited extent - to Gorchakov's strategy of concentration on its internal task of economic advancement. While total withdrawal from international activities and self-isolation would be counter-productive, it should concentrate on positive and less-costly

international agendas. The main point would be that political (primarily the eradication of corruption), social and economic progress within Russia would be the best and the strongest soft power instrument for its neighbours – be it the Baltic countries, Ukraine, Georgia or any other country. And this would attract not only the traditional influence group of the ethnic Russians, but other nationalities as well.

While joint commissions on history and other difficult issues these days may look irrelevant, because both sides are tempted to use them for negative political PR, there should be enhanced cultural and educational exchange. While diversification of Russia's foreign policy to the east and south is rational, non-investment in attraction of the younger generation to the West of its borders will surely lead to even bigger problems in 10 to 20 years' time. Thus, it is vital to increase considerably the quotas for foreign students (with parallel higher information flow on those) in Russian universities.

Competitive exchange programs for high school students, and summer schools with dual purposes - to master Russian language, and to get exposed to Russian peculiarities in geographically different and culturally exotic places, reflecting Russia's extreme diversity - should be launched. This would require considerable efforts - not only on the part of schools in Russia and, in our case, Baltic countries, to establish and nurture educational ties, but on the part of the Russian government to invest into the regional infrastructure beyond Moscow or St. Petersburg.

Russian authorities could also assist with the introduction of special subsidies to increase travel mobility on both sides. High airfares often come as a stumbling block for travelling to Russia, especially with the cheap airline tickets within the EU. Special competitive programs could be offered by the government to air companies flying into Russia.

All in all, in the situation of the informational warfare with the West in general, in which Russia finds itself in, there are limited options for using soft power in order to influence other societies. Nevertheless it does not make soft power and public diplomacy less valuable. In the long-term, even small but consistent efforts in educational and cultural interaction would allow us to avoid situations similar to the current crisis in the future.

# Will Russia Ever Be Soft?

/Jakub Korejba/

The supreme and top priority aim of Russian foreign activity on a local, regional, and global scale is to change the international order established after the collapse of the USSR – the one Russia perceives as not only deeply unfair but also irrational, in the sense of it not being able to provide security and stability. The latter conclusion is drawn from the fact, that, as the Foreign Policy Concept puts it: “Financial and economic challenges become increasingly evident as negative trends build up in the world economy. Unsolved structural problems and lingering economic depression in the leading countries of the West affect global development in a negative way. Incomplete recovery amidst the European debt crisis and ongoing recession trends in the euro area pose serious risks for the future.” The Concept also states that: “Another risk to world peace and stability is presented by attempts to manage crises through unilateral sanctions and other coercive measures, including armed aggression, outside the framework of the UN Security Council. There are instances of blatant neglect of fundamental principles of international law, such as the non-use of force, and of the prerogatives of the UN Security Council when arbitrary interpretation of its resolutions is allowed. Some concepts that are being implemented are aimed at overthrowing legitimate authorities in sovereign states under the pretext of protecting civilian population. The use of coercive measures and military force bypassing the UN Charter and the UN Security Council is unable to eliminate profound socioeconomic, ethnic and other antagonisms that cause conflicts. Such measures only lead to the expansion of the conflict area, provoke tensions and arms race, aggravates interstate controversies and incite ethnic and religious strife.”<sup>175</sup>

From a Russian point of view, the architecture of post-bipolar international relations was constructed on purpose in a way that structurally puts Russia in a subjugated position in its relations with the West. Its capabilities for independent action in general and especially around its own borders are shaped not by its own will derived from the national interest, but by the structure of an unequal relationship it is a part of. As a result, its long-term objective in Eastern Europe is to create a viable alternative to rules created by forces perceived as external to the region and establish them in the field – which means expanding them to at least all post-Soviet republics. According to key

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175 *Concept of the Foreign Policy of Russian Federation*, February 12, 2013, <http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/ns-osndoc.nsf/e2f289bea62097f9c325787a0034c255/0f474e63a426b7c344257b2e003c945f!OpenDocument>

programmatic documents that reveal Russian strategy, the post-Soviet space (notably its European flank) are of crucial importance to make this aim a reality and thus require outstanding resources and activities to be engaged: this approach makes the Baltic States, eastern European ‘Common Neighbours’, and South Caucasus a particularly interesting area of the ‘Grand Chessboard’ where the game for influence between Russia and the collective ‘West’ is more intense than in other regions. And, due to the fact the use of hard power is more difficult and less efficient than in the past (as the Ukrainian operation makes clear), Russia is confronted with the need to use more subtle aspects of power to create a comfortable environment for itself and at the same time a stable regional political order. As the Concept says: “Russia follows a policy aimed at creating a stable and sustainable system of international relations based on international law and principles of equality, mutual respect and non-interference in internal affairs of states. The system aims to provide reliable and equal security for each member of the international community in the political, military, economic, informational, humanitarian and other areas.” This position was repeatedly confirmed by Russian political leaders.<sup>176</sup>

This shows that theoretically, Russian officials see the need to create and use soft power. As the Foreign Policy concept puts it: ““Soft power”, a comprehensive toolkit for achieving foreign policy objectives building on civil society potential, information, cultural and other methods and technologies alternative to traditional diplomacy, is becoming an indispensable component of modern international relations.”<sup>177</sup> In practice, there are serious discussions on the proportion of “soft” and “hard” power in Russian foreign policy. Although both the Soviet Union and Russia had long traditions of forming and using propaganda (tools of communication that enabled them to make people inside the country and abroad to think alike), the notion of “soft power” is relatively new for Russia, especially in relation to its immediate neighbourhood that was for decades and centuries predominantly treated with hard power. For generations, international problems in this region were solved by the use of force and, as a result, the more of it a nation disposed of and was ready to use, the higher was its place in the international hierarchy of power. As a result, soft power is seen as the new face of power politics. As the Concept addresses: “Increasing global competition and the growing crisis potential sometimes creates a risk of destructive and unlawful use of “soft power” and human rights concepts to exert political pressure on sovereign states, interfere in their internal affairs, destabilize their political situation,

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176 See for example: “Interview to the Wall Street Journal”, President of Russia, June 18, 2010, <http://eng.kremlin.ru/transcripts/464>

177 *Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation.*

manipulate public opinion, including under the pretext of financing cultural and human rights projects abroad.” Consequently, from the point of view of Russian political thinkers and policy-makers, being “soft” is a synonym of being “weak” – the strength of the state and its ideology is measured by the readiness and volume of hard power instruments ready to support its point of view. As a result, internal and foreign policy are seen basically through the prism of hard components of power: if soft ones are used, it is usually as a supplementary measure to the “real”, that is to say hard, power. The best résumé of this state of mind would be the well-known Russian proverb, saying the only real allies of Russia are its army and its fleet which regained popularity after many of so called ‘partners’ turned away during the Ukrainian crisis. And indeed, this was a dogma of Russian foreign policy until around the beginning of Putin’s second presidential term, just after the Baltic States joined the European Union (EU) and NATO. Moscow understood that TV channels and social networks may be as powerful an ally as the army itself, soft instruments may replace hard ones and be much more efficient in obtaining leverage over Russia’s neighbours. As a result, Russia Today was created and The Voice of Russia network got a new life.

Another mental barrier inside the Russian foreign policy community, which undermined the elaboration of a regional strategy, is a post-imperial habit to think globally rather than regionally or locally: it is difficult for Russian strategists to reform the imperial and Soviet approach of thinking about international relations as a concert of powers that takes into consideration only the ‘big’ and tends to ignore not even the interests but the very existence of the ‘small’ players that are supposed to follow what was decided by the majors.

The aim of this chapter is to identify the foreign policy objectives Russia strives to achieve with the help of mass media, the targets of Russia’s use of mass media, and the main instruments being used for this purpose. It may be of some practical interest to analyse a number of aspects of Russian information machinery as they provide an answer to the question “What does Russia want?” in the sphere of information in the Common Neighbourhood and how it tries to achieve its objectives. Also, following a decade of Russia’s conscious use of its soft power abroad, we may see practical results. Thus, it is possible to compare them to plans made at the beginning and draw conclusions about the efficiency and prospects of Russia’s soft power.

## Ex oriente lux – Russian media as a provider of soft power

Although Russian media make wide use of already existing Russian soft power, their aim is to produce more of it, and especially create modern tools of implementation and to transform the potential into a real influence. Describing Russian media and their use of soft power we must take into consideration two aspects: objective (this requires identifying what Russia is) and subjective (how Russia is perceived, how it perceives itself, and how it wants to be perceived). In other words, the task of Russian media is more complicated than those of its Western rivals, because Russia's attractiveness (especially in the eyes of many in the former-Soviet republics) is not passively possessed but actively shaped, which means Russian media have to create the country's soft power and not only make use of an already existing potential. The problem of a lack of resources is often seen in practice through the fact that when Russian media try to influence the point of view of its target, they often use a *definitio per negatio* approach - they do not describe Russia by what it is, but try to say what it is not, which usually means underlining contrasts between Russia and the West (that usually means the United States (US), the EU, and their occasional partners). As a result, this approach creates a bigger than usual disproportion between Russian reality and the image of Russia, which occasionally provokes commentators in the West to talk about 'Russian propaganda', which simply means lying about itself and the rest of the world. However implementing moral criteria and ethical categories may be an effective tool in a political fight, but it seems to be of little use for the analysis of the *modus operandi* of Russian media and this leads to the conclusion that weaknesses of one's partners may be as good a theme as one's own strong points and the use of black PR is simply part of the reality. The sphere of information is perceived in the same way as any other sphere of international interference: land, sea, airspace or cyberspace, and as such, it has several characteristics, one of which is the fact it constitutes an area of competition, if not to say, information warfare. Only by the fact Russia finds itself in a state of confrontation with some of the views presented by non-Russian media does not mean it is fundamentally wrong and thus, all its methods and approaches should be considered as immoral and a priori illegitimate.

When thinking about the Russian approach towards shaping the hearts and minds of people in Eastern Europe, one has to keep in mind the collapse of USSR is widely seen not only as "the greatest geopolitical tragedy of the twentieth century" but as a historically illogical and geopolitically irrational fact. The very existence of a belt of - formally independent but practically controlled by the West - states on the North - South axis from the Baltic Sea to the

Black Sea, between Europe and Russia, is perceived as a geopolitical deviation and an “unnatural” state of affairs. This perception remains a cornerstone of Russian strategic thinking regarding Eastern Europe and the task of its public diplomacy is to convince inhabitants of this zone that the current situation is highly unstable and thus dangerous for them and sooner or later, due to constant workings of objective geopolitical factors, it will be (by war or by peaceful means) reshaped towards a more balanced state. This partially explains why for more than two decades there was not a single and serious strategy towards the former-Soviet republics: seen from Moscow, they were all parts of a bigger ‘natural’ entity that will sooner or later obviously find a new format for a common coexistence. The strategic shift of those countries towards the West was considered as both impossible and impractical – that is the reason Russia was surprised by and fiercely opposed to NATO enlargement and stays sceptical about the EU membership prospects of its former subjects. And all Russian media try to do is to explain this point of view to its neighbours.

It also deserves to be mentioned that, unlike some Western commentators say, the content of Russian media is far from presenting a united front based on the unique line of information policy. In fact, Russian media space is used by different groups inside the political and ideological establishment to impose their views and fight their internal rivals: very often ‘the internal enemy’ seems to be much more redoubtable than the external one usually symbolized by the US and NATO. This means that control over Russian media, its infrastructure as well as what is shown and said by it, remains the object of an internal fight and this fight is far from being settled in favour of one of the existing groups. Writing about contemporary China, the scholar David Shambaugh, identified several ideological camps within its foreign-policy establishment. His classification may be perfectly applied to present day Russia with its own groups of influence and as a result, different kinds of discourse concerning foreign countries being present in Russian media. Shambaugh’s enumeration starts with populist, xenophobic post-Marxist “nativists” and moves on to the dominant “realist” group – those who think the country should concentrate on relations with the major powers and pay less attention to the rest. Then, there are those who put the emerging countries and the developing world first, and so to “selective multilateralism” which would expand Russia’s involvement gradually and only where national-security interests are at stake. Finally he mentions “globalists” who stipulate the country is obliged to take responsibility for addressing a range of world-governance issues in keeping with its size, power and influence<sup>178</sup>. The weight of

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178 David Shambaugh, “Coping with a Conflicted China,” *The Washington Quarterly*, Winter (2011), <http://www3.nccu.edu.tw/~lorenzo/Shambaugh.pdf>

each of these groups in Russian media content varies with political conjuncture, and representatives of all of them may be periodically seen and heard, but it seems that, as in China, globalism has already lost the debate which especially after the Ukrainian crisis strengthens other groups who tend to see Russia and the West as clutched in a state of an 'objective' and unavoidable zero-sum style competition.

## **The aim: to create new thinking about Russia**

When at the end of 1990s the world was very close to the unilateral model dominated by the US, some Russian strategists, image-makers, and political advisers, notably Gleb Pavlovsky<sup>179</sup> (who was all three at the time), understood that if the country was to resist American influence, it had to keep people loyal to the Kremlin rather than to Nike and McDonalds. Thus, Russia had to start exercising 'active measures' in the sphere of informational policy. The aim was clear: firstly, to keep Western influence on its citizens as low as possible; secondly, to accomplish an ideological Reconquista of the post-Soviet space; and, thirdly, to start influencing people's minds beyond the frontline which required creating instruments of direct transmission of Russia's message inside Western countries. Of all three, the second one seems to be the most complex, and at the same time the most vital: making people of Central and Eastern Europe love Russia is not an easy task, but if accomplished it may change the regional balance of power considerably in Russia's favour. Prioritising the middle zone between Russia and the enlarged West (institutionalised by joint membership in NATO and the EU) reflects the geopolitical reality: conquering what Zbigniew Brzezinski called 'the grey zone of Europe'<sup>180</sup> and moving the 'Huntington Line' to the West (or at least stabilising it where it lies after the last enlargement) is a major task for a country that aspires to form 'an independent pole of influence' and 'an alternative centre of integration' as the Russian Foreign Policy Conception defines the country's long-term objectives. Therefore, it is of crucial importance for Russia to win the hearts and minds of people living inside the internal (already formed) and external (under construction) periphery of the West in Europe – the first means the former Eastern Bloc states in Central Europe and the second means

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179 See for example: "Political Technologists: Gleb Pavlovsky," *European Stability Initiative*, accessed April 21, 2015, [http://www.esiweb.org/index.php?lang=en&id=281&story\\_ID=26&slide\\_ID=7](http://www.esiweb.org/index.php?lang=en&id=281&story_ID=26&slide_ID=7); "Kremlin Political Consultant Sees Medvedev As Best Choice For 2012," *World Affairs*, January 21, 2010, <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/content/interview-gleb-pavlovsky-kremlin-political-consultant-russian-political-landscape>

180 See more at: Zbigniew Brzezinski, "The Premature Partnership," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April (1994), <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/49687/zbigniew-brzezinski/the-premature-partnership>

former-Soviet republics often political, correctly referred to as ‘The Common Neighbours’ (especially since 2009). As the former are obviously (but according to some in Moscow temporarily) ‘lost’ to the West, effort is concentrated on winning back (or at least not ultimately losing) the latter: post-Soviet states in Europe (Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova) and in the South Caucasus find themselves in the role of an ideological battlefield where Russian and Western media are in a constant state of war. The Baltic States form an independent case: on one hand due to their membership in the EU and NATO they are seen as ‘lost’ territories, on the other hand, however, the EU’s permanent crisis, NATO’s weakness, and US indifference in regional affairs, tempt part of Russian establishment (Sergey Glaziev, Alexander Dugin) to try a ‘why not’ policy of pressing a little bit more.<sup>181</sup> Having in mind the overall geopolitical picture and its regional specificities, it is easier to discern aims of the Russian information strategy towards its European Rimland, which are the following:

- First, inform the population. Russia is deeply convinced the global media sphere is gravely deformed by domination of Western and especially American media. Thus, Russian TV channels and information agencies seek to make it more pluralistic by producing and inserting an alternative point of view: the first objective, already achieved, was to break the Western quasi-monopoly for global narrative (create and diffuse the Russian point of view), and the second one, currently in process, is to make the Russian message equally legitimate. In other words, the aim is to make people trust Russia’s message and internalise it. It is of crucial importance for Russia that inhabitants of neighbouring countries have an alternative source of information that could balance and, if possible, dominate the Western one – and in this case ‘Western’ may not mean being owned by Western capital, but any source of information presenting sceptical views on Russia and its internal and external activities. In this regard, Russia becomes a refuge for all those disillusioned with the Western political, social, and economic model: the task is to repeat Russia Today’s success on a regional scale. Just as RT TV gave a tribune to people sceptical about American and European reality (who had little chance to express it publicly before RT arrived) Russian media in the ‘near abroad’ try to collect comments and interpretations that form an image of the reality capable of competing

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181 “For Baltic Nations, Eurointegration turned out to be an Eurooccupation,” *Regnum*, March 15, 2015, <http://www.regnum.ru/news/polit/1905325.html>; “The Baltic nations are governed by the elite of idiots,” *DELFI*, July 11, 2013, <http://rus.delfi.ee/daily/estonia/rossijskij-politolog-narodami-ribaltiki-pravit-idiotskaya-elita?id=66428546>

with the one presented by mainstream media perceived not as objective and dishonest. In this regard, Russia takes the task to act with alter- or even anti-systemic force by revealing and diffusing information omitted by other media present in the region.

- Second, form the Russian image. The first and most important aim for Russia after establishing a workable channel of communication is to form an image of itself in the minds of its neighbours. In this regard, it is important to underline the 'stick and carrot' moment of the Russian approach: there is one (peaceful and friendly) version of Russia for those with an a priori positive view and another one ('polite' in the Crimean context, that is to say strong and redoubtable) for potential enemies. For possible friends Russia tends to present itself as a better version of the 'American dream' and the 'European dream', both of which turned out to be much less attractive than expected. All those who listen or read Russian media may learn that only when an individual, society, or state keeps a friendly attitude toward Russia may they join a happy community of people using its unlimited resources. Evidently access is proportional to the level of closeness: citizens of the Russian Federation are obviously the most privileged, its 'friends and allies' – members of Russian NATO (Collective Security Treaty Organization) and Russian EU (Eurasian Economic Union) profit from special treatment, the 'privileged partners' may expect indulgence during negotiations and 'friendly pragmatists' and 'constructive neutrals' usually do good business without having any black PR in the Russian media. At the same time, those who seem to not accept the form and content of Russian foreign policy and, even worse, permit themselves to comment on its internal state of affairs, are immediately presented as irresponsible players of the international game. Those ones are shown the tough face of Russia and promised to be punished for their comportment. This approach is relevant to all kinds of targets: states, international organizations, NGO's or individuals (statesmen, activists, artists) and may be immediately seen by the words and pictures used to describe them - the example of chiefs of states and governments (say Poland and Hungary) is probably the most notorious. The ones with a constructive approach have become positive heroes of Russian media narratives, while those hostile to Russia and its foreign policy are presented not only as political opponents but as bad people in general. This 'stick and carrot' approach is a basic term for a social contract that Russia proposes to countries that find themselves as a part of the Russian 'zone of privileged responsibility'.

- Third, reform the media space. Russia's aim is to reform the geopolitical reality around its borders and the first step is to change the balance of power in the information space: reform it towards a more pluralistic state of affairs. From the Russian point of view it is unnatural and simply wrong that political orientations of 'common neighbours' seem to be all the more imbalanced: one after another they chose the Western vector, cutting ties with Russia. The ongoing westernization of the post-Soviet space is seen as a result not of objective interests, but rather as a result of a massive information campaign by the West. Russia sees Western activity in the sphere of information as a part of a broader campaign aimed at containing Russian influence in those states and transforming them (once again against their 'real' or 'objective' interests) into its own vassals, presumably hostile to the former metropolis. That is why Russia sees the media space as place where the battle for future geopolitical order in the region takes place: from Moscow's point of view, the West manipulates Belarusians, Ukrainians, and Moldovans by promising them a better future after limiting their ties with Russia and entering a more or less tight community with the EU and NATO. According to the Russian view, unlike the Russian Empire or the USSR, the West may only offer them a marginal place instrumentally used and deprived of any share in decision-makings far periphery. It is seen in Moscow that if they believe the promises of a better life that Western propaganda works: this is why it is absolutely necessary to create and use the informational response force whose task is to neutralize the 'wrong' message and explain the 'true' state of affairs. It is thus of critical importance to have sufficient infrastructure and human potential to immediately react to informational attacks (the short term goal) and build the capacity to insert its own message into the local media sphere (the long term goal).
- Fourth, transform the mental and cultural identity. Growing support for western projects such as the EU and NATO by the population (and all the more often by the government) by the Common Neighbours makes Russia feel it is losing control over the mental space of its population. It is all the more painful that hundreds of years of Russian domination over Eastern Europe formed an axiom in Moscow, saying that those are 'our people' – much closer mentally to Russians than others, and especially Western Europeans. The Soviet experience deepened this perception by, in fact, successfully creating a new "Soviet man": it is indeed difficult to deny that many people, not only in Russia, but

also Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova, stay as Soviet patriots, meaning they are loyal to the long-gone Motherland and in many cases in its heir-state. It is important for Russia to once again recreate a positive image of itself (or, if this turns out impossible, to focus on the negative image of its enemies) in the minds of people who on different levels decide about the strategic orientation of their countries. Starting this mental transformation (which also has a global dimension) was critically important for those post-Soviet states, who did not leave the ‘grey zone’ and did not join one of the integration camps that seemed to increasingly dominate the European economic and strategic landscape. The Moldovan and South Caucasian republics cases are probably the most visible, but it seems the Ukrainian and Belorussian question may be reopened at any moment (the ‘activation’ of the former would be greeted by Moscow while the latter should preferably stay conserved). In other words, the task of Russia and its media is to become what Mark Leonard called ‘transformative power’ as referred to by the fact the EU is capable of changing the political and strategic attitudes of its neighbours by the simple fact of its own existence.<sup>182</sup> This task is even more urgent because Russia sees itself exactly as a target of what Mark Leonard called the “passive aggression” of Europe. Something should be done, because not only the Russian media but Russian foreign policy in general, seem to dispose only of conservative power – it may help post-Soviet president’s stay in place, but once a process of transition starts it entirely loses control over social and political dynamics – Georgia, Kirgizstan, Moldova and especially (and ironically) Ukraine would be very much exemplary of this fact.

## **The targets: Russia’s goodwill ambassadors or its fifth column?**

Although Russian media are widely seen as presenting not Russia today but rather Russia yesterday (the imperial and Soviet glory) and periodically Russia tomorrow (the virtual future results of now-planned modernisation projects) it would be incorrect to claim that its media want to speak only to the old-aged, poorly educated, and provincial dwellers. Its strategists are very well aware of the fact that first: it is not necessary or worth spending major resources to convince Soviet-nostalgic pensioners (because they like and will like Russia anyway) and second: time and biology limit the social and political

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182 See: Mark Leonard, *Why Europe will Run the 21st Century?* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005), 49–56 and onwards.

influence of this part of society. That is why Russian media, especially after the spectacular success of glamorous English-speaking RT, defined its objective more ambitiously: try to identify and work towards influencing other parts of the target audience. The ultimate aim is to enlarge the part of the population whose opinion Russia may shape and, as a result, is in a position to have influence over domestic dynamics and the orientation of foreign policy of its neighbours. In this regard, it is important to see Eastern European societies as they are seen from Moscow where the criteria used for classification are the following: national, generational, social, financial, and cultural. However, the most obvious criterion is operational: how fast and how deeply the target is able to consume the content.

The first and the most obvious target group are ethnic Russians who live in target states. It is certainly not untrue that, as Russian radical patriots say, they found themselves out of the country 'suddenly and by accident' – many of them really did not expect or wish to live out of the Soviet Union. If those people did not repatriate it was because of several reasons: Firstly, for the Russian collective memory those territories (especially Belarus and Ukraine) has never been a true 'abroad': they perceived them as an integral, although somewhat provincial, part of the great Motherland and could hardly imagine it functioning separately. That is why so many people in Russia sincerely do consider the sovereignty of its former provinces as a geopolitical anomaly and historical aberration. As a result, they all felt at home as perfectly as members of the republican 'titular nations' and would hardly imagine not being able to speak Russian at the post office or needing to apply for a visa to see siblings in a close-by oblast. Secondly, very few of them perceived a 'parade of sovereignties' as a deep and durable process: it was just unimaginable to see a great country implode and its weak limitrophes start functioning as independent states with an efficient administration, army, and all other institutions. Sooner or later, they were all doomed to 'come back home' and this was a view deeply, and for a long time shared, inside the Kremlin. Thirdly, many people inside Russia as well as the diaspora believed that, even if things go wrong and 'international friendship' cedes place to ethno-nationalism as a basic idea of social order, 'Russia will help' and never leave its compatriots alone. This view was erratically formed on the basis of numerous declarations from the Russian Parliament and many members of the political and cultural elites. Finally, it is necessary to admit that at the moment of making the decision (as well as nowadays for many) Russia was less attractive as a civilizational alternative than newly independent republics: at least there was a true enthusiasm for major change and hope that independence will finish Soviet reality (or inversely: will establish the expected socialist reality) and let them

start approaching better standards of life. It is also true, that many of them had no place to move to and stayed passive by lack of an alternative. As all those reflections are still present among the Russian citizens of newly independent states and often forwarded onto new generations, Russian media have no easier task, than just to confirm it as often as possible.

The second target is a group of non-Russians who speak Russian and thus have direct access to Russian culture: all those, who according to Vyacheslav Nikonov's idea of exporting Russian influence abroad form what he called 'the Russian World'.<sup>183</sup> From the point of view of Russia's soft power potential and its growing reach, this audience is especially promising: logically, if one is not born Russian but speaks Russian, he or she must have put some effort into develop those skills and this means there is a certain positive motivation behind it. The ultimate aim of working with this target audience is to form a vast pro-Russian lobby containing different layers of members: the generally positive thinkers, the moral authorities capable of influencing public discussion, and activists being able to change the course of events in the direction preferred by Russia. Those people would be counted as 'Russia's friends' – supported and showed as an example both to the internal audience ('we have friends abroad') and to others in their own countries ('see how good it is to be a friend of Russia'). It is a matter of fact that for many people around the world, Russian language gives access to a cultural reality (past and present) that has great civilizational value: people in highly developed Western countries find it 'different and fascinating' while those in the poor and oppressive post-Soviet states simply treat it as 'culture' only worth the name. As a result they all seek access to Russian history, literature, opera, Russian people, landscapes, and architecture, and find out the first step necessary to break the cultural barrier is to learn the language. According to Nikonov's strategy, all those people should be identified and united in the 'Russian world' – a community of people adhering to Russian cultural patrimony in a way that would work in two directions: on the one hand, Russia would help them realise their own interests by making contact easier and more frequently, and, on the other hand, they would also be of some use for it: always ready to give live comment for a Russian TV channel or an analysis for a Russian journal, usually presenting

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183 See for example: "Вячеслав Никонов: русский мир находится вне конфессий и вне национальностей," *Russkiy Mir*, accessed April 21, 2015, <http://www.russkiymir.ru/fund/assembly/the-second-assembly-of-the-russian-world/news/155502>; "Никонов: русский мир – глобальная цивилизация людей, интересующихся Россией и ее культурой," *Vesti.ru*, November 1, 2010, <http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=403921>; "Вячеслав Никонов: русский мир — это мир русской культуры, русской цивилизации," *Russkiy Mir*, November 3, 2014, <http://russkiymir.ru/news/154003/>; <http://baltija.eu/news/read/7290>; Svetlana Smetanina, "Вячеслав Никонов: Русский мир — это самоидентичность тех, кто ощущает свою русскую душу," Фонд поддержки и защиты прав соотечественников, проживающих за рубежом, October 31, 2014, <http://pravfond.ru/?module=articles&action=view&id=889>

a more constructive approach than local or Western media. And this, once again, has nothing to do with the Fifth Column, as long as all those people honestly express their own frank thoughts – from the Russian perspective it is just a matter of putting public opinion into a state of balance between the positive and negative views on the East and West that was broken when American media gained a position of absolute hegemony of their respective informational spaces. The last fact, obviously confirmed by the level of use of the English language, is the reason for great concern in Moscow. Symbolically chosen as one of the UN's official languages, Russian established itself officially as a language of the international exchange of ideas. Indeed, during the five decades after WWII, it gained a position of a lingua franca in the vast space of the Soviet empire as well as in many friendly countries, notably India, South-East Asia, and the Middle East. The great gap of the 1990s when Russian stopped being taught in many countries previously belonging to the zone of cultural influence, resulted in a generation of today's 35-and-less year olds that have no command of Russian, which is in itself regarded as a sufficiently negative outcome. Moreover, individuals who belong to this generation usually have a high-level command of English. This makes the group of Russian-speakers a special target: unlike those Russian-born who form a ready-to-use group of people, this one must be constantly enlarged and deepened, and in some countries created from zero. This fact forces Russian media to work in tight cooperation with Rossotrudnichestvo and other structures who have knowledge about local Russian-speaking communities. Creating attractive media content would be of crucial importance to keep this group growing in terms of the quantity and quality of its members.

The third and potentially the most difficult target audience consists of those who neither by birth nor by their own choice dispose of a natural potential for receiving the Russian message. It is a long-term aim of Russian strategists and image-makers to reach a level of influence in foreign (namely Western) countries that the USSR once had – ideally the one of 20s and 30s, and at least the one of 70s of the twentieth century. Russian policy-makers are dissatisfied with the fact that due to negative stereotypes about Russia (undemocratic, corrupt, disorganized etc.) doing international politics is much more difficult for them than for their Western colleagues. Here once again the negative image is seen as an artificial construction created by Western media for political purposes. Thus, it is important to let as many people as possible 'know the truth', that is to have an alternative to Western interpretation of facts. The fact Russian informational counteroffensive is done on many fronts makes this category of targets virtually unlimited: it could be referred to as 'all the others', meaning all who are neither Russian, nor Russian-speaking.

Obviously, for many objective and subjective reasons, it is not possible to make everybody like Russia, but the aim of working with broad public opinion in targeted countries is simply to let them have an alternative source of information. This means even if Russia Today is not their favourite channel, the fact they know it and periodically watch it is already perceived as a success: it effectively breaks the Western monopoly of control over media space. People may not agree with the views presented by Russian media, but if they know about its existence their minds are already influenced and they cease living in the world where the right and the left is situated only between Fox News and CNN. Simple information about Russia may seem a banal task for international media, but the fact is that due to internal and external reasons the Russian Federation found itself in a position of an informational blockade: for at least a decade after the collapse of the USSR, the state had no control over informational content about itself: what was said or shown about Russia (to foreigners as well as to the Russian audience inside the country) was decided in other capitals, not Moscow. Obviously, after regaining informational sovereignty over its citizens, the Kremlin attempted to gain some ground abroad and tried to make up some of the information potential the Soviet Union once had. The aim is not only to have the right decisions taken but also, in the long run, shape the agenda of public discussion and political decision-making in a way that places issues important to Russia at the right place of the priority scale and prevent others from being discussed.

## **The instruments: new figures for the old game**

An overall and complete description of each means used by Russian media to match the abovementioned goals requires a much deeper and broader study than is possible to present in this text. Thus, by lack of space, only a very general and severely incomplete review may be presented. In this regard it is relevant to analyse the content of news broadcast and opinion programs, and entertainment shows in the context of their functionality for the goals identified. In a very basic way, instruments used by Russian media to create a positive view of Russia and prevent negative messages from appearing may be identified as following:

**Blocking.** The most obvious instrument of not letting rivals spoil your image is to not let the target receive content. The problem is that in the era of global media it is difficult to protect Russia's population inside the country's borders, not to mention the targets located outside the information space regulated by Russian law. Although Central and especially Eastern Europe

(with a notable exception of Estonia) remain a deep province of European digitalized cyberspace with considerable (especially rural) areas not covered by access to high speed internet, it is nonetheless difficult to ban any information reaching its inhabitants. For this reason it is of crucial importance to maintain political relations on a level perceived by local authorities as profitable enough to do the job themselves and block anti-Russian propaganda (as – generally but not always – happens in Belarus or Armenia). Due to the fact that blocking information completely is technically difficult (if a Russian channel ignores breaking news it will look unreliable among other sources that will surely present it) and blocking it partially is counterproductive (it would have to include it into content after all others did anyway) this instrument may work only with facts that happened on the Russian territory and under full control of Russian authorities.

**Discrediting.** It is of crucial importance for Russia to be able to contain information seen as threatening to its interests: that is why in such cases Russian media try to present the source of information as unreliable and either manipulated or acting out of malice. Discrediting may be used towards the source (the author), the information itself, or the described object. The emphasis is placed on the accusations of the opponent and not on justifications, which in practice means Russia tries not to engage with Western information but to create its own content and switch discussion to it. It is well known that justification may only make hostile information reach new audiences. The aim of discrediting which could also, from a Russian point of view, be called de-mystification, is to show the true face of the speaker.

**Blurring of the negative.** Trying to plunge already disseminated information into a huge amount of related content may be a very efficient instrument of containing the negative impression set out by rivals. It is important to neutralise the negative by positive or neutral information on the same theme, for instance, by multiplying news about a specific object means spreading at least twice as much information on a specific theme than the hostile source.

**Distraction of attention.** When it is difficult to make people disbelieve information, the only way to limit its influence on their minds is to create other, more interesting focal points capable of attracting their attention and making them forget about the theme or opinion raised by unfriendly media. Russia is deeply convinced that public debate inside post-Soviet states as well as global media's discourse about Russia in general was long ago switched to a sphere of non-relevant topics, the aim to put Russia into a state of permanent defence. Russian elite feel deeply uncomfortable about being forced to discuss questions on democratic freedoms, human rights, corruption, or minority rights, enforced as 'compulsory questions' about any discussion concerning

Russia. From the Russian point of view there are subjects of a much higher priority, and distracting the attention of its own public as well as recipients of its media abroad is perceived as part of rebalancing the informational order towards a more equal state of affairs.

**Distraction of resources.** There were many times in its post-Soviet history that Russia was a target of informational attacks. The year 2014 set new standards of quality and quantity of disinformation on Russia and its policies: all the above mentioned themes served as reasons to hurt its image and at the end, weaken its potential for power projection. As it is hard to believe that Western governments and NGOs really care about minority rights or environmental matters in Russia, all information campaigns based on those themes are perceived as purely political actions. And as a result of a deep disillusionment regarding the possibility of making a fair partnership with the West, Russia became used to living under constant attacks on its state and media. However, despite this fatalistic approach based on the belief that ‘the West never changes’ (and always tries to debase Russia), Moscow does not intend to make the lives of Western propaganda-makers any easier: it constantly creates and inserts into the global information space new and difficult themes that Western media and commentators cannot ignore. By doing so Russia switches attention from subjects critically important for itself, and engages hostile resources elsewhere, winning time to prepare for an adequate reaction.

**Trolling.** Although this definition of a certain informative technique was born among users of internet-media, the phenomenon existed since the time when mass-media was introduced: it has been so extensively used by almost all well-known image-makers that even Joseph Goebbels could be referred to as a great Nazi-troll. Though it has many ancillary functions, the ultimate aim of trolling is to make information odious and repulsive enough to make the target think about something else and react allergically every time, in the event it could possibly reappear in future. Probably the best example of Russian media using trolling is the ‘Psaki case’. In less than a month, the State Department’s spokesman became a widely distinguishable and deeply loathed symbol of ignorance, loftiness, inanity, and thoughtless Russo phobia. Here again Russian media do not intend to disgust the West and its representatives as a part of a manipulation campaign: it is widely believed that as Western media show only the good face of its politicians, revealing bad ones makes the whole portrait more objective and fully true. In fact, regarding how often Russian officials, and namely the Head of State are described as an incarnation of evil from a Russian perspective, the use of this instrument could be defined as “counter-trolling”, meaning simply a way to show the Western public the Russian President is neither better nor worse than their own political leaders.

**Reaching the absurd.** When trying to counter hostile information it is often useful to hyperbolise it to the extent no one considers it credible. The qualitative (and if possible also quantitative) hypertrophy of information is capable of pushing it out of the conventional informational stream and place it among obviously incredible absurdities. This approach works well with Russia by the fact that comparing it with other global players it is still a relatively closed and undiscovered country: the target audience may have very little or no personal experience or reference to revise information. This approach is often used to defend attacks on Russia's image based on well-established stereotypes: when Russia is described as an aggressive and unpredictable neighbour, Russian image-makers (as well as politicians, starting with President Putin) start using the bear-in-the-taiga metaphors intended to ridicule the fears of 'little countries' and make them look like a part of a childish stereotype nourished by paranoid Russophobes.

**Active defence.** While it is impossible to stop the flow of negative information created about Russia ('the West never changes') it is entirely practicable to work out its own defects and limit the size and exposure of blind-spots. Active defence in the information sphere consists of suppressing the reason for negative information before it is produced and diffused by rival media. Obviously, when preparing to spoil the Russian image and limit its soft power, the enemy always searches for vulnerabilities: if there are none or very few, the Russian potential of influence suffers less setbacks and works more efficiently. The problem is, that Russian media already have the potential to talk about reality but little power to change it: unlike in the Soviet Union free access to many different incontrollable sources of information prevented creating a coherent, alternative image of reality. Thus, the best way to look attractive is to be attractive, and this is probably what Dmitri Medvedev means when he talks about modernisation as the most crucial aim for contemporary Russia.<sup>184</sup> The problem is inside Russia's political elite, there is no consensus on how much Russia could open to the external world (and Medvedev's idea stipulates an unconditional and fast drive towards full participation in global processes) without harming its security and sovereignty. As a result, Russian media often have to stress more about negative discourse ("What we do not like", "What is wrong with the West") than the positive ("What do we propose for our neighbours", "What is good about us" etc.).

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184 See for example: Tatyana Lisova and Jelizaveta Osetinskaya, "Модернизация России по Медведеву," *Vedomosti*, January 26, 2011, [http://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/articles/2011/01/26/modernizaciya\\_rossii\\_po\\_medvedevu](http://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/articles/2011/01/26/modernizaciya_rossii_po_medvedevu)

## Conclusion and recommendations

For two decades after the spectacular implosion of the USSR, Russia has been an ideologically complex and strategically shy ‘Cinderella’ in the international arena. As everything went downhill at home, there was not much to show abroad that could gain any attractiveness among foreign audiences. As a result Russian propaganda has been a weak resemblance of its Soviet predecessor: a shabby Potemkin village that at the first touch left spectators with strong cognitive dissonance, for example when Russian TV criticized the West for the Kosovo operation just in time as the last remaining buildings of Grozny smouldered after the bombings. As a result, one post-Soviet leader after another, and societies, turned if not directly towards the EU and NATO, then certainly away from Russia, leaving it without the hope of being anything more than what United States President Barack Obama called in his Brussels speech ‘a regional power threatening some of its neighbours’.<sup>185</sup> But for the past 15 years the Russian message has gained power and viability, and paradoxically not by the fact that Russia changed so much for the better, but because the West lost a lot of its allure and thus made Russia look more attractive in comparison. Toms Rostoks’s statement that ‘attractiveness can be genuine when countries are honest about the values that they represent’ may not be entirely right: populations of Eastern Europe believe Russian media not because they like Russian reality and would like to implement its institutions at home, but because they perceive the critic of the Western model as basically well-founded. In this case distance from Russian reality combined with direct access to Russian media may effectively shape the preferences of populations deeply disillusioned with what the ‘European dream’ turned out to look like in reality. Consequently, what makes the Russian Cinderella attractive abroad is the permanent crisis its European sisters are in and their inability to court the Eastern European prince into marriage, especially as the American step-mother seems to feel less and less interested in helping them.

As a result of European weakness, Russian strategists decided to grab the opportunity to stop the process of its diminishing influence and, if possible, regain some ground in the domains of hard and soft power. The decision to launch the Crimean operation may exemplify the former while doubling the budget of RT (up to almost a billion dollars per year, although the budget, unfortunately, shrank after the fall of the Rouble that occurred soon

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185 See: “Full Transcript: President Obama gives speech addressing Europe, Russia on March 26,” *Washington Post*, March 26, 2014, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/transcript-president-obama-gives-speech-addressing-europe-russia-on-march-26/2014/03/26/07ae80ae-b503-11e3-b899-20667de76985\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/transcript-president-obama-gives-speech-addressing-europe-russia-on-march-26/2014/03/26/07ae80ae-b503-11e3-b899-20667de76985_story.html)

afterwards) and opening additional channels in Russian, French, and German confirms the latter. Russia increased the budget of RT because the overall opinion of the elite is that this soft power instrument works extremely well, which means better results (expanding the reach, deepening the influence) can be achieved with additional allocation of funds. Second, as Russian foreign policy becomes more assertive, external pressure rises, therefore financing has to be increased to counter it.

So it is evident that Central and Eastern Europe remains a space of intense interaction between the EU and Russia's soft (and not only soft) power in a way which underlines confrontation rather than convergences their approaches: the 'grey zone' remains an object of competition seen in terms of a zero-sum game. The conflict-provoking policy, especially heated up by differing media discourses, dominates over a compromise-search and this enables the ability to predict a New Cold War rather than a new *Détente*. And this dynamic may very soon create a new Iron Curtain in Eastern Europe transforming the Baltic States, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, and South Caucasus into a new buffer zone rather than a laboratory of cooperation. From the Russian point of view, the Ukrainian crisis is about where a partition line between civilizations will ultimately lie: at the Eastern or Western border of Ukraine or somewhere in the middle. The other question, often asked not only in Moscow but many Western capitals, is about the nature of the conflict: are the CEE states and their policy a cause or a consequence of Russian–Western tensions, which, in another words means: who is to blame for the end of 'business as usual' relations between the West and Russia.

This reality heavily influences Russia's soft power and its use. Russia can and wants to be soft, but is afraid to be soft. The act of civilizational aggression as Russia sees expansion of the EU and NATO in post-Soviet areas gives points to the hardliners, for whom only hard arguments guarantee Russian interests in its zone of privileged interests: from their point of view, American and European propaganda simply prepares the ground for deploying military units and missiles on Russian borders. As a result, they see Russian media in the same way: their ultimate function is not to make people love Russia but to make them fear it. In other words: the objective now is not to make more friends but less enemies. There is little space for being soft when American forces stand 150 kilometres from Saint Petersburg and very soon may appear in the surroundings of Chernigov, Kharkov, and Nikolayev. The mood of Russian media is therefore, the result of how the West has transformed the Common Neighbourhood in the last decade. And this is not a question of propaganda but of a hard strategic reality: the Latvian border is around six hours driving (by car; by tank probably longer) from Moscow and if one makes it a hostile border, one should expect a reaction.

In light of the above conclusions, a number of recommendations for Russian and European decision-makers can be put forward.

- First, if the ultimate aim of both the EU and Russia in the Common Neighborhood is a peaceful coexistence, the only way to achieve it is to set a clear and honest deal at borders. The Ukrainian crisis shows European and Russian projects are alternative and no compromise is possible: there is no possibility for common neighbors to take part in them and stick to what Ukrainians call a “multi-vector” policy. The only peaceful solution to this situation is to divide this area between the main players. The same thing concerns propaganda on both sides: if we want to avoid a constant soft conflict (one that takes place in the media and is led by information) both sides have to clearly define their own zone of influence and leave the rest to the partner.
- Second, it is critically necessary for Russia to seek wider use of soft power in a positive context: to propose its own project and not only criticize other (European, American, etc.) projects. If Russia wants to remain a great power it has to be ready to invest in its own greatness, not only financially, but morally. Russian policy should not remain situational and reactive: information served by Russian media and its representatives abroad (diplomacy, business, diaspora etc.) should concentrate more on initiating new projects and ideas and not on reacting to what others do or say. A clear and coherent strategy is needed to avoid conflicts of interests between different branches of the Russian state. A greater investment in stipends, grants, and budget places at universities directed at citizens of post-Soviet states is needed. It is much more efficient to be strong in itself than wait for the collapse of the Eurozone or fall of America.
- Third, the most important criteria of Russian actions should become their utility: it is important to analyze potential gains and losses before launching a specific information campaign. The aims of Russian policy in these countries must be formed on real evidence and not on a Russian interpretation of it. In other words, Russia has to take the ‘near abroad’ as it is and not as it would like it to be. More than a quarter of a century showed that, for example, trying to stimulate erosion of the sovereignty of the Baltic States and other neighbors is counterproductive. Thus, it is necessary to accept it and convince national elites to align with Russia. If done competently, it is easy to imagine politicians

from small European states looking at Moscow as an integral part of a Pan-European balance of power and their defender from the authoritarianism of European bureaucracy and big European states. As very little change is possible here in the hard components of power (due to the influence of 'siloviki' and others traditionally-oriented strategists) this sort of mental revolution should be initiated by Russian media.

