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Preprint

This is the submitted version of a paper published in *Public Relations Review*.

Citation for the original published paper (version of record):

Simons, G. (2014)

Perception of Russia's soft power and influence in the Baltic States.

*Public Relations Review*

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2014.10.019>

Access to the published version may require subscription.

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published paper.

Permanent link to this version:

<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:fhs:diva-5185>



Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

## Public Relations Review



# Perception of Russia's soft power and influence in the Baltic States

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 7 August 2014

Received in revised form 24 October 2014

Accepted 30 October 2014

#### Keywords:

Russia  
Soft power  
Influence  
Baltic States  
Perception  
Coercion

### ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to explore and analyse the different means and mechanisms of influence employed by Russia on the three Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania). By influence, it means the attempt to try and get another country to behave in a manner that benefits the influencer's policy and/or interests. As such, this can entail exerting one of two forms of power, hard or soft (as defined by Nye, 2004) to bring about the compliance. The current paper restricts its focus to those mechanisms related to shaping opinion and perception, such as public diplomacy (in its various forms).

To begin with the paper shall define the various concepts used – influence, power and public diplomacy. It shall then shift to the different Russian institutions that have been created to shape and manage influence, such as Russky Mir or Rossotrudnichestvo. Plus there are those other elements that exist in the region – Russian compatriots and Russian language media (both local and external to the Baltic States). Then the paper shall deal with relations between Russia and the Baltic States, with a focus upon recent history. Sources shall not be limited to academic literature and mass media resources, but will also include interviews for an 'insider' perspective on the issue. The responses shall be used to address the following question: How do people in the Baltic States perceive Russian soft power and influence?

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## 1. Introduction

Given the various upheavals that are currently and simultaneously occurring around the world it may be possible to overlook some of the more discreet and indirect means of gaining foreign policy goals and interests. However, the issue of soft power and influence in international relations is a hot topic and its interest and relevance is far from decreasing. How does one country influence another through the use of public diplomacy and soft power? The various mechanisms and structures that are created and employed to bring about influence may be developed over a long period of time. There also needs to be alignment between words and deeds, plus a sustained and consistent effort if there is to be a chance of success.

This paper concerns the different means and mechanisms that Russia employs in its effort to try and influence developments and events in the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania). These countries provide Russian public diplomacy and influence efforts with a significant challenge, not least by held stereotypes and perceptions, and the very efforts that are employed. The orientation of the work is that it is taken from the perspective of how the actions and activities of official Russian governmental and bureaucratic structures are received and interpreted by Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians. There

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is a focus on the public's understanding, rather than a focus on the political elite. The political elite have a clear Western oriented focus in policy, such as membership to NATO, the EU and adopting the Euro. Qualitative research was conducted with residents of the Baltic States in the spring of 2014, which generated some interesting indicative findings. Therefore, what do the responses indicate about the nature of Russian soft power and influence in the Baltic States?

A first step is to discuss and explain the terms public diplomacy, soft power and persuasion. These are all integral concepts that are used, therefore they must be defined. There also needs to be an explanation as to how these different concepts interact with each other. How Russia engages in public diplomacy and influence is the next subject matter. Recently, Russia has invested much time and effort in increasing its public diplomacy programmes and capacity. A short section then follows, on the state of relations between Russia and the Baltic States, which is intended to give context to answers in the following section. The following section provides details of responses received by the author to qualitative research that was conducted among Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians to gain an insight into how Russia and Russians are perceived, and to identify the positive and negative attributes that are associated with their neighbour. The survey work is intended as a first step to a larger more comprehensive follow up at a later stage, which means that the results are not to be viewed from the perspective as being generalisations, but possible indications that should be investigated further..

## 2. Public diplomacy, soft power and persuasion

The term Public Diplomacy (PD) is a much contested and at times misunderstood term and practice. Although there is some measure of agreement on what constitutes its core activities (Paul, 2011). In addition, it is understood as being a two-way and interactive form of communication (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2012: p. 288). PD is a form of government to people (G2P) communication and therefore differs from traditional diplomacy that is a form of government to government communication. "Public diplomacy comprises the efforts of governments from one nation to send messages directly to the "people" in another country and is part of soft power" (Coombes & Holladay, 2010: p. 299). This is a constantly evolving form of communication and interaction, which responds to changes in the political, social and technological environment (Hocking, 2005). One possible concise definition is as follows.

Public diplomacy [. . .] deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy; the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; communication between those whose job is communication, as diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the process of intercultural communications (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2012: p. 287).

There are many different parts and components of PD, which is seen in the above mentioned quote. However, it is not only about informing foreign publics, but it is also about influencing them in a manner that benefits the foreign policy and interests of the country communicating the message (Farwell, 2012: pp. 47–53; Snow, 2006: p. 227). A specific method is embarked upon, to influence the foreign publics, but there are usually some boundaries. The above is a short summary of the 'word' aspects of PD, now to turn to the 'deeds' part.

PD programmes and means in terms of physical deeds are wide and varied in practice and include different options. Various activities associated with PD includes: educational exchanges and programmes for scholars and students, language and culture training/education, visitor programmes, cultural exchanges and events, radio and TV broadcasting. Elements associated with these activities are advocacy, listening, culture and exchange diplomacy, and international broadcasting (Paul, 2011: p. 35; Jowett & O'Donnell, 2012: pp. 287–288). There are a total of three different aspects associated with PD:

- Information: information management and distribution with an emphasis on short-term events or crises;
- Influence: longer term persuasion campaigns aiming to effect attitudinal change amongst a target population (sometimes referred to as "moving the needle"); and
- Engagement: building relationships, also over the long term, to cultivate trust and mutual understanding between peoples (be they groups, organisations, nations, etc.)" (Paul, 2011: pp. 43–44).

PD can take a lot of time and effort to create a desired effect upon the targeted audience, it is about creating interaction and relationships through communication. It is also done with a particular purpose in mind, to assist with the realisation of foreign policy goals. This fact can be hedged in polite phrases and rhetoric that both parties get something from the mutual interaction. PD is also linked to the notion of power, namely soft power, although soft power and PD is not the same thing. This is a means of trying to cultivate and project soft power (Hayden, 2012). This begs the question, what is power within the context of PD and international relations?

There are two alternative ways of wielding power – through fear and coercion or through attraction and co-opting. One needs to bear in mind that "power always depends on the context in which the relationship exists." If objectives seem to be legitimate and just, others may willingly assist without the use of coercion or inducements (Nye, 2004: p. 2). In order to proceed, there needs to be an understanding of power and how it is related to PD.