- Fourth, if Russia wants to keep and enlarge its influence in post-Soviet states it has to invest in its audience and win more younger, better-educated, urban, and socially active citizens. This means Soviet-nostalgia (although it remains a powerful tool as young people tend to have an extremely idealistic view of the USSR) is not enough of an idea to keep people liking Russia. There must be a real materialistic and moral interest to have them identify with Russia and its policy as being similar to their personal, national, and social aims. Here it is probably difficult to use soft instruments without any compatibility to Russian reality. The more a positive image of Russia corresponds to reality, the more efficient Russian mass media can be in influencing target audiences abroad. This probably means that in the long run the modernization of Russia is unavoidable.
- Fifth, de-monopolization of Russian media is a must, intellectually and organizationally. Different TV stations, internet-portals, and newspapers have to compete with each other. Government funding should be allocated only to those showing real results. New ideas and structures should be allowed and evaluated according to their practical achievements.



# Ukraine: Bread with, or without, Freedom?

*/Leonid Polyakov/*

**G**eographically, Ukraine is located right between the European Union and Russia. Since the early days of independence, Ukraine has continuously experienced divergent influences of democratic Europe and post-Soviet Russia - either through offered incentives and expectations, or through direct pressure. The key difference between two influences is that for the EU, its policy in relations with Ukraine is one of the many aspiring neighbours' policies, while for Russia it looks like nothing less than an existential issue.

In spite of initial hopes for the “end of history” after the dissolution of the USSR, it became clear quite soon afterwards that for an independent Ukraine it would be impossible to remain immune to these divergent pressures and influences, and the country would have to weigh up its preferences and make a choice. Europe and Russia offered Ukraine different options to shape its preferences through integration – either to join the European Union, or to integrate into Russia-dominated projects such as Eurasian Economic Community with its Customs Union. These options were generally similar in declarative promises of political, cultural and economic benefits for Ukraine, but rather different in their practical nature. Traditional East-West “hard power” considerations aside, they were quite different in the degree and nature of attractiveness; in other words, in the nature of the EU and Russia’s so-called “soft power”.

This difference rests at the background of the current crisis situation in Ukraine. Authoritarian Russia failed to create viable soft power alternatives to the democratic EU, despite continual appeals to common history and cultural proximity, reinforced by promoting economic dependence on Russia and political corruption inside Ukraine. In February 2014, the failure of these targeted Russian efforts aimed at keeping Ukraine under control culminated in the pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich fleeing from pro-European protesters. This infuriated the revanchist Russian leadership and precipitated the occupation of Crimea by the Russian military, and aggressive Russian support to separatists in the south-eastern regions of Ukraine.

The discussion in this chapter will focus on the current interplay of the EU and Russia’s soft power assets in Ukraine through several dimensions, like non-governmental (‘people-to-people’) activities, media space, regional and business dimensions. While describing their specific role, this chapter tends to explain why Russia’s soft power fails in Ukraine, and why - in spite of the severe

challenges of Russian aggression, like the continual human, territorial and economic losses - modern Ukraine firmly gives preference to the values of freedom and democracy associated with integration to the EU, rather than to Russia.

## **‘People-to-people’ dimensions**

There are many ups-and-downs in Ukraine’s transition from its Soviet colonial/totalitarian past, to its free and prosperous future in the family of democratic European nations. While the ‘down’ periods are usually attributed to the weakness of national political elite and economic dependence on Russia, the ‘up’ periods to significant extent were catalyzed by the vibrant civil society - be it “Revolution on granite” (1990), “Orange revolution” (2004), “Revolution of dignity” (2013-2014), or different interim protest movements and activities involving millions of active Ukrainian citizens. In addition to a wide spectrum of Ukrainian political parties, the key roles in Ukraine’s civil society activities were normally played by non-governmental organizations (NGO), free media and, of course, students – the elements of civil society most susceptible to democratic European values and ideas.

At the dawn of Ukrainian independence, the notion of NGOs was practically absent, so the first contemporary revolution – a national-liberation anti-Soviet protest called “Revolution on granite” (1990) – was organized and almost exclusively manned by young students from Kyiv universities. After Ukraine became independent in 1991, experience and support from leading European democracies and the USA became widely available and, with time, highly appreciated in Ukrainian civil society.

There were different forms of horizontal people-to-people contacts, which allowed Ukrainians to learn from Western NGOs, academia and activities of interest groups, and to apply this knowledge to Ukrainian needs. Given the general interest of EU countries in developing its neighbour Ukraine into an effectively governed, market-economy type of democratic country, many individual EU members opened the doors of their foundations, “shtiftungs” and other grant-giving organizations, and facilitated exchange and education programs. Many high-profile European development support organizations and funds opened their branches in Ukraine, such as German foundations Konrad Adenauer, Friedrich Ebert, Friedrich Noumann, Hans Zaidel and Heinrich Böll. Other organisations included British Council and Transparency International from the UK, French Institute and French Cultural Centre from France, International “Renaissance Foundation”, not to mention many American and individual European Embassies’ democracy support programs.

Also, a number of European NGO think tanks established Ukraine-oriented research scholarships and exchange programs, such as Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) or London-based Royal Institute of International Affairs (RIIA or “Chatham House”).

Capitalizing on initial Western support, Ukrainian NGOs grew in numbers (there were more than 70,000 registered NGOs in 2013), matured, and with time started attracting private donations from local donors and constituencies, as well as intensified the cooperation between each other.<sup>186</sup> This allowed for further broadening of the connections of Ukrainian NGOs, academic and student organizations – at this stage capable of establishing cooperative relationships horizontally – with their neighbours from Central and South Europe and Caucasus. Most importantly, many NGO activists after the 2004 “Orange revolution” were for the first time recruited to top governmental positions, signifying the progress similar to already existing European practices. By that time, Ukrainian NGOs had enough confidence to challenge the authorities where they saw corruption, human rights violations and other abuses of the European norms and values. These were formally declared in Ukraine, but rarely observed, especially during the tenure of authoritarian pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich in 2010-2014.

In summer 2014, when the Russian military invasion of south-eastern Ukraine became a recognized fact, and when the official Ukrainian security sector appeared to be ill-prepared for this invasion, activists from Ukrainian NGOs and civil society associations - in cooperation with partners from Europe and other parts of the world - managed to substitute many formally governmental functions. They organized broad volunteer movements including the creation of the logistical supply chain to satisfy critical military needs of frontline units, provided urgent support to refugees from the Crimea and Donbas regions, established information resistance cells against Russian propaganda, enlisted medical personnel and supplies to improve medical support to wounded in action, facilitated the exchange of war prisoners, and organized the search for and collection of those killed in action. Many of these activities were realised in cooperation with civil society groups from EU countries, with Poland and Baltic countries taking the lead.

Education is yet another area where Ukrainians very much value the opportunities offered by the EU. Different EU educational co-operation initiatives aiming to promote mobility of knowledge in Ukraine started back in 1993, in the form of exchanges between universities under the EU Tempus Programme, Erasmus Mundus Programme, as well as many targeted

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186 See: Orysia Lutsevych, “How to Finish a Revolution: Civil Society and Democracy in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine,” *Chatham House* briefing paper, Russia and Eurasia Programme, January 2013.

specifically for Ukrainians nationally like the Polish programs *Gaude Polonia*, *Ditl*, *Lein Kirkland* and others. Since then, tens of thousands of Ukrainian students have given much higher preference to studying at EU universities, rather than in Russia.

Since 2014, educational co-operation between the EU and Ukraine has expanded into a wide network of programmes united under the new Erasmus+ programme. According to estimates of the European Commission, within the framework of Erasmus+, more than 4,000 young Ukrainians will benefit from university exchanges and more than 7,000 will take part in youth exchange projects between 2014 and 2020.<sup>187</sup> However, these numbers reflect only those Ukrainians who are expected to take part in the formal EU programmes, while actual numbers would be much higher, taking into account many individual applicants. In the future, ultimate completion of the introduction of the Bologna process in Ukraine, which was announced back in 2006, will help to integrate the Ukrainian and European education systems and further facilitate the access of Ukrainian youth to attractive European universities, and the mobility of Ukrainian intellectuals. Conversely, this can bring to Ukraine a risk of brain drain. According to the study, conducted as part of the governmental social programme “Youth of Ukraine” for the period of 2009-2015, one out of 10 young Ukrainians plans to look for a temporary job abroad.<sup>188</sup>

In terms of the general trends in preferences of Ukrainian students to study at foreign universities, from 2008 to 2013 the total number of Ukrainian students in the EU countries increased by 38 per cent. “While in 2008 their actual number was about 18 thousand, in 2013 European education was chosen by almost 29 thousand.”<sup>189</sup> The largest increase was observed in Poland, followed by Spain, Italy, the Czech Republic, Austria and the UK. Thus, Poland took leadership from Germany. Both Poland and Germany every year attracted almost 10,000 Ukrainian students each, leaving far behind the number of Ukrainians choosing education in Russia, which was a choice for about 7,000 Ukrainians. Each year, the Russian government offered about 280 different governmental scholarships for young Ukrainians to study in Russia. However, in the same five-year period the total number of Ukrainian students in Russia was rather stable, only decreasing by six per cent.<sup>190</sup>

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187 EUUKRAINECOOP, “Thousands of Ukrainian students will be able to study in Europe under Erasmus+,” *EU Cooperation News*, June 23, 2014, <http://euukrainecoop.com/2014/06/23/erasmus-2>

188 See: Centre for Study of Society, “Ukrainian students more often choose to study in Poland, and less – in the USA and France”, February 17, 2014, <http://www.cedos.org.ua>

189 Ibid.

190 Ibid.

Contrary to the natural magnetism for Ukrainians coming from European NGOs, think tanks and academic institutions, the Russian approach to NGO and its academic potential to generate soft power appears to be quite different. Recognizing the value of soft power, but conscious of Russia's inferiority to the EU in this matter, Russian authorities often tend to substitute the natural attractiveness of the competitive EU programmes and projects, with a set of bureaucratic measures, spin-doctor techniques and targeted propaganda. After observing the creativity and resistant potential of Ukrainian NGOs, as well as free media pro-Western influence on society during the "Orange revolution" (2004), Russians came to the conclusion that their information warfare methods and soft power influence were deficient in comparison with Western ones. As one of their leading spin-doctors Gleb Pavlovsky remarked: "The Orange Revolution was not timely punched in her face".<sup>191</sup>

This lesson led to the Russian leadership establishing the strictly controlled and generously financed specific "soft power" instruments artificially (top-down). Immediately after the Orange Revolution, the directorate for interregional and cultural ties with foreign countries was created in Russia's presidential administration. Soon after, administration controlled "NGOs" like the local branch of Moscow's "Institute of the CIS" in Ukraine, "Free Europe-Moldova Foundation" in Moldova, or branches of "Caucasus Institute for Democracy" in all countries of the Caucasus were created and became very active in the promotion of Russian regional and global policy imperatives.<sup>192</sup> With time, these efforts took the ever-penetrating character of massive complex campaigns to influence Ukraine and other countries through programmes like Federal Programme of Support of Compatriots, and Russkiy Mir Foundation.<sup>193</sup>

On the surface, such aggressive promotion of Kremlin interests through puppet pro-Russian NGOs (as in a kind of counterweight for Western NGOs) and government-sponsored media comes from the confidence of Russian officials - and the closely-linked Russian Orthodox Church hierarchy - in destroying and subverting the mission of Western NGOs, and their belief in the uniqueness of a Russian-specific version of human rights and Russian [sovereign] democracy ("Russkiy mir"). Besides, Russian authoritarian rulers may be guided most of all by the barely hidden fear of the spreading

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191 "People of the Year 2004. Foreigner of the Year, Gleb Pavlovsky," *Korrespondent*, 15 January 2005: 37.

192 See: Nicu Popescu, "Russia's Soft Power Ambitions," Centre for European Policy Studies brief No. 115, October 2006; Alexander Bogomolov and Oleksandr Lytvynenko, "A Ghost in the Mirror: Russian Soft Power in Ukraine," *Chatham House* briefing paper, Russia and Eurasia Programme, January 2012.

193 On humanitarian aspects of Russian "soft power" influence on Ukraine (and other countries), see: *The "Humanitarian Dimension" of Russian Foreign Policy Toward Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and the Baltic States*, ed. Gatis Pelnēns (Riga: Centre for East European Policy Studies, 2010).

of universal democratic values of freedom, human rights and rule of law from Ukraine (and Georgia) to Russia, which inspired Ukrainians to overthrow the pro-Russian dictatorial regimes in 2004 and in 2014, and to keep the course towards democratic Europe.

## **The media space dimension: the battle of two ‘soft powers’**

Whatever the source of the Russian approach to exercising the “soft power” instruments, it took the most aggressive form not so much in pro-Russian NGOs, but in Russian media space.<sup>194</sup> For all 20-plus years of independent development, Ukrainian media space was a kind of battle ground between Western/European approaches to public information and post-Soviet/imperial Russian discourses. In terms of mere declarations of intent, both sides declared the universal values of the freedom of speech, human rights, independent judiciary, etc. However, in practice, the majority of Russian media sources progressively deviated from democratic declarations in parallel with the strengthening of authoritarian political regime in the country.

As for the European media standards, at first they penetrated Ukraine through the natural exchanges of people, organisations and media outlets. When the EU and the Council of Europe representatives opened their offices in Ukraine, they randomly provided support to democratic values by promoting publications and media projects within the framework of the EU-Ukraine 1998 Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. This generally contributed to facilitating the process of democratic media standards development in Ukraine and better access to information for the general Ukrainian audience.

The more that relations between the EU and Ukraine were institutionalised through the Eastern Neighbourhood Policy, Eastern Partnership and Association Agreement processes, the stronger the attention to Ukrainian media, and consequent support, came from the EU. The EU support became more specifically oriented towards Ukrainian needs and better structured into consecutive EU funded projects “in the field of media and freedom of expression”. The first such project was 52 months long (September 2008 – December 2012) and cost €2,488,000 in total.<sup>195</sup> The goal was to raise standards of journalism with a view to ensuring that the Ukrainian public was better informed

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194 For more specific analysis of Russian information warfare instruments, see: Denys Kazansky, “Radio Silence: Why Ukraine is losing to Russia on the foreign information front” and other articles in Ukrainian, *Ukrainsky Tyzhden*, #33 (353), 15-21 August 2014, and articles in English in *The Ukrainian Week* #9(45)2014.

195 See: “Promotion of European Standards in the Ukrainian Media Environment 2008/DGHL/JP/2113.” Council of Europe, accessed April 17, 2015, <http://www.jp.coe.int/cead/jp/default.asp?ProjectObjectiveID=2113&SA=0&SE=0>

about political and social processes in Ukraine. In order to achieve this, the project provided continuing support for enhancing the legislative framework for media and for raising the ethical standards in journalism (275 activities in total). It also provided assistance for enhancing the legal framework on the protection of personal data. Finally, the project supported an ongoing dialogue between the media, civil society and the state administration at the regional level, ultimately aiming to enhance co-operation at the central level.

It was followed by two similar consecutive projects, with budgets of €892,918 and €2,500,000 respectively, which had key objectives of strengthening the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.<sup>196</sup> The positive impact of these projects on quality of journalism in Ukraine was proven first by the breakthrough of the then official media coverage of public protests during the Revolution of dignity in 2013-2014, and later on by noticeably improving quality and availability of information about anti-terrorist operations in the Donbas region and about other developments for Ukrainian society.

As far as Russian influence on the media space in Ukraine is concerned, until 2004 it was rather consistent in the promotion of pro-Russian messages, general resentment towards Ukraine's cooperation with the West, and antagonism to Ukrainian contact with NATO. By that time, Russia's attitude towards the EU was rather tolerant, but it radically changed after revolutions in Georgia in 2003 and Ukraine in 2004. One of the key European experts on Russia and Ukraine, British scholar James Sherr, said in reference to "Orange revolution" (2004) in Ukraine: "It is fair to recognize that Moscow's current policies towards the EU are shaped to a great extent by the colour revolutions in the post-Soviet space. Prior to the colour revolution, Putin's Kremlin was much more seeking an adjustment with the West and the EU was viewed as a natural counter-balance to the American influence in Europe. The colour revolutions convinced Moscow that in reality the EU is a revisionist power and its soft power is threatening what Russia perceives as its legitimate interests. In this context, Russia will do its best to re-define the post-Soviet space as its own sphere of influence, and the EU's attempt to negotiate a common neighbourhood with Russia is doomed to fail. The current [2009] crisis in Kiev is just one of the manifestations of the fact that the post-Soviet space will be marked by fierce competition between the European Union and Russia."<sup>197</sup>

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196 See: "Accomplished and ongoing projects in the field of media and freedom of expression," MEDIA.COOP(2014)1, accessed April 17, 2015, [http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/media/CDMSI-BU/MEDIA.COOP\(2014\)01\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/media/CDMSI-BU/MEDIA.COOP(2014)01_en.pdf)

197 See: "European Interview with James Sherr, manager of the Russia/Eurasia Programme at Chatham House," *European Interview* #35, May 25, 2009, <http://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/european-interviews/0035-european-interview-with-james-sherr-manager-of-the-russia-eurasia-programme-at-chatham-house>

Certain Russian media outlets like Evropa publishing house, Expert magazine, the website regnum.ru, and many others, became engaged in much better financed and coordinated “soft” efforts to promote the attractiveness of everything in Russia’s opposition to European. According to Ivan Krastev, the key purpose of their activity was “to develop an efficient infrastructure of ideas, institutions, networks and media outlets that can use the predictable crisis of the current orange-type regimes to regain influence not simply at the level of government but at the level of society as well.”<sup>198</sup> The key role in promotion of ‘good Russia, bad Europe, evil America’ type of messages was awarded to Russian major TV broadcasting stations. Key amongst them was multilingual channel Russia Today, which received unprecedented governmental funding. “Since 2005, the Russian government has increased the channel’s annual budget more than tenfold, from \$30 million (€22.6 million) to over \$300 million. Russia Today’s budget covers the salaries of 2,500 employees and contractors worldwide, 100 in Washington alone ... The government has also spent a lot of money on the new broadcasting center in northeast Moscow, which Russia Today moved into in May [2013].”<sup>199</sup>

In 2014, this particular channel’s budget grew as high as \$500 million, radio Voice of Russia’s broadcasting was increased as well, and a new foreign audience-aimed news agency Sputnik was established to multiply efforts of Russia Today and Voice of Russia. So, when the Russian military campaign against Ukraine was launched in February 2014, it was already conducted on the background of an unprecedented information war against Ukraine, its people and, in fact, against all real and potential sympathisers of Ukraine. While Russia Today, Voice of Russia and Sputnik were spreading false news about Ukraine all over the world around-the-clock, their colleagues at LifeNews, NTV, Russia 24, 1st channel and dozens of other TV outlets intensively brainwashed local Russian and Ukrainian audiences.<sup>200</sup>

As a result, at the start of the Russian invasion, the Ukrainian population of Crimea and certain parts of the south-eastern regions of the country (especially heavily industrialized Donbas) was evidently under duress of perceived Russian social, cultural and economic attractiveness in comparison to revolutionary events in the Ukrainian capital, which Russian propaganda described as chaos. The latter was intensively portrayed as a consequence of the armed state coup d’etat (the Russian official definition of the ‘Revolution

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198 Ivan Krastev, “Russia’s Post-Orange Empire,” *Opendemocracy.net*, October 20, 2005.

199 Benjamin Bidder, “Russia Today: Putin’s Weapon in the War of Images,” *Spiegel*, August 13, 2013, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/business/putin-fights-war-of-images-and-propaganda-with-russia-today-channel-a-916162.html>

200 See note 9.

of dignity' in Ukraine), which brought to power in Kyiv the so-called 'anti-Russian fascist junta'. Such hateful and aggressive messages of Russian propaganda made important, if not major, contributions to separatist and other anti-Ukrainian actions in Crimea, and south-eastern Ukrainian cities of Donetsk, Mariupol, Lugansk, Kharkiv, Odesa and others. Facing such unprecedented pressure of information, Ukraine had no choice but to ban 14 Russian TV channels on its territory.

In time, the pro-Russian and anti-European/anti-Ukrainian perceptions inflated by Russian propaganda machine underwent significant transformations not only in Ukraine, but in Russia itself. This, of course, developed on the background of slow but steady penetration of true information coming through global information space and from Russian citizens' communication with Ukrainian relatives and friends. There was also the influence of different internal factors like growing economic hardships in Russia as a result of the EU and US sanctions; penetration of truth about events in Ukraine and about Ukrainians, which appeared very different from false images portrayed by Russian official propaganda; a stream of high numbers of Russian military personnel and mercenaries killed and wounded in combat actions in Ukraine; protests by liberal parts of Russian democratic opposition, and ever-present internal controversies in Russian society - for instance, distrust of Russia's provinces, and the lies of "corrupt and spoiled" Moscow.

Sensing the coming shifts in public perceptions and preferences, Russian President Vladimir Putin's response was once again far from democratic - to introduce amendments to the Military Doctrine of Russia, which added allegedly adverse information impacts to the list of major internal military dangers for Russian security. In December 2014, one of the amendments to the Military Doctrine emphasized the new danger of "activity dealing with information influence on population, younger citizens of the country in the first place, which is aimed at undermining historical, spiritual and patriotic traditions in the field of defence of the Fatherland".<sup>201</sup>

## **The regionalization dimension**

Overall, preferences of the Ukrainian population at all times were more in favour of the EU than Russia, although there were noticeable differences between the centre, west, east and south of the country as well. Factors in the specific regional divide included the large territory of the country, nuances of

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201 "President approved new version of Military Doctrine", Official website of the President of Russia, December 26, 2014, <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/47334>

regional historical heritage, economic differences and geographical proximity of its regions to either the EU, or to Russia. In no small part this divide reflected regionalization in terms of perceptions of the EU or Russian “soft power” by populations of these regions.

There were numerous sociological studies of these perceptions before the start of the Russian annexation of Crimea in February 2014, and the occupation of the south-eastern part of the Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Lugansk by February 2015. One of the most representative studies, conducted by the Sociological Service of Kyiv-based think tank the Razumkov Center, can be used to illustrate how different parts of the “receiving” country Ukraine respond to Russia’s and the EU’s soft power, and which soft power the regions actually respond to.<sup>202</sup>

In this study of regional specifics in citizens’ attitudes to Ukraine’s accession to the EU, or to the Russian-centred Customs Union, citizens are generally well disposed to Ukraine’s accession to the EU - a relative majority of those polled (46 per cent) favoured Ukraine’s European integration, while 36 per cent opposed it. Ukrainian attitudes toward accession to the Customs Union are more controversial. The proportions of those who supported and did not support the accession did not statistically differ - 40 per cent and 39 per cent respectively. However, when presented with three options - Ukraine’s accession to the EU, accession to the Customs Union, or non-accession to both - 42 per cent supported European integration of Ukraine, 33 per cent supported joining the Customs Union and 12 per cent were in favour of non-accession.

Ukraine’s accession to the EU generally finds broad support among the residents of the country’s west and centre, Ukrainian-speaking groups, representatives of younger and middle-aged groups, and people with high income and education levels. For example, support for EU integration was between 57 and 68 percent among specialists, businessmen and students. Accession to the Customs Union is favoured by the residents of the south and east, Russian-speaking groups, elderly people and people with low education and income.

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202 See: “Customs Union or Europe? The Public Opinion,” National Security & Defence, #4-5 (2013): 104-132. The poll was held on 20-25 April 2013. 2010 respondents aged above 18 years were polled in all regions of Ukraine with a sample representative of the adult population of Ukraine by the basic socio-demographic indicators (area of residence, settlement type, age, gender). The sample’s theoretical error does not exceed 2.3 per cent. The regional division is as follows: the West: Volyn, Transcarpathian, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Rivne, Ternopil, Chernivtsi regions; the Centre: city of Kyiv, Vinnytsia, Zhytomyr, Kyiv, Kirovohrad, Poltava, Sumy, Khmelnytskyi, Cherkasy, Chernihiv regions; the South: Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Odesa, Kherson, Mykolayiv regions; the East: Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhya, Luhansk, Kharkiv regions.

Major advantages of the EU were cited as: a high level of social protection (47 per cent), the rule of law (32 per cent) and a developed democracy (27 per cent), followed by such elements as the availability of financial resources (22 per cent), quality of healthcare (19 per cent), science and technology development (17 per cent) and a low level of corruption (14 per cent). Among the advantages of the Customs Union, the respondents mentioned: common history, culture, and similar mentality of citizens of the Customs Union's countries (53 per cent); presence of natural resources, and energy supplies (47 per cent). A stable economic situation was another factor, which was frequently cited (15 per cent).

The high level of social protection and healthcare and low levels of corruption were the elements often considered as advantages of joining the EU by the residents of western and central Ukraine. The rule of law was far more frequently mentioned by the residents of the west, as compared with representatives of other regions. Developed democracy was the element most often cited by the residents of the west and the east, while 'availability of financial resources' was a dominating advantage of joining the EU for the east. Residents of the south and the east were more prone to name the advantages of the Customs Union. 'Common history' and 'presence of natural resources' were less frequently named among the advantages of joining the Customs Union by representatives of youth, as compared with the other age groups.

All in all, 49 per cent suggested that the European model was far more attractive than the Russian one and only 23 per cent disagreed. Forty-three per cent agreed that the Customs Union's countries have no democracy, while 31 per cent disagreed. Disadvantages of the EU were less evident to the residents of the west, and more evident to the residents of the south. Southerners more frequently noted: domination by the EU leading states over other EU countries, cultural differences, unemployment, and - along with easterners - the unstable economic situation and shortage of natural resources. By contrast, residents in the west indicated the EU's inefficient migration policy (which could be a sign of discontent with what the respondents see as severe obstacles to entering EU countries). Major drawbacks of the Customs Union, as people saw them, included corruption (48 per cent), grey economy (33 per cent), Russian domination (29 per cent), and lack of democracy (27 per cent). Disadvantages of the Customs Union are more evident to the residents of the west, who mention corruption, lack of democracy, and Russian domination (although these factors are quite often reported in other regions, too). The spread of a grey economy is equally reported by residents of the west, centre and east, and less often by residents of the south. Representatives of the eldest age group, and people with a low level of education (an incomplete secondary education), hardly ever mentioned the disadvantages of the Customs Union.

Residents of the west showed more experience of travelling to the EU countries, whereas the residents of the south and east had travelled more to the Customs Union countries. In the east, the number of those who had visited countries of the Customs Union was four times the number of those who had travelled to EU countries, while in the south and centre it was twice as many. Only in the west were the numbers roughly equal. Moreover, travelling to the EU made it more attractive for more than two-thirds of travellers, while travelling to the Customs Union was more attractive for only half. As far as personal gains and losses from Ukraine's accession to the EU or the Customs Union are concerned, a relative majority of respondents (41 per cent) believed that they would benefit from accession to the EU, and 26 per cent thought they would lose. The proportion of those who expect personal gains from membership in the Customs Union is equal to the proportion of those who expect personal losses (32 per cent). Personal benefits from Ukraine's accession to the EU were expected by the majority in the west (65 per cent) and a relative majority of Ukrainians polled in the centre (42 per cent) and the south (38 per cent) expected losses. Meanwhile, these proportions are roughly equal in the east (32 per cent and 33 per cent respectively).<sup>203</sup>

To conclude on this particular poll, it can be said that the greater attractiveness of the EU ensues largely from the fact that Ukrainian citizens often preferred the European model of organisation of the state and society, compared to the Russian one. Furthermore, the traumatic experience of Russian aggression in 2014 further reinforced the positive perception of the EU. In the polls, conducted by the Razumkov Center and other prominent Ukrainian sociological services, the level of Ukrainian citizens' support to Ukraine's integration to the EU has increased to above 50 per cent - while the level of Customs Union supporters noticeably decreased and fluctuates at about 20 per cent or less.

## The strategic dimension

For centuries, relations with Ukraine always looked to Russia like nothing less than an existential issue, the kind of issue linked directly to the core roots of the pretentious idea of the "Russian world [Russkiy mir.]" That was based on specific cultural, linguistic and religious interpretation of the commonality of Russian/Slavic people (including Great Russians, White Russians and Little Russians), and that it was presumably different from, and even superior to, European civilisation. By trying to keep Ukraine by all means under

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203 Sociological data used in this section is quoted from Razumkov Center, "Customs Union or Europe? The Public Opinion," *National Security & Defence*, #4-5 (2013): 104-132.

Moscow's control, Russian leadership is continuously appealing to 'common history', close bilateral human contacts and other common heritage of Soviet past. On yet another occasion, in December 2014 - facing the failure of Russia's 'blitzkrieg' in Ukrainian Donbas and the increase of anti-Moscow sentiments in Ukraine - Russian Prime Minister and former President Dmitri Medvedev appealed: "Even when we continued living in different states, we were reading the same books, admiring the same actors, watched the same movies... speaking the same language."<sup>204</sup> Referring to the European choice of Ukraine, Medvedev pointed out that: "The Ukrainian state made its choice. For Russia, it is difficult to accept such a choice, but not because of alleged Moscow's 'imperial ambitions'. Whatever they say, for 360 years since Pereyaslavska Rada we considered each other as a single family, though disputes and quarrels did happen between the relatives. Nevertheless, we did overcome difficulties and even dangers together. We shared joy and sorrow, and we had our common victory."<sup>205</sup>

In fact, relations between pro-European Ukrainian and imperial Russian national discourses at all times were conflicting to the extent that the so-called "Ukrainian question" united practically the whole political spectrum of Russia, often including liberals and democrats. This phenomenon, as it is widely attributed to famous Russian-Ukrainian academic Vladimir Vernadsky, is formulated as "Russian democracy ends where the question of Ukraine begins". Unfortunately, explicit support to Russian annexation of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014, expressed by Russian opposition leaders Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Alexey Navalnyi, seemingly once again proved the validity of Vernadsky's axiom.<sup>206</sup>

In addition to the "Ukrainian question", another central topic to Russian narratives (mentioned in Medvedev's address to Ukrainians - quoted above) is the stories about glorifying Russian military victories over invaders from the West (Europe), and consequent strong emphasis on national security interests often taking the form of the "besieged fortress" mentality. As a consequence of Russian traditional suspicion of the West, the Ukrainians' choice to integrate with Europe rather than Russia is barely acceptable to Russian anti-Western psyche. A view expressed by a former Member of Russia's Duma, director of Moscow's Institute of CIS countries Konstantin Zatulin, reflecting the spirit of Russia's security policy with regard to "near abroad" and typical

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204 Dmitriy Medvedev, "Russia and Ukraine: Life by New Rules," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, December 15, 2014, [http://www.ng.ru/ideas/2014-12-15/1\\_medvedev.html](http://www.ng.ru/ideas/2014-12-15/1_medvedev.html)

205 Ibid.

206 See: "Russian Opposition Leaders Support Ukraine, But Crimea Is Not Coming Back," *GlobalVoices*, October 21, 2014, <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2014/10/21/russia-opposition-ukraine-crimea-navalny-mbk>

to Russian political elite, was that “Russia could be interested in a strong and stable Ukraine exclusively under the condition of the latter following a pro-Russian political course.”<sup>207</sup>

At all times after the dissolution of the USSR, Ukrainians continued to sense conditionality in Russia’s recognition of their right to leave independently. The hypocrisy of Russians’ constant declarative appeals about brotherhood, and lack of respect towards Ukrainian state in real life, was constantly sensed in Russian media and policies.<sup>208</sup> The gap between Russian declarations of friendship and true belittling attitudes towards Ukraine and Ukrainians became evident worldwide in 2008, when the world press widely reported the quote by Vladimir Putin at the 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest, Romania. Putin told a surprised George W. Bush, “You have to understand, George, that Ukraine is not even a country. Part of its territory is in Eastern Europe and the greater part was given by us.”<sup>209</sup> This hypocritical nature of the Russian leadership’s attitude towards Ukraine culminated in February 2014 after the victory of the “Revolution of Dignity” in Ukraine, when Russian leaders became increasingly concerned with events in Ukraine. The possibility of Ukraine becoming a viable democratic European country attractive to Russian people seemed like a mortal threat to current Russian rulers. Russia launched its military campaign in Crimea and conducted annexation of this significant part of Ukrainian territory, despite many bilateral and multilateral assurances and pledges to respect territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Ukrainian state. Later on, in April 2014, Russia launched its separatism supported campaign in south-eastern Ukrainian regions from Kharkiv in the north, through Donetsk, Lugansk, Zaporizzhia, Kherson, and Mykolaiv to Odessa in the south – all the above were declared by Putin as historical Russian territories under the name ‘Novorossia’, which is perceived as an artificial and totally hollow concept in Ukraine.

This endless Russian preaching of subordination of Ukrainian citizens’ preferences to the interests of another country naturally distorted for Ukrainians the attractiveness of the Russian soft power assets of closeness of cultures and economic cooperation interests. Development of the modern Ukrainian state appeared to be much more strongly conditioned by the display of its own

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207 Valentyn Badrak, “Kyiv and Moscow are Going to be Friends Again,” *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, June 2, 2001.

208 See, for example: Tatiana Montik, “Fraternal Hatred. It is very easy to stop loving Ukraine. For that one needs only one month of reading Russia’s printed media and watching Russian TV,” *Korrespondent*, #3, January 26, 2014: 46.

209 Angela Stent, “Putin’s Ukrainian endgame and why the West may have a hard time stopping him,” *CNN*, March 4, 2014, <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/03/03/opinion/stent-putin-ukraine-russia-endgame>

national soft power assets: cultural, economic, political, and foreign policy.<sup>210</sup> The first two, (cultural and economic) historically define the popular traits of Ukraine's national identity – from Ukraine's unique cuisine, popular music and romantic 'Cossack ethos' to the famous agricultural "bread basket of Europe" label and its scientific and industrial status, including its production of the largest "Antonov" aircraft, modern ships, spacecraft, tanks, radars, etc. However, it is in political and foreign policy soft power assets that Ukrainians strive for independence, democratic freedoms and successful resistance of Ukrainian society to pro-Russian authoritarianism – which plays the key role in strengthening Ukraine's national identity and distancing it from Russia.

As the key driving forces in developing Ukrainian "soft power" appeared to be more and more inclined to generally democratic frameworks and preferences, modern Ukraine – as compared to Russia - appeared to be a clear example of the country mainly perceived as the "receiver" of the soft power, also being a "giver". For years, and on many occasions, observers refer to the real potential of a positive Ukrainian influence on Russia through examples of successful democratic development. For instance, according to Andrey Piontkovsky in 2008: "If Ukraine is successful in demonstrating effectiveness and irreversibility of its European civilizational choice, this will be a decisive argument dropped on the scales of multi-century-long discussion inside Russian culture. The best way to help Russia today is to help Ukraine to confirm the irreversibility of belonging to European civilization, European institutes. This will have tremendous impact on thinking in Russia."<sup>211</sup>

Interestingly enough, some respectable commentators point to the soft power influence of Ukraine on Europe as well. According to the President of Lithuania, Dalia Grybauskaitė, "In the Ukrainian east there is a struggle going on for peace in Europe."<sup>212</sup> Moscow's Carnegie Center expert, Professor Liliya Shevtsova, also points out that, in time, when the West has lost its mission and ideology, Ukraine suddenly steps forward on Maidan for European values: "We want Europe! We want dignity! We want freedom! But the West lost the taste

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210 Certain economic assets are considered by most Ukrainian and some foreign experts as soft power instrument similar to "classic" political, cultural and foreign policy assets. See, for instance: "Economic progress, high living standards are what make any country look attractive" – quotation from the policy paper "Ukraine's Soft Power in the Region: the Tool for Effective Foreign Policy," Institute of World Policy, October 2011, [iwpp.org.ua/eng/public/1280.html](http://iwpp.org.ua/eng/public/1280.html) Similar approach adopted by Alexander Bogomolov and Oleksandr Lytvynenko, "A Ghost in the Mirror: Russian Soft Power in Ukraine," *Chatham House* briefing paper, Russia and Eurasia Programme, January 2012; James Sherr, "Hard Diplomacy and Soft Coercion. Russia's Influence Abroad," (London: Chatham House, 2013); Rilka Dragneva and Kataryna Wolczuk, "Russia, the Eurasian Customs Union and the EU: Cooperation, Stagnation or Rivalry?" *Chatham House* briefing paper, Russia and Eurasia Programme, August 2012; and by some other researchers.

211 Andrey Piontkovsky, "Ukraine as a chance for Russia," *Korrespondent*, July 19, 2008: 50.

212 Vishala Shri-Patma, "Interview with the President of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaitė," *BBC Ukrainian service*, January 3, 2015, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/ukrainian/multimedia/2015/01/150102\\_grybauskaitė\\_ie\\_dt](http://www.bbc.co.uk/ukrainian/multimedia/2015/01/150102_grybauskaitė_ie_dt)

for these things.” Addressing Ukrainians, Shevtsova insists: “You put the West before the necessity to come back to the role it lost 20 years ago. Ukrainians appeared to be more European than Europeans themselves: you have shaken the public opinion in Europe. And you have shaken the [US] Congress.”<sup>213</sup>

## The business dimension

In terms of perceptions of the EU’s and Russia’s soft power the business dimension seems to be the most controversial from Ukrainians. On the surface, as far as general population preferences are concerned, Ukrainians formally choose attractiveness of economic cooperation at the top of lists of their preferences in relations with the EU and Russia. Both the European Union and the Russia Customs Union declare themselves rule-based organizations, consistent with WTO requirements. But those having the opportunity to look beyond mere statistics of trade relations, and analyze the business environment in terms of cultural differences, immediately see very different substances of the business identities of the EU and Russia.

Of course, controversy does not come from the EU business climate synchronized with international norms, which aspiring Ukraine wants to develop and maintain inside the country. In spite of the consequences of the recent economic crisis, the current problems of the Euro Zone, a growing debt burden and possible other challenges facing the EU, Ukrainian experts, politicians and businessmen all believe that an inherently innovative, financially robust and legally protected rule-based European business environment is objectively much more attractive than the Russian environment. According to the authoritative opinion of Ukrainian economist Pavlo Haidutsky: “It is very important to use the integration aspect, as ... bringing conditions for business activity to European standards. This potential was successfully realized in Slovenia, Poland, Slovakia and the Baltic countries, especially in the sphere of small and medium business, in tax, investment, financial, budget, judicial and administrative spheres... where Ukraine and Russia are falling significantly behind the EU countries. So, for Ukraine, it is very important to have an external environment of such influence, capable of maintaining the country in parameters of positive dynamics.”<sup>214</sup>

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213 Viktor Ogienko, “Russian professor: The goal of Moscow – to create Russian pro-Kremlin column in Ukrainian Rada,” *Novoye Vremia*, December 6, 2014, <http://nvua.net/publications/proputinskiy-central-rossiyskiy-professor-politologii-shevcova-23743.html>

214 Pavlo Haidutsky, “Ukraine-EU: problems of integration,” *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, June 7, 2013, [http://gazeta.dt.ua/international/ukrayina-yes-problemi-integraciyi-\\_.html](http://gazeta.dt.ua/international/ukrayina-yes-problemi-integraciyi-_.html)

Controversy in assessing Russian business dimensions comes from the fact that business in Russia is way too politicized and securitized. Russian leadership never misses the opportunity to stress the economic benefits of trade with Russia, which Ukraine may lose, as well as the predetermined character of cooperation between the two countries. As Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev repeatedly accounts in his article on Ukraine: “The Russian Ministry of Industry and Trade’s assessment of Russian orders for Ukrainian industry stands at \$15 billion (or 8.2 per cent of Ukraine’s GDP). No one cared to explain, how they would and who would substitute these orders ... Our countries are neighbours and cannot stop cooperation.”<sup>215</sup> However, Medvedev typically avoids talking about Russian habits in relation to moves like the arbitrary introduction of gas prices for Ukraine; and of the casual application by Russian authorities of anti-dumping tariffs, phyto-sanitary standards, and quotas for steel pipes.

There are many high profile examples of specific Russian-style business culture, which Europeans and Ukrainians remember, but Russians seemingly prefer to put aside. These include the destruction of the YUKOS oil trading company and imprisonment of its head Mikhail Khodorkovsky on political grounds, or the infamous case of a pervasive corruption network displayed in the Magnitsky affair. The latter phenomenon – corruption networks – and the spreading of this culture to Ukraine was one of the several reasons behind the alienation of pro-Russian President Yanukovich from the Ukrainian people, and behind his ultimate removal from power in February 2014.

James Sherr offers a list of systemic differences between the Russian business climate and the liberal economy environment. He says the distinction between the state and private business is “fragile and amorphous,” that economic relations are networked rather than rules-based, that there is a mercantilist ethos that “encourages protectionism and a belief in zones of special interests,” and that “special service” professionals play a facilitating and enabling role in leading economic entities with investments and interests abroad.<sup>216</sup>

Russian emphasis on great politics and security imperatives, even in business dimension of soft power, appears rather traditional once again, which may look like an historical phenomenon. So it is not surprising that Ukrainians prefer to distance themselves from Russia in this aspect as well, as similar to the political and humanitarian aspects of soft power.

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215 Medvedev, note 14.

216 James Sherr, “Hard Diplomacy and Soft Coercion. Russia’s Influence Abroad,” (London: Chatham House, 2013): 74-75.

## Conclusion

Judging by the essence of the EU's soft power, it can be said that the EU offered Ukraine a chance for a more decent future through adoption of a set of clear democratic rules of governance, high social standards, modern technological and educational opportunities and a wide array of freedoms – freedom of movement, association, expression, etc. This offer was dramatically reinforced by the power of examples coming from the former Communist countries and Ukrainian neighbours which had become new members of the EU (the Baltic States, Poland, Slovakia and others). Conversely, modern Russia - anxious to keep Ukraine in the past to preserve the legacy of Russian Empire and the Soviet Union – was constantly bringing into play old historical myths and cultural discourses. Russia also exploited the presumed benefits of common economic standards and natural resources' dependency. Facing the failure of its soft power instruments, and unable to keep Ukraine in its sphere of influence, Russia never hesitated to resort to coercive pressure and blackmail, finally resorting to the hard power of military aggression.

Despite Russian pressure, perceptions of the EU's soft power, as power of the voluntary union of free prosperous nations, appeared more favourable for Ukrainians than perceptions of the soft power of the pervasively authoritarian Russian Federation. These perceptions, in turn, shaped the preferences more radically in favour of the EU after Russia launched aggression against Ukraine in 2014. Thus, for Ukrainian people, the choice between integration to the EU and integration with Russia was not just a matter of preference between two soft power options. Since Russians pretend that values of their *Russkiy mir* make it an alternative to European civilisation, Ukrainians are making a choice between two distinct cultures, which they see as a choice between two civilizational alternatives.

In 2014-2015, shifting preferences of Ukrainians in favour of the EU were clearly reflected in sociological data. Meanwhile, much still remains to be done to meet the great expectations of Ukrainians in practical terms. After the victory of the pro-European 'Revolution of Dignity' a lot has already been done in the areas of strengthening human rights and freedoms – the reform of the education system steadily moves it toward compatibility with European ones, and important steps have been taken in fighting corruption and providing for easier ways to do business.

However, strategic communication of these and other Ukraine-related issues to European audiences appeared to be rather poor. This may have been one of the key impediments for easing the EU visa restrictions, rather than strengthening them, for Ukrainians in 2014. It is highly recommended for

both Ukraine and the EU to strengthen the offices and instruments responsible for this area.

However successful Ukraine's moves are toward integration with Europe, Russia will remain a neighbour to live with. While at the moment former illusory perceptions of 'brotherly' relations on both sides are largely replaced by hate and suspicion, in some future Ukrainians have to build a new policy towards this still-important, but unpredictable, neighbour. Learning from the experience of the Baltic countries may certainly help Ukraine to build appropriate pragmatic relations with Russia. Reducing dependency on the Russian economy and natural resources, disavowing Russian historical myths and false expectations, and showing examples of successful democratic developments of Ukraine in the European family of nations will have a positive impact on Russia, and thus help Ukraine, as well as the European Union and Russia itself.

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# Moldova Still at a Crossroads: Is the European Path Irreversible?

*/Victoria Bucataru/*

**D**uring 24 years of independence, the Republic of Moldova (Moldova) engaged in a democratic transition, managed to diversify its partners, and chose to develop closer cooperation with the West. Leaving behind its Soviet past turned out to be challenging due to growing ambitions in the Russian Federation to regain its lost position in the international arena and revive Soviet mightiness. The break-up of the Soviet Union not only opened a window of opportunity for Moldova to regain its independence, but also think about changing the pattern of development and pursuing the path of old European countries, which after the fall of the Berlin Wall changed the face of Europe by signing the Maastricht Treaty on the 7 February 1992. In spite of its weaknesses, at the beginning of the 1990s Russia was still using existing links supporting separatist movements in the East and South of Moldova. The violent clashes, regarded as a civil war, arguable because of the presence of the 14th army in the Transnistrian region, ended up with a frozen conflict in the East, affecting until now the territorial integrity of Moldova.

Moldova was not the only country from those 15 Soviet Socialist Republics dealing with a frozen conflict. The frozen conflicts in Russia's neighbourhood were created using similar tools— domestic, violent clashes and separatist movements indirectly supported the military financially and ideologically through means of media and civil society organizations. Frozen conflicts became the most obvious expression of hard and soft powers which Russia applies in order to influence, and even dominate, former Soviet republics. The recent aggression against Ukraine is an example of hard power enforcement when soft power tools do not work as they used to, and of course, an immediate loss of attractiveness in favor of the European Union (EU).

After the 2007 EU enlargement processes, Moldova became the EU's next door neighbor and a highly contested part of the Eastern Neighborhood along with Ukraine. Offering closer partnership for the new neighbors, the EU envisaged a more stable and secure environment at its border, without planning future enlargement processes due to enlargement fatigue observed in Member States, but also due to the economic crises. Moldova started deepening its relations with the EU in 2005, when the first EU-Moldova action plan was signed and the European path was declared the main foreign policy vector. Paradoxically,

cally, this happened with the Communist Party in power, but following a back down in Moldova-Russian relations caused by the refusal of the then Moldovan President, Vladimir Voronin, to agree on the Kozak Memorandum.<sup>217</sup> Immediately following that embargoes were imposed by Russia on wine and fruit in 2006. In these circumstances the Moldovan business environment, as well as the political elites, were required to change their practices and look westward.

When offered the opportunity to get closer to a European pattern of development, Moldova, as well as Ukraine, decided to focus its attention more on democratic transitions, closer relations to Euro-Atlantic institutions (the EU, Council of Europe, and NATO) and less dependence on Russia. The new EU framework of cooperation in the eastern region, the Eastern Partnership Initiative<sup>218</sup>, was based on positive conditionality associated with reforms, and supported by development assistance - taking the form of Association Agreements (AA) including the setting up of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) that stands for gradual economic convergence with the EU market. Major achievements in the bilateral relations between EU and Moldova were reached in 2014. On 27 June, Moldova, as well as Georgia and Ukraine signed Association Agreements, including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas. These were ratified by the respective countries' parliaments and the European Parliament, but are still pending ratification by all EU Member States. For Moldova, the major part of the AA/DCFTA took effect provisionally on 1 September 2014.

On 28 April 2014, Moldovan citizens enjoyed the first tangible benefits of the EU - the Moldova Visa Liberalization Action Plan implementation, by being able to travel to the Schengen area visa-free. In 2014 around 360 000<sup>219</sup> people took advantage of this opportunity. Free travel to the Schengen area strengthened not only EU popularity, but also increased the Republic of Moldova's attractiveness among its own citizens. It favors the positive measure of trust building between the two banks of the Nistru River. The number of requests for Republic of Moldova's passports from Moldovan citizens residing in the Transtistrian region increased once the visa-free regime with the EU entered into force.

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217 "Kozak Memorandum", the Russian Federation's Memorandum on the principles of establishing a unified state by federalization of the Republic of Moldova, promoted by Dmitri Kozak, first Deputy Chief of the Presidential Administration in 2003.

218 Launched in 2009, the Eastern Partnership is a joint initiative between the EU, EU countries, and Eastern European partner countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine). It enables partner countries interested in moving towards the EU, and increasing political, economic, and cultural links to do so. It is underpinned by a shared commitment to international law and fundamental values - democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms - and to the market economy, sustainable development and good governance.

219 *Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in the Republic of Moldova: Progress in 2014 and recommendations for actions*, European Commission, Brussels 25.3.2015 SWD(2015) 69 final, 2, [http://www.eeas.europa.eu/enp/pdf/2015/repulic-of-moldova-enp-report-2015\\_en.pdf](http://www.eeas.europa.eu/enp/pdf/2015/repulic-of-moldova-enp-report-2015_en.pdf)

At present, the Eastern Neighborhood is struggling between “East and West” economic, political, and social models, both of them being attractive for particular layers of society. The question is which one can ensure long term benefits and the country’s welfare, while at the same time preserving its independence and sovereign choice. Eastern Europe represents a typical example of a territory where two development patterns meet and balance against each other (the EU development model and the Russian Federation with the Economic Eurasian Union). Both integration models presume legal and economic approximation, the difference lying mainly in perceptions and tools used in order to obtain the expected results. Although soft power refers to the ability to attract or co-opt political elites and society as a whole, it is obvious that in the Eastern Europe region assuming political responsibility and risks in critical geopolitical circumstances is also required.

This paper looks at the soft power potential of the EU and Russia in Moldova by analyzing five main dimensions, mostly subjected to influences from abroad. Taking into account that outcomes of soft power strategies are quite difficult to estimate because they often take a long time and depend on a range of factors - the present domestic social, economic, and political environment, as well as the international one will serve as a starting point. As Joseph Nye mentioned: soft-power “is often hard to use, easy to lose, and costly to re-establish”.<sup>220</sup>

## People-to-people dimension

Civil society represents the voice of the people as well as the main watch dog of the government and political elites. During the years of independence, the force of the people contributed to the change of the Communist Party authoritarian regime (7 April 2009); imposed by continuous pressure for the fulfillment of assumed engagements according to the EU-Moldova Visa Liberalization Action Plan, and induced active participation in public debates by pushing for a broader policy analysis process. The nongovernmental sector in Moldova comprises of, according to the Ministry of Justice’s State Register 9697, non-commercial organizations, nevertheless only a small number could be considered active. NGOs rely on western and eastern financial assistance; agendas are largely donor-driven therefore their sustainability is challenged.

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220 Gimia-Virginia Bujanca, “The European soft-power dimension in the Eastern neighbourhood,” in *The EU as a Model of Soft Power in the Neighbourhood*, ed. Ramona Frunza, Gabriela Carmen Pascariu and Teodor Moga (Iasi: Centre for European Studies, 2013), 183.

With 7 April 2009 events, the so called Twitter revolution changed not only the Moldovan foreign and domestic policy approach but also opened new opportunities for deeper involvement of civil society in policy and decision making processes. An official European vector embarked with the government and representatives of the nongovernmental sector in a wide range of activities aiming at harmonizing the legal and institutional framework according to the EU *acquis-communautaire*. Due to the strong political will of the Moldovan Government being committed to reforms, EU-Moldova relations rose to a considerably higher level, Moldova becoming the front runner of the Eastern Partnership Initiative (EaP).

The EU engaged itself in a process of strengthening civil society capacities in Moldova, believing only a strong civil society could serve as a pillar for a genuine democracy. Civil society represents a considerable amount of attention due to established cooperation frameworks. The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) was established at the Eastern Partnership Summit in Prague 2009. The Forum would promote contact among civil society organizations of the Eastern Partnership, and facilitate dialogue with public authorities. During the 2010-2013 period, six Eastern Partnership countries received support for civil society promotion, amounting to about €63 million.<sup>221</sup> The Association Agreement signed on 27 June 2014, and ratified in Moldovan Parliament (2 July 2014) as well as the European Parliament (13 November 2014), provides for a series of institutional mechanisms supervising the implementation of the Agreement which includes dialogue with civil society. According to Article 377<sup>222</sup> of the Association Agreement, “The Parties shall facilitate a joint forum with civil society organizations established in their territories, including members of their domestic advisory group(s) and the public at large, to conduct a dialogue on sustainable development aspects of this Agreement. The Parties shall promote a balanced representation of relevant interests, including independent representative organizations of employers, workers, environmental interests and business groups, as well as other relevant stakeholders, as appropriate.” Further, Article. 442<sup>223</sup> stipulates the Civil Society Platform “...shall consist of representatives of civil society, on the side of the EU, including Members of the European Economic and Social Committee, and representatives of civil society on the side of the Republic of Moldova, and shall be a forum for them to meet and exchange views.”

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221 “Eastern Partnership,” Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, accessed January 2, 2015, <http://eap-csf.eu/en/about-eap-csf/eap>

222 Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Moldova, of the other part, OJ L 260, 30.8.2014.

223 Ibid.

The EU and its Member States offer support to Moldovan civil society being guided by the willingness to strengthen their institutional capacities. Thus, the EU, as well as other development partners, encourage activities implying: governmental policies monitoring and evaluation; support for the reform agenda; and discussing with the larger public the essence of European values and principles. Moreover, Moldovan civil society organizations try to address social problems such as human trafficking, domestic violence, protecting children's rights as well as human rights and principles, and fighting against corruption and discrimination. Western assistance granted to Moldovan NGOs presume strict accountability rules, contribute to institutional development and sustainability of NGOs as part of civil society; and make the transparency of narrative and financial reports which could be easily found on NGO's websites compulsory. Joseph Nye referring to soft-power type resources, includes intangible factors such as institutions, ideas, values, culture, and the perceived legitimacy of policies, a positive "domestic model" which mainly relies on positive attraction much of it channeled indirectly because it is mediated through mass audiences rather than elites.<sup>224</sup> Therefore, the transfer of practices, values, and European principles through civil society make EU soft power successful in promoting democratic culture. Moreover, the natural shift of experts from the nongovernmental sector to the governmental one ensures, from a long term perspective, the crystallization of the European pattern.

The situation on the left bank of the Nistru River in regard to civil society has its own particularities. Civil society in Transnistria is small, mostly isolated, and underdeveloped - lacking human capacities and resources. These organizations were set up as a rule by political leaders or individuals who represent journalists, advocacy groups, and human rights defenders who act locally. All civil society organizations are monitored by the Ministry of State Security, thus creating impediments in case of partnership initiatives with the right bank. Due to the local regime, civil society representatives prefer to limit their participation to a "discussions level" and refuse implications on a larger scale (real confidence building initiatives). The EU supports common initiatives of civil society organizations on both banks through the program "Support to Confidence Building Measures", managed by the United Nations Development Programme. Transnistrian civil society organizations are encouraged to participate in the EaP CSF as well as many other programs initiated by EU Member States, the Council of Europe, OSCE, and local foundations such as the East Europe Foundation. One of the key challenges is the impossibility to involve and contribute to capacity building of Transnistrians NGOs on a

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224 Gimia-Virginia Bujanca, 183.

larger scale. Usually the capacity to distribute information and competences of Transnistrian nongovernmental sector representatives is limited.

The education environment represents a domain which significantly benefited from EU support institutionally, as well as financially. At the present moment, Moldova has aligned to the Bologna process, participating in a broad range of educational mobility programs. Over the years, Moldovan educational institutions, at different levels, have received grants and scholarships aiming to improve the professionalism of teaching staff as well as access to new technologies and know-how. Moldova takes part in such initiatives as: Mobility Partnership Moldova - European Union, projects and programs of the European Union designed in the Eastern Partnership Initiative's frameworks; and projects and community programs for mobility in education (ex. Tempus, Erasmus Mundus, Jean Monnet, Youth in Action, Marie Curie, and e-Twinning). During 17 years of participation in the TEMPUS program approximately 60 TEMPUS projects were implemented, their worth estimated at around €13 million.<sup>225</sup> Moldova also joined Horizon 2020, the biggest EU Research and Innovation program ever, with nearly €80 billion of funding available over seven years (2014 to 2020).

Due to the harmonization of educational standards (joining the Bologna process) Moldovan students can apply for scholarships offered by EU Member States on the basis of bilateral agreements. Annually, for example, the French Service for Cooperation and Cultural Action offers several types of scholarships (undergraduate, postgraduate, PhD, and research), while the German Government, through the German Service for Academic Exchange (DAAD), hosts around 50 students. The academic mobility Moldovans enjoy represents an incentive for change as well a great opportunity to obtain best practices and have access to better education, as a result being more competitive in the labor market.

Compared to the EU, Russia's attractiveness is rather limited as it does not offer viable ground for democratic development, or a set of well-determined values and principles. Nicu Popescu believes Russia started to invest in its soft power infrastructure more when it realized its policy suffers an "ideological emptiness" and it cannot explain the purpose of its presence in the post-Soviet Union.<sup>226</sup> Previously with colour revolutions, and more precisely after the 2007 Ukrainian orange revolution, there emerged a concept of "The Humanitarian Dimension of Foreign Policy" which included such principles

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225 Website of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Moldova, accessed March 9, 2015, <http://www.edu.md/ro/cooperare-multilaterala>

226 Nicu Popescu, "Russia's Soft Power Ambitions," *Center for European Policy Studies Policy Brief No. 115:1* (2006).

as: the defense of human rights; the protection of the interests of compatriots living abroad; consular matters; partnerships in the cultural and education sectors; and the development of Russia's media abroad. This particular policy was an answer to the Western idea of democracy and human rights, a set of universal values and practices intended to be promoted in Eastern Europe. The Kremlin was trying to give an alternative to liberal democracy building, more as a conservative democracy based on Christian Orthodoxy which appeals to many parts of the Neighborhood's population.

Russia started by building a shared identity in the post-Soviet area having a number of advantages: a recent shared history, the presence of a large Russian-speaking minority, cultural and linguistic proximity, dependence on imported energy, and deeply rooted economic relations. A reliable instrument in reaching out to the public abroad turned out to be organizations, set up at Governmental level such as "Rossotrudnichestvo" (The Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation), "Русский мир" (Russian World), and such nongovernmental organizations like the "Признание" (Recognition Fund) set up in Moldova in 2009.<sup>227</sup> The official goal of these funds is to promote Russian language - as a national value and important element of Russian and world culture, as support to teaching programs and, of course, to their communities abroad.

In Moldova, the Russian World Fund has its offices at the Moldova State University premises, thus being connected to the academia environment. Its activity is based on educational programs regarding studies in Moldova and Russia. Their activities advertise the idea of the need to defend Russian compatriots' interests in Moldova. This message was also publicly conveyed by Vladimir Frolov, representative of the Recognition Fund, who stated that: "Among the main topics to be addressed by the fund "Recognition" - there is the analysis of the situation with the neutrality of Moldova, the status of the Russian language in the country, the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict, and the protection of Russian investors,"<sup>228</sup> issues that do not necessarily fit in the presented goals of an organization mainly directed to the strengthening of Russian-Moldovan relations in the fields of culture, language, and education.

There are also a series of local NGOs (Russian Youth League of the Republic of Moldova, and the Youth movement "Voievod") known for mass

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227 "В Молдову пришел российский фонд "Признание"," *Moldova.ru*, September 18, 2009, <http://www.moldova.ru/index.php?tabName=articles&owner=44&id=5230>

228 Ibid.

actions, allegedly<sup>229</sup> supported by the Russian Federation, which protested against the Romanian presence in Moldova, anti-NATO public discourse, and continuously trying to push forward the idea of “Moldovans” as a separate ethnicity including the Moldovan language. Joining the Eurasian Economic Union is seen as the most advantageous option for Moldova’s welfare and development pattern. Recently, due to the lack of consistency in advancing the reform agenda, and several high-profile corruption cases, the above mentioned ideas gain ground finding support in Moldova’s society.

Russia is a preferred destination for Russian-speaking populations in Moldova in terms of education. Russian governmental and nongovernmental organizations are the ones managing scholarship opportunities as well as the selection process. Yearly, Russia offers 100 undergraduate and 10-15 postgraduate scholarships according to a bilateral protocol signed among the two countries. Interest is shown mostly by citizens of Moldova residing in the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia (UTA Gagauzia) and Transnistrian regions. In these areas of the country the teaching process is mainly in the Russian language (for example, in UTA Gagauzia 3 out of 55 units teach in the Romanian language), and Moldovan universities offer Russian speakers the option to study in their native language, as well as hosting Russian university branches in Chisinau and Tiraspol.

Analyzing the two completely different approaches of the EU and Russia’s soft power projections through nongovernmental sectors we could understand, in essence, the expected results. While the EU is investing in the setup of democratic pillars and solid principles for market economy development (which in the long run will ensure cooperation and competitiveness on an equal basis), Russia is likely to be more interested in spreading uncertainty in domestic affairs and continues to encourage secessionism thinking. Due to a reasonably successful Russian propaganda agenda, and continuously growing disunity and lack of real support by political elite for Moldova’s European agenda, EU attractiveness might be shattered.

## **The media space dimension**

Over the years, mass-media gained substantial ground by becoming the fourth state power. This is not because it can play the role of watchdog (there is not enough democratic maturity for that), but because it is among other things (information, entertainment, education, etc.) a perfect instrument

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229 We are saying “allegedly supported” by Russian local Moldovan NGOs and political parties because no public financial activity data is presented.

for manipulation and propaganda. After the 7 April 2009 so-called Twitter revolution Moldovan media became more colorful, new media companies emerged, and the spectrum of information broadened. Diversity of information, however, does not necessarily translate into quality. While most popular TV channels and radios favor political elites or groups of interests, their freedom and transparency is doubtful. According to the Association of Independent Press, monitoring reports of the 2014 Parliamentary elections, TV, Radio and electronic channels of communication constantly favored certain political parties.<sup>230</sup> Lack of transparency when it comes to funding, declaring the real owners, and how to fight aggressive propaganda that comes through media channels from abroad (especially since the war in Ukraine) are the main issues of current concern.

Since the annexation of Crimea in March 2014, Russian propagandistic messages and manipulations through the means of mass-media challenged the information security of Moldova. A Report on the Moldovan Press in 2014 elaborated on by the Centre for Independent Journalism concludes that after monitoring five TV stations who were re-broadcasting Russian channels, the Coordinating Council of Audiovisual (CCA) observed usage of aggressive propaganda, along with manipulations through the use of text and images in programs dedicated to the conflict in Ukraine. CCA sanctioned the monitored TV channels and suspended the activity of the ROSSIA 24 TV channel for six months although the decision was not respected.<sup>231</sup> Shortly after, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation issued a press release qualifying the CCA decision as “political censorship and flagrant violation of the freedom of speech” aiming at “reducing the presence of the Russian information system” in the Republic of Moldova due to the “Western informational war against Russia”. Using the notion of informational war represents a clear acknowledgement of the fact that Russia is engaged in one, and Moldova is, among others, a target. According to the 2014 November Barometer of Public Opinion<sup>232</sup> 82 percent of Moldovans watch TV every day and 45 percent use internet resources. Approximately 63 percent of the population considers TV as the main source of information and 19 percent the internet. The most trusted source of information remains to be TV at 39 percent and the internet at 15 percent. When asked which TV channels broadcast the most trustful political information 59

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230 “Promoting free and fair elections through mass-media monitoring.” Association of Independent Press, accessed March 29, 2015, <http://api.md/page/ro-promovarea-unor-alegeri-libere-i-corecte-prin-monitorizarea-mass-media-256>

231 “Report on the Moldovan Press in 2014,” Center for Independent Journalism (2015), 6, accessed March 29, 2015, <http://media-azi.md/sites/default/files/Raport%20FOP%202014%20final%20ROM.pdf>

232 “Barometrul Opiniei Publice,” Institutul de Politici Publice, November 2014, 27-33, accessed January 4, 2015, [http://www.ipp.md/public/files/Barometru/Brosura\\_BOP\\_11.2014\\_prima\\_parte-r.pdf](http://www.ipp.md/public/files/Barometru/Brosura_BOP_11.2014_prima_parte-r.pdf)

percent of Moldovans gave preference to Prime TV the channel retransmitting National Russian Channel ORT “Первый канал”, 52 percent answered Moldova 1, the National Moldovan Channel, and 50 percent, 47 percent, and 47 percent of the population expressed an opinion in favor of, respectively, Jurnal TV, ProTV, and Publika TV which are local TV stations, broadcasting in the regions. These numbers explain why Russia is so eager to continue influencing the media environment and, of course, gives food for thought when it comes to securing Moldova’s informational environment.

The power of Russian media in Moldova is obvious, and represents a dangerously efficient soft power tool. During the Ukrainian crisis, the aggression of Russian intervention raised a series of concerns related to security as a whole, and informational security in particular. Moldova woke up to massive propaganda broadcasted through media - TV channels, internet, the radio, etc. in a very short period, resembling August 2008, during the Georgian war times. Without having proper experience, the main question was how to deal with these problems without harming the freedom of speech and at the same time protecting national security. Propagandistic ideas were promoted by news programs, political debates, and entertainment. Russia is taking advantage of their cultural and linguistic proximity, as well as of Soviet nostalgia and even something simpler than that – the habit of watching Russian entertainment programs and news.

Western media are scarcely represented in Moldova. EU-Moldova relations are promoted by the means of local media. The BBC, EuroNews, and Deutsche Welle are broadcast only through cable TV, or can be watched online. As a consequence, their popularity is low; there is a small number of people who receive information from these sources, therefore their impact is insignificant. Taking all this into consideration, the EU should think about developing and making their media tools in the region more attractive, as up till now it has turned out to be the most efficient soft power tool.

The use of social media shouldn’t be neglected either. The 7 April Twitter revolution in Moldova demonstrated how people can be mobilized through social media networks using propagandistic messages. The most popular social media networks in Moldova have Russian roots - “Odnoklassniki” (one million single users per month from Moldova), and “VKontakte” (740 960 registered users in Moldova). Facebook has 460 000 users per month from Moldova, and other Western professional networks are somewhat less popular. The difference mainly lies in simplicity of use and age preferences. Not being able to analyze content, social media becomes dangerous once turned into a tool for pushing propagandistic messages, hate speech, and violence.

When acknowledging the power of Russian media in the Eastern Neighborhood and its particularly dangerous effects on domestic and foreign policy in Moldova, we can see more attention should be focused on revising legal frameworks regulating the informational environment. Respecting the principle of the pluralism of ideas is imminent, in addition to strict requirements ensuring informational security. Encouraging local media to address all layers of society, by producing Romanian and Russian programs would give an opportunity to present more diverse information and develop the critical thinking skills related to information and media.

## **The regionalization dimension**

Due to different historical, cultural, and linguistic preconditions particular parts of the Republic of Moldova population respond differently to foreign influences. The Transnistrian frozen conflict hinders full control of Moldovan authorities over the whole territory of the country and at the same time ensures a permanent Russian presence. Moreover, since independence, Russia managed to use soft power competences to influence and maintain secessionist ideas alive in the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia (UTA Gagauzia). The unfinished transition, combines with a difficult economic and social environment, made people seek jobs outside the country in order to support their families. The Russian Federation was one country considered a main destination because it did not require visas for Moldovan citizens and jobs were relatively easy to get, not implying professional qualifications. The EU on the other hand, was a much more expensive destination – a visa regime, strict employment rules, job permits, etc. Preponderant, the Russian speaking population represents the part of Moldovan citizens who react to Russia’s “offers”. According to a report on labor migration, researched by the Moldovan National Bureau of Statistics (2013) 69.2 percent of migrants are working in Russia while 22.2 percent are in EU Member States.<sup>233</sup>

Russia is using its fully linguistic proximity and the compatriots’ policy in order to attract, influence, and destabilize large sections of Moldovan regions. By taking a closer look at the result of the November 2014 elections, it could be concluded the population of the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia, a region where 40 percent of locals speak Russian at home and 27 percent declare Russian as their native language<sup>234</sup> voted mainly for pro-Rus-

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233 “Report on labour migration,” Moldovan National Bureau of Statistics (2013), 6, accessed March 29, 2015, [http://www.statistica.md/public/files/publicatii\\_electronice/migratia/Sinteza\\_MFM\\_2012.pdf](http://www.statistica.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/migratia/Sinteza_MFM_2012.pdf)

234 Oazu Nantoi et al., “UTA “GAGAUZ YERI” in contextul eforturilor de constituire a na’iunii civice. Studiu de caz,” in *Integrarea Grupurilor etnice si consolidarea natiunii civice in Republica Moldova* (Chisinau: Institutul de Politici Publice, 2012), 100, <http://www.ipp.md/lib.php?l=ro&idc=171&year=2012>

sian parties. According to Gagauz domestic law, the Russian language has the status of an official language along with the Gagauz and Moldovan state language and not only that, it is the language predominantly used in daily life and education. A poll of attraction for this region represents the inconsistency of Russian foreign policy towards Moldova, and double standards in using hard power which ultimately generates soft power. While the economic embargo on wine, fruit, and vegetables was imposed on Moldova due to a cooperation agreement, the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia, “Ros-potrebnadzor” allowed a wine producing company to export its products to the Russian Federation.

The Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia is inclined to be influenced by Russian propaganda because of its community and political closeness, lack of ethnic minority inclusion policies at a national level, and its affiliation to the Russian informational space. Irina Vlah, an independent candidate supported by the Socialist Party of Moldova and Russia through media channels and entertainment events during the electoral campaign, won the Bascan elections in UTA Gagauzia on 22 March 2015 with 51.11 percent of votes. Mrs Vlah promoted a highly pro-Russian discourse as well as using symbols (the Russian flag), her motto being “Быть рядом с Россией в наших силах” (Being closer to Russia is in our hands). Since Mrs Vlah will have to repay the invested trust and assistance, clear preference will be given to eastern partners therefore challenging the official foreign and domestic policy vector.

The EU started raising its attractiveness among the “closed” regions in Moldova (the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia and Transnistria) in 2014 once it allowed visa-free movement on the basis of biometric passports. As a consequence, the request for Moldovan passport increased on the part of Moldovan citizens residing on the left bank of the Nistru River. Although visa-free movement does not allow working in EU territory, it is a step towards an increasing openness and an example of shared values. In public debates, Pirkka Tapiola, head of the EU delegation in Moldova, emphasizes the need to pay more attention to the ethnic minority policy, to strengthen political and social dialogue with the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia and build more trust in regards to the Transnistrian region.

Russian rhetoric and actions, also voiced by pro-Russian parties, especially the Socialist Party, combine soft and hard powers at once. This behavior is not new, as there are plenty of examples in the Eastern region where Russia plays the role of aggressor and mediator at the same time (the Transnistrian conflict is one of them). Russian attractiveness for the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia and Transnistria could also be explained by their unwillingness to open the region to new opportunities.

Transnistria, and at some point UTA Gagauzia, closed its informational space and does not allow democratic practices as well as limits access to all sorts of contacts for people.

Indeed at first glance, Russia is attractive because of its free movement, job offers, and economic facilities stipulated under the CIS Treaty. All of them, at the moment, remain just as a first impression but still successfully promoted by propagandistic messages. The main concern lies in the sustainability of these advantages, which knowing Russian practices are not supported by trustworthy institutional rules. The Russian presence in the Moldovan regions contribute to instability and the threat of territorial disintegration. Moldovan authorities should pay more attention to constructive dialogue, meaning closer cooperation at a national level and social inclusion policies for regions.

## The strategic dimension

On 30 November 2014, the citizens of Moldova elected their next parliament challenged by domestic developments and regional crises. If four years ago the elections were marked by the colour revolutions, this time Russia's military aggression in Ukraine as well as developments of the reform agenda had an impact on election results. Out of 24 electoral candidates 5 parties entered the new Parliament, 3 pro-Western (the Liberal-Democrat Party, the Democratic Party, and the Liberal Party) and 2 pro-Russian (the Socialist Party, and the Party of Communists).<sup>235</sup> Although overall the pro-Western parties have 55 mandates out of 101, they did not form a majority Government. After long negotiations a new Coalition for a European Moldova was set up out of two parties: the Democrats and the Liberal Democrats. A minority Government was voted for with the support of the Communist Party, thus endangering the reform process as well as political stability. Apart from that, Moldova's European path will be challenged by the Socialist Party, holding 25 mandates out of 101. Quoting Ion Sturza, former Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova: "Now, in Parliament, we have a genuine Russian fifth column, an extension of the Kremlin, receiving in the morning, by fax, instructions from Moscow - so-called Dodon's socialists, which are not a left opposition, but a fifth column acting on the money from Moscow and on Moscow's instructions. If you have 20 percent of the Moldovan Parliament, every day, destructiveness will be more present."<sup>236</sup>

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235 Alegeri.md website, accessed December 27, 2014, [www.alegeri.md](http://www.alegeri.md)

236 "Ion Sturza, fost premier: Rușii au acaparat miniștile liderilor politici de dreapta de la Chișinău," *digi24.ro*, January 4, 2015, <http://www.digi24.ro/Stiri/Digi24/Extern/Europa/Ion+Sturza+Rusii+manipulare+lidere+politici+proeuropeni>

Results of the elections demonstrate Moldova remains a “privileged sphere of influence” for the Russian Federation. Russia openly supported the new electoral candidate (the Socialist Party), a promoter of closer relations with Russia which got 25 mandates out of 101 at the 2014 Parliamentary election. Even though pro-Western parties won the elections they lost the popular vote<sup>237</sup> due disappointment from a big part of Moldovans in reforms undertaken by the coalition government. After a series of big corruption cases Moldovans gave their votes to pro-Russian or non-aligned parties, preferring new political candidates promoting ambiguous policies and messages. Analyzing the results of the elections, it could be concluded the Moldovan vote was not only a protest vote but a geopolitical one. People gave their votes not to political elites but to the domestic and foreign vector that is pursued, hoping for a continuation of the started reforms and further implementation of the Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, in the case of pro-Western parties and closer cooperation with the Russian Federation along with pro-Russian parties. Even though Moldovan citizens felt disappointed by previous political elites they still came in large numbers to support the country’s European future (55 mandates gained by pro-European parties).<sup>238</sup> The results of the elections confirm the Moldovan population is divided in two and there is no common understanding of the national idea of European integration.

The existence and force of the two integration patterns could be noticed throughout the electoral campaign. It is absolutely clear the EU and Russia are using soft power tools in Moldova, but the outcomes are different: one uses soft power tools in order to fortify the country institutionally, raise the social and economic level improve the daily life of people, and set up an area of stability, security, and prosperity. On the other hand, Russia tries to build a servile, weak, uninformed community, easy to influence. The EU acts institutionally, through implementation of reforms and positive conditionality thus assuming some risks while taking into account that integrating soft power into Governmental strategies is quite difficult; the results often take a long time and the instruments of soft power are not fully under government control. If the EU pattern relies on the formula “play by the rules and not with the rules”,<sup>239</sup> Russia prefers to do it the other way around.

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237 Victor Chirila, “Moldova’s last chance for reform,” *European Council on Foreign Relations*, December 9, 2014, [http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_vmoldovas\\_last\\_chance\\_for\\_reform376](http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_vmoldovas_last_chance_for_reform376)

238 Alegeri.md website, accessed December 27, 2014, [www.alegeri.md](http://www.alegeri.md)

239 Pirkka Tapiola, head of the EU Delegation to the Republic of Moldova (welcoming speech presented at the National Convention for European Integration of Moldova, Chisinau, Republic of Moldova, December 15, 2014).

At present the country's foreign and domestic vector, at a governmental level, remains in approximation to the EU by fulfilling the Association Agreement and the DCFTA. On 7 October 2014, the National Action Plan for the implementation of the Republic of Moldova-EU Association Agreement was approved by government decision.<sup>240</sup> Still, regardless of the support given by civil society and official trend of the authority's European messages, the image of the European Union suffers because of the support offered to pro-European parties involved in massive corruption cases (a damage caused to dominant Moldovan banks, among which is the Savings Bank of Moldova "Banca de Economii" amounting €1.33 billion). The EU has to face misinterpreting European values and principles, as well as the EU integration myths highly promoted by Russian propaganda.

By bringing its border closer to Moldova, the EU expanded its magnetic field, becoming a pole of attraction for Moldovan people. Being able to travel and work in the West, take advantage of the education system, observe political and economic developments in genuine democracies, people started to give their preference to the EU integration vector more and more. The European development pattern became a model of comparison to Russia's offer, which is ambiguous and uncertain. Nevertheless, Russia keeps its attractiveness by means of cultural and language proximity, nostalgia for the past, and a wide range of propagandistic mechanisms. According to the November 2014 Barometer of Public Opinion 25 percent of Moldovans trust Vladimir Putin; the Russian president is apparently much more popular than other Western and Moldovan political leaders - Angela Merkel at 11 percent, Barack Obama 6 percent, and Traian Basescu 4 percent. Lack of unity, will, and strong messages conveyed by local political elites, as well as delayed results of democratic reforms, decrease the EU's level of attractiveness in favor of Russia. Joining the Customs Union Russia-Belarus-Kazakhstan has popularity by 43 percent of the population compared with 39 percent opting for EU integration.<sup>241</sup>

At present, the strategic dimension of the Republic of Moldova is quite hazy with a pro-European minority government, and large support from the population for the pro-Eastern wing. Potential early elections might put Western-oriented parties in a difficult position due to a lack of consistency with the Moldovan European agenda and delayed benefits of the AA/DCFTA. Political instability and deficiencies in implementing the AA/DCFTA call for stronger political support on the part of European partners, in addition to

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240 *National Action Plan for the implementation of the RM-EU Association Agreement*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, accessed January 9, 2015, <http://www.mfa.gov.md/association-agreement-ro>

241 "Barometrul Opiniei Publice" 2014.

more strict conditionalities which could push for authentic reform processes. Short victories won by Russian soft power capabilities, however unsustainable because of no apparent concrete strategy or management mechanisms, could decrease the speed of Moldova's progress towards a more democratic and secure country.

## **The business dimension**

After transitioning from a planned economy to a market economy, the business environment in Moldova is still marked by its Soviet heritage. After regaining independence, Moldova started building trade relations with the EU, passing through different frameworks of cooperation such as Autonomous Trade Preferences and more recently the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) as the most important ones. As an independent state, Moldova accepted global market regulations by joining the World Trade Organisation in 2001. As part of the Commonwealth of Independent States since December 1991, Moldova enjoys free trade with post-Soviet countries.

Choosing the European vector as a main pattern of development, and by striving to enter the largest economy in the world, Moldova has to face domestic and foreign challenges related to institutional capacities, political and social reluctance, foreign influences, and hard power actions on the part of the Russian Federation. The transition period represented a gold mine for those who intended to set up businesses while avoiding legal practices (weak institutions, poor rule of law, and a high level of corruption). Corruption and illegal privatization created the preconditions for shadowy deals, some involving government officials. The fragile policy on the competition environment triggered monopolies in different areas of economy. The eradication of unlawful practices deeply rooted in the institutional system and local business culture need systemic, continuous, and coordinated reforms which have been provided by the EU in the framework of the AA/DCFTA. By deepening their relationship with the EU, Moldova engaged in a series of reforms and has taken on some commitments that required legal harmonization with EU market standards. The legal framework was adjusted, thus bringing new policies and business practices. Nevertheless, the DCFTA offers gradual integration with the EU's internal market in medium and long term perspectives. The implementation of the harmonized legal framework implies serious changes in all spheres of the economy involving public and business sectors at once. Only after the negotiated transition periods and full implementation of DCFTA requirements will Moldova be fully integrated in the EU economic area.

The DCFTA represents a shock for the domestic business environment used to playing “with the rules and not by the rules”. By being required to comply with very strict legal frameworks and regulations, many local businesses will suffer collapse because of the lack of in the capacity to adapt and modernize. This imminent result of EU soft power policy represents an argument widely used by Russian supporters. Although in a long term perspective the DCFTA gives an opportunity to include Moldova into the EU internal market, in a short term perspective, without proper assistance from the government and EU, local Moldovan businesses will suffer losses.

Although the DCFTA means real benefits in the long run, openness of the EU market to certain products reduced the dependence on exports to the Russian Federation in 2014 and gave an opportunity to Moldovan producers to access other markets. The EU market is becoming more attractive due to its clear regulations and fairness in terms of business. Compared to the EU, Russia is guided by political interests while building an economic cooperation framework, which consequently led to instability and uncertainty when doing business. The Economic Eurasian Union (previously the Customs Union Russia–Belarus–Kazakhstan) failed to become a positive example. During the past 10 years Moldova survived several economic embargoes on wine, fruit, and vegetables, as well as other food products. Hard power, by way of embargoes, was used in order to constrain Moldova and impede the deepening of EU–Moldova relations. The Russian “Rosпотребнадзор” invoked (as reasons for the embargoes) the low quality of products, which could partially be an argument, but it vanishes once there are no clear requirement and regulations. Russian embargoes created important incentives for changing the business culture, and to modernize to find other markets. The embargoes could be perceived as a reaction of Russia to the gradual loss of attractiveness and an incapacity to control the Neighborhood as it did before. In 2014 exports to Russia decreased considerably as a result of two main factors: imposed sanctions and interdictions to certain imports from Moldova after signing the EU–Moldova AA/DCFTA, and lower demand caused by the economic crises. Russia lost its position as the main destination for Moldovan exports in favor of Romania, representing only 18.1 percent share of the total amount.

The magnetism of the DCFTA relies on the fact it is predictable, and offers a stable and secure environment where business is just business. In due course it will provide modernization through new technologies, exchange of know-how, strict regulations, systemic institutional changes, and no less important: the decrease of corruption due to institutional reforms. However, the free trade regime offered to Moldova by Russia does not necessarily envisage a guarantee for further economic advantages, but relies on its capabilities

to politically influence the country and maintain control over certain important sectors such as energy, transport, and agriculture. Only by diversifying the markets, increasing competitiveness, and transforming institutions according to AA/DCFTA can dependency on Russia decrease and the country's economy strengthen.

## **Conclusion and recommendations**

Being guided by geopolitical interests and an expansionist foreign policy Russia did not manage to raise its attractiveness in Moldova to a level that would change the European foreign policy course of the country. By holding such influential soft and hard power instruments and leverage such as a common recent history, language proximity, common culture and labor market, free movement of people, along with capital and energy resources, it managed only to create an unstable environment using hard power in order to maintain its influence. Russia's attractiveness is preserved for the most part among people who agreed with their policy from the very beginning or those who became disappointed by the current political regime in Moldova. The Economic Eurasian Union (previously the Customs Union Russia–Belarus–Kazakhstan) failed to become a positive example for Eastern Neighborhood countries. Russia's soft power mechanisms did not generate the necessary leverage in order to fully win the Moldovans' trust in an eastern integration process. Political, social, and economic developments based on undemocratic norms, lack of democracy and rule of law, violation of fundamental human rights and freedoms, as well as corruption and huge domestic economic crises were also unappealing.

Through having an institutional and bureaucratic approach, the EU uses its soft power instruments at different levels. The EU is positioning itself as a normative power. The uncertainties of EU soft power lie more in the lack of a long term vision regarding the European Eastern Neighborhood while the region needs powerful incentives in order to successfully pass the transition period. While the Eastern Partnership was seen as promising by Eastern Neighborhood countries it was seen as something threatening to Russian Federation interests. Although EU soft power foresees the long term impact leading to transformations of whole societies, raging from fundamental freedoms and rule of law to functioning market economies, and taking into account the current situation in the eastern region, the EU should also consider tackling the issue of a membership prospect's perspective. This will serve as an important incentive to overcome resistance to domestic reforms when implement-

ing the Association Agreement and DCFTA commitments.<sup>242</sup> On the other hand, successful implementation and enforcement of the Association Agreement and DCFTA should represent a significant aspect in developing stronger ties and offering support to current pro-European parties. In the case of Moldova, the EU should make more vigorous use of the leverage it has over Moldovan authorities and increase society influence over politicians by creating solid partnerships and increasing the capacities of civil society organizations.

Being at a crossroads and dealing with cyclical political crises and economic instability, as well as being divided by two geopolitical projects, although the EaP was not intended as a geopolitical project but it has been transformed into one by Russia, with Moldova still managing to choose its development pattern, its “pole of attraction”, that being the EU. In order to reach the irreversibility of Moldova’s European ambitions, a coherent policy on the part of the EU is needed as well as incentives taking the form of a membership perspective. The biggest responsibility lies mainly with Moldova and its sovereign choice. Hard facts and convincing arguments are needed to persuade Member States that further enlargement will result in a “win-win” situation. In order to do so, there is an absolute need for:

- Strong political will and unity on the part of Moldovan pro-European parties to implement and enforce the reform agenda, which goes hand in hand with the implementation of the Association Agreement and DCFTA.
- Building a constructive relationship with the moderate opposition and asking for their full involvement in the reform process, thus transforming European integration into a national idea.
- A strong engagement of civil society in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of AA and the DCFTA.
- Support and monitoring the process of investigating corruption cases such as the failed “privatization” of the Banca de Economii (Savings Bank of Moldova) along with other high-level corruption cases in the past five years.

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242 Gunnar Wiegand and Evelina Schulz, “The EU and its Eastern Partnership: Political Association and Economic Integration in a Rough Neighbourhood,” (this article will be published in: *Trade Policy Between Law, Diplomacy and Scholarship* - Liber Amicorum in Memoriam Horst G. Krenzler, EYIEL Special Issue, ed. Herrmann/Simma/Strein, Springer, 2015.)

The geostrategic position in the Eastern Neighborhood region makes Moldova vulnerable to foreign influences, putting in danger the democratic development of the country as well as its sovereignty and territorial integrity. In this respect, governmental as well as civil society's attention should focus on:

- Fighting aggressive propaganda promoted by media tools without hindering the freedom of speech and fundamental human freedoms by: reforming the Coordinating Council of Audiovisual; improving the legal framework dealing with informational security; promoting an attractive environment for western media, thus diversifying the information space; and suspending activities of several Russian media outlets who show inadequate content (violence, hate speech, instigation to separatist movements) which represents a threat to the national security of Moldova.
- Strengthening partnerships between the government and civil society, creating a common national idea in order to overcome the resistance to reform implementations.
- Set up an inclusive and multidimensional communication strategy, counterbalancing foreign disinformation campaigns. Involve local public administration and civil society in AA and DCFTA implementation by sharing responsibilities and building trust.
- Revising ethnic minority legal frameworks as well as the functioning principles of the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia in order to provide a more inclusive policy and establish bridges between central government and the local administration of UTA Gagauzia. Increase their participation in the decision making process thus opening the region and making them a part of nationwide projects.
- Create preconditions for political, social, and economic inclusiveness of the so-called "closed" regions (the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia, and Transnistria).
- Diversify energy resources in order to reduce Russian energy dependency.
- Discuss options for ensuring national security and strengthening the country's national security system.

No matter how weak the country might be, having a national idea as well as strong willingness to reform makes it significantly easier to overcome transition challenges and face influences from abroad. Although some soft power instruments bring development and prosperity, others might bring destruction and insecurity. Thus, it is important for Moldova to define its major domestic and foreign goals and pursue them, taking into account its national interests and national security, along with its territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Russian soft power strategies rely more on factors which do not presume sustainability in a global world. Small victories are just short term successes which hinder and decrease the speed of reforms in the Eastern Neighborhood but do not fully impede the development of countries. Russia's interest in Moldova will continue to be alive for at least two reasons: proximity to EU borders and Ukraine, the "favourite piece of cake". By destabilizing Moldova, Russia ensures a conflict area at both borders and hampers further progress of the two countries towards a European set of values. A continuous engagement from the EU in the region, as well as a clearer strategy and European perspective, will increase EU popularity and send supportive messages to societies and countries as a whole. Taking into account the clash of interests in the Eastern European region, assuming political responsibility and risks in critical geopolitical circumstances is required.