PD is a means of promoting a country's soft power. At its core, soft power is "the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment." Each country's soft power is connected to its

resources of culture, values and policies (Nye, 2008: p. 94). If a country is liked and admired, it is more likely to be mimicked or copied. Therefore the power of attraction is the basis for soft power, which is used to shape the preferences of others. Nancy Snow identifies several dimensions that can create a soft power advantage for a country. These are “when culture and ideas match prevailing global norms, when a nation has greater access to multiple communication channels that can influence how issues are framed in global news media, and when a country’s credibility is enhanced by domestic and international behaviour” (2009: p. 4). Nye (2008: p. 102) notes that “policies that appear as narrowly self-serving or arrogantly presented are likely to prohibit rather than produce soft power.

Given the current crowded marketplace in the PD environment, publics can be overwhelmed by the deluge of information that confronts them. This creates a situation where focus becomes a crucial component. As such, the role of key influencers, such as editors, is in great demand. This is because they become a source of power by their ability to focus audience attention. The credibility of these people and those that they represent must be intact as this is an important source of soft power. “Politics has become a contest of competitive credibility” (Nye, 2008: p. 100). Communicating to a sceptical audience is very difficult, and it is not merely a matter of increasing the budget and increasing the amount of communication to get the desired message across (Melissen, 2005: p. 7). An interesting and important point made by Nye (2008: p. 106) is that “it is sometimes domestically difficult for the government to support presentation of views that are critical of its own policies. Yet such criticism is often the most effective way of establishing credibility.” When information is plentiful and available, credibility is the mechanism that enables the conversion of cultural resources into the soft power of attraction to a country, their politics and values.

Context exerts a strong influence on the success or failure of soft power, specific conditions and circumstances of the exact moment in time and space affect the outcome (Rugh, 2009: p. 6). An audience-centred approach is needed when communicating because credibility is very much in the eye of the beholder. PD must be flexible and not a one size fits all approach as credibility is very dynamic. It is also situation specific and culture bound. This means that credibility is a multi-dimensional construct that consists of expertise, trustworthiness and goodwill, all three needs to be engaged simultaneously (Gass & Seiter, 2009: p. 162). One of the assumptions held by policy makers is that some publics would come to see things ‘our way’ if they only had access to the ‘right’ information. However, preaching to a foreign public by a government is rarely a path to success. One of the fundamental issues that need to be taken into account is the information filters used by people. “But all information goes through cultural filters, and declamatory statements are rarely heard as intended. Telling is far less influential than actions and symbols that show as well as tell” (Nye, 2008: p. 103). Another consideration is that the government is not the sole messenger relaying information and impressions about a country, it is something also done (consciously and sub-consciously) by individual citizens (such as tourists) and organisations (such as corporations). If contradictions appear with government led communications, it could create a sense of message dissonance.

As stated earlier, PD is a form of communication that gets its message across by both word and deed. This communication is meant to persuade a point of view or for the target audience to adopt a particular desired behaviour in a voluntary manner. “The process of persuasion is an interactive one in which the recipient foresees the fulfilment of a personal or societal need or a desire if the persuasive purpose is adopted.” The process can also be regarded as been reciprocal and transactional where both the messenger and recipient have their needs, goals or desires satisfied (Jowett & O’Donnell, 2012: p. 33). Persuasion can evoke three different responses – *response shaping*, *response reinforcing* and *response changing* (Jowett & O’Donnell, 2012: pp. 33–34). Persuasion is the process that can ultimately lead to the end result, which is influence.

Robert A. Dahl defines influence as “a relation among human actors such that the wants, desires, preferences, or intentions of one or more actors affect the actions, or predispositions to act, of one or more actors in a direction consistent with – and not contrary to – the wants, preferences, or intentions of the influence-wielder(s)” (Dahl & Stinebrickner, 2003: p. 17). Then he narrows down the different ways of understanding influence, where the notions of distribution, gradation, scope and domain can serve as guides to the observation and analysis of influence. Influence is often understood as a “causal connection between an actor’s preference on an outcome and maybe also the form of the outcome” (Nagel, 1975: pp. 29 and 55).

Thus far there has been little connection made between soft power, influence, and propaganda with public relations. There are various inter connections between these different concepts and practices. As an initial point of departure on this road, a definition of public relations needs to be given – in terms of what it is and what it seeks to achieve. The following definitions are provided for this purpose.

Public relations is the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the publics on whom its success or failure depends (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2000: p. 6).

A more contemporary definition of public relations links to a much more functional understanding of the practice.

In basic descriptive functional terms, public relations involves the communication and exchange of ideas either in response to, or to facilitate change. It entails argument and case making. It is thus intrinsically connected to policy initiatives, their promotion and responses to these by organisational actors and their representatives (L’Etang, 2011: p. 18).

Now the connections between these different forms of communication can be more easily found. For example, creating and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships between messenger and receiver is involved in soft power and public relations in order to increase the chances of influence that would benefit the communicator. These are both active and

engaged forms of communication between the parties. Propaganda differs insofar as there is less feedback and interactivity in the process, it does however, seek to influence through a more passive form of communication relationship between messenger and receiver. In all cases there is an attempt to create an emotional bond between the messenger and receiver as such a bond is likely to create the context for creating opinion and spurring action (for example attraction or avoidance).

### 3. Russia's means and programmes of influence and soft power

The Russian approach to soft power and public diplomacy differs according to the target audience that is being interacted with. There are seemingly two broad approaches to the nature of the communication and the generated relationship (Saari, 2014; Simons, 2014). One is related to the relationship, communication and expectations with countries in post-Soviet space, those ex-Soviet republics that are now independent states. It is assumed that these weaker (especially in an economic sense) countries should 'naturally' gravitate and be drawn to the stronger Russian state. The shared historical experience, culture, language and so forth of these countries with Russia merely add to the conviction of this belief (Cameron & Orenstein, 2012; Trenin, 2009). Beyond the Commonwealth of Independent States, Russia attempts to project its attractive elements, such as sport, education, arts and culture. There has been a move away from an ideological basis of public diplomacy to a much more pragmatic and policy/goal oriented approach.

In terms of Russia's ability to conduct itself (effectively, in terms of achieving goals and objectives) on the international stage requires engaging in offering competitive attractive ideas to the world. Igor Jurgens sees that global leadership requires "a moral authority, the appeal of *success stories* of the country as a whole or its separate national and transnational projects." And that this leadership is not derived from the potential of military power that is possessed by a country.<sup>1</sup> The initial obstacle to achieving this success is to formulate national values and ideals that are credible and can be communicated. According to Jurgens, Russia has not yet been able to formulate its value idea at this stage. One of the suggested values is to re-formulate a historical idea, which was Russia acting as a shield between the Mongols and Europe. In the contemporary context to reshape this value to Russia acting as a cultural and transport bridge between East and West.

Other ideas on Russia's challenges and opportunities have also been expressed. On the 28th of October 2011, the question of how Russia can create a more positive image in the local media was discussed by the *Baltic Forum of Compatriots* in the Russian town of Pushkin in the Leningrad region. The general belief seems to lie in an information war that is being waged between Russia and the West, which is the root of Russia's image problems. One of the speakers, Modest Kolerov (currently editor of the portal Regnum, and formerly head of the Department for Interregional and Cultural Relations With Foreign Countries in the Presidential Administration), stated that the blame should not be placed on mass media outlets in the Baltic States.

The main source of information on Russia, especially the negative myths about the state of modern society in Russia, claims about the total dominance of criminality, political and media restrictions, ideological control, the factor of general negativity toward the Soviet Union are the Russian media, particularly the federal television channels and tabloids.<sup>2</sup>

This observation takes note of the need to be mindful of what is appearing in the domestic media, which may potentially 'contaminate' the national image abroad. In this regard, the root of this particular problem is found within the domestic media system and transmitted to the outside world. A number of other problems were identified too. Kolerov noted a number of weaknesses in the Russian language media outlets in the Baltic States. These included a lack of personnel, financial difficulties, and it is a closed media space. By *closed media space*, this refers to the Russian language press being isolated and shut off from their colleagues and information appearing in the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian media. Additionally, the lack of specialists in Russia with knowledge of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian language has an effect of amplifying the problem of lack of knowledge and communication.<sup>3</sup> These identified problems illustrate the need to understand the culture and language of your target audiences in order to effectively communicate to and influence them.

A number of steps and innovations have been taken to try and shape and create Russian soft power and influence more effectively. A number of these have a strong physical as well as online presence. The Alexander Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Foundation (<http://gorchakovfund.ru/>), which has information on its website in Russian only, sets out its mission and purpose. It provides "an integrated support for domestic civil society institutions. Together we can achieve the synergy, actively working on a common goal: the creation of the world public the correct presentation of Russia and our national cultural values."<sup>4</sup> It appears as though the primary role for this organisation is to perform an organising and coordinating body for other NGOs working in the sphere of international relations. Part of the given mission statement includes "[...] the

<sup>1</sup> Jurgens, I., *Tough call "soft power"*, "Russisikaya Newspaper" – Federal Edition No. 5583 (207), <http://www.rg.ru/2011/09/16/yurgens.html>, 16 September 2011 (accessed 7 November 2011).

<sup>2</sup> *Информационные войны с самими собой* (*Information war with ourselves*), DzD.ee, <http://www.dzd.ee/624820/informacionnye-vojniy-s-samimi-soboj/>, 7 November 2011 (accessed 11 November 2011).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Обращение Исполнительного директора Фонда* (Message from the Executive Director of the Foundation), О Фонде (About the Foundation), Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Foundation, <http://gorchakovfund.ru/about/> (accessed 26 January 2013).

Foundation's mission is to promote the development of public diplomacy, as well as to facilitate the creation of a favourable for Russia, social, political and business environment abroad."<sup>5</sup> The above mentioned organisation is intended to create an interactive dialogue with different foreign target groups, and to form a relationship with them in order to be able to influence opinions and perceptions concerning Russia. This suggests that New Public Diplomacy is becoming the preferred method, which is facilitated with the relationship marketing approach.

The Gorchakov Foundation does run a number of special programmes, such as the *Baltic Dialogue* (for Russian speaking youth from the Baltic States) and the *Caucasus Dialogue*. In 2014 the Baltic Dialogue was run for the third time. According to information on the Baltic Dialogue page, it includes gathering youth from Russia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to listen to lectures given by Russian and Baltic experts on certain themes revolving around "youth" and "civil society." The format appears to be an exercise of relationship building through the physical interaction of the participants and organisers.

Russkiy Mir foundation (<http://www.ruskiymir.ru/en/>) was established by Putin in 2007 and is an agency tasked with increasing Russia's soft power base. According to information on the website, its mission is "to promote understanding and peace in the world by supporting, enhancing and encouraging the appreciation of Russian language, heritage and culture. Russkiy Mir promotes the teaching of the Russian language within Russia and abroad – both to new learners of the language and to those who already know and love Russian and wish to recapture or maintain their fluency. Russkiy Mir brings Russia's rich history to life, and showcases vibrant examples of Russian art and culture around the world. Russkiy Mir reconnects the Russian community abroad with their homeland, forging new and stronger links through cultural and social programs, exchanges and assistance in relocation." Therefore it is not only about influencing foreign audiences, but also concerns interacting with Russian compatriot communities. The public diplomacy agency Rossotrudnichestvo (<http://rs.gov.ru/>) was created in 2008 via a presidential decree. According to material on the website of the agency, "Rossotrudnichestvo implements projects aimed at strengthening international ties, closer cooperation in the humanitarian sphere and the formation of a positive image of Russia abroad. Ongoing activities help to overcome cultural barriers, negative stereotypes and other obstacles to the development of international cooperation." Both of these organisations have a physical presence around the world, and are geared towards promoting aspects of Russian soft power through cultural aspects and 'humanitarian cooperation.'<sup>6</sup>

Another non-profit organisation, which was founded in 2008, is the *Historical Memory Foundation*. The director of the organisation is a historian by the name of Alexander Dyukov. According to the organisation's website, its objectives are "to provide assistance for unbiased scientific researches of relevant issues of Russian and Eastern European history of the 20th century." There is also a list of some of the different activities that *Historical Memory Foundation* engages in.

- Topical subject research of Russian and Eastern European history of the 20th century;
- Topical subject furtherance of researches of Russian and Eastern European history of the 20th century and their publications;
- Conduct of science conferences and round tables;
- Mass media presentation of research results of relevant issues of Russian and Eastern European history of the 20th century.<sup>7</sup>

These activities demonstrate that the organisation seeks to try and influence the narrative on a relatively narrow set of issues and topics related to historical matters, through producing reading material and through organising face-to-face interactions. The material on the website is available in two languages, Russian and English. Although, there is a lot of information missing in the English language version, such as the names of the Board of Trustees and those who work at the Foundation, which appear in the Russian language version. Another significant difference between the two versions was the presence of a Red Star symbol on the Russian language site, which was absent on the much more neutral (objective) looking visuals of the English language version. The information from the website, which is given above, hints that the organisation attempts to segment its targeted publics on at least two different levels – international and domestic.