# Russia's Soft Power in Georgia – A Carnivorous Plant in Action

/Sergi Kapanadze/

Before 2012 Russia's soft power towards Georgia was limited. Due to worsening political and economic ties, which escalated into the total embargo of Georgian exports to Russia in 2006, and an invasion of Georgia and occupation of its two territories – Abkhazia and South Ossetia in 2008, Russia virtually lost all soft power leverages over Georgia.

In response to Russia's aggressive actions, Georgia's Government banned Russian TV channels in 2008,<sup>243</sup> export from Georgia to Russia decreased fivefold from 2005 to 2008,<sup>244</sup> and a war of words between Georgia's pro-Western United National Movement (UNM) Government and Putin's Kremlin ensued. Georgia's Government often used such terms as "Liliputin," dubbing Putin Georgia's enemy, calling Russians vandals and Mongols, and depicting Russia as a twenty first century empire, acting with nineteenth century tools. In August 2008 Russia and Georgia fought a 5-day war, which resulted in full occupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia by Russian forces, and recognition of the independence of these regions on 26 August 2008. In response diplomatic relations were severed by Georgia. In short relations between the two countries dropped to non-existent, as did the soft power potential of Russia for Georgians and their government.

In 2012 Georgia had their first peaceful transfer of power, as the new Government Georgian Dream (GD) and billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili defeated UNM in hotly contested elections, in which relations with Russia was a major electoral issue. UNM depicted Mr Ivanishvili who made his billions in 1990s Russia as Putin's stooge. Georgian Dream, in turn, alleged Georgia's policy towards Russia was short-sighted, Tbilisi was to blame for the August 2008 war, and that President Saakashvili was provoking Moscow deliberately with his unjustified and undue criticism of Moscow. Some GD supporters went as far as to develop a crazy argument that UNM was actually playing Russia's game, as a result of which it has deliberately given away territories, and sold all strategic infrastructure to Russia and Russian Government-controlled businesses.

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243 Natalia Vakhtangashvili, "Mikheil Saakashvili: Russian TV Channels are now allowed to broadcast in Georgia," *FastCheck*, March 21, 2015, <http://factcheck.ge/en/article/russian-tv-channels-are-now-allowed-to-broadcast-in-georgia>

244 "External Trade," National Statistics Office of Georgia, accessed April 21, 2015, [http://www.geostat.ge/index.php?action=page&p\\_id=137&lang=eng](http://www.geostat.ge/index.php?action=page&p_id=137&lang=eng)

Pre-election promises by the Georgian Dream coalition was to normalize relations with Russia.<sup>245</sup> From 2012 to 2015 the Georgian Government reversed all major trends making Georgia less dependent on Moscow. Trade with Russia increased, exports going up from 2 percent in 2012 to 10 percent of overall exports. Georgia did not restore diplomatic ties with Russia, however it restored the channel of communication. Since 2012 Georgia appointed Ambassador Zurab Abashidze as Special Representative of the Prime Minister on relations with Russia, who started bilateral discussions with Russia's deputy Foreign Minister Gregory Karasin. Georgia removed visa regimes with Russians, participated in the Olympic Games in Sochi, despite the unpopularity at home released Russian spies as a part of a country-wide amnesty of prisoners in 2013, and did not openly support Ukraine in the confrontation with Russia in 2014.

Thawing of relations between Tbilisi and Moscow, did not however come at the expense or as a result of Russia's changed actions and rhetoric in the region. Moscow's actions in Ukraine, war in Donbas, the annexation of Crimea, the signing of integrationist treaties with Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, "borderization" of administrative boundary lines, the deteriorating security situation in Moldova, and extremely belligerent rhetoric from the Kremlin serve as a backdrop for Georgian attempts to find a more workable modus operandi with Moscow.

It became crystal clear in recent years Russia does not accept its neighbors' quest to integrate into Western political, military, and economic systems. Whether membership of NATO, or signatures of Association Agreements and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade agreements, Russia is equally against them. If the Bucharest NATO Summit, which gave membership promises to Ukraine and Georgia was followed by Russia's war with Georgia in August 2008, the Revolution of Dignity in Ukraine was followed by the annexation of Crimea and war in Donbas.

Hence the strategic dilemma for the Eastern Partnership States Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. Should these countries continue their pro-Western paths at all costs, or should they pause and embrace Russia's soft power? Should they reject the benefits coming from Russia and choose a tough path of reforms convincing skeptics in the EU and NATO and managing public expectations? Absence of a clear guarantee about membership of these countries into NATO and the EU makes it ever harder for Governments of EaP states to push though

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245 *Pre-election program of the Georgian Dream Coalition* (2012), [https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&ct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CB8QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ivote.ge%2Fimages%2Fdoc%2Fpdfs%2Focnebis%2520saarchevno%2520programa.pdf&ei=0b0mVdXLDvWHsQSakYGIbg&usq=AFQjCNGJnuQZDmqb0R-eoRGHbkTwGPIjhw&sig2=oJ9t\\_jkz0K\\_G-JDEtqSIKQ&bvm=bv.90491159,d.cWc](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&ct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CB8QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ivote.ge%2Fimages%2Fdoc%2Fpdfs%2Focnebis%2520saarchevno%2520programa.pdf&ei=0b0mVdXLDvWHsQSakYGIbg&usq=AFQjCNGJnuQZDmqb0R-eoRGHbkTwGPIjhw&sig2=oJ9t_jkz0K_G-JDEtqSIKQ&bvm=bv.90491159,d.cWc)

the European agenda, completing disregarding Russia's interests. Damocles sword-like questions – “What if the reforms fail and we are outvoted from power?”, “What if skeptics refuse our membership into NATO and the EU?”, and “What if Russia starts a war to stop our integration?” hang in the air.

Meanwhile, the big question that needs to be answered is whether Russia has enough soft power instruments vis-à-vis Eastern Partnership States to make them change the European course without recourse to more destructive means, like military action and nuclear weapons?

In this chapter we will analyze the set of soft power instruments Russia utilized vis-à-vis Georgia after the change of Government in 2012.

Russia's soft power in Georgia can be compared with the power of carnivorous plants – the likes of *Dionaea Muscipula*, or *Utricularia*. Such plants are usually of a glowing color and they produce mucilage, or syrup-type secretions which attract insects and arachnoids. Once the victim is comfortably placed on the well-concealed trap-like leaf or fruit, usually after having gradually approached the final destination (a point of no return that they are unaware of), the carnivorous plant activates the suction function and the victim is “swallowed”.

Something similar can be said of Russia's soft power to attract. If a neighboring state becomes too attracted to it, too dependent on trade, or conduct of foreign policy, or security, the likelihood of Russia “swallowing” this neighbor is very high.

As Giorgi Muchaidze mentions in his 2014 article, Russia's approach can be summarized in the following way – “These are the good things you can get from me, but if you don't here are all the bad things that I am capable of!”<sup>246</sup> In this chapter we will look at the “good things” Russia offers Georgia and the “bad things” it threatens to do if Georgia continues to be a troubling neighbor.

## Russia's labor market as the chief attraction for Georgians

According to various estimates several hundred thousand to one million Georgian citizens have migrated to Russia since the dissolution of the Soviet Union.<sup>247</sup> Most of them work in Russia and send part of their earnings to Georgia. Remittances from Russia represent almost 50 percent of all (close to \$1.4 billion USD in 2014).<sup>248</sup>

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246 Giorgi Muchaidze, “Russia's Soft Power Offensive in Georgia”, *Georgian Review*, December 27, 2004, <http://georgianreview.ge/2014/12/russias-soft-power-offensive-in-georgia>

247 “Singled Out: Russia's Detention and Expulsion of Georgians,” *Human Rights Watch*, Volume 19, No 5 (d) (2007): 23, <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/russia1007webwcover.pdf>

248 “Money Transfers by Countries,” National Bank of Georgia, March 16, 2015, [https://www.nbg.gov.ge/uploads/moneytransfers/money\\_transfers\\_by\\_countries\\_eng.xls](https://www.nbg.gov.ge/uploads/moneytransfers/money_transfers_by_countries_eng.xls)

The Russian labor market is therefore very attractive for Georgians. In the last three years Russia gradually simplified visa regulations for Georgian citizens. Russia introduced a visa regime for Georgia in 2000 and has not removed it since then due to bad political relations between Tbilisi and Moscow. This happened despite the Georgian side removing visa requirements for Russian citizens in 2012.<sup>249</sup> In 2013, after the change of Georgia's Government, Russia simplified visa rules for journalists, scientists, and businessmen. Before 2013 a Russian citizen could only invite their closest relatives residing in Georgia, while after 2013 changes for the circle of relatives was expanded. Visa regulations were also softened for trade operators. According to Russia's deputy minister Gregory Karasin, the number of visas issued to Georgians increased by 40 percent in 2013.<sup>250</sup> Zurab Abashidze, Mr. Karasin's interlocutor in bilateral talks also confirmed in early 2014 that Russia had simplified the process of issuing visas for the citizens of Georgia and more Georgians traveled to Russia as a result.<sup>251</sup>

Opening Russia's labor market is particularly important for ethnic minorities residing in Georgia who have difficulties with the Georgian language and who therefore see employment opportunities in either Armenia, Azerbaijan, or Russia. In 2013-2014 several politicians raised the issue of increased migration of Javakheti Georgians of Armenian descent to Russia. Allegations were made that they were given Russian visas easily and were eventually receiving Russian citizenship as a result of a simplified procedure after only several months of being present in Russia.<sup>252</sup> This created a *deja-vu* feeling for many Georgians, reminding them of the passport-ization of Ossetian and Abkhaz populations in two currently occupied regions of Georgia.

It is true that opening the Russian labor market is a great relief for many Georgians who have struggled to find employment opportunities at home. According to Georgia's Statistics Office, official unemployment in Georgia was 14.6 percent in 2014, up from 13.8 percent in 2005, but down from 16.9 percent in 2009.<sup>253</sup>

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249 "Georgia lifts Visa Rules for Russia," *Civil Georgia*, March 1, 2012, <http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=24502>

250 "Georgians visiting Russia increases by 40%," *Agenda.ge*, February 13, 2014, <http://agenda.ge/news/8590/eng>

251 "When will Russia annul visa regime" (in Georgian), *Ambebi.ge*, January 22, 2014, <http://www.ambebi.ge/politika/95034-rosdis-gasasuqsmeps-russesthi-sasviszo-reszhims.html>

252 "I believe the topic of Javakheti is artificially activated by Russian special services," *Pirveli Information Agency*, April 22, 2014, [http://www.pia.ge/show\\_news.php?id=11815&lang=geo](http://www.pia.ge/show_news.php?id=11815&lang=geo)

253 "Employment and Unemployment," National Statistics Office of Georgia, accessed April 21, 2015, [http://www.geostat.ge/index.php?action=page&p\\_id=146&lang=eng](http://www.geostat.ge/index.php?action=page&p_id=146&lang=eng)

Russia still has a serious soft power card up its sleeve – full removal of visa requirement for Georgians. This could potentially trigger increased migration of Georgians to Russia. However, Russia uses this instrument as an incentive to force Georgia to restore diplomatic ties. As Karasin noted in an interview in 2012 it was “absurd” to talk about visa free agreements with Georgia, as Georgia and Russia had no diplomatic ties.<sup>254</sup> For Russia, the absence of diplomatic relations with Georgia remains a serious political problem, since it shows how its policy of ethnic division failed and how Georgia was “lost” to the West because of Russia’s inability to solve Tbilisi’s territorial problems with Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

However, the fact that a full removal of visa requirement could seriously change Georgia’s attitude is well recognized in Moscow. In December 2013 Vladimir Putin, in a brief commentary to the press, allowed the possibility of full visa-free travel for Georgians. This was immediately commended in Tbilisi by Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili, and chief negotiator with Russia Zurab Abashidze.<sup>255</sup> What needs to be noted is the context in which Putin made his remarks. The President of Russia stated that “he sees signals coming from the Government of Georgia” and that restoration of visa-free travel would contribute to the “fundamental final normalization of relations”.<sup>256</sup> This shows Putin clearly meant more conditions are expected to be implemented by Georgia, before visa-free travel becomes a reality. Russia could also be using visa-free travel as a counter-balance to visa liberalization with the EU. As is widely believed, Georgia will soon receive visa-free travel opportunities from the European Union. Russia could be waiting for this to counter with its own soft power instrument.

Attraction power related to labor market opportunities for Georgians was never unconditional for Russia. In return for easing the visa regime Russia requested a lifting of the Law on Occupied Territories, which criminalizes entry to Abkhazia and South Ossetia from Russia. Even though the Georgian side resisted “on the record”, in practice discussions were launched in Parliament to decriminalize the first crossing of the Russian-Georgian border segments of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and only fine wrongdoers with an

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254 “Peace talks between Georgia and Russia will be resumed at the end of the week,” *Vzгляд*, December 13, 2013, <http://www.vz.ru/news/2012/12/13/611617.print.html>

255 “Gharibashvili responds to Putin”, *Presa.ge*, December 19, 2013, <http://presa.ge/new/?m=politics&AID=23767>

256 Temur Kighuradze, “Will Russia remove visas for Georgians?” *BBC Russia*, December 20, 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/russia/2013/12/131219\\_georgia\\_visas\\_russia\\_putin](http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/russia/2013/12/131219_georgia_visas_russia_putin)

administrative fine.<sup>257</sup> The issue of changing the Law on Occupied Regions has been on the agenda of Georgian-Russian relations since the day of its introduction and Russia has always wanted to remove this piece of legislation as it creates problems for Russians willing to visit Georgia's occupied territories.<sup>258</sup>

Access to Russia's labor market is not without its costs, however. If things go wrong and Georgia crosses Russia in a serious way, ethnic Georgians living in Russia could be expelled from Russia without any questions asked, as in 2006. In 2006 Russian authorities expelled several thousand Georgians from Russia following the "spy scandal", in which Russian operatives were arrested in Georgia and demonstratively handed over to Moscow. The European Court of Human Rights found in 2014 that "in the autumn of 2006 a coordinated policy of arresting, detaining, and expelling Georgian nationals was put in place in the Russian Federation".<sup>259</sup> As a result of these expulsions two people died and the rights of thousands of others were gravely violated.

As noted elsewhere, "...obviously if Moscow decides to use Georgian migrants against Georgia, it can easily do so by repeating the events of 2006".<sup>260</sup> Even though it is unlikely that scenario could materialize out of the blue, there remains the danger that Russia could deport Georgians if Georgia goes against Russia's fundamental interests, in this case pursuing deeper European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

## Russia's economic soft power

In 2013 Russia decided to open its market for Georgian products, thus utilizing one of the most effective soft power tools it possessed – trade. In 2013-2014 the Russian agency for veterinary and phytosanitary control removed bans on Georgian wine, tea, nuts, cherry, tomatoes, potatoes, cucumbers, peppers, carrots, watermelons, melons, and other agriculture products.<sup>261</sup>

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257 "Georgia eases punishment for entering breakaway regions," *Democracy and Freedom Watch*, February 7, 2013, <http://dfwatch.net/georgia-eases-punishment-for-entering-breakaway-regions-80552-17593>

258 "Russia Warns Against Travel to Georgia", *Civil Georgia*, April 12, 2012, <http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=24657>

259 *Case of Georgia v. Russia*, Application no 13255/07, Judgment, July 3, 2014, European Court of Human Rights, <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/sites/eng/pages/search.aspx?i=001-145546>

260 Sergi Kapanadze, "Georgia's Vulnerability to Russian Pressure Points," *European Council of Foreign Relations*, June 19, 2014, [http://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/georgias\\_vulnerability\\_to\\_russian\\_pressure\\_points312](http://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/georgias_vulnerability_to_russian_pressure_points312)

261 "List of the quarantined products, allowed to the Russian Federation from Georgia", Federal Service for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance, accessed April 21, 2015, [http://fsvps.ru/fsvps-docs/ru/importExport/georgia/files/fito\\_product\\_georgia.pdf](http://fsvps.ru/fsvps-docs/ru/importExport/georgia/files/fito_product_georgia.pdf)

According to Mr Karasin and Mr Abashidze, opening the bilateral channel of communication in 2012 was the main reason why restoration of trade ties occurred. It is also noteworthy that Russia's accession to the WTO and the generous «green light» by Georgia played a fundamental role in the decision of Russia to trade with their neighbor by WTO rules. In 2013 Georgia's exports to Russia grew over four times from \$45.8 million USD in 2012, to \$190.3 million USD in 2013, and \$274 million USD in 2014. Exports to Russia are now higher in absolute numbers than in any other time since Georgia's independence. In 2014 exports to Russia constituted roughly 10 percent of Georgia's overall exports (\$274 million USD out of \$2.84 billion USD), while in 2006-2012 exports to Russia were never higher than 2 percent.<sup>262</sup> These numbers attest that if Russia was to close its market one of these days, in the manner of a carnivorous plant, very serious damages would be incurred to Georgia's economy. It is especially true in current circumstances when the biggest alternative market - Ukraine - is no longer reliable due to the ongoing conflict and economic problems.

The biggest attraction for the Russian market is Georgian wine-makers and mineral water producers. In 2012, a year before Russia opened the market for Georgian producers, total exports of mineral waters amounted to \$59 million USD, wine exports to \$65 million USD, and other alcoholic beverages to \$80 million USD. After the full restoration of exports to Russia these numbers have almost doubled in 2014, with mineral water exports reaching \$137 million USD, wines - \$180 million USD and other spirits - \$95 million USD.<sup>263</sup> Russia is a top destination for wine export, with 63 percent of total wine exports from Georgia going to Russia in 2014 (equating to approximately 37.6 million bottles).<sup>264</sup>

It should be noted that economic problems in Russia in 2014 and rapid depreciation of currency immediately affected Georgian wine exports to Russia. As Interfax reported in March 2015, in January-February 2015 Georgian wine exports to Russia reduced seven-fold, with only 1.7 million bottles entering Russia from Georgia.<sup>265</sup> In 2005, before Russia embargoed Georgian wine only 52 million bottles were exported to Russia and they constituted about 5 percent of the Russian wine market. Today's export statistics show Georgian wines have occupied almost 2.5 percent of the Russian market already.

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262 "External Trade," National Statistics Office of Georgia.

263 Ibid.

264 "Official statistics," Georgian Wine Agency, accessed April 21, 2015, <http://georgianwine.gov.ge/geo/text/133>

265 "Georgian wine's export to Russia declined sevenfold," *iBusiness*, March 24, 2015, <http://ibusiness.ge/qartuli-ghvinis-eqsporti-rusetshi-7-jer-shemcirda>

Most importantly, export to Russia now constitutes 40 percent of total Georgian wine exports, which clearly demonstrates Georgian wine producers are becoming dependent on Russian market.<sup>266</sup>

Another area of soft power from Russia is in Foreign Direct Investments to Georgia. Since 2012 investments have risen from Russia to pre-2008 war levels. In 2007, almost \$89 million dollars were invested by Russian companies in the Georgian economy, which constituted 4.39 percent of total investments in Georgia (over \$2 billion USD in 2007). In 2008-2013 total Russian investments in Georgia were over \$162 million dollars, which constituted roughly 2.7 percent of total FDI. In 2014, however Russian investments increased to \$66 million USD, which is about 5.17 percent of the total FDI. Even though the increase of investments from Russia is obvious, it has to be noted numbers might actually be high, since many Russian investors could be contributing from a number of offshore companies which do not fall statistically under “Russian investments”. One way or another, even though Russian investments in Georgia are on the rise, they do not represent a serious input in the Georgian economy, since its largest investors still remain EU countries (\$640 million USD in 2014), China (\$195 million USD in 2014), United States (\$79 million USD in 2014) and Turkey (\$67 million USD in 2014).<sup>267</sup>

Analysis of the shares of Russia’s investments in Georgia’s economy in the last 15 years shows that at no time since 1996 did Russia have more than a 10 percent share of Georgia’s total FDI. This leaves Moscow without the serious tools to damage the Georgian economy via compelling Russia-based companies’ investments. However, there is another important instrument through which Russia and pro-Russian forces could influence the investment climate in Georgia. In 2013 the Government of Georgia created the Georgian Co-investment Fund, a private investment vehicle which aims at-financing projects with other private investors. According to Bidzina Ivanishvili, the GCF received \$6 billion USD from private investors, which is 38 percent of Georgia’s GDP.<sup>268</sup>

The structure of the GCF is very complex. It is registered in the Cayman Islands with two subsidiaries, one in Hong Kong and another in Luxembourg. The Fund is managed by the Georgian company GCF Partners, which is co-owned by Giorgi Bachiasvili, head of the GCF (42 percent), Russian-based oligarch Levan Vasadze (16 percent) and Ucha Mamatsashvili, cousin

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266 “Georgian wine’s export to Russia declined sevenfold.”

267 “Foreign Direct Investments,” National Statistics Office of Georgia, accessed April 21, 2015, [http://geostat.ge/index.php?action=page&p\\_id=140&lang=eng](http://geostat.ge/index.php?action=page&p_id=140&lang=eng)

268 Eva Anderson, “New USD 6bn Georgian Co-Investment Fund: Transparency will play a role in its success,” *Transparency International Georgia*, November 26, 2013, <http://transparency.ge/en/blog/new-usd-6bn-georgian-co-investment-fund-transparency-will-play-role-its-success>

of former Prime Minister Ivanishvili (42 percent).<sup>269</sup> As for investments in the Fund, even though they lack transparency, one glance is enough to ascertain the potential of increasing Russian influence there. At the launch of the Fund, Giorgi Bachiashvili announced the Dhabi Group (United Arab Emirates – UAE), RAK Investment Authority (UAE), the State Oil Fund of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Batumi Industrial Holdings Limited (owned by the Kazakh state-owned KazTransOil), Calik Holdings A.S (Turkey), Milestone International Holdings Group Limited (China), Bidzina Ivanishvili, Alexander Mashkevich, and the estate of the late Georgian oligarch Badri Patarkatsishvili, will be investors in the GCF.<sup>270</sup> While no concrete numbers are yet known, the presence of the likes of Mr Vasadze in management of the GCF and Mr Mashkevich, a Kazakh billionaire with an Israeli passport on the list of potential investors raises doubts about the potential Russian influence on the investment climate in Georgia.

Another potential area for Russian soft power is energy. It is clear that Russia has used energy dependency as a major instrument for reaching political goals in the Neighborhood. Be it Ukraine in recent years, the Baltic States in the 1990s, or Georgia until 2006, energy was one of the strongest tools in the Kremlin's hands. However since 2006, Georgia diversified its energy supplies and hardly depends on Russia any more in terms of the supply of electricity and gas. Official statistics show that no more than 10 percent of Georgia's gas consumption comes from Russia. In 2013 Georgia imported almost 1.5 times less natural gas from Russia than in 2010, while the total value of the imported gas stood at only 107 million USD (less than 10 percent of total gas imports). The main supplier of natural gas to Georgia is Azerbaijan, who provides 500 million cubic meters for \$189 USD and 400 million cubic meters for 240 USD. In addition to this supply Georgia receives gas from the Shahdeniz pipeline (250 million cubic meters for 55 USD and 500 million cubic meters for 64 USD), and Russian-Armenian pipeline transit (around 150 million cubic meters for 110 USD).<sup>271</sup> Even though these prices are cheap compared with European prices, the Government attempted in 2012 to diversify the supply further and allegedly reached out to Kazakh suppliers, who would have to transport their gas through Russia, thus giving further leverage to Moscow. This issue became highly politicized in 2013, when still President Saakashvili slammed such plans as contradictory to national security.<sup>272</sup> As

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269 Ibid.

270 Eva Anderson.

271 "Government of Georgia changes mind regarding import of Russian gas," *Mediamall.ge*, June 14, 2014, <http://press.mediamall.ge/?id=11145>

272 Molly Corso, "Georgia: no plans to import more Russian gas," *Natural Gas Europe*, March 21, 2013, <http://www.naturalgaseurope.com/georgia-russian-gas-imports>

a result Energy minister Kakha Kaladze denied the attempts to receive more gas from Kazakhstan in 2013, and deputy minister Mariam Valishvili stated in 2014 that no more efforts were undertaken to further diversify gas supply.<sup>273</sup>

In electricity, Georgia's dependence on Russia has been growing recently. In 2010 Georgia was exporting to Russia at least five times more electricity than importing. As of 2014, however, the trend is reversed, as Georgia now imports almost 3.5 times more from Russia than exports back to it. This is a result of a growing consumption in Georgia, as well as the lack of availability of alternative supplies through import. Statistical data shows that if in 2010 roughly 45 percent of total electricity imports were from Russia, in 2013 this number has gone over 90 percent and dropped just below 80 percent in 2014.<sup>274</sup>

Moreover, in the energy sector several serious Russian companies are operating in Georgia. Inter RAO owns 40 power plants and 13 hydroelectric power plants (HPP) in Georgia, including some of the biggest power plants like Mtkvari Power station (capacity – 600 MW), Khrami 1 (112.8 MW) and Khrami 2 (114.4 MW).<sup>275</sup> Inter RAO also plans to expand its hold on Georgia's energy sector by building another power plant with a capacity of 100 MW.<sup>276</sup> Inter RAO is also a distributor of electricity to the population through AES Telasi. The total length of electric cables that Inter RAO owns is 4593 km, whereas the number of subscribers to its services is over 540 thousand people.<sup>277</sup> Inter RAO is also a serious actor in relation to the Enguri HPP, which is one of the major producers of cheap electricity for Georgia. The HPP is co-located on the territory of Abkhazia and represents one of the few infrastructure projects managed together by the Abkhaz and Georgians despite the conflict. Inter RAO renewed its partnership with Georgia even after the August 2008 war, as wounds of the conflict were still fresh.<sup>278</sup>

Among other serious Russian companies, who are present in Georgia one has to note Lukoil, Vneshtorgbank (VTB), Wimbildan, and Beeline. However, neither of these companies represent a monopoly in the field of their activities. In recent months the Georgian public has been actively following the discussion regarding the entry of Rosneft into the Poti Port, a strategic port at the Black

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273 "Government of Georgia changes mind regarding import of Russian gas," *Mediamall.ge*, June 14, 2014, <http://press.mediamall.ge/?id=11145>

274 "Electricity Import/Export Statistics," ESCO – Electricity Market Operator, accessed April 21, 2015, [http://esco.ge/index.php?article\\_id=43&clang=1](http://esco.ge/index.php?article_id=43&clang=1)

275 "Generation," Inter RAO, accessed April 21, 2015, <http://interrao.ru/activity/generation>

276 "Innovation, Investments and Energy Efficiency," Inter RAO, April 21, 2015, <http://interrao.ru/activity/investing>

277 "Foreign Business," Inter RAO, accessed April 21, 2015, <http://interrao.ru/activity/foreignact>

278 "Inter RAO signs the Memorandum about the effective exploitation of the Enguri HPP," Inter RAO, December 31, 2008, [http://www.interrao.ru/presscenter/news/?ELEMENT\\_ID=625&sphrase\\_id=63761](http://www.interrao.ru/presscenter/news/?ELEMENT_ID=625&sphrase_id=63761)

Sea. Rosneft bought 49 percent of shares in the Poti port from Petrocas Energy Ltd, a company owned by Russian businessman Davit Yakobashvili who started leaving the Georgian market after the change of power in 2012. As a result of the business deal, which was not agreed upon with the Government of Georgia, Rosneft now owns a serious share in the port to the dismay of the Georgian Government.<sup>279</sup> Thus, in recent years Russia has become an increasingly important economic partner for Georgia, and this trend carries with it certain risks.

## **New infrastructure ideas as new soft power instruments**

It is no secret that a serious game-changer in Georgia's ethnic politics and in general relations with Russia was a so-called "project of the century" in 1984. The 3.7 km long Roki tunnel located at the altitude of 2-3 thousand meters connected Russia with Georgia and opened new trade and transportation possibilities between the two Soviet republics. Those who opposed the Roki tunnel in the 1980s, basing their concerns on the fears of Moscow exploiting ethnic relations between Georgians and Ossetians, saw their worst fears come true first in the 1990s when the Roki Tunnel was used to channel Russian troops and armaments in support of Ossetian separatist, then again in 2008 when the Russian regular army marched into Georgia during the five day war, effectively cutting South Ossetia away from the rest of Georgia.

This is a good reminder of how large infrastructure projects proposed by Russia could be used for political purposes. In 2013-2015 Russia proposed at least two new regional infrastructure projects.

First in 2013-2014 discussions started about the possibility of opening the railway link from Russia to Armenia through Abkhazia. This idea, publicly endorsed by then prime-Minister Ivanishvili, as well as a number of Georgian politicians,<sup>280</sup> was supposedly shot down in Baku, who is uneasy about any major infrastructure project in which Armenia would play a major role. However, until recently Georgian politicians have repeated the possibility of the railway link being restored. The Abkhaz railway was closed down after conflict erupted in 1990s in Abkhazia. If restored it could connect Russia with Armenia, thus facilitating trade and movement of people. It could also be beneficial for Abkhaz, who could become more integrated with regional economic projects. However, for Tbilisi, unless the link could be used to increase

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279 "Georgia's economy minister condemns Rosneft's purchase of the Poti port," *Agenda.ge*, January 22, 2015, <http://agenda.ge/news/28491/eng>

280 "Ivanishvili Believes that Abkhaz Railway Will Open for Sure," *Netgazeti.ge*, April 23, 2013, <http://www.netgazeti.ge/GE/105/News/18910>

people-to-people ties with Abkhazia and an eventual conflict resolution end, the railway will remain purposeless.<sup>281</sup>

In 2014 Russia voiced the idea of constructing a highway connecting Russia's Dagestan region with Georgia's Kakheti region (Eastern Georgia). This highway would have to go through a very complex mountainous region, and would cost hundreds of millions of dollars, but, presumably this is an adequate price for the goal it would achieve - linking Georgia's wine producing Kakheti region even more closely with Russia.

Ideas for new infrastructure projects have been heavily criticized by opposition parties and movements in Georgia. Non-governmental organizations have also expressed protest at plans to build the highway. In response, the Government of Georgia claims no such plans are known and if Russia wants to build the infrastructure on its side of the border they are entitled to do so.<sup>282</sup> The Government of Georgia on several occasions denied there was ever a discussion of this infrastructure project with Russia, however it would seem almost impossible that for Russia to start such a project without being sure a road link connecting their border with the Georgian highway would be restored too. The proposed project would complete a Caspian to Black Sea highway, which currently requires building 80 km. of road, five tunnels through the Eastern Caucasus Mountains and about twenty bridges.<sup>283</sup> As former foreign minister Vashadze noted, Russia would not spend \$2.5 billion dollars just to "enjoy the view of the mountains in Kvareli" [a town in Kakheti].<sup>284</sup>

As an element of restoring infrastructure and transportation links one has to mention the restoration of regular air transportation links between Georgia and Russia since 2014 - allegedly also deliverable from dialogue between Abashidze and Karasin. Since then, flights from Moscow and Tbilisi have intensified and new companies, like Siberian Airlines, have entered the Georgian air market. A license to fly to Georgia was issued by Russia's Federal Aviation agency to seven airlines - Aeroflot; VIM Airlines; Globus; Sibir Airlines; Transaero; Ural Airlines; and UTair.<sup>285</sup>

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281 Nino Edilashvili, "Sergi Kapanadze skeptical over government's Russia rhetoric," *Georgia Today* 639 (2012), [http://www.georgiatoday.ge/article\\_details.php?id=10610](http://www.georgiatoday.ge/article_details.php?id=10610)

282 Kavkazskii Uzel, "Georgia's Security Council Does not Consider the Construction of the Avara-Kakhetian Highway to be a Threat," *Кавказский Узел*, December 14, 2014, <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/254056>

283 "Georgia's MFA Decided to Study the Issue of a Railroad," Free Zone News Agency, October 14, 2014, <http://bit.ly/1njE2qx>

284 "Vashadze: why does Russia spend so much money to enjoy the view of the mountains?" *Грузия Online*, October 14, 2014, <http://www.apsny.ge/2014/mil/1413321236.php>

285 "Russia's Aeroflot Resumes Georgia Flights," *Civil Georgia*, October 27, 2014, <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=27747>

## Mass media and propaganda

Russian soft power is also increasingly visible in mass media. Pro-Russian newspapers, which have a very strong anti-Western position are gaining popularity. Newspapers and news agencies like Sakinform, Asaval-Dasavali, Alia, and Georgia and the World are widely circulated and are some of the most read by Georgian public. Analysis of the regular digests “No to Phobia” created by the Media Development Foundation and Georgia’s Democratic Initiative show that aforesaid editions are constantly propagating anti-Western attitudes, express xenophobic, homophobic, and misogynic attitudes, and often call for violence.<sup>286</sup> A brief glimpse at the headlines of the Georgia and the World news agency, which produces the printed weekly newspaper, is enough to see the resemblance with old Soviet-type propaganda. The majority of headlines inform the readers that “A Eurasian Union would be fine for us”<sup>287</sup> and that “Russia is our eternal neighbor.”<sup>288</sup> News coverage of western countries range from the Pentagon losing track of \$500 million (USD) as it assisted Yemen<sup>289</sup> to American policemen killing more people in March 2015 than the entire UK police since 1900.<sup>290</sup>

The Russian influence in Georgian media was heavily felt heavily Maestro TV’s majority shareholder, Russian businessman Kote Gogelia decided to change the TV company’s editorial policy firing journalists for allegedly “crossing red lines” in reporting and their willingness to create more “pro-Georgian” editorial policy (clearly opposed to more pro-Western coverage).<sup>291</sup> Even though the owners denied the Russian factor, a change of Maestro’s editorial policy has been obvious since 2014.

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286 Website of *No to Phobia!*, April 21, 2015, <http://notophobia.org>

287 “Gogi Topadze: Eurasian Union will be just fine for us,” *Georgia & World*, March 25, 2015, <http://www.geworld.ge/View.php?ArtId=2602&Title=Gogi+Topadze:++Eurasian+Union+would+be+just+fine+for+us&lang=en>

288 “Zaza Papuashvili: Russia is our eternal neighbor,” *Georgia & World*, March 25, 2015, <http://www.geworld.ge/View.php?ArtId=2607&Title=Zaza+Papuashvili:+Russia+is+our+eternal+neighbor%E2%80%A6+We+got+worries,+water+and+diapers+from+the+West!&lang=en>

289 “Pentagon loses track of \$500 million in weapons, equipment given to Yemen,” *Georgia & World*, March 25, 2015, [http://www.geworld.ge/View.php?ArtId=2604&Title=Pentagon+loses+track+of+\\$500+million+in+weapons,+equipment+given+to+Yemen&lang=en](http://www.geworld.ge/View.php?ArtId=2604&Title=Pentagon+loses+track+of+$500+million+in+weapons,+equipment+given+to+Yemen&lang=en)

290 “American police kill more people in March than the entire UK police since 1900,” *Georgia & World*, March 25, 2015, [http://www.geworld.ge/View.php?ArtId=2620&Title=American+police+killed+more+people+in+March+\(111\)+than+the+entire+UK+police+have+killed+since+1900&lang=en](http://www.geworld.ge/View.php?ArtId=2620&Title=American+police+killed+more+people+in+March+(111)+than+the+entire+UK+police+have+killed+since+1900&lang=en)

291 “Zhizhilashvili: Gogelia told me that Maestro should have pro-Georgian editorial policy and that I crossed all red lines,” *News.ge*, December December 23, 2014, <http://news.ge/ge/news/story/117748-zhizhilashvili-gogeliam-mitkhra-rom-arkhis-politika-proqartuli-unda-yofiliyo-da-me-yelanairi-tsiteli-khazi-gadavkvet>

The most important gesture influencing Georgian domestic media came in November 2014 when Moscow launched a Russia Today (RT) controlled news agency – Sputnik. According to the web site of the agency, Georgia was supposed to be one of the host cities together with 129 other cities in 34 countries.<sup>292</sup> Sputnik started broadcasting in 2014 very briefly, when Radio Monte Carlo FM allotted airtime to Russia Today. Around the same time Sputnik started broadcasting in Abkhazia and plans to start broadcasting in South Ossetia.<sup>293</sup> Georgia’s Government did respond to Sputnik’s attempts to become established in Tbilisi, as shortly after it started broadcasting the Georgian National Communication Commission suspended its communications as it did not hold a broadcasting license.<sup>294</sup> Sputnik is widely viewed as a serious tool of Russian propaganda throughout Europe. Actions by the Government of Lithuania, who suspended its broadcasting in April 2015 are good proof of this.<sup>295</sup>

Civil society organizations, political parties, and the Church as the biggest soft power assets.

The biggest assets of Russia’s soft power projection in Georgia are organizations that clearly support Russia, or the Russian agenda in Georgia. Among such organizations are some elements of the Georgian Orthodox Church, political parties with a clear pro-Russian agenda (Nino Burjanadze’s Democratic Alliance, Irma Inashvili’s Alliance of Patriots and Kakha Kukava’s Free Georgia), and civil society organizations affiliated with the Kremlin.

According to opinion polls, approval ratings of the Georgian Orthodox Church - namely, head of the Church Patriarch Ilia II - has been more than 90 percent for almost twenty years.<sup>296</sup> In polls carried out by the International Republican Institute (IRI), most Georgians place high importance and confidence on the Church, as 94 percent of respondents said the Church is the most trusted institution.<sup>297</sup> According to data provided by Transparency International Georgia, public financing provided to the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) during the period 2002-2013 amounted to approximately 200 million GEL. If in 2003 the GOC was receiving a little less than 1 million, by 2007

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292 “Major New Media Brand Sputnik goes live November 10,” *Sputnik*, November 10, 2014, <http://sputniknews.com/russia/20141110/1014569630.html>

293 *Ibid.*

294 “Major New Media Brand Sputnik goes live November 10,” *Sputnik*, 2014.

295 “Lithuania bans Russian TV station,” *EU Observer*, April 9, 2015, <https://euobserver.com/tickers/128274>

296 “Political Ratings in NDI Commissioned Poll,” *Civil Georgia*, August 27, 2014, <http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=27616>

297 “Public Opinion Survey: residents of Georgia; February 3-28 2015,” accessed April 21, 2015, International Republican Institute, [http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/iri\\_georgia\\_public\\_2015\\_final\\_0.pdf](http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/iri_georgia_public_2015_final_0.pdf)

numbers jumped up to 13 million, and 26 million in 2009. Financing gradually decreased to 22.8 million in 2012. However, in 2013 and 2014 financing of the GOC was back up to 25 million GEL per year.

High approval ratings of the Church and its rich coffers would not be a problem if clerics did not attempt to influence politics and policy-making. Usually this influence is not in favor of the country's democratic development and European integration. Intervention from priests also infringes on the principle of the separation of Church and State.

The GOC's involvement in politics and electoral process has been ubiquitous and mainly concerns the role and status of minorities (ethnic, religious, sexual), but also taking sides in the political confrontation between the two main political parties - Georgian Dream's ruling coalition and the opposition United National Movement.

When we speak of the Church, it is notable the GOC consists of several competing factions obviously struggling for the eventual post of Patriarch, after the ailing Patriarch Ilia II passes away. Ilia II's influence during the last thirty years has been fundamental and has therefore often affected the political situation in the country. The Church is ruled by the Holy Synod, which consists of 36 bishops. The Synod is not a homogeneous body and there are a few informal groupings in the Church created around one or more influential clerics. Because of such internal confrontations the main position adopted by the Patriarch is not always shared throughout the Church. Various factions provide their own interpretations of the Patriarch's statements, as well as their own interpretation of political events in the country and internationally.

It is believed there are three main centers of power within the Church. The first is around the Metropolitan of Batumi Dmitri, who is a nephew and protégé of the Patriarch. This group owns serious financial and human resources and is considered to be a frontrunner in the competition to take over the Patriarch's post after Ilia II. This group is considered to be extremely pro-Russian, against Western values, and against the principle of secularism. Chorbishop Jakob is from this group.

The second grouping within the Church is around the Metropolitan Iob, and it is the most radical faction in the Church. Iob has often publicly disagreed with decisions of the Synod and confronted policies of the government, including such issues as biometric ID cards. Iob has mobilized the most radical groups inside the Church and is suspected of having good relations with the criminal world and Russian businessmen - however all these rumors are anecdotal. Inside the Church, it is believed that Iob's ascent to the Patriarch's throne could be a very confrontational step towards the government, and principle of secularism.

The third faction in the Church is led by the Metropolitan Abraam Garmelia; he is in charge of the European parish. This is the only group which has a more or less pro-European orientation and negative stance towards Russia. Metropolitan Garmelia is personally very influential and has served in the Holy Synod for a long period. He has good ties with the UNM government and was poised to take over the Holy Synod and the GOC after the death of the Patriarch. However, the outcome of the 2012 elections decreased his chances. He still remains influential in the Synod and has a strong group of supporters.

The Church often intervenes in public policy making and the positions it takes are very much in line with the Russian agenda in Georgia. A negative stance of the church on issues of non-discrimination, minority rights, European integration, and others, coincide with Russian interests in Georgia.

The most notable instance of the Church's intervention in public life concerned anti-discrimination legislation passed in 2014, which introduced the notions of "Sexual orientation" and "gender identity" as grounds for prohibiting discrimination. On the 30 April, Orthodox groups and priests rallied in Tbilisi and Kutaisi to protest adoption of the anti-discrimination law. Moreover, a few days earlier, on 28 April, the GOC propagated that believers should be against the proposed anti-discrimination bill because it is "propaganda" and "legalizes" a "deadly sin" - because the bill includes the words "sexual orientation" and "gender identity" as prohibited grounds for discrimination. During parliamentary hearings regarding the proposed bill, several clerics were in attendance and left the session in protest. One cleric explained: "Confronting the Church and the nation will do no good to the present government. You have the example of the previous government, and now you are doing even worse." This attitude of the Church is well in line with the official Russian position and Kremlin propaganda on the unacceptability of "gay propaganda" and negative influence of "Gayropa".

Outside of the major political parties there are a few smaller parties who support Russia and who are gaining momentum as disappointment with the Government rises. They do not affect the political landscape significantly at this stage, however they could play an important role in the new electoral cycle from 2016. Former Speaker of the Parliament Nino Burjanadze of the Democratic Movement United Georgia and the political bloc United Opposition, scored between 10-12 percent in the last elections. Burjanadze managed to garner 10.19 percent of votes in the 2013 presidential campaign (third place), and opposition led by her gathered 10.23 percent of votes during the local 2014 elections. Her proposed mayoral candidate for Tbilisi gathered 12.82 percent of votes. In 2014, Burjanadze created a coalition of smaller parties uniting them in the United Opposition bloc. The most notable of Burjanadze's partners are the

Christian Democrats, who were the only opposition party in the UNM-dominated parliament in 2008-2012, but who were always accused of being UNM stooges. Burjanadze is well known for defying the idea of Western integration as counterproductive and damaging to Georgia's security. She is in favor of normalization relations with Moscow. In a very unpopular, but characteristic move Burjanadze visited Moscow in 2010 and met with Vladimir Putin.<sup>298</sup>

Among other pro-Russian parties, one needs to mention the ultra-nationalist Patriots' Alliance, which gathered close to 5 percent in previous local elections. Led by Irma Inashvili and supported by ultra-nationalist, chauvinist media house Obieqtivi, the Patriots' Alliance advocates for pro-Georgian policies, and expresses clear antagonism towards national minorities, political opposition, Western-orientation of Georgia, Western culture, and pluralism in general.

Kakha Kukava's party "Free Georgia" is one of those parties that have not managed to enter either the Parliament or show serious results in any elections in the last five years. However, Kukava managed to get the reputation of a pro-Russian politician, especially after visiting Moscow in 2011 and raising the issue of restoring exports of Georgian wine with Russian authorities.<sup>299</sup>

According to the 2015 International Republican Institute's survey,<sup>300</sup> "if the parliamentary elections were held next Sunday" 5 percent would choose Burjanadze and Inashvili as first place choices and a further 4-5 percent as a second choice. The Labor party, who is another anti-Western political force in Georgia has 6 percent as first and second choice. These numbers show that pro-Russian forces could add up to 15-18 percent in the next parliamentary elections. This could be a serious game changer, since it is unlikely that either the Georgian Dream coalition, or United National Movement would gather more than 50 percent of votes and win an outright majority. Therefore anti-Russian parties could have "king making" privileges in the nearest elections.