#### 4. Russian relations with the Baltic States

This section is not intended as a detailed study of relations between Russia and the Baltic States over the centuries of interactions between them, but a quick overview of relations in the post-Soviet period in order to give context and meaning to some of the answers provided by respondents in the qualitative research. Having said that, the understanding and perception of history plays an important in the relations between Russia and the Baltic States. There is also the question of identity, which in a number of regards is tied to the aspect of recent history.

The Baltic States are an interesting case in the study of Russian soft power and influence for a number of reasons, among them, in the Russian perception they lie somewhere between the two distinct lines of Russian public diplomacy (*Sleivyte*,

<sup>5</sup> Миссия И Задачи (Mission and Objectives), Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Foundation, <http://gorchakovfund.ru/about/mission/> (accessed 26 January 2013).

<sup>6</sup> Humanitarian cooperation in this sense of the word includes scientific and educational collaboration between the Russian organisation and the recipient. For example, a visa can be issued free of charge if the invitation is issued by an educational organisation under the humanitarian category.

<sup>7</sup> About Us, Foundation, Historical Memory Foundation, <http://www.historyfoundation.ru/en/about.php> (accessed 15 July 2013).

2008: 35). On the one hand, they were once part of the Soviet Union, having been forcibly incorporated in 1940 and again after World War Two. But all three Baltic States are integrated into the Western sphere, being full members of both the European Union and NATO. From the perspective of governments of the Baltic States, there are two possible sets of risks emanating from Russia. Firstly, found in the context of the state in a direct context threatening their territorial integrity or independence, such as the case in June 1940 with the invocation of the mutual defence treaty that led to loss of independence. A second context is an indirect one, where the Baltic States are subverted from within, such as the mobilisation of Russian compatriots that are resident there.

When independence was regained in 1991, the Baltic States went through a very difficult period of relations with Russia. Russian troops remained stationed on the territory of the Baltic States for some years, a reminder of the legacy of the Soviet Union. Political discourse on national identity in Russian political discourse was highly securitised, which added to tensions, especially regarding the attitude towards the Baltic States as being a bastion of anti-Russianness (Morozov, 2004). The Baltic States sought membership and integration into Western clubs, such as the European Union and NATO, as a safeguard against any possible threats in the future from Russia. Moves to join, especially NATO, caused Russia to react and oppose or at least attempting to gain some leverage in the process (Kramer, 2002). The entry of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania into the EU and NATO in 2004 seems to have brought some measure of security guarantee for the political leadership of the countries from possible direct action by Russia. To influence decision making in the Baltic States, Russia does still use economic tools, such as those relating to energy supplies and the imposition of targeted trade embargoes (Grigas, 2012; Sleivyte, 2008). However, some internal questions need to be addressed as well.

History, and the memories associated with recent episodes in history play an important part in perception, opinion and relations among the different groups in the region (at state and governmental level and at the level of different ethnicities). This was witnessed in the 60th anniversary of victory in the Great Patriotic War celebrations in Moscow on 9 May 2005, when President Putin invited the leaders of the three Baltic Republics to attend. Only the Latvian President, Vaira Vike-Freiberga accepted the invitation. The Lithuanian President, Valdas Adamkus remarked that they had only traded Hitler for Stalin (Onken, 2007). This demonstrates the large gulf in the perception and interpretation of this event. To Russians it is a source of pride and patriotism and celebrated as having liberated territories from fascism, to the titular peoples of the Baltic States it marks the ‘trading’ of one repressive regime for another. There is an inability to recognise, let alone understand each other’s point of view. Events that occurred during and immediately after WWII exerted a significant impact upon the political, ethnic, cultural and economic landscape.

Significant changes to the demographic situation, especially in Estonia and Latvia occurred in the wake of the events after the WWII.<sup>8</sup> This occurred through the deportation of citizens to the far reaches of the Soviet Union and the importation of Soviet citizens into the Baltic States during the industrialisation process (Peters, 1994). Subsequently, the Russian government has used the issue of protecting minority rights in the Baltic States (namely Russian speakers) to pressure the Estonian and Latvian governments (Adrey, 2005; Peters, 1994). One of the issues that have been championed by the Russian government in Estonia and Latvia has been the question of Russian language teaching in the school system. The phasing out of Russian language teaching in Estonian schools caused a number of protests and reactions. One of the reactions was to create a pressure group, an NGO called *Russian School of Estonia*. It lobbied based upon notions of compliance with national and international legislation.<sup>9</sup> A similar situation occurred in Latvia, and the use of photo opportunity moments were used to highlight the plight of Russian language schools in Latvia.

History has been forming personal connections and means to project soft power and influence. One of those connections is the accumulation of commercial assets in the hands of Russian businessmen (from both an ethnic and citizen aspect) as well as personal connections between various elites. It represents an opportunity to benefit, from associations and interactions with those business groupings. Sport has also featured as a mechanism of influence, such as the creation of the Continental Hockey League, which competes with NHL. Russian high culture is also valued in the Baltic States, which can carry Russian values and norms. Grigas notes that the current soft power and influence owes as much to the Tsarist and Soviet legacies as it does to the current Russian efforts (2012: 22). There are a number of other internal factors that are a cause for concern among the political elite in the Baltic States.

One of the causes for concern by the governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania has been the funding of different activities that could increase Russian influence in the region. This includes giving advice to and the funding of NGOs, championing the rights of compatriots, political parties and media outlets (Grigas, 2012; Saari, 2014). There are approximately 300,000 Russians living in Estonia, which is about 25 per cent of the population. In some areas they constitute a majority, such as Narva, where they account for 97 per cent and Tallinn where one figure puts the level of “non-Estonians” at 66 per cent.<sup>10</sup> In

<sup>8</sup> Smirnov, V., *Russia’s “Soft Power” in the Baltic*, Russian International Affairs Council, [http://russiancouncil.ru/en/inner/?id\\_4=367#top](http://russiancouncil.ru/en/inner/?id_4=367#top), 4 May 2012 (accessed 7 February 2014).

<sup>9</sup> Strnad, V., *The Russian-Estonian Debate: The Language of Instruction for Schools in Estonia*, Cultural Diplomacy and Human Rights, <http://culturaldiplomacyandhumanrights.wordpress.com/2013/08/07/estonia-versus-russia-the-language-of-instruction-in-schools/>, 7 August 2013 (accessed 7 February 2014).

<sup>10</sup> Strnad, V., *The Russian-Estonian Debate: The Language of Instruction for Schools in Estonia*, Cultural Diplomacy and Human Rights, <http://culturaldiplomacyandhumanrights.wordpress.com/2013/08/07/estonia-versus-russia-the-language-of-instruction-in-schools/>, 7 August 2013 (accessed 7 February 2014).

Latvia “Russian speakers” constitute 44 per cent of the population, and some 300,000 are classified as being “non-citizens.”<sup>11</sup> Lithuania does not face a similar situation with regards to the demographic situation as Russians constitute a very small minority and there is no “non-citizen” category.

A case concerning foreign NGOs, funding and political parties occurred in Estonia in 2010. On 16 December 2010, the Mayor of Tallinn Edgar Savisaar, was accused of being an agent of Russian influence. Savisaar was also leader of the Centre Party, the largest of the political opposition. Centre Party received funds from an NGO, which has ties to Vladimir Yakunin, an influential political figure in Russia and head of the Railways. This caused the Estonian Security Police (KaPo) to declare Savisaar as an agent of Russian influence and a threat to Estonian security in a letter to the Estonian government.<sup>12</sup> This represents a more subtle and covert approach to influence, where a significant number of the population are wary and suspicious of Russian government intentions.

An academic from Kaliningrad characterised Russia’s attempts at soft power in the Baltic as having “been discrete and non-systematic and, frankly, inefficient. That said it does not mean that Russia should give up these attempts. Vice versa, despite the fact that bilateral format of interaction will not be bringing results for Russia for a long time to come this area, for all the difficulties Russia faces in implementing its action plans in the Baltic segment of the post-Soviet space, should be prioritised in pursuing Russian foreign, cultural, scientific and educational policies.”<sup>13</sup> This reality, combined with the isolation of some segments of the population in Estonia and Latvia, has caused a response in Latvia recently.

The daily newspaper Diena ran an expose on a secret government study that was designed to gauge and understand attitudes of the Russian speaking segment of the population. The press secretary of the Latvian Prime Minister, Dzeina Tamulevica, remarked that “the outcome of the study is directly related to international security. However, the government admits that a part of the findings could be made public” see footnote 11. This demonstrates just how politically sensitive and prioritised the issue has become. In some manner, it represents a distinct sense of insecurity by the Latvian authorities of a segment of its population. With the theoretical, conceptual and academic foundations now in place, how does the perception of publics in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania compare?

## 5. Identifying aspects for future research

During the spring of 2014 qualitative research was carried out via email with Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian respondents. It was emailed to friends and acquaintances, which in turn emailed it to their contacts and networks. In this way it was hoped to get a greater level of objectivity and honesty from the respondents as they received the request from someone that they personally know.

Six of the responses (four from Estonia and two from Lithuania) were received after the Russian annexation of Crimea on 18 March 2014. This provides a coincidental opportunity to see if there is any significant change in the responses than prior to this event (owing to threat perception). The research was conducted in English language only, which means there is a bias that is introduced to the population sample, namely that those who responded possessed sufficient education in English language in order to be able to participate. Respondents are anonymous and are assigned identifying codes to protect their identities. The system is as follows: Latvian respondents are assigned LV for the country and numbers from 1 to 25 for the individual respondent, Estonia as EE and 1–7, and Lithuania LT and 1–3. When quoting the fourth Estonian respondent, the identifier used shall be EE4, for example.

The results of this qualitative research are to be viewed as a first step in building a methodological programme to generate results to better understand how soft power and influence interacts and functions. This particular project was unfunded and therefore the options limited in gaining a significant quantity of responses. It is intended that research funding shall be sought to follow up the indicative results of the survey conducted for this paper. Therefore this paper is intended as an exploratory research paper to identify the different aspects that may affect soft power and influence in order to conduct a second (more extensive) round of surveys and fieldwork, which is much more precise and targeted in terms of the questions asked.

Qualitative research was intended to tease out research areas that could be more thoroughly addressed in follow-up research. A total of five different areas were tentatively explored. The first area involved asking respondents “are there any positive attributes associated with Russia?” See annex one for a list of the responses. This intended to identify possible sources of Russian soft power in the Baltic States. The most commonly given answers included: culture (including arts, movies and literature), ordinary Russians (i.e. not the state or officials – hospitable, friendly and good sense of humour), business opportunities, high quality education, science/technology and scientists, Russian goods, cuisine and some traditions.

There were a number of unique answers given by various respondents. LV24 named “military history (Russian before Soviets)”, LV22 stated “anti-gay law, where it is about saving children from gay propaganda,” LV22 also mentioned the Russian

<sup>11</sup> Latvia Commissions Secret Study on Attitudes of Russian Speakers, RIA Novosti, <http://en.ria.ru/world/20140515/189843000/Latvia-Commissions-Secret-Study-on-Attitudes-of-Russian-Speakers.html>, 15 May 2014 (accessed 15 May 2014).

<sup>12</sup> Chausovsky, E., *Dispatch: A Case Study of Russian Influence in the Baltics*, Stratfor, <http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/20101227-dispatch-case-study-russian-influence-baltics#axzz36V4bO8Ym>, 27 December 2010 (accessed 7 February 2014).

<sup>13</sup> Smirnov, V., *Russia’s “Soft Power” in the Baltic*, Russian International Affairs Council, <http://russiancouncil.ru/en/inner/?id.4=367#top>, 4 May 2012 (accessed 7 February 2014).

company ITERA's sponsorship of the ice hockey team *Riga Dinamo* as being positive, LV3 mentioned "big country, strong army" and good athletes, EE2 and EE3 mentioned Russian tourists, EE3 also mentioned the signing of the border agreement between Russia and Estonia, LV18 "Russia supports their people outside Russia, especially in post-Soviet countries," LV11 (a non-citizen) mentioned Russia's role as a counter-balance to the United States in international politics, EE5 (post-Crimea) added that there was still some sign of freedom of speech and pluralism of opinion in Russia (on blogosphere and social networks) and that the GULAG system has not been restored, and EE7 (post-Crimea) observed that Russian "women dress up very luxuriously (much more than Estonian women)."