Together with the political parties and Church one has to mention a number of active non-governmental organizations, who have become omnipresent in the last three years. As Michael Cecire noted in his Foreign Policy piece earlier this year,<sup>301</sup> there are quite a few "...innocuously named pro-Russian groups like the "Eurasian Institute", "Eurasian Choice", and "The Earth

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298 Ilya Azar, "Nino Burjanadze on Meeting Vladimir Putin," *Telegraph*, March 16, 2010, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sponsored/rbth/politics/7456514/Georgian-opposition-leader-Nino-Burjanadze-on-meeting-Russia-Prime-Minister-Vladimir-Putin.html>

299 Giorgi Putkaradze, "Kukava: Export to Russia Will Start and This is the Credit of Our Party," *Resonance Daily*, September, 5, 2011, [http://www.resonancedaily.com/index.php?id\\_rub=2&id\\_artc=7519](http://www.resonancedaily.com/index.php?id_rub=2&id_artc=7519)

300 "Public Opinion Survey: residents of Georgia; February 3-28 2015."

301 Michael Cecire, "The Kremlin Pulls on Georgia," *Foreign Policy*, March 9, 2014, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/03/09/the-kremlin-pulls-on-georgia>

Is Our Home”. Many of these organizations pop in and out of existence as needed — the “Peace Committee of Georgia” one week, something else the next — but they are often tied to the same group of pro-Russian ideologues and policy entrepreneurs who make regular pilgrimages to Moscow and, according to Georgian officials in the ruling party and opposition, almost certainly receive Kremlin funding. Their common message isn’t high-church Russian apologia or Soviet nostalgia, but rather “Eurasianism” and “Orthodox civilization” — Kremlin shorthand for “Putinism”. Appeals to Georgian social conservatism, economic vulnerability, and lingering anger over past government abuses are winning converts within a population increasingly impatient with Georgia’s unrequited love affair with the West.”

## Sports, culture, and human dialogue

Since the restoration of dialogue in 2012 Russia has become extremely active in financing various sports activities, promoting cultural links, conducting various concerts, and in general supporting activities that foster ties between Georgian and Russian interest groups.

A number of meetings have been held since 2012 between Georgian and Russian civil society actors, think-tanks and academics, with an aim of understanding each other better and devising creative solutions on how to solve the impasse in which the two countries’ relations finds itself. These meetings were supported by various international donor organizations, including Russian think-tanks like the Gorchakov Foundation – a think-tank with close links to the Kremlin. The author of this chapter has taken part in at least four such meetings over the last three years, and a general observation is that Russian civil society received a “green light” to talk to Georgian colleagues and make them understand that certain issues of problematic character in bilateral relations (read – Abkhazia and South Ossetia) will not be discussed and agreed upon between the two countries.

A number of Russian companies and organizations established in Georgia have actively become visible in promoting and supporting sports and cultural activities. VTB Bank, a daughter company of VneshtorgBank of Russia has since 2012 become a general sponsor of the Georgian National Rugby team, Georgian Equestrian Federation,<sup>302</sup> Georgian Gymnastics Federation,<sup>303</sup> and Georgian Water Polo national team. VTB Bank has also supported the

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302 “Equestrian Federation,” *VTB Georgia*, accessed April 21, 2015, <http://en.vtb.ge/about/society/sport/horse>

303 “Gymnastics,” *VTB Georgia*, accessed April 21, 2015, <http://en.vtb.ge/about/society/sport/gym>

basketball team from Kutaisi,<sup>304</sup> a football club Saburtalo from Tbilisi<sup>305</sup> and a Rugby club Locomotive.<sup>306</sup>

VTB Bank has also financed and supported a number of cultural activities, sponsoring Telavi dramatic theater,<sup>307</sup> Tbilisi Rustaveli Theater,<sup>308</sup> Kutaisi Theater,<sup>309</sup> and partnering with a popular charity fund Iavnana.<sup>310</sup>

Russia also opened its education market for Georgian students which was very restricted before 2012. In 2013-2014 Russia allocated 92 stipends for Georgian students who received the opportunity to study in 20 universities across Russia. Another 90 Georgians will be allowed to study in Russia in 2015-2016.<sup>311</sup>

## Soft power wrapped in hard security

Russia's soft power toolkit, as demonstrated above, is quite rich, however the biggest "soft" influence it could exert on Georgia is over its occupied territories. Abkhazia and South Ossetia have been occupied since 2008 and have remained a major apple of discord between Georgia and Russia. In 2008 after the five-day war with Georgia, Russia recognized the independence of these regions and attempted to gain their international recognition. Through a mixture of military incentives, monetary assistance, and personal bribes, only Venezuela, Nicaragua, Nauru, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu followed Russia's quest. Soon after however, Vanuatu (in 2012) and Tuvalu (in 2014) reversed their recognitions.

Russia's soft power could be best used if it promises Georgia to help solve its territorial problems. In such a case, the Government of Georgia could be expected to compromise on major issues, even on European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations, though such move would be extremely unpopular among pro-

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304 "VTB Bank (Georgia) becomes sponsor of Kutaisi basketball team," *VTB Georgia*, accessed April 21, 2015, <http://en.vtb.ge/about/society/sport/basketball>

305 "'Saburtalo" Football Club," *VTB Georgia*, accessed April 21, 2015, <http://en.vtb.ge/about/society/sport/saburtalo>

306 "Rugby," *VTB Georgia*, accessed April 21, 2015, <http://en.vtb.ge/about/society/sport/rugby>

307 "Telavi drama theatre," *VTB Georgia*, accessed April 21, 2015, [http://en.vtb.ge/about/society/culture/telavi\\_drama\\_theatre](http://en.vtb.ge/about/society/culture/telavi_drama_theatre)

308 "VTB Bank – General Sponsor of Rustaveli Theatre," *VTB Georgia*, accessed April 21, 2015, <http://en.vtb.ge/about/society/culture/rustavelitheatre>

309 "Kutaisi drama theatre," *VTB Georgia*, accessed April 21, 2015, <http://en.vtb.ge/about/society/culture/kutaisitheatre>

310 "VTB Bank charity organization" (in Georgian), *VTB Georgia*, accessed April 21, 2015, <http://ge.vtb.ge/about/news/218552>

311 "Russian universities are starting to accept Georgian students for no price," *Pirweli Information Agency*, February 13, 2015, [http://pia.ge/show\\_news.php?id=34512&lang=geo](http://pia.ge/show_news.php?id=34512&lang=geo)

Western political parties and the wider population in general. But before Russia uses this technique, it is more likely to use a different approach – threatening Georgia’s Government with the annexation of its territories similar to Crimea and asking all kinds of favors in return. In 2014-2015 Russia signed treaties of integration with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, underlying to the whole world that it could easily swallow these regions at any time, at its convenience.

Georgia currently has no anti-annexation strategy, and neither does any other country in the world. Like Ukraine, Georgia will have serious problems on an international arena, fighting the legitimacy of annexed territories. Therefore, Russia can easily manipulate the Government of Georgia, promising not to annex, and seeking favors in return. This approach in Georgia’s case could be extremely successful, since instead of addressing the Government as a collective body, Russia only has to persuade Mr Ivanishvili, who is widely believed to be still running Georgian politics, while formally playing no part in the government.

As soft power techniques, Russia could use other promises too – such as a commitment not to break international negotiations, or assurances to not seek further international recognitions of the two regions. While not credible, such promises could actually serve certain diplomatic goals in the short-term perspective.

## **Conclusion and recommendations: How to counter Russian propaganda?**

Countering Russia’s soft power is extremely hard, but not impossible. There are a few things the Government of Georgia can do to minimize the damage from Russia and at the same time enjoy the fruits of trade and inter-cultural relations.

- First of all, the Government should develop a strategy of not becoming overdependent on Moscow in terms of economic relations, investments, trade, and energy. Any overdependence is prone to bring political meddling from Moscow as has often happened in Georgia and other neighboring countries.
- Second, Georgia should think carefully before agreeing to such infrastructure projects that will connect Georgia with Russia, in ways that will jeopardize the country’s security and geopolitical credentials. This was overlooked in 1984 when the Roki tunnel was built and the price paid was very high. Several new ideas proposed by Moscow obviously

aim at the similar kind of results the Roki tunnel brought about. These projects have to be shot down instantly.

- Third, Georgia with Russia should continue seeking various opportunities for dialogue, however it also needs to clearly delineate between anti-Russian diplomatic work (which needs to continue) and anti – Russian rhetoric (which needs to be suspended). In recent years Georgia slowed down anti-Russian diplomatic work, choosing not to implement the Agreement that Russia signed with Georgia upon Russia’s accession to the WTO and choosing not to pursue anti-Russian legal tracks in various international courts.
- Fourth, Georgia has to become more active against Russian media propaganda in the country. Minority-populated regions can only watch Russian TV and read newspapers of which the majority are anti-Western. The suspension of a regional Russian language broadcaster - First Caucasian Channel (PIK) in 2013 was a mistake. Such a channel was needed to deliver Georgia’s message not only to its Russian language population but to Russian public as well. Georgia now needs to resist the pressure to allow more Russian propaganda channels in the country. In the situation when Government is implementing painful reforms needed for European integration, any media channel that will blame pain on the European Union and West can be a serious threat to national security.
- Fifth, the Government should increase transparency requirements for party financing to ensure the public knows which parties are receiving funds from Moscow and which are not. This is important information during elections and knowing the sponsor could be essential for those who have not yet made up their mind. According to IRI in February 2015 there were more than 30 percent of voters who did not know who to vote for, or did not answer the question about political preferences. Giving this information about links of Georgian political parties to Moscow could swing them into a right direction.
- Sixth, Government should find ways to encourage pro-Western forces within the Georgian Orthodox Church, so that eventually they gain ground and take over the GOC after popular and wise patriarch Ilia II passes away. The pro-Russian Orthodox Church, which meddles in public policy-making is a threat to Georgia’s national security and an opportunity for Moscow that it will not hesitate to exploit.

- Seventh, Russian special services in Georgia, which are obviously very active, need to be checked in a robust way. Any compromise with special services' activities on Georgian territory are obviously counter-productive and could only lead to more active Russian involvement. Georgian government made a mistake in 2013 when it released Russian spies as political prisoners. This was interpreted as a sign of weakness in Moscow. Cracking down on a resuscitated spy network is essential. It does not have to be as dramatic and artistic as in 2006, but the result has to be as effective as during Saakashvili's administration.
- Eighth, Georgia needs to engage Western powers, the United States, and the European Union to counter Russian soft power in the country. This will not always be easy, as countering soft power of a neighbor requires money, resources, and political will, which are a scarcity in today's West. However, the EU and US have both recognized the necessity to counter Russian propaganda and this could be used to the best possible extent.
- And last, but not least, Georgia and its partners need to make sure that hard security threats deriving from Moscow are prevented at the international stage through the active involvement of international partners.

To sum up, Russia's soft power in Georgia has been on the rise in recent years. Even though Russia has not yet used all its instruments its power of attraction has increased. In times of uncertainty, economic decline, and insecurity, reverting back to a well-known, profitable, but unstable Russian market could be deadly for the country's security and economy. Just like a carnivorous plant which allows the victim to enjoy the fruit before cracking down on it and absorbing it fully, Russia can attract Georgia's businesses, exporters, and Orthodox electorate, however the danger of absorption needs to be kept in mind. The role of Government in this is extremely important. So far, Georgia's Government has not crossed any major red lines with regard to allowing Russia's soft power, however it has still contributed to Russia's increased leverages. The ability to counter Russian propaganda and soft power will be directly proportional to Georgia's ability to successfully integrate with the EU and NATO. If it fails, however, it will always remain in the orbit of Russia.

# Russia's Soft Power in Lithuania: The Impact of Conflict in Ukraine

/Linas Kojala, Aivaras Zukauskas/

The concept of 'near abroad,' allegedly popularized by the former Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrey Kozyrev in the 1990s, still serves well to illustrate the attitude of the Russian Federation towards its neighbouring countries. 'Near abroad' encompasses the former members of the Soviet Union and (often) the Warsaw Pact countries in Eastern and Central Europe. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the concept was invoked in order to designate the region where Russia's sphere of influence is supposedly undisputed by other geopolitical powers, especially the Western actors. This logic was evident during the period when former members of the defunct Soviet Union in the Baltic States were attempting to reintegrate into the Western political framework by becoming members of NATO and the European Union (EU). Through economic, political and cultural mechanisms, the Russian state sought to preserve the "buffer" of the Baltic States in its sphere of influence. This, however, proved to be unsuccessful, as Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia became members of NATO and the EU in 2004.

Recent history of "protracted conflicts," trade disputes, economic sanctions and political pressure shows that maintaining a strong presence in South Caucasus, Moldova, Ukraine and the Baltic States is still an important part of the Russian foreign policy. However, as military power is not as effective and as readily available a foreign policy instrument as it used to be, the Russian policy makers have been actively developing soft power strategies. The concept of soft power, seen by Joseph S. Nye as an ability to attract based on state's culture, foreign policy and political values with the qualification of perceived legitimacy,<sup>312</sup> is officially included in the Russian Concept of Foreign Policy of 2013.<sup>313</sup>

Russia's soft power in neighbouring countries consists of creating, maintaining and supporting "Kremlin-friendly networks of influence in the cultural, economic and political sectors,"<sup>314</sup> including local national minori-

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312 Agnia Grigas, "Legacies, Coercion and Soft Power: Russian Influence in the Baltic States," *Chatham House Briefing Paper* 2012/04, 1.

313 *Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation*, approved on February 12, 2013, [http://www.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/0/76389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D](http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/76389FEC168189ED44257B2E0039B16D)

314 Agnia Grigas, 9.

ties, which are an important part of Baltic societies. Russia's message consists of denouncing the "corrupt" and "immoral" Western liberal systems. Russia uses this discourse while combining softer policy instruments with aspects of hard power, in order to maintain its grasp on ex-Soviet states. This is especially evident in cases of Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia, where cultural and diplomatic approaches are used alongside more traditional methods of economic sanctions, trade embargoes, and in more extreme cases, the use of military power. The image of Russia as a great power, ready to maintain its influence and help its "friends" is coupled with the depreciation of Western powers as being content on just declaring support or offering condemnation, without any serious action.<sup>315</sup>

Lithuania, being one of the more vocal critics of Russian foreign policy, is also a target of Russian soft power strategies. This chapter will take a look at five dimensions of Russian soft power policy in Lithuania: people-to-people, media environment, regional, strategic and business culture. The analysis shows that both Lithuania and the EU lack a comprehensive strategy, allowing Russia to maintain soft power influence in Lithuanian politics and culture even without fully accomplishing its primary goals. On the other hand, it is noted that the EU's soft power measures play an important role in tackling Russia's influence. The analysis is followed by recommendations for possible counteractions to the Russian soft power in Lithuania.

## People-to-people dimension

The cultural dimension of Russian soft power, aimed at relations between members of the community, might be one of the most important elements of the Russian soft power policy. It is one of the pillars of the so-called 'Russian World,' strategy, which is aimed at preserving Russian language, culture and relations all over the globe. The appeal for preservation is based on sentiments of the Soviet Union, which are still widely prevalent in Lithuanian society. An opinion poll in 2012 revealed that more than a third of Lithuanians fully or partly agreed with the statement "It was better to live during Soviet times than now." Experts noted that while the feeling of Soviet nostalgia correlated with the respondents' age (the older the respondent, the more positive their attitude towards Soviet times), a lot of younger Lithuanians expressed no opinion whatsoever on the matter. Furthermore, people

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315 Tomila Lankina and Kinga Niemczyk, "What Putin Gets About Soft Power," *The Washington Post*, April 15, 2014, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/04/15/what-putin-gets-about-soft-power>

who had a positive attitude towards Soviet times were expected to vote for political parties which have affinities with Russia.<sup>316</sup>

The Russian speakers in Lithuania are targets for soft power strategies through various activities and initiatives, usually conducted through NGOs and community-based organizations, of which more than 80 are found in Lithuania.<sup>317</sup> The majority of them are controlled and coordinated by such Russian-funded organizations as the Russkiy Mir Foundation,<sup>318</sup> the Gorchakov Foundation,<sup>319</sup> Rossotrudnichestvo<sup>320</sup> and the Historical Memory Foundation. All of them seek to establish cultural ties, and engage in the construction of a pro-Russian historical and media discourse in the neighbouring countries, with a goal to maintain Russia's influence.<sup>321</sup>

The people-to-people dimension depends on the idea of compatriots and a common language. Both of these interrelated concepts refer to the possibility of maintaining the image of Russian and Lithuanian citizens as brotherly nations, linked by their common Soviet past. This particular discourse, although firstly aimed toward national minorities (the most important aspect of the 'Russian World' strategy), does not limit itself only to ethnic Russians. By playing the symbolic Soviet nostalgia card, the compatriot discourse seeks to engage all Russian speakers as sort of compatriots, inhabiting a common cultural and linguistic space.<sup>322</sup> This plays a substantial part in not only reviving the older feelings towards the Soviet system, but also in establishing sentiments in some sectors of the younger generation of Lithuanian citizens. Some aspects of the Russian culture (popular Russian criminal movies, Russian chanson and dance music), although not widespread, are still relatively popular even among the younger generations. For example, research shows that classic Russian culture and arts are still commonly regarded as positive attributes of Russia in the Baltic States.<sup>323</sup>

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316 Ainė Ramonaitė, "Who is Nostalgic about the Soviet Past? The Impact of Economic Stats, Social Networks and Ideological Beliefs on the Soviet - Anti-Soviet Cleavage in Lithuania," *Sociologija. Mintis ir veiksmas* 2 (2013): 267.

317 Nerijus Maliukevičius, "Russian Soft Power and Non-Military Influence: The View from Lithuania" in *Tools of Destabilisation*, ed. Mike Winnerstig, (Stockholm: FOI, 2014).

318 Website of *Russkiy Mir Foundation*, accessed April 19, 2015, <http://www.russkiymir.ru/en>

319 Website of Фонд поддержки публичной дипломатии имени А. М. Горчакова. Accessed April 19, 2015, <http://gorchakovfund.ru>

320 Website of *Rossotrudnichestvo*, accessed April 19, 2015, <http://rs.gov.ru>

321 Greg Simons, "Perception of Russia's soft power and influence in the Baltic states," *Public Relations Review* 41 (2015), 4-5.

322 Nerijus Maliukevičius, 125.

323 Greg Simons, 11.

The goal of Russian-speaker mobilization is furthered by waging a “war over hearts and minds”<sup>324</sup> in the cultural sphere. For example, Russian Culture Days were organized in Vilnius in June 2014, even though there were public concerns about the timing of such events because of the ongoing war in Ukraine<sup>325</sup> - while Moscow Culture House, which has been under construction in Vilnius since 2006, is expected to be finally opened in the autumn of 2015.<sup>326</sup> Youth and student sectors are also targeted through paramilitary camps aimed at Russian speakers. Officially described as sports camps, most of these activities include officers from Russia’s intelligence agencies and are financed by the Defence Ministry of the Russian Federation. These particularly drew significant attention from Lithuanian media in 2014 because of allegations of preparation of Russian loyalists.<sup>327</sup>

It is clear that Russian soft power works on multiple levels in Lithuania, including the promotion of Soviet nostalgia, and various NGOs and youth initiatives in order to keep the grip of Russian cultural influence. However, despite the sophisticated mechanism of influence and increased activity since the start of the Ukrainian crisis, Russian strategy does not go uncontested. This could be attributed not only to general hostility towards Russia some segments of society, but also to the EU soft power, which, although working not as directly, influences Lithuanian attitudes a great deal.

The Lithuanian membership of the EU did not simply bring Lithuanians into the Western political system. It also brought new cultural influences, affecting the people-to-people dimension of society. While the significant growth of the NGO sector after the Lithuanian accession to the EU does not show significant civic participation in democratic NGOs,<sup>328</sup> the overall situation shows that attitudes towards the EU are positive.<sup>329</sup> For instance, 67 per

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324 Andrew Foxall, “The war at home: how Russia is winning the battle for hearts and minds,” *NewStatesman*, March 1, 2015, <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2015/03/war-home-how-russia-winning-battle-hearts-and-minds>

325 Arūnas Dimalakas, “On the side of Ukrainian crisis – Russia Days in Vingis Park,” *Lrytas.lt*, June 8, 2014, <http://www.lrytas.lt/lietuvs-diena/aktualijos/ukrainos-krizes-pasoneje-vingio-parke-rusijos-dienos.htm>

326 Arūnas Dimalakas, “Moscow ready to step in Vilnius,” *Lrytas.lt*, February 8, 2015, <http://bustas.lrytas.lt/nekilnojamosis-turtas/maskva-jau-pasirengusi-ikelti-koja-i-vilniu.htm>

327 Asta Narmontė, “Militarized Russian camps open yet another Lithuanian wound,” *Lrytas.lt*, October 12, 2014, <http://www.lrytas.lt/lietuvs-diena/aktualijos/sukarintos-rusijos-stovyklos-atvere-dar-viena-lietuvs-zaizda.htm>

328 Rūta Žiliukaitė, “Quantitative growth of the NGO sector in Lithuania: when the number of organizations increases without significant effects on participation level,” *Sociologija. Mintis ir veiksmai*, 1 (2012): 252

329 Vilija Andrulevičiūtė “Lithuanian attitude towards EU – disappointed or rid of illusions?,” *LRT.lt*, April 11, 2014, [http://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/40771/lietuviu\\_pozioris\\_i\\_es\\_nusivyleme\\_ar\\_atsikrateme\\_iliuziju](http://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/40771/lietuviu_pozioris_i_es_nusivyleme_ar_atsikrateme_iliuziju)

cent of Lithuanians support membership of the EU (the EU's average is 54 per cent), while only seven per cent are against it (the EU's average is 14 percent).<sup>330</sup> Furthermore, 83 per cent of respondents have a positive attitude towards membership of NATO.<sup>331</sup> This is also reflected in the overall position towards Russian aggression. 2014 polls show that 87 per cent agreed that Russia poses a direct occupational threat to Lithuania,<sup>332</sup> compared to 50 per cent in 2012.<sup>333</sup> Such attitudes can be attributed not only to the memory of Soviet horror, but also to more democratic values, which throughout the years have significantly changed Lithuanian views towards human rights and democracy.

The overall positive outlook towards the EU especially affected the younger segments of Lithuanian society. Free movement among countries, and study and job opportunities, create a more positive view of the EU and a more negative view of Russia and its aggression. Another positive aspect of the EU influence is the growing prevalence of the English language in Lithuania.<sup>334</sup> From 2001-2011, the percentage of people having a command of English increased from 16.9 to 30.4 per cent, mainly due to the popularity of English among young people. While the Russian language remained dominant (63 per cent), only 42 per cent in the age group 15-19, and 48 percent in the age group 20-24, spoke Russian. The growing preference of English over Russian in Lithuania is hampering the efforts of Russian soft power to include younger generations of Lithuanians into its discourse. This even prompted the Russkiy Mir foundation to conclude that there is a crisis of Russian language command among youth.<sup>335</sup>

Finally, popular Russian singers (singer Oleg Gazmanov, the band Liube and others) faced more difficulties performing in Lithuania during

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330 "Lietuviai nori stiprinti Europos Parlamentą [Lithuanians would like to strengthen European Parliament]," European Parliament, accessed April 19, 2015, [http://www.europarl.lt/lt/naujienos\\_ir\\_aktualijos/pranesimai\\_spaudai/pranesimai\\_2015/ps\\_2015\\_vasaris/eurobarometras\\_ep.html](http://www.europarl.lt/lt/naujienos_ir_aktualijos/pranesimai_spaudai/pranesimai_2015/ps_2015_vasaris/eurobarometras_ep.html)

331 "Poll shows overwhelming support for permanent NATO presence in Lithuania," *LRT.lt*, August 4, 2014, [http://www.lrt.lt/en/news\\_in\\_english/29/55567/poll\\_shows\\_overwhelming\\_support\\_for\\_permanent\\_nato\\_presence\\_in\\_lithuania](http://www.lrt.lt/en/news_in_english/29/55567/poll_shows_overwhelming_support_for_permanent_nato_presence_in_lithuania)

332 "Poll: how many Russians would agree with annexation of the Baltics," *Delfi.lt*, accessed April 1, 2015, <http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/atliko-apklausa-kiek-rusu-noretu-prisijungti-baltijos-salis.d?id=67515210#ixzz3WbiAMzON>

333 "Poll: Poland is seen as friendly by more than half of Lithuanians, most hostile – Russia and Belarus," *Lrytas.lt*, September 11, 2012, <http://www.lrytas.lt/lietuvos-diena/aktualijos/apklausa-lenkija-draugiskasalimi-laiko-daugiau-nei-puse-lietuviu-priesiskiausios-baltarusija-ir-rusija.htm>

334 "Population and Housing Census 2011: Education Command of Languages," accessed April 19, 2015, [http://statistics.bookdesign.lt/dalis\\_05.pdf](http://statistics.bookdesign.lt/dalis_05.pdf)

335 Nerijus Maliukevičius, 123.

the war in Ukraine.<sup>336</sup> It is a major shift compared to previous years, when performances of Russian singers, known for patriotic and pro-USSR songs, were staged specifically at the time of Lithuanian national celebrations (e.g; Independence Restoration Day), with a supposed aim of spreading doubt about the legitimacy of the statehood of Lithuania.

Overall, the people-to-people dimension of the Russian soft power remains one of the main tools of Russian influence in Lithuania. However, even if it proves to be effective among some Russian speakers and older people with nostalgia for the Soviet Union, 10 years of membership in the EU has proven to be a changing factor in Lithuanian mentality, as the spread of democratic values and English language provides a more sceptical outlook towards Russian actions in Ukraine and in Lithuania. As told by Lithuanian sociologist Mindaugas Degutis, “Lithuanians value that we got out of the sphere, where neither human life nor human rights are respected.”<sup>337</sup> Much of this is owed to the membership in the EU.

While there are positive developments in tackling Russia’s soft power, some negative trends should be addressed. For example, public initiatives, NGOs, and cultural events which are funded by the Kremlin should be advertised as such, rather than hidden behind the veil of independent organizations. Furthermore, the EU, together with Lithuania, could propose more exchange programmes for students from Russia. While this is an indirect measure, in the long term it could foster changes in Russian society by denying myths about the EU and the Western world among Russians.

## Media dimension

In order to achieve its cultural and ideological goals, Russia has developed a sophisticated media platform for the advancement of its soft power goals in Lithuania and the whole Baltic region. The Russian cultural platform consists of a wide array of internet portals, TV stations (PBK, RTR, etc), media outlets (Litovskiy Kurier, Obzor, Komsomolskaya Pravda, etc.) as well as pro-Russian media “expert” initiatives like “Format-A3” and “Regnum.” These platforms prove to be popular among Lithuanians. For example, Russian NTV Mir is among the top five most popular TV channels in Lithuania.<sup>338</sup> The popularity of

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336 Virginija Spuryte, “USSR worshipping singer O. Gazmanov is asked to leave Lithuanian concert venues,” *LRT.lt*, November 10, 2014, [http://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/77027/sovietu\\_sajunga\\_slovinantis\\_dainininkas\\_o\\_gazmanovas\\_isprasytas\\_is\\_lietuvos\\_arenu](http://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/77027/sovietu_sajunga_slovinantis_dainininkas_o_gazmanovas_isprasytas_is_lietuvos_arenu)

337 Vilija Andrulevičiūtė.

338 “TV auditorijos duomenys – liepa, 2014.” *MediaZIP*, accessed April 19, 2015, <http://mediazip.lt/201408/tv-auditorijos-duomenys-liepa-2014>

Russian productions (TV shows and series) in Lithuania is further emphasized by the fact that Russian producers have openly tried to propose pro-Russian TV series for broadcast on Lithuanian TV stations.<sup>339</sup>

Furthermore, Russian media often touches upon critical historical topics, in the form of fiction and pseudo-documentary films.<sup>340</sup> The topics in these “documentaries” include World War II, nostalgia for the Soviet times, and crucial moments of Lithuanian history. In 2013, PBK broadcast the documentary “The Man and the Law” (Chelovek i zakon), putting forward a theory that on January 13, 1991, it was members of the Lithuanian Independence Movement (Sąjūdis), and not the Soviet armed forces, who opened fire on innocent citizens gathered in front of the Television Tower in Vilnius. This documentary sparked enormous debates about the nature of Russian media platforms and its effects on Lithuanian society, as well as the growing activeness of the Russian propaganda.

In addition to the old historical-revisionist strategies, Russian media is using a relatively new ideological aspect that consists of attempts to portray Russia as a bastion of traditional and “true” Christian values. As emphasized by Vladimir Putin himself, “Many Euro-Atlantic countries have moved away from their roots, including Christian values. Policies are being pursued that place on the same level a multi-child family and a same-sex partnership, a faith in God and a belief in Satan. This is the path to degradation.” While it also has domestic goals, the main external aim of such rhetoric is to portray Russia as a “different” country, which sticks to its moral foundation and traditions, while the West (including the EU, NATO and other organizations) stands for arbitrariness and degradation. With a concept of alternative civilization, Putin also tries to convince conservative and traditionally orientated people in post-Soviet countries that their Western political direction is wrong because it neglects their roots and key values.<sup>341</sup> Various internet platforms (Russia Today, for example) carry out a key role in transferring the message to the masses, often generating positive reactions not only from the nostalgic, but also more radical, nationalistic and socialist margins.

Russian media platforms prove to be ubiquitous and quite effective among the Eurosceptics in Lithuania. However, during the events in Ukraine, the Lithuanian government stepped up to protect its media environment. For example, broadcasts of some Russian TV channels, which were deemed

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339 Lauryna Vireliūnaitė, “Lithuanian TV is under the burden of brainwashing Russian production,” *15min.lt*, October 8, 2014, <http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/lietuva/lietuvos-televizijos-linksta-posmegenis-plaunancia-rusiskos-produkcijos-nasta-56-458553>

340 Nerijus Maliukevičius, 135.

341 Julia Gerlach and Jochen Töpfer, “The Role of Religion in Eastern Europe Today,” *Springer* (2014): 118.

as inciting hatred and spreading pro-Kremlin propaganda, were restricted. Channels such as Ren TV Baltic, NTV Mir Lithuania, and PBK were suspended temporarily, while the Lithuanian Radio and TV Commission also decided to suspend RTR Planeta, which is officially registered in Sweden - up until then there was no such precedent in the EU.<sup>342</sup> Moreover, Lithuania, together with Great Britain, Denmark and Estonia, initiated a strategic communication plan until June to “challenge Russia’s ongoing disinformation campaigns” in the EU. In a letter to EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini, the foreign ministers of these countries called for “credible and competitive information alternatives to Russian-speaking populations and those using Russia’s state-controlled media.”<sup>343</sup>

Unfortunately, despite ongoing efforts from Lithuania and some other EU members, it failed to provide a more determined approach from the EU as a whole, for a more comprehensive strategy for the protection of the media environment. And, despite the fact that Western European media is gaining more and more traction with Lithuanian society, the Russian media platform remains a problem for Lithuania and its neighbours, influencing a significant portion of national minorities and Russian-speaking ethnic Lithuanians. The inability of the EU to act decisively on this issue will prove to be more and more problematic as time moves on.

Hence it is recommended to use not only a negative approach (bans of TV channels), but also a positive one (creation of new media outlets, TV stations, and programmes). There is a clear need for more media outlets in minority languages, both Russian and Polish, in Lithuania. While the EU is already considering plans to launch a TV channel in the Russian language,<sup>344</sup> Lithuania still lacks domestic measures to strengthen loyalty and inclusiveness of its local population by creating alternative sources of information. Furthermore, both Lithuania and the EU should do more to deny Russia’s self-imposed status as a “stronghold for traditional values.” Support for Catholic movements, or initiatives to portray the EU as an organization open to traditional values, could be an important factor in denying the Kremlin a way to gain attractiveness.

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342 Rūta Balčiūnienė, “Will Decide Whether to Stop Broadcasting of “RTR Planeta” for a Year,” *Verslo Žinios*, April 7, 2015, <http://vz.lt/article/2015/4/7/svarstys-rtr-planeta-transliaciju-stabdyma-metams>

343 “EU to Work out Plan by June against Russian “Disinformation Campaigns,”” *Delfi.lt*, March 20, 2015, <http://en.delfi.lt/eu/eu-to-work-out-plan-by-june-against-russian-disinformation-campaigns.d?id=67489286#ixzz3WfjBY7Xi>

344 Ben Nimmo, “Are the Baltics next on Putin’s list?” *Central European Policy Institute*, March 6, 2015, <http://www.cepolicy.org/publications/are-baltics-next-putins-list>

## Regionalization dimension

Russian soft power also relies on the regional element of its neighbours, and specifically national minorities. Lithuania is no exception, despite its differences with Latvia and Estonia. Lithuania is the biggest of the Baltic States, but it also has the smallest and fastest-shrinking Russian minority – according to the census of 2011, only 177,000 Russians (5.8 per cent of the total population) live in Lithuania; while the percentage was almost double that in 1989.<sup>345</sup> In Estonia and Latvia the numbers are considerably higher – 24 and 27 per cent respectively.<sup>346</sup> Furthermore, rising levels of English proficiency, and overall indifference towards the Russian language among Lithuanian youth, also diminish the focus of activity toward Russian speakers.

The absence of a sizeable Russian minority in Lithuania does not detract from the influence of the Polish minority. The Polish minority is concentrated in south-eastern Lithuania (61 per cent of its regional population), which is known for its historic political controversies, such as attempts to declare autonomy from Lithuania in the early 1990s.<sup>347</sup> Issues such as identity of local population, education, the usage of the Polish language, and one-party dominance distinguish it from other parts of Lithuania up to this date. According to research, these factors, together with the relative socio-economic backwardness of the region in comparison to other parts of the country, leads to a strong sense of opposition to the state and its policies.<sup>348</sup> The region is also known for a sizeable (eight per cent) Russian minority,<sup>349</sup> but the Polish prove to be much more consolidated as a segment of society. The contrast is clearly emphasized in the constellation of political parties towards the majorities. The Russians of Lithuania are split between the Russian Alliance and Russian Union of Lithuania; while the Polish have a single consolidated political power representing the minority – the Electoral Action of Poles (Lietuvos lenkų rinkimų akcija, LLRA).

Almost all Lithuanian parties, even those that were considered positive towards Russia, took a pro-Ukrainian stance during the conflict. A notable exception is, quite paradoxically, the main political party representing the

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345 “Population and Housing Census 2011. Ethnic Composition of the Population in Lithuania,” accessed April 19, 2015, [http://statistics.bookdesign.lt/dalis\\_04.pdf](http://statistics.bookdesign.lt/dalis_04.pdf)

346 Agnia Grigas, “The New Generation of Baltic Russian Speakers,” *Euractiv.com*, November 28, 2014, <http://www.euractiv.com/sections/europes-east/new-generation-baltic-russian-speakers-310405>

347 Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, *Intermarium – The Land between the Black and Baltic Seas* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2012), 439.

348 Gediminas Kazėnas et al., “Lenkų tautinės mažumos Lietuvoje identiteto tyrimas” [Research on identity of Polish minority in Lithuania] (Vilnius: Mykolas Romeris University, 2014), 154.

349 Rasa Navickaitė, “Norai geri, bet ne visi supranta [Good intentions are not always understood]”, *IQ The Economist*, March 24, 2011, <http://iq.lt/lietuva/norai-geri-bet-ne-visi-supranta>

Polish national minority - LLRA. This party has been known for its sympathies towards the Russian policy in Ukraine, attempts to stir up conflicts between Lithuanian majority and national minorities, and employing former KGB officers as assistants in European Parliament.<sup>350</sup> The leader of the party, Waldemar Tomaszewski, has drawn significant attention to himself by condoning Russian actions in Crimea and Georgia, condemning the Maidan protests, making contact with officials from Russian institutions, refusing to meet Lithuanian State Security Department officials<sup>351</sup> and even wearing the infamous St. George's ribbon during official events.<sup>352</sup> In some cases, analysts deemed Mr Tomaszewski to be "the gates of the Kremlin in Lithuania."<sup>353</sup> Moreover, LLRA managed to join forces with a marginal party, Russian Alliance, and successfully participate in the Lithuanian Parliamentary elections of 2012. The appeal to Russian minorities increased the party's popularity; hence during the election LLRA managed to pass the five per cent threshold for the first time in history and to form a separate faction, thus exercising some influence over the governmental politics in Lithuania.

The failure to integrate the Polish minority and the south-eastern region of Lithuania can be partly attributed to the absence of a comprehensive Lithuanian strategy towards the Polish (and Belarusian)-inhabited part of Lithuania. Lithuanian politicians have shown their tendency to rely on confrontational policies (for example, not allowing cities and towns to have street names in both Lithuanian and Polish), without any clear attempts to establish a constructive dialogue. This leads to failure in reducing antagonism between Lithuanians and the Polish, as well as the declining well-being in the region - as Šalčininkai remains among the worst regions in Lithuania to attract investment.

The situation is further complicated by the pro-Russian stance taken by the LLRA, which isolates the region even from the political support of neighbouring Poland (which was available before the Ukrainian crisis). Polish criticisms towards the LLRA further isolate the south-eastern region from the EU's soft power and further into the arms of Russian influence.

Yet neither the Lithuanian government nor EU-level initiatives paid significant attention to these problems. The presence of EU soft power is rel-

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350 Valdas Tamošaitis, "Russian Knot of the Polish," *Bernardinai.lt*, July 17, 2014, <http://www.bernardinai.lt/straipsnis/2014-07-09-valdas-tamosaitis-lenkiskasis-rusu-mazgas/119568>

351 "Waldemar Tomaszewski Refused to Meet with the Officials of the Security Forces. "The Stalinist Times Got Back", *Media.efhr.eu*, March 25 2014, <http://media.efhr.eu/2014/03/25/waldemar-tomaszewski-refused-meet-officials-security-forces-the-stalinist-times-back>

352 "Stirring the Pot," *The Economist*, March 3, 2015, <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21645522-leader-ethnic-polish-party-tries-broaden-his-appeal-reaching-out-ethnic>

353 "Waldemar Tomaszewski can Become the Kremlin Gate in Lithuania," *15min.lt*, February 19, 2015, <http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/lietuva/kremliaus-vartais-lietuvoje-gali-tapti-valdemaras-tomasevskis-56-486240>

actively minor in the region, despite one of the most active European youth organizations in Lithuania, Europroject, being based in Šalčininkai. Therefore, it is recommended to create a special social fund, dedicated to tackling the region's socio-economic backwardness, and cultural programmes which would engage societies in different regions of the country. While there have been some political initiatives by members of Parliament and even the President, no practical measures have been implemented yet.<sup>354</sup> Without a comprehensive approach towards the Russian and Polish minorities in the Baltic region, Russian soft power will continue to have its way with possibly negative effects in the future.

## The strategic dimension

The strategic dimension of soft power involves the attitudes of the state towards its course of development. This includes the so-called civilizational or geopolitical choices of the state, which are usually expressed by political parties, state institutions, and other elements of statecraft. This is an especially riveting question for the so-called 'buffer states' in Eastern Europe, which are still torn between the West and Russia in terms of their geopolitical orientation. This dilemma is embodied in the example of Belarus, which, despite being mocked as a 'province' of Russia because of its extensive cooperation and the dominance of the Russian language, has significantly blurred its tone in the light of the Ukraine crisis - even embracing a sort of a "contained" national revival.

This question is not as complicated in the case of Lithuania. Virtually all political powers, leaders and institutions see Lithuania as being integrated into the Western model of politics, and thus projecting its future in the EU. This positive effect of the EU's soft power to attract Lithuania was reflected in thorough and resilient attempts by Lithuanian politicians to integrate Lithuania into the EU, with the culmination of joining the EU in 2004 and the Eurozone in 2015. Furthermore, the EU's soft power in Lithuania is being indirectly spread by the Eastern Partnership policy (EaP). While it is dedicated to bringing Eastern neighbours, such as Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and others, closer to the EU, it also acts as a policy that strengthens the feeling of "Europeanism" in Lithuania. By being actively involved in EaP issues, Lithuania acts as a representative of European democracies in relationships with countries

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354 Liepa Želnieņė, "Dalia Grybauskaitė ragina investuoti į Vilniaus kraštą: "Jei ne mes, tai padarys kiti" [Grybauskaitė urges to invest in Vilnius region: "If we won't, others will do it"]," *15min.lt*, accessed April 19, 2015, <http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/lietuva/dalia-grybauskaite-ragina-investuoti-i-vilniaus-krasta-jei-ne-mes-tai-padarys-kiti-56-449084>

that were formerly members of the Soviet Union, yet did not manage to be as successful as the Baltic States after the collapse of the USSR. It was especially relevant in 2013 during the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the EU, when the Eastern Partnership Summit took place in Vilnius. While the summit will be remembered partly as a failure (because of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich's decision not to sign an Association Agreement with EU, which proved to be a catalyst for Maidan protests in Ukraine), Lithuania played a key role in strategic discussions with European leaders.

The EU-based strategic attitude among the leading political powers in Lithuania does not mean that there is a shortage of Eurosceptic or populist forces seeking to debunk the overall strategic direction. Some of them are not without their ties to Russian business and political structures. Ambivalent messages concerning engagement with Russia most of the time came from the members of the so-called former elites (nomenclature) of the collapsed Soviet regime, who managed to become a part of the newly-formed Lithuanian political leadership. Among the most cited examples was a prominent Lithuanian politician Kazimira Prunskienė, who played an important role in Lithuanian political life before retiring from politics due to illness. A former Lithuanian Prime Minister, she was a member of the Lithuanian Communist Party and managed to establish an extensive network of contacts with Russian officials during the years of the Soviet Union. Her ties to Russian political and social life are exemplified by the title of Duchess of Russia, which was awarded to her and her descendants in 2005.<sup>355</sup> An avid proponent of a more open and pragmatic dialogue with Russia, Mrs Prunskienė later led the Lithuanian Peasants Party, which at that time was known to be the official Lithuanian sister party to Putin's "United Russia" Party.<sup>356</sup>

The Russian shadow also followed some of the younger politicians. One of the most famous cases was that of the leader of a new political generation, now ex-President of Lithuania, Rolandas Paksas. He became the first leader of a European state to be impeached and removed from office in 2004. Among the charges raised against the politician were ties with controversial Russian businessman Yuri Borisov, who was at the time linked with Russian organized crime.<sup>357</sup> Furthermore, allegations were made that Paksas was financed

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355 Agnia Grigas, "Legacies, Coercion and Soft Power: Russian Influence in the Baltic States," 12.

356 "Cooperating with a Russian Party, Kazimira Prunskienė Cannot Find Political Support in Lithuania," *15min.lt*, October 4, 2011, <http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/lietuva/su-rusijos-partija-bendradarbiaujanti-kazimira-prunskiene-neranda-politines-paramos-lietuvoje-56-172958>

357 Steven L. Myers, "Lithuanian Parliament Removes Country's President After Casting votes on Three Charges," *The New York Times*, April 7, 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/04/07/world/lithuanian-parliament-removes-country-s-president-after-casting-votes-three.html?pagewanted=1>

by Russian organizations<sup>358</sup> early on in his political career. It is worth adding that Paksas returned to politics after the presidential scandal with a new political party, 'Order and Justice' (Tvarka ir Teisingumas, TT), known for its populist bent and some of its members' affinity for more open relations with Russia. Other notable examples include Viktor Uspaskich, a Russian-Lithuanian businessman and the founder of the Lithuanian Labour Party, who has close business ties to Russia and a pro-Russian rhetoric,<sup>359</sup> as well as the former leader of the marginal pro-Russian Socialist People's Front Algirdas Paleckis, who has been convicted for denial of the Soviet aggression during the events in Vilnius on January 13, 1991.

Openly pro-Russian political movements, with the exception of the aforementioned LLRA as a regional power, have not gained any significant traction in Lithuanian politics and have remained largely marginal. Since the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis, even the more populist parties (TT, Labour Party) have had a pro-Ukrainian stance, concerned with the preservation and protection of Lithuanian statehood. The EU and the Western political institutions remain as the most viable and attractive option for Lithuanian strategic development.

However, it is recommended for Lithuania to pay more attention to another strategic dimension – its relationship with Poland. While both countries have similar opinions on many strategic issues (Ukraine, regional security, energy and transport), relationships between the countries are still described as “cold” or “intense.” Issues such as minority rights and minority language in Lithuania remain an obstacle for better cooperation on an international level. Hence, recent geopolitical shifts and the exposure of LLRA as a pro-Russian party could act as a catalyst to an improved relationship.

## The business dimension

The EU is understood to be a guarantor of Lithuania's economic development – until the end of 2012 Lithuania has received support worth almost 11 billion Euros from the EU, while its payments equalled less than 2.5 billion euros. Without the EU's support, annual growth in Lithuanian Gross Domestic

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358 Šarūnas Černiauskas, “On R. Paksas' Road to Political Elite – Millions from Russia,” *Delfi.lt*, November 3, 2014, <http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/r-pakso-kelyje-i-politikos-virsune-milijonai-is-rusijos.d?id=66272956>

359 Rasa Lukaitytė-Vnarauskienė, “Company of Uspaskich's Family Offers sausages 'Ruskij Standart' for Lithuanian mViams-siuolo-ruskij-standart-desreles.d?id=64301560

Product (GDP) would have been 1.6 percent lower.<sup>360</sup> More than three quarters of residents in Lithuanian cities agree that Lithuanian economic development highly depends on EU funds.<sup>361</sup> Hence advertising stands with the EU logo near various EU-funded project sites, such as renovated schools or newly constructed infrastructure, are considered to be an effective tool to promote a positive image of the EU in Lithuania.

Yet Russia, despite ongoing off-and-on economic conflicts with Lithuania, remains one of the most important players in the economy of Lithuania,<sup>362</sup> especially in the energy and commerce sectors.<sup>363</sup> Soft power and coercion is often combined, which, contrary to J. S. Nye's conclusions about Putin's soft power decline,<sup>364</sup> is a seemingly effective policy approach to maintain Russian influence in the region.<sup>365</sup> This commanding presence is partially owed to the overall business culture in Lithuania and the Eastern European region.

By looking at the business culture and its relation to the Russian and the EU's soft power policy, two trends of business culture could be distinguished – namely, post-Soviet, and European. The first trend involves businesspeople who came from a Soviet background, or who managed to operate under the leftover Soviet system right after the restoration of independence in Lithuania. The second trend represents a more modern, Western-oriented business generation, seeking to establish themselves in the EU and leading industrial countries. This view, while in a way being overtly schematic and not representing the totality of business culture, is a good heuristic tool for distinguishing between the Russian and the EU influence in the business culture of Lithuania.

The post-Soviet example usually involves close links between Lithuanian and Russian business actors, including the state. This usually involves agricultural and transportation companies which have grown from Soviet factories and firms, although the cases may differ. Among the most prominent examples is the Lithuanian dairy market, where the largest companies

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360 Donatas Brazdžius, "ES paramos reikšmė Lietuvos ekonomikai [The importance of EU's funds to Lithuania]," *Verslo Žinios*, July 24, 2014, <http://vz.lt/blog/2014/7/24/es-paramos-reiksme-lietuvos-ekonomikai>

361 "Apklausa: ES parama padeda šalies pažangai [Poll: EU funds help Lithuanian development]," *Kauno diena*, November 2, 2011, <http://mlaipeda.daily.lt/naujienos/ekonomika/apklausa-es-parama-padedas-alies-pazangai-269472#.VSSUoPmUdII>

362 "Foreign Direct Investment During the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter in 2014," *Lithuanian Bank*, January 6, 2015, [http://www.lb.lt/tiesiogines\\_investicijos\\_2014\\_m\\_treciaji\\_ketvirti](http://www.lb.lt/tiesiogines_investicijos_2014_m_treciaji_ketvirti)

363 Agnia Grigas, "Legacies, Coercion and Soft Power: Russian Influence in the Baltic State," 3-8.

364 Joseph S. Nye, "Putin's Rules of Attraction," *Project Syndicate*, December 12, 2014, <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/putin-soft-power-declining-by-joseph-s-nye-2014-12>

365 Agnia Grigas, "Legacies, Coercion and Soft Power: Russian Influence in the Baltic States," 3, Daunis Auers, *Comparative Politics and Government of the Baltic States: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in the 21<sup>st</sup> century* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 223-224.

were managed by their current owners even before independence, or privatized shortly after. They still concentrate a significant part of their activities in Russia. Furthermore, some of the largest businesses in Lithuania, such as Vikonda and Agrokoncernas, also have ties with Russia. This point was driven home even further in 2010, when the influential owner of Lithuanian company Arvi, Vidmantas Kučinskis, was named the first Honorary Consul of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Lithuania. It is worth noting that for some time Kučinskis was also a political actor, considered an important interlocutor for Russian-Lithuanian dialogue, especially in the business sector.<sup>366</sup> This usually translates into pleas for a more open relationship with Russia. In some cases business interests and political rhetoric clashed, as was evident in 2014, when Lithuanian businessman Vilius Kaikaris rhetorically asked if Lithuanians will arm their tanks with Lithuanian cheese which will no longer be purchased by the Russian customers.<sup>367</sup>

In recent years, however, a parallel style of business culture has been growing. It relies on international investment, IT, and overall orientation to stable Western markets, rather than the lucrative but unpredictable Russian market. Furthermore, the conflict in Ukraine, and Russian embargoes on various Lithuanian and European products, renewed a debate about the need to shift focus to other markets.<sup>368</sup> The Lithuanian government also has been actively making moves to help businesses to reach new markets in North and South America, Asia, the Persian Gulf states and Africa. Hence, while due to the current geopolitical tensions and crisis Lithuania's exports to the region of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) declined by 158 million Euros in 2014, exports to new markets grew by 176 million Euros. Furthermore, a poll by the Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists revealed that the hopes of Lithuanian businesses to expand in the CIS have been declining.<sup>369</sup>

For a number of years Lithuanian business in Russia was followed with allegations of illegal conduct, backroom dealings and activities directed against the state. However, the Ukrainian conflict might (much to the Krem-

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366 "What Links Influential Politicians and the Owner of "Arvi"?", *Alfa.lt*, May 28, 2013, [http://www.alfa.lt/straipsnis/15138228/Kas.sieja.itakingus.politikus.ir.Arvi.savininka.=2013-05-28\\_07-05](http://www.alfa.lt/straipsnis/15138228/Kas.sieja.itakingus.politikus.ir.Arvi.savininka.=2013-05-28_07-05)

367 Edmundas Jakilaitis, "Businessman V. Kaikaris: We Will Have to Smear Our Tanks with Butter, Because We Will Not Have Where to Put It", *LRT.lt*, March 14, 2014, [http://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/ekonomika/4/38522/verslininkas\\_v.\\_kaikaris\\_galesime\\_savo\\_tankus\\_sviestu\\_tepti\\_nes\\_je\\_nebus\\_kur\\_deti](http://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/ekonomika/4/38522/verslininkas_v._kaikaris_galesime_savo_tankus_sviestu_tepti_nes_je_nebus_kur_deti)

368 "'Versli Lietuva': Russian Sanctions Will Push Business to Look for New Markets", *LRT.lt*, August 14, 2014, [http://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/ekonomika/4/57581/\\_versli\\_lietuva\\_rusijos\\_sanckijos\\_paskatins\\_versla\\_ieskoti\\_nauju\\_rinku](http://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/ekonomika/4/57581/_versli_lietuva_rusijos_sanckijos_paskatins_versla_ieskoti_nauju_rinku)

369 "Lithuania's Companies Set Off Losses in CIS with Exports to New Markets," *Delfi.lt*, February 8, 2015, <http://en.delfi.lt/lithuania/economy/lithuanias-companies-set-off-losses-in-cis-with-exports-to-new-markets.d?id=67115306#ixzz3WfczvNrn>

lin's chagrin) provide an impetus for Lithuania to finally reorient its businesses towards alternative markets, and reduce the dependence on the Russian market. While it may prove to be a long shot, since the Russian market is always attractive to Lithuanian businesses due to its size and the popularity of Lithuanian production, the attraction of the EU and other markets seems to have improved significantly over the past few years. Hence, a clear recommendation for policy makers is to use the window of opportunity and create incentives for Lithuanian businesses to reduce their dependence on the Russian market. The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership between the EU and the USA should be a priority, because of the potential of new free-trade market for Lithuanian products.

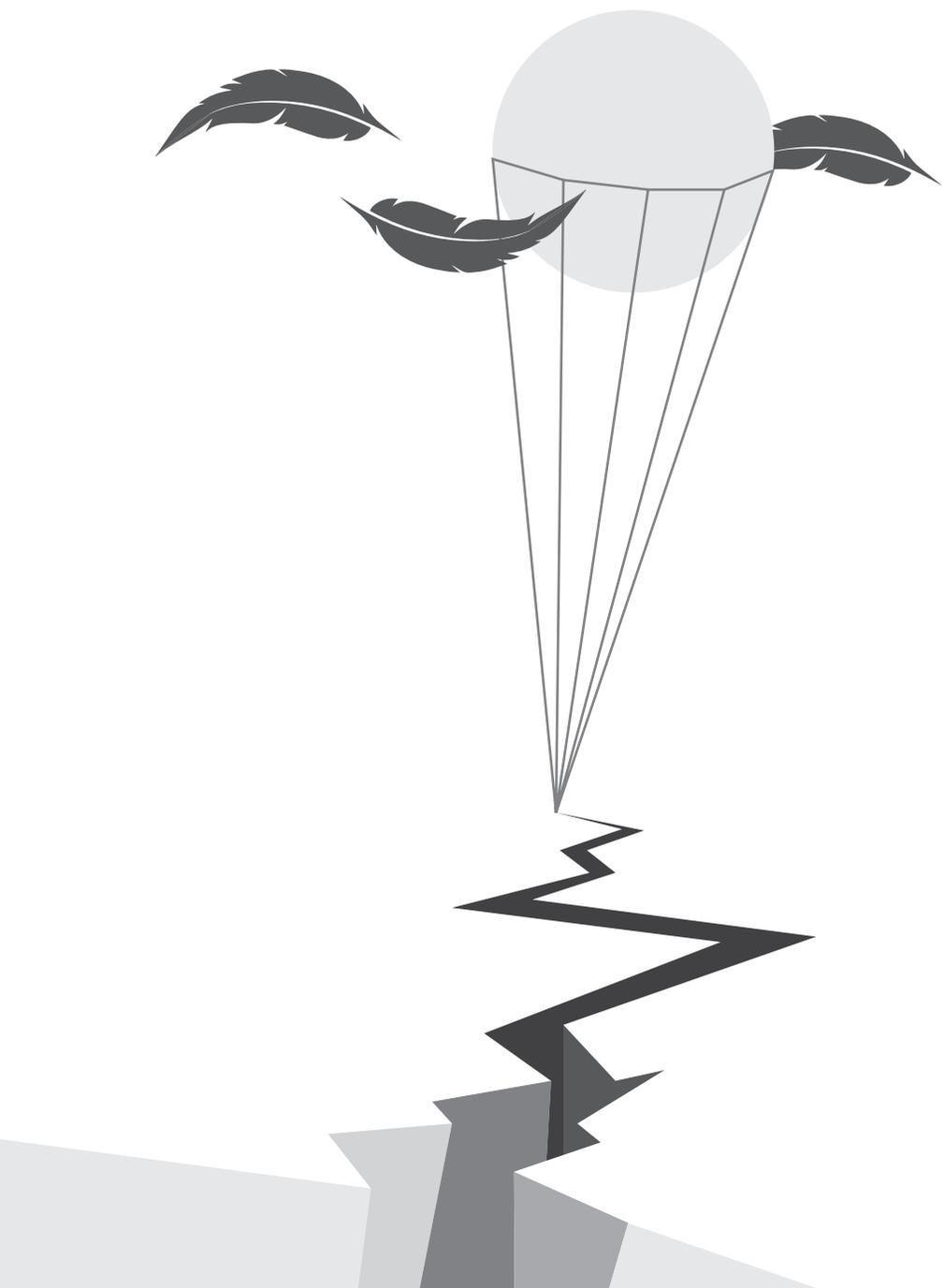
## Conclusions

When analysing Russian soft power strategies towards Lithuania, one can distinguish direct and indirect achievements. Exercising cultural, political and economic influence through various cultural activities, media platforms, and appeals to historical experiences are without a doubt among the most important priorities for every geopolitical superpower. These involve the direct correlation between soft power tools and results. Negative goals could involve the indirect strengthening of influence through crises or disorientations caused by soft power tools designed to achieve particular goals.

In the first case, it is not clear whether the Russian presence is becoming stronger in Lithuania. Despite the extensive mechanisms of cultural appeal, outreach of media platforms and influence through business culture, it has not managed to achieve its intended effect fully. In reaction to the Ukrainian crisis, Lithuanian society, media outlets and watchdogs, and NGOs have united against the looming threat of Russian imperialism in the region, threatening with propaganda and disinformation. Lithuanian-Russian business cultures, despite being somewhat connected by a common historical experience, have also been diverging and will most likely continue to do so in the future, even though the Kremlin intended otherwise. These reactions are united with a more-or-less common strategic vision by Lithuanian political leaders, who already see Lithuania as a part of a Western modern democratic family of states.

The regionalization dimension, however, is still a grave problem that remains to be solved by Lithuanians. The pro-Russian Polish minority managed to consolidate itself into a formidable and outspoken political power, while maintaining the relative isolation of the south-eastern regions. This demands a more direct engagement of Lithuanian and Polish political leaders.

The relative success of the Lithuanian reaction in light of the Ukrainian crisis does not paint the full picture. This is especially relevant in the media dimension, where, despite failing to influence a wide segment of Russian-speaking Lithuanian society, Russian soft power managed to achieve an indirect partial victory by sparking unease in the public sphere - which sometimes transforms into media witch-hunts for political opponents. In the long run, this can prove to have a negative influence on the development of a professional and open media sphere in Lithuania. Comprehensive action needs to be taken not only to address this goal, but also to combat the Russian propaganda techniques.



# Estonia: Fearing ‘Decoding’ by Russia

/Ahto Lobjakas/

## Setting the scene: Russia unpicking the Euro-Atlanticist ‘order’

We are witnessing a confrontation in Estonia that transcends the conceptual reach of conventional theories of power. This confrontation suggests there is more to power than the straightforward application of will and intention. Underlying conventional views of power, which construe it as a causal subject-object relationship, is a power whose goals can be overwhelmingly random in its effects, with no identifiable purpose other than making life unliveable for its target - in this instance Russia’s immediate neighbours. Russia’s recent trade sanctions, diplomatic snubs, air-space violations, propaganda, and veiled threats of warfare (hybrid, nuclear or otherwise) are manifestations of that power, even if they bear no meaningful or constructive results.

Certainly, all this has until now served to stiffen Estonia’s resolve. Perversely, then, Russia appears to apply its unconventional power regardless of the fact that its immediate and foreseeable effects are negative in terms of its own reputed interests. Of course, Estonia is not alone. Russia is doing something similar (only on a vastly grander scale) in Ukraine, where it seems to court outright destabilisation in its own back yard.

This is not to say that Russia’s use of this negative type of power defies conceptualisation, merely that it requires a different sort of conceptualisation. In a nutshell, the Russian moves outlined above are directed against the idea of order as such - international law, institutional certainties, regional stability, and even the current global balance of power. This power is not wholly indiscriminate in its direction. Russia is not an irrational power. The primary targets are its neighbours - the dislodging of whom, from the articulation provided by the very concept of an international order, seems to be Russia’s pre-eminent aim. Russia is trying to instigate instability on its own borders out of a seemingly rational calculation, that in its immediate vicinity it stands to gain more from chaos than anyone else.

The greater the decay of order and predictability along Russia’s borders, the better for Russia, it seems.

Correspondingly, I would like to take step or two back before applying the classification of power suggested in the introductory chapter. Next to hard power (of which Russia has plenty, but which it is keeping in check, shying away from open and declared military engagement in Ukraine as elsewhere) and soft power (of which Russia has little beyond the immediate confines of its “compatriots”), the kind of power that Russia now wields is something I would call negative power or “de-structuring power.”

This is a type of power categorically different to the traditional soft-hard power division. It requires the abandonment of the subjectivist matrix where power is, if not a zero-sum game, then at the very least a causally determined relationship, where it is applied by a subject in order to produce a pre-calculated change in the actions of the object. All application of power, on this reading, has a purpose which fits into a larger pattern of goals and objectives, ultimately reflecting some sort of a picture of the world complete with the agents within it, and an interpretation of their motives.

The new type of power that Russia has begun to project has more to do with ancient and medieval strategies of wanton destruction, the sowing of fear and chaos in the hearts and minds of adversaries, or simply neighbours with no other aim than keeping them in a state of disorganisation. Once attained, this state of disorganisation could serve as a starting point for conventional stratagems with more straightforward aims, that could be more readily analysed within the framework of modern theories of power.

This is the setting for the current phase in the two decades’-long struggle between Russia and the West over Eastern Europe. Only one side - the West - backed by most of the governments in the region (certainly that of Estonia) is trying to apply power with intentions that have anything to do with constructive political and economic calculation. Both the EU and NATO are instruments in a drive to extend the boundaries of order and security. The mainstay of that drive is a concept of international law and order, which by definition is expected to be shared by the objects of the struggle as well as the adversary. True, the adversary (the current Russian regime) may outline intimations of a new order, if pressed. In fact, it has periodically affirmed designs of geopolitical institution- and rule-building with some aplomb.

Until 2014, serious Russian attempts to this end were almost exclusively limited to the territory of the former Soviet Union. There is the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which serves mostly as a forum for periodic political contacts. The Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), founded in 1992, comprises (apart from Russia itself) Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), which went officially live on January 1st, 2015, brings together Rus-

sia, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Belarus and Kyrgyzstan, It is outwardly the most ambitious of Russian stabs at generating regional integration, being ostensibly modelled on the example of the European Union. However, it appears still-born by any rational standards.

These organisations are facsimiles of existing Western institutions - CSTO of NATO, and the EEU of the EU. Their reason for existing has so far been overwhelmingly reactive, providing Russia with the proverbial smoke and mirrors. They serve as spoilers, intended to either confound the West or roll back its own attempts at outreach and stabilisation.

In some ways, what we are seeing today in the Baltics is a strategy which has its counterpart in longstanding Russian moves to coax governments within the EU into bilateral relationships, at the expense of EU-28 cooperation. Previously, the sole point of these moves was undermining the other side's negotiating positions, dividing and hoping to conquer. In other words, Russia was applying a certain conventional type of power with conventional ends. Now, however, with tensions with the West mounting, Russia's "de-structuring" power has also started to contaminate its relations with countries such as France and Germany, where it is financing extremist forces with the aim of creating instability within those countries.

In Estonia, Russian pressure seems to have no identifiable short- or medium-term aims. Russian leaders have repeatedly said that Estonia has nothing to fear from Russian expansionism. Yet Russia's moves - ranging from the very abstract, such as the recent revamping of the Russian military doctrine, to encouraging messages sent by low-level officials to would-be separatists in Latvia and Estonia, to finally the capture and abduction of the Estonian security agent Eston Kohver in September 2014 - have had a disproportionately unsettling effect on Estonia. Russia may say it intends no harm, but its actions generate anxiety, advance unpredictability and instigate instability. In fact, Russia seems to welcome such developments, even if all it gains is instability on its borders, a collapsing relationship with the West, and allies with the threat of an impending economic collapse.

Moscow is also forcing the hand of Estonia's allies, manoeuvring them onto the shifting sands of its de-structuring power. The United States clearly has no more than limited national interest in risking nuclear holocaust for the territorial integrity of Estonia, even if Estonia is a NATO ally. Yet President Obama's remarks in Tallinn in September 2014 may be interpreted as suggesting the United States would be willing to do just that.<sup>370</sup>

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370 *Remarks by President Obama to the People of Estonia*, September 3, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/03/remarks-president-obama-people-estonia>

Russia is putting a question mark on more than two decades of political discourse, self-legitimation and Western integration in Estonia (as well as Poland and the other two Baltic countries). Russia's actions are already affecting policy choices (defence spending, minority policies, etc), and societal debate (the advent of self-censorship among analysts and experts for fear of appearing unpatriotic), as well as the overall political climate in Estonia (skewing party preferences among electorates by elevating the prism of security). They are loosening up Estonia's societal moorings and slowly dissolving the underpinnings of stability.

Russia's actions also serve to dissociate Estonia from the broader international order. Tellingly, Estonia's leaders have coded their reactions most vocally in this particular idiom. President Toomas Hendrik Ilves has talked at length about paradigm shifts, collapsing security structures and the undermining of international law and order (notably the 1975 Helsinki Act). Most recently, in his 2014 New Year's Eve address, he went as far as to say that the post-Cold War security order in Europe had collapsed.<sup>371</sup> Ilves went on to state, however, that Estonia "remains protected." This is a conviction which sits uneasily in its ambiguity and open-ended reliance on the goodwill of the US with Estonia's customary calm and collected appeal to international law and order, and its voluntary, ordered integration, as the ultimate legitimating guarantees of its independence over the past two decades.

## Overview of the current geopolitical situation

As may be expected given the "de-structuring" aims of Russian actions, Estonia has in recent months redoubled its efforts to secure its standing within various Western structures. Since early 2014, the government's focus has near-exclusively been on NATO. Tallinn has worked hard to secure as great a NATO (or bilateral allied) troop presence in Estonia as possible; clarify as much as possible NATO's obligations towards members who consider themselves to be at risk from Russia (this in terms of public policy, the credibility of the Article 5 mutual defence clause, and defence planning); and it has looked to the US to deliver on its image as the ultimate guarantor of world order as Estonia knows and supports it. In this respect, President Barack Obama's visit to Tallinn in early September 2014 was of great symbolic importance - as an affirmation of Estonia's continued enjoyment of the privileges conferred by membership in the Western world.

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<sup>371</sup> *New Year's Eve speech of President Toomas Hendrik Ilves on 31 December 2014*, <http://www.president.ee/en/official-duties/speeches/10930-new-years-eve-speech-of-president-toomas-hendrik-ilves-on-31-december-2014/index.html>

For reasons to do with size and regional influence, Estonia sought to act in concert with like-minded countries that find themselves in a similar circumstance. Pre-eminent among these have been Poland and the two other Baltic states of Latvia and Lithuania. Although all four have pronounced themselves satisfied with the results of NATO's Cardiff summit, their officials have also informally conceded that although NATO plans to create a "Very High Readiness Joint Task Force," (it will set up a regional operational headquarters in Poland, increase the continuous rotation of US and other allied troops, and boost Baltic air-policing), its mission fall short of the ultimate ambition of their countries - to create a workable and credible conventional deterrent against Russia. Arguably, Russia has been able to exert its own preventive strategic power, inhibiting the NATO response and confining the United States (so far, at least) to largely rhetorical affirmations of support against any reputed Russian threat. This is not a modality of the "destructuring power" discussed above, but an exploitation of systemic advantages yielded by Russia's status as a nuclear superpower which enjoys rough parity with the United States. Russia's disproportional skill of regional escalation keeps begging the question: when and where precisely would American national interest be sufficiently crossed for the country to risk a nuclear standoff?

Russian 'grand' strategy has fallen far short of its assumed aim of demoralising or even 'destroying' NATO.<sup>372</sup> It has, however, served to highlight strategic divisions among key allies, mainly the United States on one hand (and Poland and the Baltic countries behind it,) and Germany and France on the other. US officials publicly concede that processing an Article Five request by Estonia could take "weeks," especially if the circumstances of Russian aggression were unclear and fell under some localised description of "hybrid warfare" or "micro-aggression." The commander of US land forces in Europe, General Ben Hodges, told journalists in Estonia during an on-the-record briefing in November 2014, that the United States would (in such an instance) probably opt for quicker bilateral measures, though underscoring that the political prerogative of such a decision rests with the US President, and "cannot be judged."<sup>373</sup>

Similarly, Russia's sharply increased appetite for confrontation has contributed to tensions and polarity within the EU; between member states pushing for a softer line on Russia, and states intent on ramping up sanctions and other measures to rapidly and lastingly hike the costs for Moscow of its invasion of Ukraine. Estonia has been firmly entrenched on the side of the hawks, strengthened by the recent rise of German anger at Russia's intransigence.

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372 Justin Huggler, "Putin Wants to Destroy NATO, Says US General Ben Hodges," *Telegraph*, March 4, 2015, <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/natosource/putin-wants-to-destroy-nato-says-us-general-ben-hodges>

373 General Ben Hodges, Commander of US Army in Europe, in Ahto Lobjakas, "Ahto Lobjakas: sõjahobuse suust," *Postimees*, November 26, 2014, <http://pluss.postimees.ee/3006315/ahto-lobjakas-sojahobuse-suust>

However, the EU's undeniable fragmentation, and the emaciation of both its foreign policy resolve and instruments at its disposal, has contributed to the fact that Estonia finds itself in an international environment which has already been significantly de-structured as a result of Russian action.

## **Domestic political situation**

Perhaps understandably preoccupied with foreign policy, the Estonian government has been slower to address the country's domestic weaknesses and vulnerabilities to Russia's de-structuring power. Chief among them is Estonia's status as a de facto (if not de jure) post-Soviet successor state with a large Russian-speaking minority, half of whom live in areas adjacent to Russia. Russian officials have on occasion denied that President Vladimir Putin's pledges to protect Russian-speaking "compatriots" outside of Russia should be of any concern to Estonia. However, the Estonian authorities and most of the Estonian-speaking public perceive a credible threat.<sup>374</sup> This assessment, in turn, has begun influencing policy. Supporting higher defence expenditure and generally taking a tough line in regards to Russia is starting to pay off in opinion polls for centre-right parties. Even the populist centre-left opposition, which relies heavily on the ethnic Russian vote, has been moved to reaffirm its credentials as a patriotic political force. The current centre-right government has begun investing in something described as the "psychological defence" of the nation. Cosmetic changes have been made to the citizenship legislation, affecting perhaps 1000 people (children of stateless parents under 15 years old are, as of January 2015, automatically Estonian citizens). With elections in March 2015, the political debate on minorities has in recent months taken a sharp turn to the right. Mainstream politicians have been trying to re-open a wider debate on the place of ethnic non-Estonians - or Russian-speakers - in Estonian society, irrespective of whether or not they are citizens. About half of them are.

According to the 2013 national census, about 380,000, or 29 per cent, of Estonia's 1.3 million inhabitants are non-Estonian. An overwhelming majority of these are either Russians or native Russian speakers with different ethnic affiliations - Ukrainians, Belarusians, or other ethnicities from the former Soviet Union. About 50 per cent of the non-Estonian residents are either citizens of Russia (approximately 100,000) or stateless persons (just under 90,000).

Estonian naturalisation policy remains strict. It prescribes an exam

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<sup>374</sup> Edward Lucas of the Economist sums up Estonia's fears in this representative account: Edward Lucas, "Against Putin, It's Time to Challenge JFK," *Politico Magazine*, August 22, 2014, <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/08/only-obama-can-stop-putin-now-110264.html#VRQnwztMm32>

every applicant must pass. Naturalisations achieved an annual peak of over 7000 in 2005 only to fall to an estimated 1300 in 2013. This figure includes people who arrived in Estonia recently and from other countries than Russia. The low rate of naturalisation must be partially construed as a victory for Russia's compatriot policy, or chalked up as a failure of Estonia's soft power. Anecdotal evidence suggests Russia's decision to offer visa-free travel to stateless Estonian residents in 2007 played an important role, in particular since stateless persons could by then already travel visa-free within the Schengen Zone.

A 2011 survey conducted by the Praxis think-tank in Tallinn found that the non-Estonian community fell into three groups (of 120,000-130,000 people each): those strongly integrated with Estonian institutions and national identity, those moderately integrated, and the rest admitting to low or absent levels of integration.<sup>375</sup>

Against the backdrop of Russia's current economic troubles, two aspects are worth noting. Firstly, the decline in the buying power of the rouble affects more than 3000 pensioners who receive their funds from Russia. Secondly, however, the relative income gap between residents of Estonian border areas and their Russian neighbours, already in Estonia's favour for quite some time, has further increased.

This, as well as the Russian government's generous financial backing to the various compatriots' unions in Estonia, reflects various forms of semi-administrative power Russia retains in Estonia irrespective of its status as a foreign power.<sup>376</sup>

Russia has also for a long time financed political parties and candidates representing the Russian-speaking community, but none have made it across the 5 per cent electoral threshold in the national elections, or been elected to the European Parliament. There have been allegations that Russian funds have reached the left-wing Centre Party's campaign coffers to the tune of a few million Euros, via its chairman Edgar Savisaar's personal dealings with Vladimir Yakunin, a close associate of Vladimir Putin - but nothing has been proven in a court of law. Yet this particular cloud has a silver lining. It is arguable that the fact that the Centre Party has held the Tallinn City council for more than a decade on the strength of its showing among the Russian-speaking vote (in local elections all Estonia's permanent residents can vote irrespective of citizenship), provides the Estonian political system with something of a safety valve. Tallinn and Narva, dominated by the Centre Party as they are

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375 *Estonian Integration Monitoring 2011. Summary*, Praxis, accessed April 18, 2015, [http://www.praxis.ee/fileadmin/tarmo/Projektid/Valitsemine\\_ja\\_kodanike%C3%BChiskond/Artiklid/Integratsiooni\\_monitooring\\_2011\\_ENG\\_lyhiversioon.pdf](http://www.praxis.ee/fileadmin/tarmo/Projektid/Valitsemine_ja_kodanike%C3%BChiskond/Artiklid/Integratsiooni_monitooring_2011_ENG_lyhiversioon.pdf)

376 Anna Bulakh et al., "Russian Soft Power and Military Influence" in *Tools of Destabilisation* ed. Mike Winnerstig, (Stockholm: FOI, 2014), 40 ff, [http://www.icds.ee/fileadmin/media/icds.ee/failid/FOI-R-3990--SE\\_reducerad.pdf](http://www.icds.ee/fileadmin/media/icds.ee/failid/FOI-R-3990--SE_reducerad.pdf)

home to the largest concentrations of Russian-speakers, also afford a notable degree of representation to that community in the absence of proper Russian-speaking parties in the Estonian parliament. Savaaar's Cente Party can count on about 80 per cent of the Russian-speaking vote in parliamentary elections.

Mainstream representatives of the Russian-speaking community have pursued relatively modest political aims. They have tried to partially derail, or at least slow down, the implementation of the government's adopted policy of ensuring at least 60 per cent of secondary-level tuition in Estonia's Russian-speaking schools is in Estonian. A recent study by Juhan Kivirähk for the International Centre of Defence Studies notes that "[i]nsufficient preparation for the transition to Estonian-language tuition left the Russian-speaking population feeling that the obligatory transition constituted pressure from the government. Many felt that they were being transformed into Estonians by force."<sup>377</sup> However, these feelings have not translated into notable levels of grassroots activism or other forms of resentment. The same study quotes figures from an opinion poll conducted in March 2014, which shows that 82 per cent of Estonia's non-Estonians believe either strongly or moderately that the country should resist an armed attack. The corresponding figure for Estonians was also 82 per cent. Although the author of the study warns that the non-Estonians see the chance of an attack as a very remote and abstract possibility, he goes on to note that significantly more than half of the non-citizens in the demographic cohorts falling between the ages of 20 and 60 say they would be prepared to "take part in defensive actions in the event of an attack" on Estonia. Also, 44 per cent of Estonia's non-citizens support the country's membership of NATO.

There is ample anecdotal evidence to suggest that Estonia's Russian-speaking population is split in its attitudes to the developments in Ukraine, with a large majority supportive of Moscow's current policies (see more below under "Media space"). Russian-speaking Estonian MEPs and MPs have openly questioned the government line - while generally steering clear of open endorsement of Putin's policies, among other things they have refrained from condoning Russia's annexation of Crimea.

Clearly, Russian semi-administrative and financial power over parts of the Russian-speaking community remains pervasive. This influence could certainly constitute a springboard for further intervention. However, if there were plans in the Kremlin to exercise this power for political leverage on the streets in 2014, they did not materialise. Demonstrations in support of sepa-

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377 Juhan Kivirähk, *Integrating Estonia's Russian-Speaking Population: Findings of National Defense Opinion Surveys* (Tallinn: International Centre for Defence and Security, 2014), [http://www.icds.ee/fileadmin/media/icds.ee/failid/Juhan\\_Kivirahk\\_-\\_Integrating\\_Estonias\\_Russian-Speaking\\_Population.pdf](http://www.icds.ee/fileadmin/media/icds.ee/failid/Juhan_Kivirahk_-_Integrating_Estonias_Russian-Speaking_Population.pdf)

ratists in Ukraine organised in Tallinn and Narva in the spring of 2014 were sparsely attended. The main event in Narva drew a crowd of about 100 people, and even fewer in Tallinn.

## **The people-to-people dimension**

The people-to-people dimension in Estonian-Russian relations has been one of the notable early casualties of the crisis and the war in Ukraine. Relations between the two countries had been relatively settled over recent years. In the wake of the “Bronze nights” riots in 2007, which followed the removal of a Soviet World War II commemorative statue from central Tallinn, Estonia had conducted a campaign against representatives of the Nashi youth movement. Some of these activists were declared *personae non grata* under the EU’s Schengen visa regime. However, relations appeared to be on the mend in the early 2010s, with Russia agreeing to talks on local ferry traffic on Lake Peipsi and Lake Pskov, as well as other measures designed to promote people-to-people contact.

However, the recent repressive measures adopted by the Russian authorities are now driving liberal critics of the regime, as well as entire Russian alternative media outlets, into exile. A number of these have found sanctuary in the Baltic States. Estonia has proudly, and all but officially, welcomed as its highest-profile ‘catch’ - the renowned critic Artyom Troitsky. He has quickly blended into the local mainstream media scene, commenting on topical issues, with a critical eye on Russia.

On the other side of the spectrum, Estonia has flexed its political-administrative muscle blocking entry to the country of a number of notable sympathisers of the Putin regime and its programme goals. In October 2014, Estonia denied entry to Valeri Tishkov, former Russian Minister for Inter-ethnic Relations and currently a member of its Academy of Sciences. Although no formal reasons were cited by Estonian authorities, Tishkov later told Estonian media he suspected the move was inspired by his views on Baltic minority policies: “Estonia is very sensitive to everything that does not agree with official national policy on ethnic issues and minorities.”<sup>378</sup> He said another reason could have to do with the fact that the organisation behind the event he was going to attend (‘Media Club Impressum’) has been linked with Russian military intelligence (SVR) by the Estonian security police.

In December, ‘Impressum’ claimed another unintended victim when Giulietto Chiesa, a veteran Italian journalist and a one-time member of the

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378 Tishkov on the national public broadcaster’s website (in Estonian).

European Parliament, was prevented from entering Estonia to address members of the same Russian-speaking ‘media club.’ A top official at the Estonian Ministry of the Interior, Erkki Koort, issued a statement to the effect that the Estonian state reserves the right to protect its population: “We will always weigh the public interest behind denying entry into Estonia to someone against their own interests and rights.”<sup>379</sup>

In both cases, (unintended) insult was added to injury as neither man had been aware of the interdiction prior to setting out on their trip to Estonia. Tishkov was turned back at the airport, and Chiesa was apprehended at his hotel in downtown Tallinn. Koort said the entry ban was not contingent on whether its targets were aware of it or not. Chiesa, on the other hand, said he would contest Estonia’s application of Schengen rules.

While shying away from direct retaliation, the Russian government has for years targeted Eerik Niiles Kross, an Estonian entrepreneur and politician, whose company Trustcorp has advised governments in Iraq, Georgia and elsewhere. Russia issued an international arrest warrant against Kross in 2010, briefly endorsed by Interpol, saying it wanted to question Kross about his alleged involvement in the “Arctic Sea” hijacking case in 2009.<sup>380</sup>

Russia is seeking to demonstrate the ease with which it believes it can translate its superpower status into global administrative and normative power, even if it only has nuisance value to show for it. Estonia, in turn, is looking to muster whatever resources its membership of Western institutions brings, with the aim of generating its own nuisance value. On the other hand, the deepening concern over Russian propaganda also plays its part. Estonia appears to somewhat inordinately fear the impact of Russian soft power, which Tishkov and Chiesa appeared to embody. The government has been criticised in the mainstream media for fearing debate and the exchange of views which appeared innocuous from a security point of view. Critics also point out that about 90 per cent of non-Estonians already glean their news from TV stations Estonia says are either directly or indirectly controlled by the Kremlin (see below, under ‘Media space’).

However, this tit-for-tat must be seen against backdrop of the almost near-total absence of high-level political contacts after 2008. Although then-Prime Minister Andrus Ansip met his Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev in April 2013, people-to-people relations between the two countries have been limited to sporadic and sparse contacts between members of the academia, as well as some cultural exchanges such as drama festivals or concerts. Bilateral schemes aimed at revitalising cross-border contacts between the south-west

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379 Koort on the national public broadcaster’s website (in Estonian).

380 “Kross Wanted Notice Appears on Interpol Site on Eve of Election,” *Estonian Public Broadcasting*, October 19, 2013, <http://news.err.ee/v/politics/b8639300-0770-4998-90e4-135e8df50b44>

of Estonia and the Pskov oblast have come to nothing, and the 2014 war in Ukraine put paid to such ambitions with some vengeance. When a regional figure representing the governing centre-right Reform Party suggested in late December 2014 that Estonia should emulate Latvia and Lithuania in taking advantage of EU regulations giving member states discretion to set up 50km-deep visa-free zones for citizens of neighbouring countries, he was met with near-universal vilification within the three centrist or right-wing mainstream parties. Apart from the Reform Party, this list includes the Social Democrats as well as the nationalist Union of Pro Patria, and Res Publica.

The tourism industry is the one sector that has seen a relative boom in recent years, but it has also gone into heavy decline in terms of the numbers of Russian visitors expected to arrive in Estonia over the New Year and Orthodox Christmas. The fall in the exchange rate of the rouble is more than decimating visitor numbers. Although trade insiders say the situation in Estonia is not as bleak as that in Latvia or Lithuania, Russian visitor levels could decline by as much as 30 to 40 per cent year-on-year.<sup>381</sup>

## Media space

There is a clear and deepening cleavage between those who receive their news predominantly in Estonian and in Russian. There are reports that audience figures for Radio 4, the flagship publicly funded Russian-language news channel in Estonia, have dropped drastically since the start of the conflict in Ukraine. The commonly accepted explanation is that Russian listeners object to the Western angle of the Radio 4 coverage. A study commissioned by the Open Estonian Foundation over the summer showed that while the local Russian-speakers' dominant source of news remains television (the Pervyi Baltiiskii Kanal'), their second preference was the Russian-language website of delfi.ee.<sup>382</sup> Over 2014, regular spats have broken out among media observers and analysts over differences in coverage of events in Ukraine by the Russian-language and Estonian-language sister versions of the delfi.ee site. Often, exactly the same news story has carried very different headlines, diametrically opposed in meaning. Not surprisingly, the Estonian-language site takes a pro-Western line, whereas the line of the Russian-language site is easily interpreted as pro-Moscow, or at best neutral. The owners of delfi.

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381 Raigo Triik, chairman of the Estonian Association of Hotels and Restaurants in Ken Rohelaan, "Kurvad Vene jõulud," Äripäev, December 29, 2014, <http://www.aripaev.ee/uudised/2014/12/29/kurvad-vene-joulud>

382 *Current Events and Different Sources of Information* (Tallinn: Saar Poll, 2014), [http://oef.org.ee/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Current\\_events\\_and\\_different\\_sources\\_of\\_information\\_ED\\_\\_1\\_.pdf](http://oef.org.ee/fileadmin/user_upload/Current_events_and_different_sources_of_information_ED__1_.pdf)

ee downplay these charges, saying the overall coverage is balanced on both versions of the sites. Neutral observers contend Delfi's differing editorial policies boil down to market-related considerations, not any ideological biases.<sup>383</sup> Meanwhile, 32 per cent of the non-Estonians say their preferred media outlet is the Estonian-language station Estonian TV.<sup>384</sup>

The continued absence of a nationally-funded Russian-language TV channel became a political talking point among the political elite in 2014. Early suggestions to either set up or ask the EU to set up Russian-language TV stations, broadcasting objective news in Russian, devolved to an in-principle decision by the government to allocate €2.5 million for the creation of a national Russian-language channel. Sceptics doubt a station with a budget of this magnitude could hold its own against PBK or other Russian channels with far greater revenue streams.<sup>385</sup>

Calls to ban or block offending Russian TV stations have not fallen on receptive ears in Estonia. This is a type of administrative power Estonia authorities are loath to use, in contrast to Latvia and Lithuania. They point to the technical difficulties inherent in such an enterprise, but also (and significantly) to its running counter to the basic values of freedom of speech and opinion.

Estonian politicians have at best been lukewarm in their reception of the idea of setting up a pan-Baltic Russian-language TV channel, arguing that the Russian populations in the region, and their problems, are too different. However, Estonia has been very active diplomatically within the EU (as well as NATO) in support of broader efforts to counteract Russian propaganda and “information warfare.”<sup>386</sup>

## Regionalisation

There may be differences in how Russian-speakers in Tallinn react to developments in Ukraine and their resultant global political, economic and social fallout, as opposed to those in Narva or elsewhere in north-eastern Estonia. However, there is currently no hard data to either suggest that or outline possible divisions.

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383 Priit Pullerits, “Delfit süüdistatakse Kremli-meelsuses,” *Postimees*, September 19, 2014, <http://www.postimees.ee/2925753/delfit-suudistatakse-kremli-meelsuses>

384 *Current Events and Different Sources of Information* (Tallinn: Saar Poll, 2014), [http://oef.org.ee/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Current\\_events\\_and\\_different\\_sources\\_of\\_information\\_ED\\_\\_1\\_.pdf](http://oef.org.ee/fileadmin/user_upload/Current_events_and_different_sources_of_information_ED__1_.pdf)

385 Rain Kooli (online op-ed editor at Estonia's National Broadcasting Corporation), “Rain Kooli: venekeelne telekanal, piits ja präänik,” Estonian Public Broadcasting, September 22, 2014, <http://uudised.err.ee/v/arvamus/acc6a1ff-2d9a-4fa2-b725-c47276bfe31a>

386 “Estonia, Lithuania, UK, Denmark call for EU action on Russian information warfare; Latvia refuses to join,” *Baltic Times*, January 15, 2015, [http://www.baltictimes.com/estonia\\_\\_lithuania\\_\\_uk\\_\\_denmark\\_call\\_for\\_eu\\_action\\_on\\_russian\\_information\\_warfare\\_\\_latvia\\_refuses\\_to\\_join](http://www.baltictimes.com/estonia__lithuania__uk__denmark_call_for_eu_action_on_russian_information_warfare__latvia_refuses_to_join)

It is clear that borders and border security have abruptly come into much sharper strategic focus in the wake of the abduction of an Estonian security police operative in south-eastern Estonia by the FSB in early September 2014. In what was widely seen as a tit-for-tat reaction, Estonian border guards arrested two KGB ex-majors on the Narva River who had strayed into Estonian waters, across the demarcation line with Russia. However, this renewed focus on borders is yet to translate into measures that would materially threaten northeast Estonia's traditional and daily links with Russia, be they economic or social.

These links work both ways. The fall in the value of the Russian rouble has led to increases in buying power on the part of the Estonian residents living close enough to the border with Russia to cross it regularly. This humdrum cross-border trade could be said to contribute to the social, economic and political cohesion of the country.