These observations tend to support Nye's (2008) understanding of soft power as emanating from a country's culture and values. A number of the identified aspects also agree with the findings and observations of Grigas (2012) – such as sport and high culture. The next question was designed to identify those attributes and aspects that tend to hinder or undo Russian soft power.

A second area to be explored was when respondents were asked "are there any negative attributes associated with Russia?" Please refer to annex two for a complete list of the responses received. This was intended to identify possible sources that detracted from any possible soft power. A number of the written responses are worth quoting, to give a greater sense of context and meaning to the above. LT3 (Post-Crimea) stated that Russia was "perceived as a military threat, maybe not a reliable trading partner." EE1 wrote that "the negative attributes associated with Russia are the same as the ones evident in the current Ukraine crisis. Expansionist foreign policy, use of emotions of Russians living abroad for Russia's foreign policy goals." LV13 replied "I hate to say, but Russia has always been dominant in relations with the Baltic States. In case some cooperation goes wrong, Russia has already not once implemented short-term import embargoes on different kinds of goods, in a manner worsening or even destroying some specific business areas (e.g. milk imports from Lithuania)." In a response from LV21, "Russians wanted to open Russian schools here in Latvia. That means Latvian society would be divided in two parts, Russians and Latvians. And both of the parts would have different education and education principles, and that is wrong." LV14 made mention of historical issues – "the history is obviously not very positive, meaning all the harm that has been caused during the war and occupation years (deportations, executions, suppression of the Latvian people, etc.). This is the main negative connotation when it comes to thinking about Russia." LV2 named "psychological heritage – still we feel the influence of Soviet time occupation." EE6 (Post-Crimea) listed "dependency on the power and inability to think without it, different understandings of history, fear politics, compatriots protection."

A lot of the negative aspects and attributes are often in some way tied to the Russian state in terms of personalities, policy and history. These are the primary causes that inhibit Russian soft power from developing or growing. This was particularly evident in descriptions from respondents about the arrogant, aggressive, overbearing or uncaring attitude displayed by Russian officials and politicians towards, especially, smaller countries (such as the Baltic States). Low class/culture Russians received a great deal of attention in negative associations as did the high culture Russians in question four for positive associations. Melissen (2005) described the difficulties faced by governments trying to communicate to sceptical audiences, which is something that is not easily resolved. Nye (2008) encapsulates part of this problem within the notion of competitive credibility aspects to politics. Other actors that are more credible have the ability to out-communicate and influence publics. The success or failure of soft power is also linked to credibility and context. The aspect of context refers to the conditions and circumstances at a moment in time (Rugh, 2009) and credibility only occurs when expertise, trustworthiness and goodwill are aligned simultaneously (Gass & Seiter, 2009).

The remarks from areas one and two seem to substantiate the findings of Sommerfeldt and Taylor who note "as scholars and practitioners we must see that our own relationships are in order before we can turn to solving the problems in the environment" (2011: p. 205). It is also in keeping with Nye, where a country's domestic policy also exerts an influence upon its ability to conduct foreign policy and communication. The inference is a deficit in the development of social capital in Russia, which not only influences domestic relationships, but also external relationships too.

The third area was explored with the question "do you know of any mechanisms or means whereby Russia seeks to influence your country? It seeks to identify the different levers and mechanisms used by Russia to influence decision making and public opinion in the Baltic States as understood from the perspective of the local population. Go to annex three for a complete list of responses.

EE4 (Post-Crimea) noted "youth camps financed by Moscow City Government in Moscovia, 1st Baltic Channel TV, handing out "grey passports" to Russians in Estonia (that allows visa free travel to Russia)." EE3 observed that "there is also notable influence on the Centre Party of Estonia by the Russian Federation, both moral and financial (for example the Patriarch of Russia met only with the leader of the Centre Party before elections, giving the sign to the Russophone voters on the local election in October 2013 in Tallinn and Eastern Estonia)." EE1 confirmed the Centre Party connection – "the political party Keskerakond and its leader Edgar Savisaar has been one of the central instruments for Russia's political interests in Estonia. This party also has a cooperation agreement with Putin's United Russia party." LV4 said that "they want to open in Latvia Russian speaking schools, they already bought a lot of Latvian land and they have taken a great deal of our economy." LT1 mentioned "all kinds of sport and culture events (the best examples VTB basketball league and lots of concerts of various Russian pop music stars)." LV11 thought that the "primary means of influence is Russia's media. Local Russian media is quite lacking therefore Latvian Russians have no choice but to watch non-local Russian TV-news or read non-local Russian internet-based news. Even more, I think that at least some local Russian media get some of its information from public sources in Russia, which only strengthens the influence. So even inadvertently Russia's own propaganda has a great influence on Russian-speaking Latvians. And, of course, some of the propaganda is aimed at Russians living abroad." LV19 notes that

“one of the mechanisms whereby Russia influences our country is by financial support in our politics. There are one or two political parties that get their financial funds from Russia, so in a way, those political parties are dependent on Russia. Russia can influence their motifs and their main ideas.”

The levers and mechanisms of influence that are exploited by Russia fall in to the two different categories of power noted by Nye (2004) – hard power through coercion and soft power through attraction. The mechanisms used appear to be aimed at influencing responses, as outlined by Jowett and O'Donnell (2012) – response shaping, response reinforcing and response changing. In addition, as noted by L'Etang (2011), the communication and interaction is based around the context of policy initiatives that intend to respond to or enable change. These are directed at different audiences in the Baltic States. The soft power seems to be more readily directed at the Russian speaking residents (mass media, education, culture, Russian language and compatriot issues), and aspects of harder use of power directed against the state (trade sanctions, political pressure and diplomatic pressure). There is also overt and covert use of influence – trade sanctions versus the sponsoring of political parties and cultural events, for example.

On the fourth area, respondents were asked “how do you characterise relations between Russia and your country?” Theoretically the answers to this question should be related and linked to the preceding questions on perceived positive and negative attributes of Russia, and the mechanisms of influence that are exercised in the respondents' country. See annex four for the list of responses received.