However, there is a far more invidious relationship that links Russia and Ida-Virumaa, the northeasternmost Estonian district, with its capital town Narva. An eruption of the HIV epidemic in 2000-2001 coincided with an explosive increase in drug use, with Russian-sourced synthetic opioids fentanyl and 3-methylfentanyl quickly replacing other substances as the drugs of choice, with drastic results. Intravenous drug use led to a massive increase in HIV and AIDS cases, with an estimated five per cent of the Narva population carrying the virus - the highest proportion in the entire EU.<sup>387</sup>

By 2012, Estonia reported 191 drug-related deaths per million inhabitants - three times as many as Norway, which claimed second place in Europe. There are an estimated 20,000 to 25,000 drug users in Estonia, with studies suggesting some 80 per cent of them represent the Russian-speaking community.<sup>388</sup>

This presents a problem in terms of regionalisation, as far as Narva and north-eastern Estonia are concerned. Russia clearly has leverage here which could be described as the extreme hard edge of what is usually termed soft power. However there is a cross-over effect here to hard power proper, if, as is suspected, the fentanyl brought into the country from Russia originally hails from the stocks of Russian special forces and intelligence agencies. The same substance was used by Russian special forces in the 2002 Dubrovka

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387 See Kaja-Triin Laisaar et al., "Estonia at the Threshold of the Fourth Decade of the AIDS Era in Europe," *AIDS Research and Human Retroviruses* 27 (2011): 841-851, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3180763>

388 See "Estonia Data Sheet," European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, accessed April 18, 2015, <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/countries/data-sheets/estonia>; Sam Wilson, "Synthetic drug fentanyl causes overdose boom in Estonia," *BBC*, March 30, 2012, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17524945>

Theatre hostage crisis in Moscow to incapacitate Chechen terrorists. There were 130 hostages who died as a result of inhaling the fentanyl-based gas pumped into the building.<sup>389</sup>

Further, beyond mere regionalisation, the fact that the ills associated with drug use and HIV infection have so far predominantly affected the non-Estonian community, suggests the problem is inter-communal rather than inter-regional. If, by commission or omission, Russia is responsible for the influx of fentanyl into Estonia, the impact of this insidious mixture of soft and hard power goes well beyond creating regional problems. It also raises questions as to the extent of the corruption which must go hand-in-hand with the estimated volumes of drug consumption (the annual turnover of the fentanyl trade in Estonia is put anywhere between €100-400 million) and the depth of its penetration into the services and government of an EU member state.

## **Trade/economy/business culture**

Estonia has long been looking to minimise its exposure to Russian trade. From the imposition of double tariffs on Estonian exports in the early 1990s, to unilateral import bans slapped on a number of Estonian producers by Rosselkhoznadzor in January 2014 (well before the Ukraine crisis grew into an international problem), Russia has employed economic sanctions for political leverage. Paradoxically, in Estonia's case this has not extended to cuts in gas deliveries. Estonia is linked to Latvia, whose Incukalns underground gas storage facility is utilised by Russia as part of the back-up mechanism in supplying its own north-western areas.

The 1998 and 2008 crises only served to drive home the point that Russian markets are unreliable, their profits fickle, and dependence on them ultimately does not pay off. Thus, Russia has for a number of years been losing ground among Estonia's trade partners. In 2013, Russia was Estonia's third biggest export market with 11 per cent (after Sweden and Finland), though the export volume had already contracted by 7 per cent compared to 2012. In terms of imports, Russia was seventh with 6 per cent, having lost 22 per cent year-on-year compared to 2012.<sup>390</sup>

The full Russian sanction list in August 2014 had a relatively small impact on Estonia. In 2013, the value of Estonian exports on the 2014 sanctions list amounted to €75 million. In the first half of 2014, Estonia exported

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389 See Artem Krechetnikov, "Moscow theatre siege: Questions remain unanswered," *BBC*, October 24, 2012, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-20067384>

390 See "Möödunud aastal Eesti kaubavahetus vähenes," Estonian Statistical Office, February 10, 2014, <http://www.stat.ee/72534>

these goods for a grand total of €28 million - 27 per cent less than in 2013 during the same period. All up, the Ministry of Finance predicts Estonian losses to stabilise around the €50 million mark, or 0.2-0.3 per cent of GDP.<sup>391</sup>

There are anecdotal reports of Russian money, mostly in the form of cash, looking to enter the Estonian business scene as Russian entrepreneurs try to diversify their holdings. Serious offers appear to be considered by Estonian businesses. It may safely be assumed the Estonian security and intelligence agencies are keeping a clear eye on the movement of Russian funds.

However, on the other hand, Estonia has come to realise the potential that well-managed Russian investment could have in the present economically-straitened circumstances. For example, the Estonian Entrepreneurship Agency - the government's investment arm - finalised talks with the major Russian software developer Acron in December 2014. Acron will set up offices in Estonia with some 50 employees, saying it could extend its presence to 500 people should the Estonian government offer further concessions. Acron, like many other potential investors, is above all looking for exemptions from Estonia's social tax regime.

A Bank of Estonia analysis on the possible impact of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict on the Estonian financial sector concludes that the risks are minimal. Russian residents' deposits amount to €232 million, or 1.1 per cent of the total balance sheet of all the banks active in Estonia. In no bank do they surpass 10 per cent of the total balance sheet.<sup>392</sup>

Two considerations shape Estonia's official reaction to Russian investment. One has to do with security. The reported high levels of Russian financial penetration in Latvia and in Lithuania set the negative benchmark which the Estonian authorities are keen to overshoot by as large margin as possible. The second is related to Estonia's EU membership. The country has long been keen to subscribe both to the letter and spirit of EU legislation. It is a matter of some national pride that Estonia has emerged as the highest-placed east-European nation in Transparency International's yearly corruption perception indices. Estonia has also looked to the EU to exploit community funds to the maximum, in forging regional ties in terms of transport and communications links with the aim of isolating itself from Russian influence. The same applies to energy. Estonia is an ardent backer and implementer of the Third Energy Package, which requires gas distributors to be separated from delivery networks. It is hoped in Tallinn that the package will be an important nail in the eventual coffin of Russia's leverage over the EU.

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391 Kristjan Pungas, "Vene sanktsioonidel väike ekspordimõju," *Äripäev*, September 5, 2014, <http://www.aripaev.ee/blog/2014/09/05/vene-sanktsioonid-mojutavad-eksporti-vahe>

392 See "Lisa. Venemaa ja Ukraina konflikti võimalik mõju Eesti finantssektorile," *Finantsstabiilsuse Ülevaade* 2 (2014), 56-58, <http://www.eestipank.ee/search/gss/fsu22014est6.pdf>

In short, Estonia has purposely and intensively worked to minimise, and where possible to eliminate, its exposure to Russian economic pressure (whether formal or informal), reckoning it is always liable to come at a political cost.

## **Strategic dimension**

Under the most charitable of interpretations, Estonia has virtually no power it can use as a counterweight to Russian influence. As a small country, it has chosen a two-pronged strategy - leverage and isolation. It is seeking to isolate itself from and insulate itself against Russia. At the same time it is seeking to maximise whatever international leverage it has, such as the EU and NATO.

Russia, in turn, has overwhelming superiority when it comes to raw hard power, as well as finances. Estonia's membership of both the EU and NATO has so far served the country well, securing it against possible Russian attack. Assuming Russia has aggressive designs, it clearly doesn't put enough into them to risk damaging its relationship with the West even further. But, it is now becoming apparent that even hints of aggression, together with veiled threats (ranging from political barbs to the continuous background noise of airspace violations by Russian military aircraft), also have an impact. Russia's sudden refusal in 2014 to ratify a border treaty it had signed with Estonia in late 2013 is part of the same strategy - it feeds the Estonian sense of insecurity and gradual loss of control over the environment. It is enough for Russia to simply remain silent about its intentions to cause anxiety in Estonia. This is a form of what I have chosen to term "de-structuring" power. It is certainly a kind of power, but it is no ordinary power.

In applying de-structuring power, Russia is trying to pry Estonia loose from the international structures that secure its independence. While Moscow's long-term aims may include doing damage to and possibly destroying NATO and the EU, in the short and medium term Russia seems content with letting its de-structuring power undermine both the international system and the weaker countries embedded in it.

Russia's corroding tactics have also had an effect insofar as Estonia's reliance on NATO has created political tensions with neighbouring Finland and Sweden. Both (unlike Estonia) have an independent defence capability, but are not members of NATO. Finland in particular is pursuing an independent foreign policy line in regards to Russia, causing great nervousness and consternation in Tallinn. Although Estonia and Finland are in a very similar position as neighbours of Russia, there exists today next-to-no defence co-ordination between the two countries. NATO commanders view Finland as part of the High North, to be engaged via Denmark and Sweden; and Estonia as one of the Baltic States, situated at the very end of a string of countries running north from Poland.

The other side of the coin is the hard edges of the soft power Russia wields in Estonia itself. Estonia's Achilles' heel is its Russian-speaking minority. Russia has so far been fairly inept in putting the minority into any substantial use. But its constant pressure via media propaganda, campaign funds, and sting operations such as the abduction of the Estonian security agent Eston Kohver two days after Obama visited Tallinn, is chipping away at the resolve and patience of the Estonian side. The Estonian authorities have begun to over-react, turning on the one thing they feel they can control - the Russian-speaking minority. This involves suspicions directed at Estonia's ethnic Russian politicians, as well as resorting to state propaganda to shore up the confidence of the Estonian-speaking community at the expense of civic harmony. A case in point here is the recently-revived campaign for "psychological defence," aimed at building up patriotism and national cohesion in the struggle against the enemy. From a Western standpoint, the campaign comes uncomfortably close to state-sponsored propaganda aimed at the country's own residents, while also blurring the distinction between war and peacetime.

To round off this chapter, Estonia defines itself by order. Its stability is encoded in its membership of the international legal order, and integration with the West via the EU and NATO. In a sense, Estonia views the world as pigeon-holed. As long as there is a clearly defined pigeon-hole for Estonia, the country is safe. Russia, on the other hand, seems to feel handicapped by, if not the existence of international norms, then at least their reach. Its own strategy therefore also has two prongs - by trying to pry its neighbours loose

from their Western-defined pigeonholes, it de-codes them. Re-coding these countries might follow later, as happened in 1940. If so, we could revert to a more conventional typology of power. Secondly, by picking off and incapacitating its neighbours, Russia also weakens the overall system of international rules. Presumably, its goal is to eventually participate in re-designing and re-encoding these very rules.

## **Recommendations**

Policy makers must avoid falling victim to the temptation of viewing and treating Russians as objects or pawns in information warfare counter-campaigns. Attempts to set up “objective news” channels for Baltic Russians especially will fail, as long as their problems and grievances are treated narrowly as resulting from deficiencies in information consumption. In other words, access to information must not overshadow the far more fundamental need to secure their loyalty as fully-fledged members of Baltic societies - whether this is eventually or immediately does not, and should not, make a difference.

There is also the broader threat, already visible in Estonia, of policy makers starting to overcompensate in their efforts to counteract Kremlin propaganda, by conceiving of their own citizens as vulnerable targets needing state-provided protection - or in need of something called “psychological defence,” to use the current catchphrase.

In practical terms, this means the current preoccupation with either setting up alternative Russian-language media channels, or blocking channels emanating from Russia, is a waste of time - a war waged on the tip of the iceberg. If the West - to all practical intents and purposes synonymous here with the EU - wants to prevail, it will need to invest in measures contributing to its drive towards order and integration. This should, in the first instance, mean drastically heightened attention to (and investments in) Baltic vulnerabilities. Substantial funds should be found and channelled to regions with predominantly Russian-speaking populations. This would need to take place quickly, and would thus require some extremely creative thinking on the part of the traditionally slow-moving EU. Perhaps lessons learned (or about to be learned) in Greece on how to counter and roll back the effects of impoverishment and exclusion could prove inspirational.

# Diverging Faces of ‘Soft Power’ in Latvia between the EU and Russia

/Andis Kudors, Gatis Pelnens/

Latvia has experienced fundamental economic and political changes since regaining its independence in 1991. What started as the strife for independence and democratic order continued as aspirations towards the “Western” lifestyle and values. After a period of hesitancy in regards to foreign policy priorities in the early 1990s, the majority of Latvia’s societal and political elites<sup>393</sup> agreed on integration into the Western political and economic structures as a major direction of strategic development. Renewal of the principles of democracy and the market economy was a rational choice having no viable alternative, and allowing the re-constructing of Latvia’s identity in terms of a democratic European country rather than in the Post-Soviet influence zone of Russia.<sup>394</sup>

The foreign policy objectives - to become a member of European Union and NATO - were defined in 1995 and reached in 2004, a relatively short time. Downturn in economic growth at the beginning of the 1990s related to the transition to a market economy did not meet the expectations of a large part of the population. As a result, a certain degree of scepticism towards the “Western-style” political and economic order has been evident. This, in turn, has attracted the attention of the Russian political elite to intensify propaganda against the “West” by exploiting the consequences of the economic problems. This has manifested in various ways - starting with historical references to the high living standards in the Baltic States under the Soviets in comparison to Latvia’s present position in the EU, and promoting Russia (and its market) as a viable way of tackling economic issues.

With the rise in oil prices, Russia began to grant increasingly substantial sponsorship to various ‘soft power’ projects. This marked Russia’s “normative counter-attack” against the West by doubting the universality and applicability of Russian culture and “traditional values” to the norms of human

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393 Airis Rikveilis notes that political elites have pursued the direction of integration into the “Western” political and economic system “strictly and consistently” since restoration of independence. See Airis Rikveilis, “Fifteen years of Latvian–Russian relations: From optimism to hopelessness and back” in *Latvia-Russia-X*, ed. Žaneta Ozoliņa (Riga: Strategic Analysis Commission under the Auspices of the President of the Republic of Latvia, 2008), 19.

394 Restoration of validity of Latvia’s Constitution, adopted in 1922, was a reminder of the state continuity and, along with the other factors, it simplified the self-identification of Latvians as the citizens of a democratic European country, which was undermined, but not fully altered, during the Soviet period.

rights. Vladimir Putin's speech of 2005 clearly stated that the collapse of the USSR had been the major geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century. After that, the discourse of the Russian political elite embraced the ideas of a clash of civilizations and the necessity for Russia to implement its own regional project of "civilization construction" which, according to the Kremlin ideologists, would protect it from the negative impact of globalization.

The process of national identity-building by Russian authorities, has turned out unfavourably for Latvia, as officially Moscow tries to address the majority of the Latvian population with the help of its policy toward the compatriots and the media, offering them the "Russian World" integration project. Initially, the aforementioned concept was based on the principles of soft power, but since 2014 it has served as the means for legitimizing Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Today's Russia is not the cause of these weaknesses, but it actively exploits them.

The EU is not only an example of economic, political and legal integration, but represents an unprecedented social and cultural project. In this regard, the EU represents promotion of common (European) identity, instead of strengthening national identity in Latvia. Emphasis on the promotion of common identity, while not undermining national identity, has its grounds in the European project itself - the EU has been built on the idea of having a common space for people and states while embracing differences as a part of cultural heritage. From this perspective, the EU uses the positive agenda of common values and normative background for its projection of "soft power."

This chapter follows the activities of Russia and the EU in regards to Latvia in the five dimensions identified for this study. Different elements of "soft power" are illustrated by each section of this chapter, providing a general overview of Russia's and the EU's capabilities, and activities and tools for wielding their "soft power" in relation to Latvia. In order to best illustrate power disparities between the EU and Russia, we have chosen a "zero-sum-game" as an approach for the chapter. This is due to the fact that despite periodic collaboration, both the EU and Russia are adversaries in terms of power.

The first section looks at the activities of the EU and Russia in shaping perceptions that result in attraction and further facilitate forming of the identities of target audiences. The second section focuses on the presence of Russian and 'Western' media in Latvia as a tool for influencing public opinion. This section allows observation of the asymmetrical nature of "soft power" between Russia and EU, in terms of tools available for both sides. Although, the notion of the 'West' may be viewed more broadly than the European perspective, the focus on the EU shows more tangible results of external influence. The third section explores the different approaches of Russia and the EU

in regards to specifically the eastern Latvian region of Latgale. The strategic dimension, covered in the fourth section, reveals the basic features behind the choice of strategic partnership towards the EU and Russia and allows recognition of the advantages and disadvantages of both external actors. Finally, the business dimension shows the role of business interaction as a part of power relations within Latvia.

## People-to-people dimension

The people-to-people dimension of soft power has been described by Joseph Nye as part of public diplomacy. According to Nye, states engage in public diplomacy not only by means of direct or strategic communication, but also by means of engagement with opinion leaders and initiatives that allows the shaping of peoples' perceptions. It should be noted that the concept of public diplomacy is viewed differently by Russia than the West – Russian authorities see public diplomacy merely as a set of instruments used by government to deliver its message, while for the West, public diplomacy is an intangible form of communication among people and societies. The Western notion of public diplomacy is the one that Nye promotes as a direct and indirect activity by the state to shape attitudes and perceptions, with focus on the goals/ends of the activities. In accordance with Russian authorities and academia, public diplomacy by definition has clearer focus on the means used to achieve goals. This is evident by the fact that public diplomacy in Russia is often described by using the concepts of “social diplomacy” (*obschestvennaya diplomatiya*), “people’s diplomacy” (*narodnaya diplomatiya*) or “international humanitarian cooperation” (*mezhdunarodnoe gumanitarnoe sotrudnichestvo*), thereby stressing the importance of the involvement of non-governmental actors<sup>395</sup> as a defining feature of public diplomacy. It should be noted that the word “humanitarian” in the West is mainly used when speaking about activities against human rights abuses or in cases of emergency situations. But in Russian the term covers a much broader area of cultural, inter-civilization relations, dialogue and discussion between civil societies, as well as relations with compatriots abroad.<sup>396</sup> Despite these differences, an outcome of public diplomacy is defined by perception of one’s identity as being closer to that of Russia

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395 According to the information of the agency *Rossotrudnichestvo*'s homepage, people's diplomacy and social diplomacy include such elements as public organizations and associations, contacts between partner cities, social-political actions, international non-governmental organizations. See „Obshestvennaia diplomatiia,” *Rossotrudnichestvo*, accessed March 11, 2015, <http://rs.gov.ru/node/307>

396 Tatiana Zonova, „Cultural diplomacy as a soft power tool in EU-Russia relations,” accessed March 11, 2015, [www.osce.org/secretariat/103745?download=true](http://www.osce.org/secretariat/103745?download=true)

or that of the West. It is manifested in terms of attitudes towards particular activities by either side in the short term, and by perception of image and values in the long term.

Analysing the people-to-people relationship dimension as the part of Russian public diplomacy in Latvia's direction, it can be concluded that Russia's approach has specific features. These features in large part are related to the presence of a significant Russian-speaking minority in Latvia that enables the spreading of Russia's influence. And Russia is actively using this resource as its public diplomacy is oriented mainly on the Russian-speaking audience in Latvia. That is evident by the example of Russian Ministry of Education and Moscow Municipality grants to students in Latvia, which are mainly allocated to the Russian-speaking citizens of Latvia (Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, etc), but not to Latvians.<sup>397</sup> Although public diplomacy and people-to-people contact as part of public diplomacy are usually employed for socialization purposes, in this case it works the opposite way - for Latvians have been partly artificially excluded from the target group of Russia's public diplomacy. It should be noted that the Russian-speaking population in Latvia serves both as an instrument and a target group for Russian public diplomacy.<sup>398</sup>

Another characteristic which has also caused criticism from Joseph Nye<sup>399</sup> is the approach of Russian state authorities to maintain extensive control over everything that can be considered as the sphere of soft power. Besides, Russia tries to conceal the presence of state power in the process. While analyzing Russia's sponsorship of NGOs in Latvia, the researcher Artūrs Kvesko writes that "... the practice of sponsorship of NGOs indicates that Russia tries to prove the appearance that its public diplomacy is the foreign policy activities initiated by the public and its various groups, not by the state."<sup>400</sup>

When speaking of values and identity formation, Russian authorities refer to the concept of the "Russian World." In this context it is possible to recall Russia's attempts to propose a set of universal values through its specific interpretation of democracy – a so-called "sovereign democracy." Acknowledging the inadequacy of using such a construct in a society where democracy is already in place, Russian authorities had to come up with other

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397 Rinalds Gulbis, "Krievijas tautiešu politika – idejas, īstenotāji un ietvars", in *Krievijas publiskā diplomātija Latvijā: mediji un nevalstiskais sektors*, ed. Andris Kudors (Rīga: LU Akadēmiskais apgāds, APPC, 2014), 100-118.

398 Artūrs Kvesko, "Tautiešu organizācijas kā Krievijas publiskās diplomātijas sastāvdaļa" in *Krievijas publiskā diplomātija Latvijā: mediji un nevalstiskais sektors*, ed. Andis Kudors (Rīga: LU Akadēmiskais apgāds, APPC, 2014), 128.

399 Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "What China and Russia Don't Get about Soft Power," *Foreign Policy*, April 29, 2013, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/04/29/what\\_china\\_and\\_russia\\_don\\_t\\_get\\_about\\_soft\\_power](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/04/29/what_china_and_russia_don_t_get_about_soft_power)

400 Artūrs Kvesko, 146.

unifying constructs to consolidate those sympathetic to Russia and sharing anti-Western sentiments. "Russian World" has been described by agency Rosotrudnichestvo as a concept that unites "...people in the near and far abroad being attracted by Russia, the Russian language and culture, and who feel a deep necessity to maintain ties with Russia and its citizens".<sup>401</sup> In practice, it is enforced through the "Russkiy Mir" Foundation that deals with sponsoring Russian speakers' NGOs in Latvia, and projects related to interpretations of history<sup>402</sup> that contradict the opinion of Latvian and Western scientists.

At the same time, the Russian-speaking minority cannot be regarded as a homogenous group exclusively responding to Russia's activities of public diplomacy. This was evident in regards to the crisis in Ukraine, when division of attitudes were evident not only within Russian-speaking non-governmental organizations, but also in daily communication and relations among ethnic Russians and Ukrainians in Latvia.<sup>403</sup>

The image of the West in Latvia is mainly constructed by the EU on the basis of "normative" and "cultural" power,<sup>404</sup> and values that represent specific political and economic principles of democracy and the free market. In the case of the EU's normative power, the "common European space" of institutional framework and rules, and free movement and communication of people is what promotes the EU's image. As noted by Kristin Archick, already the accession process to the EU is guided by the criteria that represent democratic order and a functioning market economy above anything else.<sup>405</sup> The perception of democracy and a market economy is crucial in order to promote the notion of common values – the more positively Latvia's society reflects to those values, the more it associates itself with these values. In this sense we can speak of the EU as "...not only an example of economic, political and

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401 "Obshestvennaia diplomatia," Rosotrudnichestvo, accessed March 11, 2015, <http://rs.gov.ru/node/307>

402 Inga Sprinģe, Donata Motuzaite, Gunita Gailāne, "Demokrātijas izplatīšana Latvijā Kremļa stilā," *Re-Baltica*, March 16, 2012, [http://www.rebaltica.lv/lv/petijumi/krievijas\\_nauda\\_baltija/a/601/demokratijas\\_izplatisana\\_latvija\\_kremla\\_stila.html](http://www.rebaltica.lv/lv/petijumi/krievijas_nauda_baltija/a/601/demokratijas_izplatisana_latvija_kremla_stila.html)

403 TV3 raidījums *Nekā Personīgā*, "Ukrainas konflikts sašķēļ Latvijas krievvalodīgo kopienu un Nepilsoņu kongresu," *Diena*, September 21, 2014, <http://www.diena.lv/latvija/zinas/ukrainas-konflikts-saskel-latvijas-krievvalodigo-kopienun-nepilsonu-kongresu-14070645>

404 Helene Sjursen has noted that both the EU and the U.S. possess normative power in terms of norms and values in their foreign policies. See Helene Sjursen, "The EU as a 'normative' power," *Journal of European Public Policy* 13:2 (2006): 235-251. For more critical approach on EU's normative power see also Ian Manners, "The EU's Normative Power in Changing World Politics" in *Normative Power Europe in a Changing World: A Discussion*, ed. André Gerrits (Clingendael: Netherlands Institute of International Relations, 2009), 9-24.

405 Kristin Archic, "The European Union: Questions and Answers," Congressional Research Service, January 13, 2015, <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS21372.pdf>

legal integration but ...[also]... a social and cultural project.”<sup>406</sup> In this case, exchange of views among people and support to non-governmental organizations are the main channels that allow promotion of European values - respect for human dignity, liberty, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights.<sup>407</sup>

Being a part of the EU, Latvia is also a part of the EU’s “cultural” and “normative” space. However, a sense of belonging to this space, and the perception of the legitimacy of the EU’s normative power, is not necessarily that clear. Shortly after the accession to the EU, only half of Latvia’s society felt it belonged to the EU.<sup>408</sup> And this is despite the fact that Western values and lifestyle, as well as self-awareness of belonging to Western Europe, were important symbols after regaining independence. Although the course towards integration into the western political structures (namely the EU and NATO) was backed by positive public opinion in the beginning of the 1990s, a gradual increase in scepticism towards the EU was also evident. It was mostly related to the “broken promises” of the free market economy, caused by lack of competitiveness of Soviet-style industry and agriculture. Despite this scepticism, an economic turndown of Russia’s economy in the late 1990s shifted the perception towards joining the EU and NATO. In the wake of the referendum on joining the EU and NATO, the support towards later was larger, as doubts over economic gains and losses from membership in the EU were raised before the accession. Security was the decisive argument to persuade Latvia’s population to accept “the package deal” (joining EU and NATO together), and it seemed to have greater impact than the sense of belonging to Europe’s cultural heritage and institutions. Public opinion polls in Latvia suggest that the tendency towards more trust in the US rather than the EU has grown among the Latvian-speaking population in Latvia, while the Russian speaking population has a better opinion of Russia.<sup>409</sup>

The percentage of those people feeling a sense of belonging to the EU has grown significantly in the last 10 years.<sup>410</sup> That is not only evidence of acceptance of the EU’s ‘normative’ power, but also a result of increased communication and interaction with people in other countries. Amartya Sen has

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406 Tatiana Zonova, 2.

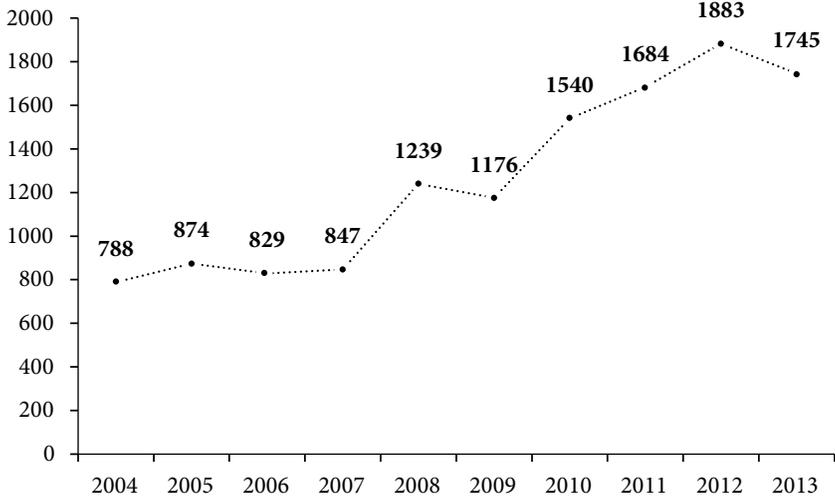
407 Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union, art. 2., OJ C 326, 26.10.2012.

408 See “Ziņojums par valsti: Latvija,” *Eurobarometer* 64 (2005), [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb64/eb64\\_lv\\_nat.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb64/eb64_lv_nat.pdf)

409 See Aivars Tabuns, “Identity, Ethnic Relations, Language and Culture,” in *How Integrated is Latvian Society?*, ed. Nils Muižnieks (Riga: University of Latvia Press, 2010), 272. [http://www.lu.lv/fileadmin/user\\_upload/lu\\_portal/zinas/Integracija\\_anglu.pdf](http://www.lu.lv/fileadmin/user_upload/lu_portal/zinas/Integracija_anglu.pdf)

410 See “Nacionālais ziņojums: Latvija,” *Eurobarometer* 82 (2014), [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb82/eb82\\_lv\\_lv\\_nat.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb82/eb82_lv_lv_nat.pdf)

stated that “... extensive interconnections between political freedoms and the understanding and fulfilment of economic needs [...] are not only instrumental, but also constructive [issues].”<sup>411</sup> Therefore, economic growth is one of the elements that may construct a positive perception towards the EU. Together with free movement that provides the possibility of travelling and getting acquainted with people and cultures of other European countries, as well as a space to fulfil their economic needs, the intensity of people- to-people communication has also increased. Despite the challenges that negative migration to other European countries brings to the long-term socio-economic development of Latvia, it has contributed to the positive perception and association with the EU.



**Table Nr. 1.** Number of students studying abroad through exchange programs  
 Source: Data of Ministry of Education and Science of Republic of Latvia. Statistics on Higher Education. See <http://izm.gov.lv/lv/publikacijas-un-statistika/statistika-par-augstako-izglitiba> (in Latvian).

Another aspect of developing a positive perception of the EU in the people-to-people dimension is related to direct activities facilitating communication and exchange through programs for studying or experience-sharing

<sup>411</sup> Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Anchor Books, 1999), 147.

(Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, Lingua, Tempus, etc). The number of students studying abroad through exchange programs has grown significantly since Latvia's accession to the EU (see table No. 1) and the most popular destinations for Latvia's students are EU countries (Germany, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, France, Spain, etc).<sup>412</sup>

With increased communication among societies, the importance of values for the promotion of the EU common space is crucial. According to Nye, soft power rests on the attraction of shared values; and on others wanting to share them effectively.<sup>413</sup> Therefore, focus on values is important, not only as a unifying element, but also as a part of ensuring attractiveness. This has also been recognized by the EU, as support to the NGOs that strengthen European identity and values is one of the most tangible instruments to pursue that goal. The EU provides significant funding for such umbrella organizations as the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) and the EU Neighbourhood Info Centre (ENPI). Their funding, which is an important element of soft-power policy, is decided upon by the EC and approved by the EP.<sup>414</sup> Also, direct support to NGOs such as the European Endowment for Democracy, or European movements across the EU countries, are active in promoting the EU's values and support to the EU's policies. Apart from that, there are also national cultural institutes and centres of competence (eg; the British Council, the French Institute, the German Goethe-Institut, and the Danish Cultural Institute) that facilitate the spreading of common values, through partnership at the EU level (European Union National Institutes for Culture),<sup>415</sup> as well through their branches in other EU member states. In this regard, the EU is consolidating the internal efforts of its member states in promotion of its values, as there is also an argument that only member states have cultural identity and these "tend to be intensely national in character."<sup>416</sup> The EU is spreading its

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412 Number of students studying abroad is much larger than those in exchange programs, however no clear data on the matter is available. Representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia have estimated that the approximate number of Latvian students abroad is around 5000, although such data is not confirmed by statistical data. See "Nav plāna, kā atgūt ārzemēs studējošos jauniešus," *TVNET*, August 26, 2012, [http://www.tvnet.lv/zinas/latvija/433672-nav\\_plana\\_ka\\_atgut\\_arzemes\\_studejosos\\_jauniesus](http://www.tvnet.lv/zinas/latvija/433672-nav_plana_ka_atgut_arzemes_studejosos_jauniesus)

413 Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 7.

414 Gerald M. Steinberg, "EU Funding for Political NGOs: Examining Soft Power Impact on Arab-Israel Peace Efforts," *Europe's World*, September 23, 2010, [http://www.ngo-monitor.org/article/eu\\_funding\\_for\\_political\\_ngos\\_examining\\_soft\\_power\\_impact\\_on\\_arab\\_israel\\_peace\\_efforts](http://www.ngo-monitor.org/article/eu_funding_for_political_ngos_examining_soft_power_impact_on_arab_israel_peace_efforts)

415 Gottfried Wagner, "Soft power in Europe's external relations? External cultural relations!" *More Europe*, accessed March 18, 2015, [http://www.moreeurope.org/sites/default/files/Soft%20power%20in%20Europe\\_GW.pdf](http://www.moreeurope.org/sites/default/files/Soft%20power%20in%20Europe_GW.pdf)

416 Kristian L. Nielsen, "EU Soft Power and the Capability-Expectations Gap," *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, Volume 9, Issue 5 (2013), 729.

image through its lifestyle and support to many NGOs. As concluded by Bruno Macaes: “While largely invisible and diffuse, tireless interactions between civil societies help make the European Union a powerful global actor.”<sup>417</sup>

## The media space dimension

Taking into account that public opinion and images are largely shaped by media perceptions, the media space dimension is of particular interest in the case of Latvia. This is especially true when taking into account the ethno-linguistic division of Latvia’s society, which is also present in the media space. It has been noted that Latvian language media has adopted Western traditions of journalism by becoming a ‘watchdog,’ while Russian-language media, with few exceptions, is functioning as a political platform for the Russian-speaking minority.<sup>418</sup> Apart from specific politically-oriented outlets, Latvian language media, like Western media, distinguishes facts and commentaries from interpretation, therefore providing a basis for public discussion, rather than formulated positions on issues. Although the purpose of providing political support to minority groups is valid enough for a democratic society, caution towards the Russian language is caused by a focus on emphasizing the view of Russia’s official policy, rather than dealing with the empowerment of minorities. As noted by Ilze Šulmane: “Media specialists and journalists argue that Russian journalism is more emotional, interpretative, and does not always find it necessary to separate news from opinion.”<sup>419</sup> Despite these differences, local Russian-language media has a minor effect when it comes to shaping attitudes in terms of the soft power of Russia – the presence of external (Russia’s) media in Latvia seems to be more important.

Major Russian media is under direct or indirect control of Russia’s political elite. So is Russia’s policy on the “development of a unified humanitarian and information area in the territory of the CIS and neighbouring regions”, which has been stated in the Russian National Security Strategy until 2020, and is regarded as an integral part of Russia’s security.<sup>420</sup> In this context, the spread of Russia’s media has a strategic aim of influencing and shaping public attitudes. The objective is not simply to inform the audience, but to reach political, and (in

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417 Bruno Macaes, “The Paradox of European Soft Power,” *Wilfried Martnes Centre for European Studies*, March 5, 2014, <http://martenscentre.eu/blog/paradox-european-soft-power>

418 Ilze Šulmane, «The Russian Language Media in Latvia» in *Latvian-Russian Relations: Domestic and International Dimensions*, ed. Nils Muižnieks (Riga: LU SPPI, 2006), 64.

419 Ilze Šulmane, 67.

420 *Russia’s National Security Strategy to 2020*, May 12, 2009, <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/99.html>

the case of Ukraine) military objectives. Also, achievements of Russian popular and classical culture are advertised through these channels, therefore raising the attractiveness and popularizing the positive image of Russia.

Russian television channels (such as Rossija - RTR, NTV Mir and REN Baltija) are regularly among the top 10 most popular media in Latvia. All of these channels openly defend Vladimir Putin's foreign policy decisions, including the Crimea annexation and granting military support to separatists in Luhansk and Donetsk. It is possible to distinguish three main non-commercial objectives of Russian television in Latvia: to support particular political forces in Latvia; to influence particular social and political processes in Latvia (elections, referendums, etc); and to create a positive view of Russia, to spread Russian values, opinions on history, politics and international processes.<sup>421</sup>

As a result, Russian media in Latvia facilitates the creation of a pseudo-social way of thinking "based on content of separate media, its clichés and one-sided explanations which become the conviction of the carrier of pseudo-social way of thinking, and not based on informed discussion."<sup>422</sup> Mārtiņš Kaprāns writes that Russian media cultivates a "sense of oppositionist diaspora membership within the Russian-speaking part of the population of Latvia."<sup>423</sup> The artificial isolation of Russian speakers in Latvia, and the creation of a pseudo-social way of thinking with the help of Russian media, hampers the consolidation of Latvia's society. The creation of the pseudo-social way of thinking creates obstacles in the normal process of democracy, as part of the population of Latvia become negatively disposed against the state of Latvia and the basic ideas forming it.

It is necessary to look at the level of trust in Russian media to better understand the influence of the Russian TV channels on the political opinions of the inhabitants of Latvia. Survey conducted in 2014 show that approximately one third of the TV audience in Latvia prefers to watch more of Russia's TV channels than Latvia's.<sup>424</sup> The same survey shows relatively high trust in the information on Russian TV channels among the Russian-speaking audience in

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421 Andis Kudors, "Russian Soft Power and Non-Military Influence: The View from Latvia," in *Tools of Destabilisation*, ed. Mike Winnerstig, (Stockholm: FOI, 2014).

422 Anda Rožukalne, "Krievijas mediji Latvijā: īpašnieki, regulācija, ietekme," in *Krievijas publiskā diplomātija Latvijā: mediji un nevalstiskais sektors*, ed. Andis Kudors (Riga: APPC, LU Akadēmiskais apgāds, 2014), 99.

423 Mārtiņš Kaprāns, «Vecs vīns vecā ādas maisā: Latvijas ierēmēšana Krievijas medijos,» in *Krievijas publiskā diplomātija Latvijā: mediji un nevalstiskais sektors*, ed. Andis Kudors (Riga: APPC, LU Akadēmiskais apgāds, 2014), 75.

424 According to the survey conducted in 2014 by research centre SKDS 14.4% of the TV audience in Latvia is watching mostly Russia's TV channels and 28.2% prefer to watch more of Russia's TV channels than Latvian TV. To the similar questions about Latvian TV channels in favour for Latvian television answered 23.7 and 26.0% accordingly. See "Latvijas iedzīvotāju aptauja" in *Cik demokrātiska ir Latvija? Demokrātijas audits 2005 – 2014*, ed. Juris Rozenvalds (Riga: LU SPPI, 2014), 294-295.

Latvia.<sup>425</sup> Asked similar questions about Latvian TV channels, 23.7 per cent preferred Latvian television, while 26 per cent trusted its information.<sup>426</sup> Russian media also tries to influence the opinion of Latvian citizens regarding Latvia's foreign policy. Anda Rožukalne indicates that the impact of Russian media can be illustrated by the results of public opinion polls in Latvia. For example: the survey of March 2014 showed that 21 per cent of Latvian citizens fully or partly support Russia's activities relating to the Ukraine events. Moreover, the support of the Russian speakers is much more considerable, at 41 per cent.<sup>427</sup> Another poll shows that one third of Latvia's population consider that a basis exists for the presence of Russian troops in Ukraine, and the support of minorities members is twice as strong.<sup>428</sup> Rožukalne concludes: "It can be considered that the objectives of Russian public diplomacy in Latvia have been reached through television channels, partly supported also by the Latvia media."<sup>429</sup>

Western media in Latvia cannot be regarded as particularly important in terms of influencing public opinion. Western news agencies are sources of information for local media, and direct presence in the media of the EU or the U.S is not widespread. Access to Western media is provided in various ways. Major news agencies are available through the internet, BBC radio is available in Riga through FM broadcast, and TV channels are provided through cable television. It should be noted that, as a response to the overwhelming presence of Russian media content in Latvia, TV channels such as BBC, CNN, RTL, Sat1, Euronews or ARTE are also provided within some basic cable packages by cable networks.<sup>430</sup>

Apart from its internet platform, the EU has no media assets directly under its control. The EU's policy in regards to media space is related to setting "...a minimum of common rules covering aspects like advertising, promotion of European works and protection of minors."<sup>431</sup> In this regard, the focus is on social policy and constrains for the media market rather than

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425 To the question "To what extent do you trust in Russian TV channels (RTR, REN, NTV)", 12.0% answered "fully trust" and 22.2% choose "trust to a great extent. See "Latvijas iedzīvotāju aptauja" in *Cik demokrātiska ir Latvija? Demokrātijas audits 2005 – 2014*, ed. Juris Rozenvalds (Riga: LU SPPI, 2014), 294-295.

426 See "Latvijas iedzīvotāju aptauja," 294-295.

427 "Aptauja: Krievijas rīcību Ukrainā atbalsta 21% Latvijas iedzīvotāju," *Focus*, April 1, 2014, <http://www.focus.lv/pasaule/krievija-un-nvs/aptauja-krievijas-ricibu-ukraina-atbalsta-21-latvijas-iedzivotaju>

428 "Aptauja: Trešdaļa Latvijas iedzīvotāju ir par Krievijas karaspēku Ukrainā," *Ir*, March 11, 2014., <http://www.ir.lv/2014/3/11/aptauja-tresdala-latvijas-iedzivotaju-par-krievijas-karaspeku-ukraina>

429 Anda Rožukalne, 99.

430 *Cik demokrātiska ir Latvija? Demokrātijas audits 2005 – 2014*, ed. Juris Rozenvalds (Riga: LU SPPI, 2014), 196.

431 "Media Policies," European Commission, March 2, 2015, <http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/about-media-policies>

shaping perceptions. Although promotion of European cultural production facilitates the spreading of the EU's values of and cultural heritage, it is still an issue of market regulation, rather than public attitudes. Plurality of media content is regarded as a value itself, which, in terms of shaping perceptions, leads to a lack of unified messaging to the public. In general, this mainly refers to strengthening the competitiveness of the European audio-visual sector in terms of the promotion of Europe's cultural identity, as well as facilitating the use of digital technologies.<sup>432</sup>

At the same time, several media assets are also used by the EU as tools of the EU's public diplomacy. In order to facilitate the spread of the EU's position on various issues, the internet is used, and direct access to the work of EU institutions is provided for media representatives. This is mainly taking the form of press releases and press conferences, as well as publications of analysis and various issues.<sup>433</sup> The EU is also providing significant funding to the news channel Euronews.<sup>434</sup> With a daily audience of more than 6.5 million viewers,<sup>435</sup> its goal is defined as covering world events "from a European perspective,"<sup>436</sup> therefore suggesting that it works as an instrument of the EU to shape public perceptions. Some observers have even called it the "EU Commission propaganda channel."<sup>437</sup> In case of Latvia, Euronews cannot be regarded as having a significant impact on public perceptions as it is far from the most-viewed channel in Latvia, and it shares its audience with other major Western news media (such as BBC and CNN). However, it provides an alternative to the overwhelming presence of Russian media in Latvia, which, as noted by the Foreign Minister of Latvia, Edgars Rinkēvičs, "has been very aggressive in what can no longer be considered normal news or normal journalism, but is more information warfare and propaganda."<sup>438</sup> Therefore, the

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432 "Media," European Commission, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, accessed March 15, 2015, [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/media/index\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/media/index_en.php)

433 See for example European Strategy and Policy analysis System, <http://europa.eu/espas/>, or European Parliament's research services, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/supporting-analyses-search.html>

434 See Ronny Patz, "Euronews becomes EU Commission propaganda channel," *Polskieu*, April 11, 2012, <http://polskieu.ideasoneuropa.eu/2012/04/11/euronews-becomes-eu-commission-propaganda-channel/>; Jan Å. Johansson, "Euronews: Channel of Propaganda," *Alliance for a Europe of Democracies*, January 18, 2011, <http://www.eudemocrats.org/eud/news.php?uid=296>

435 Kevin Deidre, Francesca Pellicano, Agnes Schneeberger, *Television News Channels in Europe*. (European Audiovisual Observatory, 2013), 25-16, <http://www.obs.coe.int/documents/205595/264629/European+news+Market+2013+FINAL.pdf/116afdf3-758b-4572-af0f-61297651ae8>

436 *Encyclopedia of Journalism*, ed. Christopher H. Sterling (California: Sage, 2009), 551.

437 See Ronny Patz; Jan Å. Johansson.

438 Ben Smith, "The EU Is Plotting A New TV Channel To Counter Russian Propaganda In Europe," *BuzzFeed*, December 31, 2014, [http://www.buzzfeed.com/bensmith/the-eu-is-plotting-a-new-tv-channel-to-counter-russian-propa?utm\\_term=.cggVD2lAw#vp9M4OOAY](http://www.buzzfeed.com/bensmith/the-eu-is-plotting-a-new-tv-channel-to-counter-russian-propa?utm_term=.cggVD2lAw#vp9M4OOAY)

idea to launch a Russian-language TV station to act against spreading Russian media influence has been proposed.<sup>439</sup> The idea of a TV station in the Russian language was proposed in the spring of 2014, as a potential project of Baltic States to act as a counterweight to information and the role of TV stations from Russia.<sup>440</sup> With the issue of Russian propaganda having an impact on other societies beyond the Baltic countries, as well as a need for significant funding for the implementation of such project, the idea of a need for the EU-wide TV station became more realistic.

The difference in regards to using media space for shaping attitudes is significant. In case of the EU, the competition within the media market is rather high, and it is hard to attain a unified message in line with the EU's interests. In Russia's case, such competition does not exist, since major television channels are under direct or indirect control of the Kremlin. Thus, a unified interpretation of current events is secured by Russian state authorities.<sup>441</sup> For now, this allows Russia to win the hearts and minds of the Russian-speaking part of Latvia's audience.

## The regionalization dimension

Although Latvia is a small country with a unitary political structure, regional concerns periodically occur in relation to its eastern part bordering Russia. The region of Latgale has suffered major economic and social downturn with negative migration and high unemployment. It is also ethnically and culturally heterogeneous, with a large proportion of ethnic Russians (around 40 per cent), a unique language and different religious affiliation (Catholicism) of majority of people from the rest of the country. All of these elements present certain vulnerabilities in the context of political preferences.

Historical ties, ethnic composition and daily people-to-people contacts have also formed a positive perception of Russia in Latgale. Russia's media influence is an urgent issue in regard to Latgale, as even despite banning several Russian TV channels, the Latvian government has not been able to stop their broadcasts in this region. Russia periodically emphasises the fact that Latgale is somehow different from the rest of Latvia, and in fact is much

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439 Kashmiri Gander, "EU could launch European TV channel to combat 'aggressive' Russian propaganda," *The Independent*, January 1, 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/eu-could-launch-european-tv-channel-to-combat-aggressive-russian-propaganda-9953129.html>

440 BNS, "LTV: vienota Baltijas kanāla saturs izmaksas varētu būt divi miljoni eiro," *DELFI*, April 8, 2014, <http://www.delfi.lv/news/national/politics/ltv-vienota-baltijas-ka>

441 Andis Kudors, Mārtiņš Kaprāns, Māris Cepurītis, *Russian information campaign against Ukraine* (Riga: StratCom NATO centre of Excellence, CEEPS, 2014), 15.

closer to Russia. The large number of Russian-speakers, common history, the presence of the Orthodox Church and business ties with the region are used as a justification for that. Therefore, an attempt to produce an image of difference from other regions is made. However, Latgale should not be regarded a backward region with conflicting political affiliations. It also represents a unique regional identity and perspective for development, facilitated by both being a part of the EU and being geographically close to Russia.

The notion of Latgale as an autonomous region is one of the alarming issues periodically raised in public. The issue has its historical roots in 1918 when Latvia was established and formed as an independent country. After nearly 100 years, the Russian Ambassador to Latvia, Viktor Kalyuzhny, indicated that Latvia's support of the separation of Kosovo would cause separatism in Latgale.<sup>442</sup> The Review of the Constitution Protection Bureau (CPB) of 2012 shows that several Russian institutions tried intensively that year to promote discussions in Latvian society on the separation of Latgale from the rest of Latvia.<sup>443</sup> The discussions were stimulated by statements from Latvian Russian-speaking activist Alexander Gaponenko on ethnic, economic and historical differences of the Latgale region, and creating publicity for those statements. The CPB report says that the presentation of Gaponenko's book *Latgale: Seeking the Other Existence in Moscow* was organized and hosted by Russian Foreign Intelligence Service officer Dmitry Yermolayev.<sup>444</sup> The book popularizes the ideas that the Latgals are a self-contained nation, and that autonomy is necessary. Gaponenko was one of the initiators of the referendum in 2012 on granting the Russian language the status of state language. Investigative journalism center Re-Baltica indicates that Gaponenko has received sponsorship for his activities from the Russian Government-financed foundation *Russskiy Mir*.<sup>445</sup>

Latvian state authorities once more began to be concerned about potential separatism problems in Latgale just after the Crimea annexation in spring 2014. The concern was caused by the possibility that Russia might use in Latvia the same instruments as in Ukraine prior to the Crimea annexation - the media and non-governmental organizations. Over a number of years, Russian compatriots organizations and propagators (for example, Alexander Dugin)

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442 Viktors Kaļūznis, "Tirdzniecības apjomi starp Latviju un Krieviju varētu trīskāršoties", *TVNET*, 2008. gada 21. janv., [http://financenet.tvnet.lv/zinas/125555-kaluzniss\\_tirdzniecibas\\_apjomi\\_starp\\_latviju\\_un\\_krieviju\\_varetu\\_triskarsoties](http://financenet.tvnet.lv/zinas/125555-kaluzniss_tirdzniecibas_apjomi_starp_latviju_un_krieviju_varetu_triskarsoties)

443 The Constitution Protection Bureau (SAB), Annual report 2013, accessed March 17, 2015, <http://www.sab.gov.lv/index.php?lang=lv&nid=303>

444 Ibid.

445 Re-Baltica, *Demokrātijas izplatīšana Latvijā Kremļa stilā*, accessed March 11, 2015, [http://www.rebaltica.lv/lv/petijumi/krievijas\\_nauda\\_baltija/a/601/demokratijas\\_izplatisana\\_latvija\\_kremļa\\_stila.html](http://www.rebaltica.lv/lv/petijumi/krievijas_nauda_baltija/a/601/demokratijas_izplatisana_latvija_kremļa_stila.html)

had cultivated in Ukraine the idea of the necessity to return Crimea to Russia, and organize regional referendums in the south-eastern regions of Ukraine.<sup>446</sup> However, it should be mentioned that the Latgale theme has been cultivated less intensively in Russian media and NGO networks compared with the Crimea issue. Repetition of the Crimea scenario in Latgale is hardly possible for Latvia as it is still an institutionally stronger country than Ukraine, and being a part of the EU and NATO also plays its role.

For the EU, regional differences are important, but in a different way. The EU promotes regional differences as a part of Europe's historical legacy, therefore stressing the importance of plurality of identities as a backbone of its strength rather than its weakness. In this regard, the EU's policy of regional cohesion, with funding almost a third of the total EU budget, is used as a tool of levelling the economic and social differences among regions. It should be noted that EU regional policy is based on the notion of direct investments to stimulate economic growth and improved quality of life.<sup>447</sup> Around 90 per cent of all administrative territories in the Latgale region are defined as a "specially-supported region." This enables Latgale to receive significant financing from various EU funds,<sup>448</sup> already before the accession of Latvia to the EU by the PHARE program.<sup>449</sup> EU funding has risen through the years; however the Latgale region remains struggling with major economic and social challenges. The social and economic situation remains one of Latgale's vulnerabilities. Unemployment is one of the problems for which a solution demands a special governmental policy. Availability of Latvian media in the areas bordering Belarus and Russia is still an issue in regards to foreign (Russian) influence.

## The strategic dimension

Latvia's strategic choices were discussed already in the late 1980s, before the collapse of the USSR, during the period of Latvian national revival. The demise of the Soviet Union and communist ideology stimulated the seeking of self-identification by Latvians. The period of independent Latvia from 1918 till 1940 served as an additional basis in favour of the idea of "returning to Europe," not "entering Europe." The identity roots of Latvia, banned dur-

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<sup>446</sup> Gatis Pelns (ed.), *The Humanitarian Dimension of Russian Foreign Policy toward Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and the Baltic States*, ed. Gatis Pelns, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Riga: CEEPS, 2010), 254-264.

<sup>447</sup> See website of the InfoRegio, accessed March 17, 2015, [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/index\\_fr.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/index_fr.cfm)

<sup>448</sup> See data by State's Regional Development agency, accessed April 18, 2015, <http://raim.gov.lv/pub/#>

<sup>449</sup> See <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/multisite/etc/en/content/latvia-19>

ing Soviet time as the part of the Western world, were not completely lost, disregarding the teaching of “correct history” in the interpretation of Soviet authorities. The state continuity doctrine, which became urgent after the adoption of the Latvia Independency Declaration on May 4, views Latvia as the same Republic of Latvia which had existed prior to the Soviet occupation. Latvia’s historical experience and cautiousness regarding Russia’s future development scenarios excluded the possibility of joining the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). In 1995, the conceptual document Main Directions of Latvia’s Foreign Policy until 2005 defined the strategically important objectives in foreign policy as accession to the European Union and NATO.<sup>450</sup> The aforementioned objectives were reached relatively soon after that, in 2004. Ten years later, in 2014, Latvia entered the Euro-zone which, along with the economic considerations, was also a strategic decision influenced by the background of Russia’s regional ambitions of previous years.

Prior to 2004, the European Union’s direction on foreign policy in Latvia had had an expressively normative character – its objective comprised the putting into practice particular norms and values in exchange for the possibility to join the European Union. Respecting the human rights; securing the freedoms of speech, consciousness and the press; observing the principles of democracy and free market – these are the norms without the acceptance of which the return to Europe would not be possible. According to Ian Manners, the EU’s foreign policy was based not only on normative objectives, but also on normative methods for achieving them.<sup>451</sup> Discussions and persuasion, not involving military force, were the methods of inducement used in the Latvia direction. However, also not to be excluded as the strong motivating factor were the economic instruments and expected European well-being. Latvia’s self-identification (to consider itself as the member exclusively of the family of the free world countries) and Russia’s presence were the two factors strengthening the support of Latvian citizens for accession to the EU.

The geopolitical situation plays an extremely important role regarding strategic choices in Latvia. The general population and the elite in Latvia have largely accepted authority of the EU, NATO and other multilateral frameworks of institutional cooperation. Even despite criticism in regards to the EU, Russia (with its project and Eurasian Economic Union) is not regarded as a sufficient alternative. Also the West is actively shaping the issue by noting the authoritarian, corrupt and non-liberal nature of Russia while accepting Latvia as a part of Western democracies.

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450 “Latvijas ārpolitikas pamatvirzieni līdz 2005. gadam,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, accessed March 17, 2015, <http://www.am.gov.lv/lv/Arpolitika/4294>

451 Ian Manners, “The normative ethics of the European Union,” *International Affairs* 84: 1 (2008): 65-80.

Russia's attempts to establish authority and form political order in the region have been rejected so far by political decision-makers in Latvia. However, some groups in society may see Russia's attempts to shape the regional political order as legitimate. One of the ways Russia tries to impact Latvian citizens' self-identification, and theoretically in the future also the related strategic choices, is the attempted influence of the national identity-forming process. With the help of the media and compatriots organizations, the Russian speakers in Latvia are told that they are the part of the "Russian World" and have to assist Russia in regaining its former power. In their turn, Latvians are told that the Soviet period was not so bad after all, and the Latvia's current problems would be resolved sooner with assistance on Russia's part. Beginning in summer 2013, with the approach of the EU Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius and eventual signing of the EU-Ukraine association agreement, Russian media intensified, stressing the differences between Russia as the spiritual and traditional value in opposition to the "morally corrupted" and secular Europe. Officially, Moscow seeks allies among the right-wing radicals and conservative Christians in Europe in order to gain support for Putin's foreign policy. Although the aforementioned tactics works to some extent in Latvia, nevertheless Russia's closeness allows Latvia to be aware of most of the hypocrisy on the issue of the Russian political elite's real position on the issues of spiritual and traditional values.

Russian-EU relations are part of the global agenda with politically high sensitivity. Being a member of the EU, Latvia is directly involved and equally responsible for advancement of these relations. A constructive partnership with the countries of the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership of the EU, together with improvement of Russia-US relations, are important preconditions for successful co-operation between the EU and Russia. At the same time, if the EU is striving for an increase of its role as a global power, it must embrace a clear strategy for relations with Russia. Cultural co-operation, in this context, is an important 'soft power' tool which is at the forefront of priorities of Russian foreign policy and diplomacy, and the EU must be prepared to counterweight these tools. It is clear that advancement in this direction requires considerable efforts, political will, and (last but not least) adequate funding.

## **The business dimension**

After regaining independence in 1991, major economic reforms in Latvia were undertaken to restructure its economic system. Changes in macro-economic

policy were rapid, and have even been described as “free-market radicalism.”<sup>452</sup> Swift macro-economic changes towards a free market economy, and the goal of democratic order, created new conditions for society and suggested changes also in behavior over economic interaction. Private business was still a new phenomenon in the early 1990s, therefore certain elements of the former (Soviet) system, such as informal networks (blat), or mutual involvement,<sup>453</sup> remained a part of business culture. Synthesis of these elements and aspirations to follow the Western understanding of business culture created a mixed behavior, where the free market was disturbed by a relatively high level of corruption. The accession process to the EU demanded higher commitment on fighting corruption and this also implied moving closer to the business culture of the west. Despite corruption still being an issue, Latvia has been active in building an open business environment with effective business regulation.<sup>454</sup> Latvia is now fully integrated into the EU market, and is regarded as an open country for foreign trade relations with neighboring countries, including Russia.

Latvia has tried to carry out pragmatic relations with Russia in the sphere of economic contacts. Both the signing of the Latvia-Russia Border Agreement in 2007, and Latvian President Valdis Zatlers’ official visit to Russia in 2010, had a positive impact on the relationship between the two countries. In Moscow and St Petersburg, Zatlers met Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, head of the Government, Vladimir Putin and other officials. During the visit, a large Latvian business forum was held with the participation of 120 Latvian entrepreneurs.<sup>455</sup> However, with the growth in intensity of the economic relationship, concern about eventual negative consequences of the growth in economic relations also increased in Latvia. Three main factors causing worries of the public may be distinguished: Latvia’s asymmetric economic dependence on Russia, the import of Russia’s business culture,<sup>456</sup> and the eventual use of energy dependency for political purposes.

Are there solid reasons for this public concern? The non-diversified situation in the field of energy supplies is really the risk both for Latvia’s eco-

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452 Anders Åslund and Valdis Dombrovskis, *How Latvia Came through the Financial Crisis* (Washington DC: PIIE, 2011), 8.

453 Rasma Karklins, *The System Made Me Do It: Corruption in Post-Communist Societies* (New York: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 2005), 77.

454 According to Doing Business rankings, Latvia is in the 23<sup>rd</sup> position (out of 189) in 2015. See “Economy Rankings,” Doing Business, accessed on March 11, 2015, <http://www.doingbusiness.org/rankings>

455 “Valdis Zatlers: 2010.gada darba pārskats,” Latvijas Valsts prezidenta kanceleja, accessed March 17, 2015, [http://www.president.lv/pk/content/?cat\\_id=8693](http://www.president.lv/pk/content/?cat_id=8693)

456 Andis Kudors, “Russian Soft Power and Non-Military Influence: The View from Latvia,” in *Tools of Destabilisation*, ed. Mike Winnerstig, (Stockholm: FOI, 2014).

conomic development, and the implementation of independent policy. But considerable dependency on Russian energy would not last forever: the initiation of operation of the liquid gas terminal in late 2014 in neighbouring Lithuania provides the basis for expectations of improvement also of Latvia's situation after 2017, when the Latvijas Gāze monopoly ends in the Latvian gas market.

The asymmetry in the economic relationship really exists, but it is incomparable with the situation prior to the financial crisis of 1998 in Russia, which stimulated Latvian businesses' turning to the markets of the EU member countries. Being not too influenced by the political relations background, Latvian-Russian trade has grown since 2004. Some decline was related to the world economic crisis in 2008-2009. About 70 per cent of all Latvia's economic contacts are maintained within the European Union member states, however, it is obvious that Russia still plays a significant role in Latvia's foreign trade. According to statistical data of the first half of 2014, Russia is the second largest export partner and fourth largest import partner of Latvia.<sup>457</sup> Prior to the Russia- Ukraine conflict and the Western countries' sanctions against Russia that followed, the number of Russian tourists in Latvia had also grown. The number of tourists from Russia has recently decreased because of Russia's economic problems and the fall of the ruble.

With the increase in the volume of Russian investments in Latvia, concern grew about the coalescence of the Russian business elite and the state political elite, which under particular circumstances would be used for reaching Russia's political objectives in Latvia. A research study, carried out by the Latvian Institute of International Affairs and the Centre for East European Policy Studies on the consequences of economic presence of Russia and Belarus, indicates that Russian capital tends to promote an "offshorization" of Latvia.<sup>458</sup> Researcher Andris Spruds notes that "some positive experiences notwithstanding, Russian investment may be adventurist, speculative, or short-term."<sup>459</sup>

The aforementioned research study also states that a successful business in Russia almost cannot exist without the participation of political mediators: "Big business goes hand in hand not only with bribes but also with politics."<sup>460</sup> The researchers indicate that transparency issues could be highlighted in

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457 "Latvijas un Krievijas divpusējās attiecības," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, January 19, 2015, <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/moscow/latvijas-un-krievijas-divpusejas-attiecibas>

458 Arvils Zeltiņš, "Business Interests in Latvia-Russia Economic relations" in *The Economic Presence of Russia and Belarus in the Baltic States: Risks and Opportunities*, ed. Andris Spruds (Riga: CEEPS, LIIA), 140.

459 *The Economic Presence of Russia and Belarus in the Baltic States: Risks and Opportunities*, ed. Andris Spruds (Riga: CEEPS, LIIA), 296.

460 *Ibid.*

light of the corruption associated with particular investments.<sup>461</sup> Transparency International published the Bribe Payers Index in 2011. It states that Chinese and Russian firms are the most likely to pay bribes while operating abroad.<sup>462</sup>

EU countries are the largest trade partners of Latvia, accounting for around 70 per cent of the overall trade turnover. As a result of Russia's economic crisis of 1998, Latvian businesses have largely diversified their markets, with the largest part going to the EU countries. With increased commercial activities with other EU countries, Western business approaches are also adopted as part of the business environment of Latvia. The attractiveness of the Western business approach - which includes stable and predictable conditions for business, as well as a certain degree of transparency for business activities - are important in terms of perceptions. As a small country with a small market, with limited access to raw materials, an emphasis on liberal economic policies as a means to attract foreign investment has been crucial for Latvia.<sup>463</sup> As these principles grow stronger in the business environment of Latvia, it becomes more attractive for foreign economic operators as well.

However, there is still an issue of private business interests having access to political processes, which raise concerns in regards to the potential for political corruption. In the case of the projection of 'soft power,' the problem occurs when political influence is used to promote Russia's (or its businesses') interests in exchange for personal gain. Thus, this should be treated as a concern for national security. Safeguards and restrictions at the institutional level are sometimes bypassed because of the close links between politicians and the economic elite, thereby intensifying the risk of corruption and damaging the role of institutions in economic interactions.<sup>464</sup>

## Conclusion

The case of Latvia demonstrates intensive projection of 'soft power' by both Russia and the EU. In regards to both, there are sources of power that are passively present and actively shaped by attempting to construct identities,

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461 Andis Kudors, "Russian Soft Power and Non-Military Influence: The View from Latvia," in *Tools of Destabilisation*, ed. Mike Winnerstig, (Stockholm: FOI, 2014).

462 "Launch: Bribe Payers Index 2011," Transparency International, October 25, 2011, [http://www.transparency.org/news/pressrelease/20111025\\_launch\\_bpi\\_2011](http://www.transparency.org/news/pressrelease/20111025_launch_bpi_2011)

463 Gatis Pelnēns, "Investment policy of Latvia" in *Economic Diplomacy of the Baltic States*, ed. Kārlis Bukovskis and Andris Sprūds (Riga: Latvian Institute of International Affairs, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2014), 42.

464 Gatis Pelnēns and Diāna Potjomkina in *The Economic Presence of Russia and Belarus in the Baltic States: Risks and Opportunities*, ed. Andris Sprūds (Riga: CEEPS, LIIA, 2012), 140, 188.

influencing public opinion and shaping the domestic political and economic environment. Due to Latvia's EU membership, better preconditions for the EU's normative power are obvious in the case of the people-to-people dimension and strategic dimension, while Russia has been active in shaping the media environment and keeping business relations close to political influence.

Different approaches to public diplomacy of the West and Russia have to be taken into account in order to consolidate the idea behind an integrated society. In this respect, Russia's activities should be closely monitored, and public communication with the Russian-speaking population of Latvia should be intensified. This may include support to the NGOs and strengthening of the idea of plurality of identities, while countering of negative messaging from Russia should also be developed. As noted in this chapter, daily interaction between people remains positive, instead of having political tensions. Therefore, more effort in facilitating direct communication in the people-to-people dimension may prove itself more useful than any other activities. It is not an option to ignore differences in cultural and historical identities of various groups (i.e; Latvian-speaking and Russian-speaking) – more effort should be made for these groups to increase their direct interaction. This may be carried out by various forms of civic or cultural activities, with the main aim of building a sense of community and bringing people together.

Undoubtedly, media plays an important role in shaping perceptions in Latvia. Therefore a more direct approach, by the launch of a Russian-language TV station, has been proposed by Latvian authorities to tackle the overwhelming presence of Russian media. It should be noted that some activity may require a more technical approach (ensuring technical means for the broadcasting of national media), than just countering the negative effects of Russian media. The EU's efforts in regards to the media space have not played a significant impact on public perceptions in Latvia so far. Action on a national level could have better results due to the know-how in regards to addressing the Russian-speaking audience in Latvia. However, media projects are costly, and additional funding in this matter is required. The EU's involvement is crucial, both as a source of funding and a basis for production of the content of media.

Russia's aggression toward Ukraine and annexation of the Crimea has raised concerns about possibility of a similar scenario in the eastern part of Latvia. However there is no serious evidence that could show the existence of a real separatist movement in the Latgale region. Despite the vulnerabilities of Latgale, these conditions are not likely to cause serious political consequences. Further emphasis on economic development and attraction of FDI play a more significant role in the region, than any activities of identity-building on either (EU's or Russia's) side.

Pragmatic relations with Russia in the sphere of economic cooperation are important for Latvia. Despite political tensions, economic relations between the countries remain positive, and Russian business still has an interest in Latvia. Business contacts should be promoted, however more emphasis should be made on transparency of business activities and their relation to politics. Strengthening mechanisms for more transparent business interactions is crucial for assessing potential risks.

At the strategic level, no real alternative to the direction to the West has been proposed by Russia and, despite its activities in promoting 'soft power,' Russia still has not changed the direction of Latvia towards the West. As noted previously in this chapter, the authority of the EU, NATO and other multilateral frameworks of cooperation has been accepted as a strategic direction of Latvia and, despite geopolitical challenges or scepticism, there have not been serious doubts in regards to this path.

Russia's concept of soft power is different from those in the West. For the EU, the promotion of EU values and common space have been major directions for its 'soft power.' Also, the EU uses funding instead of direct control over media or establishing NGOs for specific political goals, as in case of Russia. As described by Eleonora Tafuro, if pluralistic civil society, culture and the 'way of life' in general are main sources for the West's 'soft power,' then "...in Russia the Kremlin is the main soft power actor."<sup>465</sup> In the context of impact, Russia's soft power policies produce division of society, while the EU promotes the image of an even larger community. At the same time, the argument of Bruno Macaes that "...European soft power [...] seems to work much better outside than within the borders of the Union,"<sup>466</sup> seems to explain the notion of Russia being more active in Latvia in terms of 'soft power' than the EU.

Different faces of Russia's soft power in Latvia include a wide range of activities – from the simple use of the cultural attractiveness, to deception and even direct interference in the politics of Latvia, which is hard to address as a 'soft' matter. Due to limited resources, the Baltic States alone cannot effectively defend their democracies against unauthorized Russian influence with its media and compatriots policy. Solutions must be carried out on a regional and European level. Russian soft power still remains 'a' power as the implementation of Russia's public diplomacy is always a tool to achieve foreign policy aims - including the changes of the strategic

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465 Tafuro Eleonora, "Fatal Attraction? Russia's Soft Power in its Neighbourhood," *Eurasia Review*, May 29, 2014, <http://www.eurasiareview.com/29052014-fatal-attraction-russias-soft-power-neighbourhood-analysis>

466 Bruno Macaes, "The Paradox of European Soft Power," *Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies*, March 5, 2014, <http://martenscentre.eu/blog/paradox-european-soft-power>

choices of the Baltic states. In the context of the war in Ukraine, the European Union has to carry out effective and undisturbed communication to European citizens and those in the EU neighboring countries.

The European Union has to consider how to implement more active public diplomacy in the EU member states (especially in the Baltic states), as well as in the Eastern Partnership Countries. Europe has to work more actively on distribution of its 'narrative' in explaining the EU's fundamental values - human rights, human dignity, democracy, market economy and good governance, as well as an impact of these values on each individual's life. It should be noted that the EU's public diplomacy does not operate in a vacuum - Russia is particularly active in the dissemination of its strategic narratives, some of which are contrary to the European ideas and values.

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# Soft power of the EU and Russia in Eastern Europe: Soft Power vs (not so) Soft Manipulation?

*/Toms Rostoks, Diana Potjomkina/*

The preceding chapters have outlined Russian and EU (with a special focus on Germany and Poland's) perspectives on soft power, as well as how the soft power of these two key actors is perceived by six Eastern European countries: Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. Although the authors who have taken part in this research project cannot agree on many issues, this chapter attempts to draw a number of conclusions from those preceding. The following sections will focus on three issues. The first section discusses implications for the soft power concept that stem from the findings of this research project. The second section looks at the diverging approaches of Russia and the EU on soft power. It also compares findings from the three Baltic States with conclusions drawn from the three case studies of Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia. The third section spells out a number of recommendations for policy makers.

## **Implications for soft power as a theoretical concept**

The conceptual chapter offered a number of theoretical concepts that could potentially be used in the analysis of softer versions of power that are at the core of this research project. Military and economic power are the two linchpins of hard power, while the range of softer versions of power is much more extensive and, besides attraction which is the focal point of soft power, includes authority, productive power, structural power, and institutional power. It has also been argued that power is decaying and it is increasingly easy for actors to lose it. The fact most authors chose to use soft power as their intellectual point of departure certainly pays tribute to the academic accomplishments of Joseph Nye, the leading protagonist of soft power. Still, this research project had a (re)conceptualization of 'soft power' as one of its goals, and the preceding chapters point to several conclusions that are more conceptual than practical.

First, soft power is omnipresent and fulfils different purposes in social interaction. Although it is difficult to pin down, there is a widespread perception among policy-makers and the general public that soft power matters. The discussion of ‘faces of power’ undertaken by Toms Rostoks in the first chapter shows how it starts from assigning definitions and roles to actors, onto agenda setting and impacting decisions – influence throughout the entire policy-making circle. We could also ask how power tries to dilute decisions already made. A comprehensive analysis of ‘soft power’ wielded and received means attention must be paid to all of these aspects.

Second, it seems the relationship between soft power and hard power is closer than previously thought. J. Nye suggested countries should be smart when applying their power, therefore the concept of smart power is intentionally defined in a normative way because smart power is usually an aspiration rather than an accurate description of how good countries are at wielding their power. As a concept, smart power is a combination of hard power and soft power, where these two facets are applied in such a way that allows a country to advance its vital interests in a competitive international environment. However, since indeed aspiration does not always predict a given result, the notion of smart power also implies there is a potential for “dumb power” when countries apply soft power and hard power in such a way that it harms their vital interests. Failure is as prevalent in the international realm as success is. Russia has clearly attempted to be ‘smart’ when applying its power with regards to Ukraine, but to date, the results certainly do not look like a vivid example of smart power.

Moreover, it was particularly challenging for the authors to disentangle soft power from hard power. Although this project explicitly focuses on the former, it revealed that in the economic realm distinction between soft and hard versions of power is particularly difficult. Thus, drawing a clear dividing line between the two aspects of power seems hardly possible because of the endless ways in which these are interrelated. Also, it seems Russia’s soft power is feared no less by its neighbours than its hard power. Although this may seem irrational, this notion touches upon threats to identity international subjects. There is little doubt Russia’s hard power is a grave security concern for its neighbours, but fears that Russia’s soft power would have the potential to change the identities of targeted societies are no less profound.

Third, soft power in terms of the attractiveness of a country seems to be a lasting phenomenon. Contrary to the assertion that power is easy to lose, soft power seems to enable uncritical thinking about the country which individuals are attracted to. This does not imply individuals do not change their minds. Instead, the case studies in this book suggests groups of individuals

who are attracted to a certain political actor may sustain positive attitudes towards that country especially when there are information sources available which convey positive messages about that country. When a wide variety of information sources is available, people are likely to choose those sources which confirm, or at least do not contradict, their entrenched worldviews. This tendency could be easily explained by the social constructivist perspective: once certain norms have been internalized, they are difficult to change and promote perception bias and desire to avoid cognitive dissonance, especially when this perception bias is continuously supported from the outside. The preceding chapters indicate that Russian-speakers in the Baltic States and elsewhere tend to have less negative views on Russia's annexation of Crimea than those segments of population that are not Russian. Their largely positive outlook towards Russia is reinforced by the choice of sources from which they receive information on Russia and its neighbours. Soft power, in the end, may be less volatile than previously thought.

Fourth, the reasons why Russia has resorted to the use of hard power in Ukraine (accompanied by a massive flow of positive messages about itself and negative messages about everyone who dares to criticize them) are structural rather than specific. Under the circumstances of competition between the EU and Russia, as the two poles of attraction for countries situated between Western Europe and Russia, it is the less attractive power that is more likely to use force in order to shape the choices of its neighbours. This is not to say that all segments of society in the countries neighbouring Russia would find the EU more attractive than Russia, but there is sufficient evidence from public opinion polls which confirm that significant majorities find the EU more attractive than Russia. This inferiority in terms of attractiveness is an important driver of Russia's resort to hard power which certainly includes not only military might, but also economic incentives. Seen from this perspective, Russia's military aggression in Ukraine is a reflection of the limits of the soft power it possesses and a failure of its repeated attempts to position itself as an attractive partner and model of economic development for its neighbours.

Fifth, there is a strong link between power and international order. Power per se is usually not the main concern of Russia's neighbours. The real question is about the aims of Russia's power. Unfortunately, the preceding country chapters provide ample evidence that Russia's application of power - both hard and soft - is perceived as being detrimental, if not utterly destructive, to the vital interests of its neighbours. Ahto Lobjakas claims in the chapter on Estonia that Russia is a de-structuring power. In other words, it is perceived as willing to dismantle the existing order. It is still not entirely clear whether this is just a perception or an accurate description of Russia's foreign policy

objectives, but it is clear that revisionist countries are likely to face stiff opposition from those states that have a stake in the existing international order. As the core countries of the existing order (largely comprised of Western European and North American powers) are seen as attractive and certainly not threatening by a number of Russia's neighbours, Russia is likely to be perceived as a rogue state that has to be contained. Challenging the international order is a costly exercise by which one is unlikely to earn friends.

Sixth, there is not one, but two opposite ideal types of soft power: natural attractiveness and manufactured attractiveness. Although the question "Can Russia ever be soft?" posed by Jakub Korejba earlier in this volume is now more relevant than ever, distinction should be made between natural and manufactured attractiveness. Russia has some soft power and it can be soft, but it is not soft in the same way the EU is. The soft power of the EU is a natural "shining city on a hill" type, but Russia's soft power is manufactured and based on the Russian image which hardly corresponds to reality. Previous chapters make it clear that Russia's soft power is more often than not perceived as manufactured, manipulative, and having little resemblance with the sometimes harsh Russian realities and the vertical authoritarian power its political leadership has built over the past 15 years. Moreover, Russia is seen as a manipulative power whose aims are fundamentally different from the vital interests of its neighbours and who is likely to use whatever leverage it has to influence the behaviour of its neighbours. Thus, Russia presents an interesting case study because it has to be demonstrated rather than assumed that such a façade of attractiveness can stand the test of time. It is assumed that propaganda is self-defeating in the long run and that manufactured attractiveness – one that is artificial rather than natural – is not likely to endure. In this sense, the Russian case will be watched with great interest.

## **Findings from the EU, Russian, Baltic, and Black Sea chapters**

Perspectives on soft power included in this edited volume point to a number of conclusions. First, EU and Russian approaches to soft power are very different in substance although they may share surface similarities in terms of instruments and actors used to generate and project it. The EU and its Member States have significant advantages over Russia in terms of soft power. The EU is more prosperous and democratic than Russia – qualities much valued by the population in Russia's neighbourhood - which means that if Russia intends to compete with the EU in terms of attractiveness, it not only has to put on its best face, but has to attack the attractiveness of the EU and provide alternative

enticements (or compensate for the lack of attractiveness with 'sticks'). This discrepancy in terms of attractiveness at least partially explains why Russia has to resort to more intensive use of hard power - both economic and military - if it wants to win over its reluctant neighbours. Thus, Russia uses whichever level of influence it has over its neighbours in order to prevent them from turning westwards. Russia is exploiting their weaknesses while the EU is trying to help them reduce their vulnerabilities. A blurring of the dividing lines between Russia's soft and hard power is one key characteristic of the competitive geopolitical processes in Eastern Europe. The prevailing trend is that we are witnessing not only a hybrid war in eastern Ukraine, but also what can be called "hybrid soft power" which involves increasing the collusion of soft and hard aspects of power. Although there is little doubt the attractiveness of the EU partly rests on its hard power, and especially its prosperity, there is significantly less willingness on the part of the EU to use economic instruments to bolster its attractiveness. Ironically, despite being an economic giant when compared with Russia, the EU and its Member States have failed on a number of occasions to offer superior economic incentives to its neighbours, remaining a beacon but not a direct provider of prosperity, while Russia despite its economic inferiority has been able to offer more substantial economic carrots although these have already come with political costs in the short-term, and economic ones in mid-term. In sum, the EU has tried to rely on the attractiveness of its political values to a much greater extent than Russia.

Second, in terms of instruments of influence the EU and Russia have used with regard to their common neighbours, there is much more similarity than in terms of the political objectives these two actors are trying to achieve. The authors who represent the Russian perspective on soft power, have conceded that Russia lacks the attractiveness the EU has. For example, Victoria Panova writes in this book that Russia still needs to become sufficiently attractive in order to become the preferred partner for its neighbours. There is little doubt Russia can use the instruments it has developed over the past years to criticize and undermine EU soft power, but it probably still has less to offer in terms of an acceptable model of political and economic development than the EU. When it comes to instruments of soft power, however, the picture is very different, and the authors who represent the Russian perspective in this volume have adamantly defended Russia's right to use the instruments at its disposal to criticize the EU and actively shape the attitudes of citizens in its neighbouring countries in ways favourable to Russia. The argument would probably be that eastern and western European societies deserve to have a second opinion. Indeed, the instruments that Russia has used in order to become attractive, such as NGOs, mass media, youth, and student exchange

programmes, are hardly different from ones used by other actors, including the EU and its Member States. Russia rightly sees these instruments as means for facilitating change in countries where these are used. Because Russia's political elite perceives the aims of Western agents of influence as contrary to its vital interests, it has restricted the ability of organizations to have an influence on Russians. Meanwhile Russia has created a panoply of its own instruments to tell the story about the decaying, double-faced, and immoral West to receptive audiences at home and abroad. Thus, the real controversy is about the message the EU and Russia are trying to project to their neighbours and the possibility to communicate that message to target audiences rather than the instruments used for this purpose.

Third, the EU and Russia are worlds apart in terms of their readiness to accept defeat. When Armenia decided not to sign the earlier negotiated Association Agreement in September 2013, the EU accepted defeat and quietly began to look for a mutually acceptable model of relations between the Union and Armenia that would be compatible with the international obligations of both sides. Russia, when faced with the defeat of its long-term partner in Ukraine, gobbled up Crimea and decided to destabilize Ukraine with military, economic, and other means. These different approaches to Eastern Partnership countries reflect the asymmetry of motivation of both parties. There is little doubt that Armenia is less important to the EU than Ukraine is to Russia. However, these two examples also reflect more profound differences in approaches to the Eastern Neighbourhood by the EU and Russia. While the EU plays a long-term game, Russia offers short term fixes. While the EU offers assistance aimed at strengthening the governance structures of its neighbours, Russia's influence weakens governance and creates a corrupt power vertical. The EU sees civil society as an important partner and a set of actors in their own right in the reform process, Russia finds it hard to believe that civil society can be an independent actor at all. Hence Russia alleged the Revolution of Dignity was largely a conspiracy of the West against Russia, which ignores the fact that Western leaders were ill-prepared to deal with the fallout from Ukraine's then president Viktor Yanukovich's ousting from power. The EU defends the principle that countries have the right to choose where they want to belong and which international organizations and alliances they want to join, while Russia strongly disagrees with this. Above all, however, the EU perceives itself as more attractive than Russia which naturally means Eastern Partnership countries will gravitate towards the EU. Although there is debate within the Union regarding the potential outcomes of this process and whether they will be ready to integrate new Member States in the foreseeable future, the perception is that Russia under its current leadership is not a viable alterna-

tive to the EU. This is somewhat hubristic because attraction works best when both sides are equally attracted and committed to each other. Thus, to achieve real progress in Eastern Partnership countries, the EU should be more committed towards achieving this aim. Sometimes being “the shining city upon a hill” is not enough. The EU should still be ready to accept defeat graciously when Eastern Partnership countries for some reason turn towards Russia, but they should understand that while its eastern neighbours may be in favour of good relations with Russia, they are also likely to want more of the Union.

Fourth, the comparison of the three Baltic States and Black Sea states (Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia) reveals there is the expectation the EU should counter the projection of Russia’s soft and hard power more proactively. It remains to be seen whether creating a Europe-wide TV channel for Russian-speaking parts of the population in the three Baltic States and elsewhere is a worthy and viable idea, but there is definitely an expectation the EU should do more. Despite rising concerns over Russia’s hard power (including military capabilities), the primary worries of the Baltic States are found more in the realm of soft power. The Baltic States worry about the potential impact of Russian NGOs and state-controlled mass media on Russian-speaking (and in the case of Lithuania, Polish-speaking) parts of population. The three Baltic States are also concerned that Russia may undermine the idea that Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are successful states. The remedy to this concern is obvious, as the Baltic States should demonstrate to their populations, including ethnic minorities and backward regions, that this is not the case. Although it may seem counterintuitive, sustained economic growth and inclusive societies based on rule of law are the best remedy for their perceived vulnerability. Admittedly, the Baltics’ example shows that mere accession to the EU and NATO is not a panacea, so tangible development-oriented solutions must be implemented further, alongside well-considered communication campaigns. The problems of Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia are still different from those of the Baltic States. The authors of the three chapters on the Black Sea countries are not concerned about EU soft power which means the Union’s influence is not resisted and virtually uncontested. Also, these chapters indicate that Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia are to a much greater extent concerned about the possibility of hard power instruments being applied by Russia against them. Lacking the protective shield of the EU and NATO means their perception of being vulnerable towards Russia’s hard and soft power strategies while having fewer economic and other means to counter these unwanted influences is much more pronounced. In other words, there are more threats and less security. The trend in recent years, however, is that Russia’s influence has increased in Georgia due to the resumption of economic relations and

political dialogue, but decreased in Ukraine due to proxy war waged by Russia around Donetsk and Luhansk. Moldova has been the frontrunner in terms of building closer ties with the EU in recent years, but the progress in Moldova is fragile. The chapter on Moldova suggest that firm commitment and more engagement by the EU is expected. Also, there are possibilities for the Baltic States to play a much more significant role in relations with the three Black Sea countries because of the sizeable soft power they have vis-à-vis Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia. Although the financial means Estonia, Lithuania, and especially Latvia can allocate to this aim are limited, their power of being successful examples of transitioning from post-Soviet to EU Member States should not be underestimated.

Fifth, Russia and the EU's assessments of the situation are fundamentally different. This does not only explain their conduct but also represents an imperative for the EU to investigate Russia's rationale in greater depth. Over the years, Russia has come to see the EU as a competing project and its relations with common neighbours as a creeping enlargement which directly challenges the Federation in its 'natural' sphere of influence. Although Russia has traditionally treated political elites in neighbouring countries as far more relevant than societies (and, thus, responsive to Russia's hard power), the colour revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia emphasized the role of increasingly politically active societies, thus, emphasizing the need for Russia to develop a range of soft power instruments in order to have an impact on the behaviour of societal elements in neighbouring countries. Another important difference, of course, is Russia's geopolitical vs. the EU's liberal approach. Russia managed to identify certain weak points in the States surveyed in this edited volume that the EU has until now failed to address. The importance of a 'social contract' for societies on the Baltic States and Eastern Partnership countries is one key element. As mentioned, the EU offers a more prosperous and sustainable, but at the same time more abstract model of development, demanding sometimes painful adjustments. Meanwhile, Russia's offer is relatively less enticing in the mid-term, but in the short term it is more accessible and represents an absolute improvement of target countries' current situations. Paradoxically, it is even more difficult for democratic governments in the EU's eastern neighbourhood to resist Russia's offer – an electoral cycle lasts only a few years, but implementation of an Association Agreement with the EU will predictably require ten.

## Recommendations

The authors in the preceding chapters have come up with a number of detailed recommendations for decision-makers, therefore the remainder of this chapter will provide only general recommendations and explain the assumptions upon which these are formulated. In some cases the recommendations will be presented as strategic choices.

Russia is going to face tough choices in the coming years because it may have to choose between two foreign policy strategies: influence through attraction (soft power strategy) and coercion (hard power strategy). Although the events in Ukraine are a sign Russia does not shy away from using hard power, it remains to be seen whether this trend will last because the use of hard power can be self-defeating. Our recommendation would be Russia should aim become a naturally attractive power, but this is a long term strategy which would likely result in a complete temporary loss of the remaining parts of its zone of influence. To become attractive to its Russo-sceptical neighbours, Russia would actually have to let them go. This path would, however, ensure Russia becomes attractive in the long run. But is such a scenario possible? Has Russia lost the attractiveness it once had in its neighbouring countries for good? We think it is possible but extremely unlikely because the pursuit of this strategy may have negative repercussions for the current political regime in Russia as for the several past years it has been built on scoring foreign policy 'successes' abroad. Letting its neighbours go would likely backfire at home in the short term.

The EU also faces tough choices under the current circumstances. Should it become more active in the eastern neighbourhood? Should it take active measures to neutralize Russia's manipulated attractiveness? Can it develop a sufficient strategic interest (among 28 Member States) in keeping the eastern neighbourhood stable? We would recommend the EU to do more in the eastern neighbourhood because it would prevent its neighbours from becoming destabilized, and to learn from the experience of the Baltic States. The EU should also develop a range of instruments to neutralize the negative narrative about the Union that Russia has chosen to publicize, and to address issues exploited and abused by Russia, such as inclusive economic and social development spanning all layers of partner states' societies, and the insecurity of energy supplies. At the end of the day, it should be clear to everyone the EU model of development is superior to that of Russia. However, the EU should proceed cautiously with use of these instruments. It should realize its attractiveness partially rests on values, such as democracy, prosperity, rule of law, and rejection of spheres of influence it represents. If the EU fails to defend

these values, it is likely to lose much of its attractiveness. That the EU should do more with regard to its eastern neighbours, is clearly reflected in the chapter written by Kai-Olaf Lang. The real challenge for the Union is to become more effective in shaping transformations in Eastern partnership countries. To this end, the EU should also work closely with the United States (could the Latvian idea for a Euro-Atlantic Eastern Partnership come true?) in order to produce additional leverage vis-à-vis Russia.

The recommendation for the three Baltic States would be that they should try to protect themselves and be in the forefront of attempts to assist the European neighbours of the EU. In light of the military conflict in Ukraine, in the worst-case scenario, the Baltic States could start treating their Russian-speaking minorities as a fifth column who receive direct orders or are manipulated directly by the Kremlin. This scenario should be avoided because the security of the Baltic States hinges upon their ability to become attractive to their own populations, Russian-speaking and otherwise. The Baltic States certainly have to react to changing regional security environment in Eastern Europe, but they should not overreact.

Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia are facing the toughest of choices. Our recommendation would be for the three Black Sea countries to reform themselves, lessen their vulnerabilities to Russian pressures, and integrate with the EU. Unfortunately, this would be the wrong recommendation if Russia uses its military muscles to prevent this from happening, and if the EU and NATO stood by and provided no meaningful assistance to stop it. Thus, the strategies of Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia largely depend on the EU (and to some extent NATO commitment) to their security and well-being. Sensing that EU efforts are half-hearted (which is probably how these efforts can be characterised up until this far), the three Black Sea region countries are likely to fracture and pursue multi-vector foreign policies that would eventually be ineffective or even harmful. The important thing, then, is to keep explaining their situation to all EU Member States and to work proactively not only on implementing reforms but also gathering EU and other international players' political and material support for them. That would be an important step towards the goal of building a 'ring of friends' around the EU, the initial aim of the European Neighbourhood Policy.



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