There were a number of interesting answers that highlight some more aspects to the replies. LV2 “Overall they are good. Even more – the government has better relations with Russian politicians than with local people – local inhabitants. In mass media there are much more negative news on internal issues than on relations between LV and RUS.” LT2 (Post-Crimea) “I think Russia doesn't see Lithuania as a real partner in politics and business. Lithuania on her side can see Russia still as an enemy and danger.” LT1 “Cold peace, with an element of economic wars.” EE5 (Post-Crimea) “Anything else but warm. No official state visit has taken place lately, although this could be a polite way of communication between neighbours. Quite a pity because it looks like there are good personal contacts with people from Russia in general and have been on the increase in the last years (growing number of tourists from Russia in Estonia and a more positive attitude towards them).” EE2 “Relations are not good, but they are not very bad either. Russia is a powerful and leading country, so holding a relationship is difficult.” EE1 “I would characterise the relations as 'normal'. However, these relations may change suddenly, and there are some tensions.” LV19 “I would characterise the relations between Russia and Latvia as strongly associated. Mostly because it hasn't been long ago when Latvia was a Soviet country.” LV11 “I'd say there are double: at the one hand there is a strong movement for a partner like relation with Russia, at the other hand the majority of officials tries to counter this as much as possible. So there is a situation when official stance is cold and tense, but among the populace and businesses there are many ties to Russia.” The answers were quite wide and varied on this question, there was also a distinction drawn, on a number of occasions, between official-level and population-level relationships. The characterisation of relations between Russia and the Baltic States by the respondents is a reflection, to some extent, of the level of influence. Dahl and Stinebrickner (2003) defines this influence as being shaped by an influence wielder's intentions, wants or preferences being considered as being in-line or contrary to those held by the publics.

Then respondents were asked to account for why these specific relations have developed. This is intended to link those positive or negative attributes and the current perceived state of relations between the countries. Refer to annex five for the responses. In terms of history, the greatest mention was made of the 1940 occupation, much more so than the events that followed the defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945. Some selected quotes from the respondents shall give further meaning and context to the above mentioned data. EE4 (Post-Crimea) mentioned “history – Estonia feels threatened by Russia and the rise of nostalgia for the Soviet Union in Russia.” LV20 noted “due to the history and speculations regarding (im)possibility of repeated Russian occupation.” LV8 stated “since global politics has become increasingly about business gain and less about principles and moral standards that fuels Russia's arrogance.” LV15 said “it is a legacy of the long years of Soviet spheres of influence.” LV7 observed that “Russia and Russians always need much more than they have, much more than they can afford. Geographically we are neighbours.” EE6 (Post-Crimea) wrote “the fact that Estonia(ns) is/are terrified for their survival, and that they have a daily reminder of how close they came in the form of the Soviet migrants in Estonia, also does not help the relationship.” EE5 (Post-Crimea) stated that “no one can make friends with a bully. Russia should draw back from its ambitions of being a superpower and sincerely admit the right of self-determination of other states.” There is a sense of insecurity in the Baltic States, which seems to have been rooted in the recent historical past (particular links to the events of 1940). But there is another element of this in the current setting that is derived from Russia's foreign relations with former territories and (internal to Russia) the growing sense of nostalgia or positive reflection on the Soviet past.

Wang identified a number of key points in public diplomacy that required further research. The first point is that “managing national reputation is not just about projecting a certain national image but rather negotiating understanding with foreign publics.” This communication is driven by changing events in international relations. Secondly, building relations between a government and foreign publics not only involves a rational and logical aspect, but also an emotional level. The emotional level of relationship building requires further research. Thirdly, concerns the nature of communication, the mode of communication (for example via mass media or social media) and nature of communication (one-way or dialogic). Which variant or combination proves to be more effective? A final point concerns the communicator. “The credibility and efficacy of the government as a primary communicator, is now often suspected, because people tend to perceive communication by a foreign government as propaganda” (Wang, 2006, p. 94). This implies the need to communicate and interact indirectly. What other organisations or individuals are used, and are they more effective?

The final request posed in the qualitative research was “please feel free to give any other information here that you feel may be relevant to the study.” This was completely open and up to the respondent to decide what, if anything, could be added. Some selected quotes shall be used to illustrate some of the answers given. LV6 said that “Latvia has no strategy to improve relations with Russia.” LV17 stated “I believe that at the moment we do not need to worry about the status of our relationship with Russia, because we are a member of NATO and we can feel safe. In my opinion, in the next few years, our relationship will not change.” LV8 notes that “my guess is that the world is viewing Russia through two lenses, fear and gain.” EE6 (Post-Crimea) wrote that “before last week, the Estonian government was only using soft power when trying to compete with Russia. Now it is shown that it might not be enough, and has opted for a hardliner’s tactic.” LV11 (self-identified as a Russian non-citizen) stated that “I do not support most of the Russian-rights initiatives in Latvia as I find them inconsiderate towards the still tense relations between Latvians and Russians.” EE7 (Post-Crimea) mentioned an article in Estonian newspaper about Russian thinking by Ants Laaneots “our trouble here in Estonia, and Western Europe is that people, including politicians, the younger generation does not know and can not understand the Russian mentality specificity. Speaking of Russian mentality pillars, then in the West do not get to understand the big Russians where power is more important than his welfare.”

The answers given were quite varied, but some trends are discernible. Firstly, relations are not expected to change significantly in the near future between Russia and the Baltic States (a form of tense stability). Secondly, there is a tense and simmering element (especially in Estonia and Latvia) between the titular nationalities and the Soviet-era migrants, which provides a source of tension on the one hand and a possibility to ignite or mobilise different groups by unscrupulous political actors on the other hand. The answers given by the post-Crimean annexation respondents did not differ markedly from the other responses, instead this action was used as a further justification and consolidation of a number of negative pre-existing attitudes and opinions concerning Russia and Russians.

## 6. Future research

This initial step in the research identified a number of soft power and influence aspects that need to be followed up, investigated and analysed in much more detail. In a follow up it would be necessary to focus more clearly on the possible trends and aspects indicated in this study. There would also need to be a translation of any questionnaires into Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Russian. The use of focus groups should also be strongly considered. These measures would widen the available number of respondents by permitting different socio-economic and language publics to participate in the research. One more issue that needs to be addressed is generating a much larger and more representative (and evenly proportioned) sample from across the three Baltic States.

The qualitative research of this paper has identified several subject areas that need to be further addressed.

- What is the role of Russian citizens and the Russian information space in affecting the level of soft power and/or influence in the Baltic States?
- Is there any significant difference in the level of Russian soft power and influence between different socio-economic and ethnic/language groups?
- What are the most effective levers of Russian soft power and influence?
- Which are the greatest detractors of Russian soft power and influence?
- What is the exact nature and extent of Russian power and influence in the Baltic States?

One of the criticisms, in terms of shortcomings, of evaluating such communicative practices as soft power and public diplomacy is that academic research (currently) tends to try and impose an ‘ideal’ model over what is actually done in order to gauge the success or failure. However, this ignores the aspects of national priorities and interests, which may not be ‘logical’ in this regard. Therefore the pragmatic drivers actually defining the problem of influence is missed (Pamment, 2014). The more comprehensive study would seek to shed light and understand the nature and scale of Russian influence in the Baltic States through its communication and interaction practices.

## 7. Conclusions

In the introduction, the following question was asked, what do the responses from the qualitative research indicate about the nature of Russian soft power and influence in the Baltic States? In order to answer this question, some other issues need to be addressed first. The first is the manner in which Russia conducts PD and relations in and with the three countries. This presents a number of problems as they have been formerly Russian and Soviet territories, which generates one type of attitude, which is interpreted as being arrogant or overbearing. However, all three countries are in the EU and NATO, which necessitates a different understanding and approach (one more nuanced and including the propagation of soft power elements). It has been noted by observers that Russia’s activity does not seem to be very well coordinated and somewhat inefficient. This was backed by a remark from LT1 who noted an absence of a Kremlin “master plan.” This situation creates a greater chance of lack of consistency in the communication efforts and seems to indicate that the focus may be more upon tactical and operational level pragmatic and policy objectives.

The official Russian efforts at public diplomacy, soft power accumulation and influence differ in effectiveness and a number of problematic issues to the approach have been noted. One of these problems was even noted by an official, Modest Kolerov, criticising the efforts of influence as being counter-productive by Russian language mass media that was inundated with negative content. He saw two separate media spheres, which lacked any kind of meaningful interaction (a prerequisite to relationship building and leading to possible influence). Having said this, a number of respondents made a clear distinction between the “Power” (the hierarchy of political, administrative and other structures that direct and rule Russia) and ‘the average’ Russian. There was a clear level of suspicion and mistrust demonstrated by the responses.

Russian soft power elements do exist in the Baltic States, which are related to the primary themes that are often communicated in public diplomacy programmes – culture, arts, education and sport. There is also an appreciation of the ‘positive’ aspects of Russian people (welcoming, hospitable, etc.), and of the benefits of Russian tourism. In this regard, Russian people seem to be an unrated asset. There was also some mention of common traditions and values, such as the respondent that identified the Russian gay propaganda law as being positive. Other more pragmatic issues also featured, such as commercial opportunities.

These elements were, however, severely tempered by aspects that worked against the soft power potential. The biggest issue being recent history, and especially that of the occupations (1940 generating a greater response), and how these are represented by the different sides. The Russian narrative of victory in the fight against fascism in 1945 does not resonate with many of the titular peoples as they see one repressive regime being replaced by another. Divisive aspects concerning the presence of Russian compatriots (especially in Estonia and Latvia), and the protection of their rights, plus the promotion of Russian language are seen as keeping a wedge in society and as being a lever of possible external influence. Another thorn in the side of relations is, the at times, demonstrations of power or strength on an individual as well as a state level – ‘aggressive’ and ‘arrogant’ Russian people and when economic sanctions or embargoes are applied by Russian authorities. The last point to be gleaned is that the perceived lower living standards in Russia also negatively influence soft power projections. These observations on soft power elements and detractors fit with Nye’s understanding of the role played by culture, values and policies.

This leaves the issue of the levers of influence and persuasion to discuss. These seem to exist on a number of different means and levels, physical and psychological. A number of new PD initiatives are very interactive in nature, yet also narrowly focussed (on Russian speakers), such as the Gorchakov Foundation’s Baltic Dialogue programme. Trade sanctions are one pragmatic means of applying pressure on the Baltic States, to a specific area or sector/industry. This includes, as noted by Grigas and Sleivyte, the supply of energy. Attempts by Russia to support or mobilise the compatriot community as well as supporting political parties is also a concern. The loyalty of the community is at times called into question, which has an effect of making Russian claims look more legitimate as well as isolating this group even more (they turn to news and information from Russia as being a primary source of news and information, for example). The mechanisms of persuasion and influence seem to be aimed at response shaping and/or response changing among the decision makers in the Baltic States. However, it seems that the result is often reinforcing negative opinions and attitudes towards Russia, with this particular pattern remaining for the immediate foreseeable future.

**Acknowledgement**

The author would like to thank Lars Nicander from the Swedish National Defence College and Sergei Samoilenko from George Mason University for their reflections. A great deal of gratitude is owed to Bruce Newman from De Paul University for his considerable help in polishing the text.

**Annexes. Respondent answers**

*Annex 1. Are there any positive attributes associated with Russia?*

Attribute	Number of times mentioned
Culture and arts	19
Sport	4
Science and technology	3
Well-known public figures	2
Russian people	10
Tourists	2
Values/norms	4
Business/commerce	9
High quality education	2
Food/traditions	5
Military	2
International role	3
Country	6
Nothing	2

*Annex 2. Are there any negative attributes associated with Russia?*

Attribute	Number of times mentioned
Russian politics and politicians	17
Russian people	17
History and occupation	13
Use of Russian language and compatriots issues	9
Lack of human rights and freedom of speech	8
Corruption and crime	5
Low quality of life in Russia	6
Russification	4
Military threat	4
Imperialism	3
Negative propaganda	3
Visa issues and foreign policy	2
Russian overt/covert financing of Baltic organisations	1

*Annex 3. Do you know of any mechanisms or means whereby Russia seeks to influence your country?*

Mechanism/means	Number of times mentioned
Trade sanctions and economic levers (including buying real estate and businesses)	17
Funding research, organisations and events	16
Mass media, propaganda and misinformation	15
Sports, culture and education (including exchanges and funding)	15
Political pressure	12
Use of compatriots	9
Diplomacy (including public diplomacy, branding and show of military force)	8
Religion	4
Trade potential	1

*Annex 4. How do you characterise relations between Russia and your country?*

State of relations	Number of times mentioned
Bad	7
Tense	7
Changing relationship	5
Complicated	4
Functional	4
Cool	2
Good	2
Strongly associated	2
Not good not bad	2
Normal	1

*Annex 5. In your opinion, please account for why these specific relations have developed*

Reasons for relations	Number of times mentioned
History (occupation, deportations, interpretations of history)	26
Russian political interests and zone of interest	9
Russian arrogance or aggression (not conversant with the local language, attitude towards former territories)	8
Trade and commerce	5
Presence of compatriots	4
Possibility of future attack/occupation	4
Mutual political antagonism	2
Cultural differences	1

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Please cite this article in press as: Simons, G. Perception of Russia’s soft power and influence in the Baltic States. *Public Relations Review* (2014), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2014.10.019>

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